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Dry Times in a Desert

Barda--sweating with his long, even hair in his half-kept tarp broken in by scorpions and sandstorms--stole water during the peak of the dry season. Dragged by his legs, he took three hits from the leaders of the village, their split-then-conjoined ponytails filing their backs in the shape of an eye rotated ninety degrees. Barda pleaded to stay in the village. The three men stood near the well in the center of their village and quietly discussed the situation. Three eyes stared Barda down.

“We have chosen to send you off with a pail of water. You must not return without finding another source of water. If you shall die, it will be of your own fault. We give you this water as a token of our village. We have been of plenty help to you, but you must be on your way,” said Dain, the more composed leader.

“ Please! I cannot survive out there! Let me stay, just until the dry season is over,” exclaimed Barda with an airy but deep voice.

“You have grown your hair too much for your own good. You better slice it all off before you leave,” Simion spurted before spitting onto Barda’s hair.

Barda held his head low as he had his hair cut. He was then immediately exiled from the community. Barda’s house was turned over to the shorter-haired man he stole from. Barda left with a tan-colored short sleeve shirt and shorts that were colored a brown slightly darker than the desert. He held the pail in one hand and a woven bag of dried food scraps with a tarp on his

shoulder that was slightly whiter than the desert sand. His whole body continued to lean forward as the sun rose.

Travel and Trade

“See you in a week, Cactus Crew”, said Joey as he left with two full pails of water with lids. Halfway to the village he encounters a man.

“Hey, are you from that village? What are you doing walking so slowly in all this heat? Here, let me give you some more water,” said Joey.

“Oh, thanks. Where are you coming from, I didn’t know people were still out trading at this time of year,” says Barda quietly after looking up then dropping his head back down.

“Originally we were stocking up on cactus and we checked out an old well. We thought we could start a connection from there to the nearest village. Our village is a week out, and we don’t want the well to dry up before we can replace all the old parts. Here let me give you some more water, I should be able to make it there with just a little water” said Joey.

“A well! That's just what we need! They sent me out for one. We are really running low on water. I left in the other direction of our village with no luck a couple weeks ago, but everyone else is too weak to go out all day,” exclaimed Barda as he accepted some of the water Joey had carried.

“How about you meet up with my crew and start setting up around the well. I will go tell your village about the well and where you're at. Can I have that tarp for when I get to your village? My crew should have mine for spare.”

“Yeah, sure. Good luck...uh, what's your name,”

“I’m Joey, and you?”

“Barda, have a safe journey”, said Barda waving a hand as he walked normally.

Joey arrived at the village and settled in. On arrival most villagers stayed away from Joey because he had Barda’s tarp. After he told one of the elders they were skeptical because Joey did not bring much water to show the condition of the well. A few villagers and Joey started planning a trip to the well. Joey helped out around the village and life there went on with a little more hope.

An unexpected visitor

“Joey would’ve told us to share the well. You know he doesn't think of the profit.”

“I guess you’re right, Sheryl.”

“We could use a hand, Alistair. Sheryl is carving the brand new bucket, and I’m repairing the top of the well. What are you doing?”

“Mike, I am looking out to make sure no one sees us tampering with the well.”

As the sun started to set, Sheryl and Mike finished making changes to the well. Alistair saw someone unknown walking towards the well. “Someone’s coming, and it's not Joey. Hide the well tampering tools,” said Alistair. Barda arrived at the well. After introducing themselves, Barda lowers his pail and woven basket of food scraps. Barda cranks up the old bucket, and there is only a thin film of water lining the base of the bin. “NOOOOOOOO!!!!” yells Barda in agony. “Let's all just get some rest. Maybe the well will work in the morning. Here you take Joey's tent,” said Mike. They sleep as light wind passes near the well.

Barda woke up in the morning feeling refreshed but still a little angry. He tried using the well a few times with no luck. Barda decided to return to the village. He returned with more water than he left with because of what Joey gave him. In his village Barda supported Joey's story about the well working well. After giving some water back and recollecting some resources Barda left his village and traveled away from the new well. In a couple of days, people from Barda's village arrived at the well. They saw that the well does not work and returned to their village. Joey gets kicked out of the village for the false hope of the well and returns to his village. Joey leaves the Cactus Crew. Alistair, Sheryl, and Mike are able to sell water to Barda's village for the foreseeable future. The well's functionality is still unknown to Barda's village. Joey's village gets wealthier as a result of this trade relationship, but Joey gains no personal benefit. Barda may die in the desert, but if he is lucky he might just find another miracle.