

TRACE

**Traditional Children's Stories for a common
Future**

The Caliph, the Shepherd and Happiness



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Once upon a time there was a caliph who went hunting and had the bad fortune that his mount was suddenly frightened, running wild and rushing uncontrollably to the race. The steed went so fast that it quickly disappeared from the view of the courtiers who were trying to reach it. Suddenly he opened before the sovereign and his horse a deep gully, so the caliph understood that he had reached the end of his days. At the last moment, a humble shepherd who was in the vicinity with his flock managed to stop the horse right at the edge of the abyss, preventing them from falling off.

The caliph was very grateful to the shepherd for having risked his life to save him, so he decided to reward him for his courageous and generous action. For that reason at that very moment he swore to the shepherd by the hairs of his beard that he granted in gratitude happiness, for which he would grant him everything he desired.

The next morning, as bold as you like, the shepherd went to the caliph's palace where he was received immediately by the caliph with great joy. The shepherd explained to the caliph that he had fifty goats in his flock and that he would like to double the number of them.

At the request, the sovereign replied immediately:

- Little is what you ask me to have saved my life. To make sure you reach happiness, I not only give you the fifty goats you ask, but I also give you a house surrounded by green pastures where your flock can peacefully graze.

The shepherd felt then the happiest man in the world, telling himself that he had undoubtedly attained happiness, since the sovereign had granted him more than he wanted, and that he finally had a house and meadows of his own. That same day, the shepherd went to live at his new home. A short time later he met a neighbour who showed him his farm, which had a beautiful house, more than two hundred goats and very fertile land that reached beyond where he could see.

The shepherd returned home at dusk and went to bed, but could not get to sleep and spent the whole night thinking about all the properties of his neighbour, and said to himself: "What a fool I was! I should have asked the caliph two hundred goats! If I had, I would be as rich as my neighbor." And he spent the whole night awake with the same thoughts hanging around his head.

At dawn, the shepherd walked to the court of the caliph, who attended him immediately. The shepherd told his concerns to the caliph, who listened amused and laughing told him that he would gladly grant his new requests to fulfil what he had promised: "By the hairs of my beard, I grant you what you ask, shepherd, well I will fulfil my promise to give you happiness. "

The shepherd came back leaping with joy on the way home. But, once he got into bed, he began to think: "What a fool I was again! I could have asked him for three hundred heads instead of two hundred, which he surely would have given me with pleasure. "

After several sleepless nights, the shepherd finally took courage and decided to go back to the caliph to tell him his troubles. "Majesty," he said, "I come to tell you that I cannot be happy, and that to achieve it I need more land and many more goats."

The sovereign returned to fulfill his promise, since that was what he had sworn by his very beard.

The shepherd was jumping with joy on the road that took him home telling himself that he was truly a lucky man and that he had really achieved happiness.

But a few days later our shepherd began to feel dissatisfied with everything he had, telling himself that the place where he should be to be really happy was not the countryside, full of dirt and dust, but the court, surrounded by luxuries.

So sooner rather than later the shepherd again went to the caliph, who immediately granted him a beautiful house. However, the shepherd felt unhappy again within a few days and in a short time, from the beautiful house he went to an imposing palace, and from a few mules he immediately went to an incredible stable full of purebred horses. The calm talks with the neighbors of the field turned into parties in which the drink did not stop running and the rich delicacies did not stop being served. The caliph began to get uncomfortable with the incessant requests, but as he had promised the pastor by the hairs of his beard that he would make him happy, he continued to grant him everything he asked.

Even so, unhappiness and dissatisfaction filled the shepherd's heart more and more, so for the umpteenth time, he asked for an audience with the sovereign.

- "Your Majesty, you know well that I saved your life and for that, and in gratitude you promised me by the hairs of your beard that you would grant me everything I asked you to make me happy".

- "Well it is true, shepherd, and I have done so, but I think that if you have not managed to be happy, it will not have been because of me".

- "Since we agree on your promise, I ask you to finally achieve happiness let me be caliph for a while".

The shepherd had not finished saying this phrase when the caliph immediately summoned his barber and at that same moment, sitting on his throne, the caliph asked him to shave his beard.

Once shaved, the caliph told the shepherd:

"You see that I no longer have a beard, shepherd, so I no longer have to fulfill that for what I swore by the hairs of my beard and you have no reason to stop being what you have always been. So as a shepherd you came and as a shepherd you will come back".

The caliph then ordered the servants to deprive him of all the possessions he had granted him and to accompany him to the same place where their lives were first crossed. And in those places continued the shepherd with his fifty goats and as poor as the caliph found it.