



GLASS OF WATER

Stimulus



There was once, in an old city in Afghanistan, a very rich merchant called Dara. He made his money from selling beautiful clothes and jewellery. The clothes were made of silk sewn with gold thread; the jewellery had precious stones like diamonds and emeralds set in gold and silver. After many years of success in business, he rode high through the streets on camel whose saddle was red and gold, and lived in a tall house with balconies and fountains and a lush green garden.

The time came for him to open a new shop in the capital, Kabul. The main problem was how to transport the treasures he would be selling to the new shop. Three camels would be needed to carry the precious cargo, and such a long and grand camel train would attract the attention of robbers and bandits on the way. Dara decided to hire guards for protection.

Fully prepared, he set off with a guard of four men for the great and famous city, which was a week's ride away. He took some money for the journey and made sure that all his precious goods were securely fastened to the camels. He didn't want anything to fall off on the way.

The following morning, after the group had all slept in the desert and made another couple of hours progress on the trail, they came to a canyon - a road that runs between two tall cliffs. As they turned the corner into the canyon, they were met by a gang of bandits. The gang were all on camels, and carried daggers under their arms, and wore scarves over their faces. There were eight of them. Dara's guards warned him straight away that they could not hope to beat twice their number in a fight. 'Run!' they yelled. And all four of them steered their camels in the other direction.

Dara was horrified when he saw that they had left behind all the camels that were carrying his precious goods. He tried to pull the three camels with him as he escaped, but they just ran in circles, scared by all the panic. By this time, the bandits were all around him and seized the terrified beasts - together with all the loot. Now Dara had no choice but to urge his own camel, Tarboosh, to run away as fast as he could.

Luckily, Tarboosh was a fine, young, strong camel and carried Dara out of reach of the bandits' daggers. But as he headed back towards the city, he heard shouts in the distance. The bandits knew that he was rich by the clothes he wore and knew he would have money tucked into his pockets somewhere. They were right. Dara was carrying a sack of gold on his saddle. Two of the gang chased after Dara.

To begin with, Dara was confident because Tarboosh would be able to stay ahead of them. But the problem was not Tarboosh, but himself. He was very thirsty and all the water was back on one of the camels he had lost. To begin with, he ignored his dry throat and sticky tongue but as the hours went on, he started to feel faint. He didn't want to fall off onto the ground and be captured. But then he remembered that there was a tiny village just off the road a little further ahead.

When Dara got there he asked for a bottle of water. But the villagers were crafty. They saw how desperate he was and thought it was a chance to make some money.

'You will have to give us all the gold in that sack' they replied. Dara was thunderstruck. There were fifty gold coins in there.

'What?!' he croaked, his voice cracking with thirst. 'That's robbery. You're no better than the thieves who attacked me'

And Dara rode away from them.

Tarboosh was slower now, as he was tired. Way off in the distance behind him, Dara could see a cloud on the trail. That would be the dust kicked up by the hooves of the bandits' camels, pursuing him. He kept going. Then, coming towards him, he saw a farmer on a donkey. Relieved he stopped the farmer and asked him:

‘Give me a drink. Quick, I’m going to faint. I’ve been robbed. Help me! What are you waiting for?’

The farmer didn’t like being spoken to so rudely. He wanted to teach Dara a lesson.

‘I’ll give you a drink, but seeing as you spoke to me as if I were your servant, you’ll have to pay. Because servants get paid.’

‘I’ll pay’ groaned Dara, looking over his shoulder again as the bandits grew closer. ‘How much?’

‘Five gold coins,’ demanded the farmer, grinning.

‘What?!’ spluttered Dara. ‘Another thief, that’s all you are! And you’ll be a murderer too, if you don’t let me have a drink right now. Either I’m going to die of thirst or those two bandits will get me.’

‘Five gold coins,’ shrugged the farmer, and held out his hand.

Dara pulled his camel’s head away and flicked its flank with the whip to move it on and away. Tarboosh pushed on as hard as he could but after another half an hour or so, the poor camel’s legs grew slower and slower until he finally stopped and lay down gasping on the sand. Dara had to leave the exhausted creature there and walked on. He promised if he got back to the city alive he would try to return and rescue Tarboosh but nothing could be done now. If he could just get back to his home... there would be water, a bed, and all the rest of his fortune to comfort him.

His footsteps were unsteady. He knew that the bandits were moving faster than him. Perhaps they would beat him up. Perhaps they would kill him. Perhaps they would just take the last of his money.

That moment, he suddenly saw a wonderful sight. Green palm trees... Glittering blue water... An oasis... It was as if an angel had put it there to rescue him. He ran towards it with a burst of energy that seemed to come from nowhere. However fast he ran, though, the oasis didn’t come any closer. So he stopped... and blinked... The oasis disappeared. He blinked again, expecting it to loom up in front of him again... but No. He look around in all directions. No... there was nothing. It had just been his imagination. The oasis never existed. His tired, dehydrated brain had created it. And when he realised this, it finally destroyed all his hope.

Dara sank down on his knees and gave up. He wondered if he would die before the bandits caught up with him. He prayed for mercy. To his amazement, he was answered by an angel’s voice.

‘Dara... you have lost a lot today. You are just about to lose the most important thing of all - your life. But you are lucky. The bandits have turned back. Your only danger now is to die of thirst. And I will grant you one more chance. A jug of water will appear before you now - wet and real and delicious for you to drink. You just have to do one thing. Give up all your wealth. That means your clothes, your houses, your camels, your jewels, your fine food and wine and every single coin you carry or have hidden anywhere. Every last thing that you own in the world. In exchange for one jug of water. You now have to decide if that jug of water is worth more than all your riches.’

Wearily, Dara forced the words out of his throat:

‘The jug of water is worth more than my entire fortune’.

And as he finished speaking the angel disappeared and the jug of water was there on the ground in front of him. He picked it up and tipped the water into his mouth. It seemed to be the most wonderful and beautiful thing he had ever tasted. The angel was not the only thing that had vanished. So had his sack of coins and so had his fine clothes, leaving him in just an old shirt and trousers. And he knew that when he got back home, his house and all his many treasured possessions would be gone too.



Task Questions

- ✓ Was the water worth more than the riches?
- ✓ Did it become worth more or was it always worth the same?
- ✓ What makes something worth money?
- ✓ Is money the best way to say how much something is worth?

