# The Jew in the Bush

A faithful servant had worked hard for his master, a thrifty farmer, for three long years, and had been paid no wages. At last it came into the man's head that he would not go on thus any longer, so he went to his master and said—"I have worked hard for you a long time, and without pay, too. I will trust you to give me what I ought to have for my trouble, but something I must have, and then I must take a holiday."The farmer was a sad miser, and knew that his man was simple-hearted, so he took out three crowns, and thus gave him a crown for each year's service. The poor fellow thought it was a great deal of money to have, and said to himself—"Why should I work hard and live here on bad fare any longer? Now that I am rich I can travel into the wide world and make myself merry."With that he put the money into his purse, and set out, roaming over hill and valley. As he jogged along over the fields, singing and dancing, a little dwarf met him, and asked him what made him so merry."Why, what should make me down-hearted?" replied he. "I am sound in health and rich in purse; what should I care for? I have saved up my three years' earnings, and have it all safe in my pocket.""How much may it come to?" said the mannikin."Three whole crowns," replied the countryman."I wish you would give them to me," said the other. "I am very poor."Then the good man pitied him, and gave him all he had; and the dwarf said—"As you have such a kind heart, I will grant you three wishes—one for each crown,—so choose whatever you like."The countryman rejoiced at his luck, and said—"I like many things better than money. First, I will have a bow that will bring me down everything I shoot at; secondly, a fiddle that will set every one dancing that hears me play upon it; and, thirdly, I should like to be able to make every one grant me whatever I ask."The dwarf said he should have his three wishes, gave him the bow and the fiddle, and went his way.Our honest friend journeyed on his way too, and if he was merry before, he was now ten times more so. He had not gone far before he met an old Jew. Close by them stood a tree, and on the topmost twig sat a thrush, singing away most joyfully."Oh what a pretty bird!" said the Jew. "I would give a great deal of my money to have such a one.""If that's all," said the countryman, "I will soon bring it down."He took up his bow, off went his arrow, and down fell the thrush into a bush that grew at the foot of the tree. The Jew, when he saw that he could have the bird, thought he would cheat the man, so he put his money into his pocket again, and crept into the bush to find the prize. As soon as he had got into the middle, his companion took up his fiddle and played away, and the Jew began to dance and spring about, capering higher and higher in the air. The thorns soon began to tear his clothes, till they all hung in rags about him, and he himself was all scratched and wounded, so that the blood ran down."Oh, for heaven's sake!" cried the Jew. "Mercy, mercy, master! Pray stop the fiddle! What have I done to be treated in this way?""What hast thou done? Why, thou hast shaved many a poor soul close enough," said the other. "Thou art only meeting thy reward;" and he played up another tune yet merrier than the first.Then the Jew began to beg and pray, and at last he said he would give plenty of his money to be set free. He did not, however, come up to the musician's price for some time, so he danced him along brisker and brisker. The higher the Jew danced, the higher he bid, till at last he offered a round hundred crowns that he had in his purse, and had just gained by cheating some poor fellow. When the countryman saw so much money, he said—"I agree to the bargain," and, taking the purse and putting up his fiddle, he travelled on well pleased.Meanwhile the Jew crept out of the bush, half naked, and in a piteous plight, and began to ponder how he should take his revenge and serve his late companion some trick. At length he went to a judge, and said that a rascal had robbed him of his money, and beaten him soundly into the bargain, and that this fellow carried a bow at his back, and had a fiddle hanging round his neck. The judge sent out his bailiffs to bring up the man whenever they should find him. The countryman was soon caught, and brought up to be tried.The Jew began his tale, and said he had been robbed of his money."Robbed, indeed!" said the countryman; "why, you gave it me for playing you a tune, and teaching you to dance."The judge said that was not likely; that the Jew, he was sure, knew better what to do with his money; and he cut the matter short by sending the countryman off to the gallows.Away he was taken, but as he stood at the foot of the ladder, he said—"My Lord Judge, may it please your worship to grant me but one boon?""Anything but thy life," replied the other."No," said he; "I do not ask my life. Only let me play upon my fiddle for the last time."The Jew cried out—"Oh, no! no! no! for heaven's sake don't listen to him! don't listen to him!"But the judge said—"It is only for this once, poor fellow! He will soon have done."The fact was he could not say no, because the dwarf's third gift enabled the countryman to make every one grant whatever he asked.Then the Jew said—"Bind me fast, bind me fast, for pity's sake!"The countryman seized his fiddle and struck up a merry tune, and at the first note judge, clerks, and jailer were set agoing. All began capering, and no one could hold the Jew. At the second note the hangman let his prisoner go and danced also, and by the time the first bar of the tune was played all were dancing together—judge, court, Jew, and all the people who had followed to look on. At first the thing went merrily and joyously enough, but when it had gone on a while, and there seemed to be no end of either playing or dancing, all began to cry out and beg the countryman to leave off. He stopped, however, not a whit the more for their begging, till the judge not only gave him his life, but paid him back the hundred crowns.Then the countryman called the Jew, and said—"Tell us now, you rogue, where you got that gold, or I shall play on for your amusement only.""I stole it," replied the Jew, before all the people. "I acknowledge that I stole it, and that you earned it fairly."Then the countryman stopped his fiddling, and left the Jew to take his place at the gallows.

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