

## The Bridegroom Who Was a Snake



**L**ONG AGO there lived a Brahmin and his wife. They had no children, and it was a great grief to them both.

The wife wept bitterly when she saw little boys and girls playing round her. The Brahmin could not bear to see her so sad, so he made many sacrifices to the gods, in the hope that his prayers might be granted.

The gods took pity on the Brahmin and his wife, and at last they knew that a child would be born to them.

They were full of happiness at the thought of having a baby of their own, but alas, when the child was born it was a serpent!

Their friends said the snake should be thrown out into the jungle, but the mother loved it, and took the greatest care of it. She bathed and fed it, and it grew very fast.

Some years later the Brahmin and his wife were asked to a wedding. When they returned to their home, the wife said:

'It is time our son was married too.'

'My dear,' said the Brahmin, 'who will give his daughter to be married to a snake?'

At this the wife wept bitterly, and would not be comforted. At last the Brahmin said he would try to find a wife for their serpent son.

He set out, and travelled far, looking for a bride. One day he arrived at the house of an old friend, whom he had not seen for many years.

His friend was very glad to see him, he said. Come and stay in my house. As they sat talking together his host said:

Why are you travelling about? What is your business?'

'I am looking for a bride for my son,' said the Brahmin.

Now the host had a young daughter, and he wanted a husband for her. Very soon the two fathers agreed to make a match between their children.

The Brahmin took the girl and her attendants back to his home, and the wedding was arranged.

A crowd collected to see the girl, who was to marry the serpent. Everybody was sorry for her. At last somebody told her servants that the bridegroom was a snake. The servants were horrified and ran to tell the bride.

When she heard what they had to say, the girl said proudly, 'My father has agreed to the marriage and I will not make him break his promise.'

She waited on her husband, and prepared his meals as a good wife should, and never in any way showed that she disliked him.

One evening, as it was growing dusk, the serpent came out of his basket. Then suddenly there appeared a very handsome young man!

The wife was terrified. She thought a thief had broken in to the house. She rushed to

the door, but before she could give the alarm the young man said:

'I am your husband! Do not be afraid.' The girl could not believe him, but to prove it to her, he went back into the body of the snake, and the snake began to move about. When he appeared again as a man, the snake lay dead.

There were great rejoicings when his parents heard the news. They young bride was very happy too.

**B**UT IN the morning they were all very sad for once again the son became a serpent!

However, the Brahmin cheered them all by saying that he had a plan in his head, but he would not tell them what it was.

That evening the young man appeared again.

The father waited till he was asleep in bed, and then went quietly into his room, and carried away the body of the snake.

He burnt the snake to ashes. After that the spell was broken and his son remained a man.

The Brahmin gave a great feast to all his friends, and everybody was very happy.

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*Fun is like insurance — get it while you're young.*