

Misery

There once was a man who was so very poor that sometimes there wasn't anything in the house for him or his little children to eat. This poor man had a rich brother who had no children.

In about a year's time the poor brother got the news from other folks that his brother had become the father of a son. Upon hearing this, he ran to his wife with the good news, saying, "Do you know, dear wife, that my brother now has a son?"

"What of it?" she asked, as if bored by the news.

"It must be true. My brother once told me that if he ever had a child I was to be godfather. Do you know, I'd like to visit him."

And his wife said, "Don't go, my dear. If he wanted you to be the godfather he would have sent for you."

But the man insisted. "I have decided to go. I want to get at least a glimpse of my godchild." And off he went.

He arrived at his brother's place and sat at the table to talk. Soon a rich neighbour came in and the rich brother gave him the place of honour, saying to his poor brother, "Move over. Let this guest sit at the table."

He moved over. Then there came another rich man and the brother said, "Mover over." And so many visitors arrived that soon there was a full house. At first the poor brother had a seat at the table, but soon there wasn't even room for him on the doorstep. The rich brother treated his rich friends with great respect and hospitality but for the poor man there was nothing. The rich men drank too much and talked a lot of nonsense but the poor man didn't even get a morsel of food. He felt in his pockets for something to nibble and found some sunflower seeds. He pulled them out, peeling them as

though he were going to nibble them after a glass of wine. When the rich man saw the seeds on him he said, "Give us some, too."

"Allow me," he said.

One man took some, another hand grabbed a few and a third did likewise. Soon they had all disappeared. The poor man sat for a while longer and then returned home without anything.

"Well," asked his wife, "what happened?"

"You were so right. I am not the godfather. I didn't get a bite to eat. And not only that—they even swiped my seeds!"