

Name _____ Date _____

A Bundle of Sticks

Once there lived an old Persian rug maker and his three sons. One day the old man called his sons, Tashi, Mashi and Sashi, to him. "My sons," he said, "it is time that I turn my shop over to you. Remember, in all Persia there are no better rugs than ours."

From then on, Tashi made the patterns, Mashi mixed the beautiful dyes, and Sashi worked at the loom. Now it happened that the prince of Persia was going to marry a lovely princess of Baghdad. The prince wondered what gift he could give the princess that would please her most. He thought and thought, and decided on a rug. "That's the very thing," he said. "In all the world Persia is known for its beautiful rugs."

The prince ordered the rug makers of Persia to set to work. Each man was to bring his finest rug to the palace on the wedding day. The princess herself would choose the finest rug, and a rich prize would go to its maker. When Tashi, Mashi and Sashi heard of the prize, their eyes sparkled. They said, "If we win the prize, we will be known all over Persia. Everyone will buy our rugs."

The wedding day was six months away. Tashi began to plan the pattern. As he worked, he thought. How wonderful it would be if I alone should have the prize. It is I who make the pattern. Everything depends upon me. When at last Tashi finished his pattern, Mashi and Sashi said, "Show us!"

"No," said Tashi. "I have worked hard, and this is a beautiful pattern. It is sure to win the prize for me. After all, without my pattern where would you be?" "Where would we be indeed?" said Mashi with anger. "Would there be a rug at all without my colors? It is I who should have the prize!"

Sashi shouted, "There can be no rug if I do not weave it! I should have the prize!" The three sons quarreled while other weavers were busy. Many beautiful rugs were soon finished. The old rug maker's sons just kept quarreling. Things went from bad to worse. In a rage, Tashi tore his pattern to bits. Mashi gave Sashi a push toward the dye. All the bright colors spilled on the floor and flowed into one ugly brown puddle. Sashi shoved Mashi against the loom. It cracked and broke.

Now the wedding day was but a month away. Tashi had no pattern, Mashi's colors were spilled, and Sashi's loom was broken. The old father saw that something must be done. He called his sons and ordered them to bring him some sticks. Holding out one stick, he asked each son, "Can you break this one stick?" "Easily," laughed the sons.

Next the old man took all the sticks and tied them into a bundle. "Now," he said, "break the sticks." Each son tried, and each failed. The bundle of sticks was too strong. "My sons," said the old father, "you can see for yourselves. One stick is weak. Three together are strong. It is the same with men. Alone you are weak. Together you are strong."

The sons did see - each needed the others. Although time was short, the sons worked together to try for the prize. On the day of the wedding the three sons took their rug to the princess. The colors flashed in the sun. The pattern pleased the eye. The weaving was smooth and perfect. "Here is the rug I want," the princess said to them. "The prize is yours. You have won it by working together."

Even to this day, Sashi, Mashi and Tashi keep a bundle of sticks hanging from a peg in their shop.