

THE SCORPION AND THE TORTOISE A FABLE OF BIDPAI

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A Scorpion and a Tortoise became such fast friends that they took a vow that they would never separate. So when it happened that one of them was obliged to leave his native land, the other promised to go with him. They had traveled only a short distance when they came to a wide river. The Scorpion was now greatly troubled.

“Alas,” he said, “you, my friend, can easily swim, but how can a poor Scorpion like me ever get across this stream?”

“Never fear,” replied the Tortoise; “only place yourself squarely on my broad back and I will carry you safely over.”

No sooner was the Scorpion settled on the Tortoise’s broad back, than the Tortoise crawled into the water and began to swim. Halfway across he was startled by a strange rapping on his back, which made him ask the Scorpion what he was doing.

“Doing?” answered the Scorpion, “I am whetting my sting to see if it is possible to pierce your hard shell.”

“Ungrateful friend,” responded the Tortoise, “it is well that I have it in my power both to save myself and to punish you as you deserve.” And straightway he sank his back below the surface and shook off the Scorpion into the water.

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