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TORT'S BITTER MARRIAGE

PAUPER AND BRAWLER were born and lived in a big city, well crowded with people. At last, Pauper became Tort's real first name for he kept too long in a very miserable condition. From his youth he was so poor that he went from one dustbin to another and he collected the crumbs of rotten food that which he ate, otherwise he would have died of hunger since his youth days. It was so he did for a number of years. His nickname was Shell-man while his surname was Tort which he inherited from his father. Being Shell-man's father was a great niggard in his time, the name 'Tort' was given to him (father) in respect of his niggardliness.

Pauper Tort was much lazy that he hardly had a very small farm which was at a little distance from the city. Although the farm did not yield good crops, Pauper got poor aids from some people of importance of the city being he was also a great sweet-talker. Pauper was also a great agitator whose agitation was so strong that it ruined hundreds of people who opposed the king of the city. But people hated him later for he talked and agitated to the point that the enemies besieged the city several times.

Furthermore, Brawler afterwards became the first name of Yanribo while Yanribo was her surname and her nickname was Beetle-lady. The name 'Brawler' was given to her in respect of her abnormal attitudes. She was the great brawler, obstinate and self-willed Beetle-lady who ever lived in the land during that century.

Then Tort, the Shell-man who was afterwards called 'Pauper' was a beautiful and handsome young man, though he was very miserable. Later, he married Yanribo, who was the great Brawler, and as a married woman, her nickname was changed from Beetle-lady to 'Beetle-woman.'

But of course, Pauper Tort, the Shell-man, was as beautiful as a zebra or peacock and his wife, the great Brawler was also as beautiful as a peacock. He was poor and also his abnormal characters were the talk of the city and also throughout the neighboring countries, cities and villages.

Pauper and his wife, Brawler the Beetle-woman, hardly got two children. They could have had more than those two but the poverty of

Pauper and the hot brawls of his wife hindered them from having more than that.

Although Pauper and Brawler hardly got two children, Pauper's nephew who was called Alaafia otherwise known as Peace and Brawler's niece who was called Ayo or Joy, lived with them for many years. But as time went on, Brawler's hot brawls tortured Peace and Joy much that at last when they could no longer tolerate the harmful effects of the brawls, they fled to one of the houses which were on the outskirts of the city, and there both of them lived peacefully and joyfully.

Yet, as for Brawler, the Beetle-woman, her everyday work was that it was hardly daybreak when she started to brawl hotly. And as she was chasing her husband about inside the house and from premises to the front of the house. Thus she did round their area till the midnight or till when she fell asleep suddenly in the night.

And further, to complete the testimony of Brawler, she brawled horribly also in her sleep and dreams. For all these her abnormal behaviors, she had no time at all to do any work that which could fetch her money. Worse still, all the other women in the city hated her extremely in respect of her horrible and continuous brawls.

But then the other people of the city remarked that only Pauper himself could live with Brawler, his wife, and that only Brawler herself could live with Pauper, her husband. Because their abnormal characters were absolutely the same.

Even the people remarked in proverb further that,—'Bottle' and 'Demijohn' are made from the same material—glass. Yet both hate each other and they scorn at each other. It was just the same for Pauper and his wife, the great Brawler. Pauper was a great talker and agitator who ever lived in the city and it was so for his wife, who was a great Brawler and who ever lived in the city! thus the people assessed them to be.

Pauper Tort, the Shell-man planted one cherry-tree in front of the little house in which he, his wife and children lived. Pauper's tree bore hundreds of cherries in a year and the cherries were of the best quality in the city.

Though Pauper Tort was a lazy farmer. He used to go and work on his little farm occasionally. He returned to the house some time in the evening with one very small yam because each of his yams was small as an egg.

But the worst of it was that each time the yam was put in the fire to roast. Brawler's continuous hot brawls and quarrel with her husband

would not allow her pay heed to the yam until when it would burn into ashes. Then she, her husband and their two children would not eat that night. It was so all of the family were living in great misery and quarrels.

But as time went on, and as their Creator saw their restless living. He was much sorry for them that one morning, He sent one of His messengers to them, to ask them the kind of help that which each of them wish Him to do for him or her.

Without hesitation, the messenger left for the city of Pauper and his wife. Then when he walked zigzag to their door, he stopped and knocked at the door first.

“Good morning to you all here!” the messenger greeted aloud.

“Good morning to you! Please come in!” Pauper replied with the voice of that of a pauper, as his wife was brawling hotly all about in the house.

“Yes, there is a very good message from the Creator for you and your wife, please!” the messenger entered and shouted cheerfully and politely as he stood in front of Pauper.

“A message from the Creator?” Pauper was shocked and moved back a bit.

“Certainly! A good message indeed!” the messenger confirmed.

“But who are you?” Pauper asked confusedly as his wife continued to brawl so hotly that her brawls did not allow her to pay heed to what her husband and the messenger were talking about.

“I am one of the Creator’s messengers!” the messenger introduced himself.

“Oh! Is that so! I see! But what the message is all about?” Pauper asked reluctantly with a pauper’s voice.

“Please ask your wife to come to us because the message concerns her as well!” the messenger said and hesitated.

“My Beetle-woman, the great Brawler, please come and listen to the Creator’s message!” Pauper shouted poorly on his wife.

“Yes, here I am! But what is the message?” Brawler continued brawling in front of the messenger and her husband.

“But by the way, what are you brawling hotly for, you a young Beetle-woman like this?” the messenger was astonished, and then he folded his arms and hesitated.

“You see, my husband is a nuisance entirely. He is too cunning! He is a pilferer and a great pauper of the time!” Brawler brawled hotly with absent mind.

“Is that all you are brawling for!” the messenger wondered.

“No! Not at all! He is my husband who I know as well as I know the money. He is a villain, an expert liar, deceiver and all sort of things that which I cannot remember now! And . . . and . . . and for all his abnormal bad characters, the other people of the city hate him!” the Brawler sighed and then she started brawling on another different matter entirely.

“Hmmm! That means you and your husband have the same abnormal bad characters. For you are accusing him of his abnormal bad characters and so also he too. So I take the two of you to be ‘the bottle’ and ‘the demijohn’ which are accusing of each other. The ‘bottle’ accuses ‘demijohn’ that it is made of glass and ‘demijohn’ too accuses ‘bottle’ that it is made of glass! But what is the difference between glass and glass?” the messenger explained in proverb to the Brawler.

“Yes, I admit that both ‘bottle’ and ‘demijohn’ are the family!” the Brawler brawled.

“Good of you! So since your husband is a great talker, agitator, cunning and villain and you as well is a great brawler who grumbles on everything which is on earth, therefore both of you are the family,” the messenger appeased the Brawler.

“All right, what do you wish the Creator to do for your husband, the Pauper?” the messenger asked calmly from the Brawler.

“Good! I wish the Creator to help me slay him!” the Brawler brawled mercilessly and then she was sullen as she was squinting at the messenger and her husband, the Pauper.

“Is that your self-will?” the messenger asked coolly.

“Exactly!” she confirmed hastily as her husband looked on speechlessly.

“Yes, Pauper, what do you wish the Creator to do for your wife, the great Brawler?” the messenger fastening his eyes on Pauper and asked politely.

“Though I am the greatest Pauper of this century and my wife’s brawls are the most peevish. And the only treasure which I have on earth is the cherry-tree which is in front of the house. I do not wish my Creator to slay or harm anyone on earth. But all I want is that I wish the Creator to give my voice a very effective command. So if a person touch my cherry-tree, and if I command that he be stuck on to the tree, he will stick on to it immediately. Please, the kind messenger, help me tell the Creator that, that is only such power of command that which

I wish Him to give my voice," Pauper requested carefully as his wife continued to brawl hotly about in the house.

"Well, your own wish and your wife's wish will be approved by the Creator as soon as I return to Him and deliver all to Him!" the messenger assured Pauper and his wife.

Then he walked zigzag to the outside and soon after, he disappeared suddenly with the strong whirlwind which rose from the sky to the ground at that moment.

Then the messenger told the Creator the kinds of helps that which Pauper and his wife, the Brawler, wanted from Him as soon as he returned to Him. And the Creator commanded: "Let their wish be as they wish!"

And in fact, immediately the Creator approved Pauper's wish and his wife's wish. There was a strong effective command in his voice. So effective that everything he commanded with his voice came to pass immediately. As for his wife's wish, the Creator agreed to send Death down to slay him for her.

But one morning, as Pauper was agitating bitterly about his wife's behaviors and his wife too was brawling hotly and both of them were chasing each other fiercely about in the house, and some time from premises to the front of their house. Death appeared suddenly in their house.

Without hesitation, Death shouted horribly on them:

"Eh! Let you stop there! This morning, you Pauper, for your wife's wish, I come to take your life away to the Creator!"

"Thank you, Death, I agree to slay me for my wife and I am ready to join my ancestors today! But I wish you to do me a favor first before you slay me!" Pauper said fearlessly.

"But what kind of favor do you wish me to do for you?" Death shouted impatiently as Brawler, his wife, was then tiptoeing and despising her husband round that spot.

"Thank you Death!" Pauper said and pointed hand to his cherry-tree, "Do you see that cherry-tree?"

"Yes, I see it in front of your house!" Death confirmed. "But make haste to surrender your life," Death shouted horribly as he fastened his eyes on the tree.

"Good. That cherry-tree is the only treasure which I have on earth. So I wish you to allow me pluck even one cherry from the tree and eat it first before you slay me for my wife!" Pauper begged Death as his wife chuckled with a brawl.

“Oh well. Your request is quite simple. But go now and pluck the fruit and eat it at once!” Death shouted.

Then Pauper took one nearby stool, he walked to his tree. He put the stool down at the foot of the tree and he climbed it (stool). Then he pretended to be outstretching himself so that his hand could reach one or two of the fruit. But when his hand could not reach the fruit. He begged Death whose arms were longer, to help him pluck it.

Fortunately the strong effective command of his voice induced Death much that he could not refuse, but he climbed the stool. But as Pauper stood at a few meters away from his cherry-tree and as soon as Death outstretched his right hand just to pluck the cherry. Pauper commanded aloud:

“Death, let the whole of you stick on to my cherry-tree!”

But to Death’s and the Brawler’s fear, Pauper hardly commanded when the body of Death was stuck on to the tree as when a bird was stuck on to a very strong birdlime.

Now Death was powerless and then he started to beg Pauper to command his cherry-tree to release him.

“No! But till when you swear that as from today and for ever, you will not kill neither a pauper nor a brawler!” Pauper shouted mercilessly.

“Well, to abide to your request, I, Death, therefore swear that henceforth and *for ever*, I shall not kill neither a pauper nor a brawler!” Death promised with fretfulness. “Or if I attempt to do so,” he continued, “Let the day change to night and let the darkness of the night swallow me up.”

Then Pauper commanded his cherry-tree to release Death and he was released at once. But he feared Pauper much this time that he disappeared suddenly without even thanking him.

But when Pauper’s wife saw that Death had failed to slay her husband for her. She collapsed and fainted for some minutes. Her husband however treated her till when she was conscious. But she was hardly conscious when she stood up and then she resumed her usual brawl.

But as she was brawling hotly at her husband thus her husband was agitating so deeply about his wife’s brawls that some hours later his wife started to bite him. But when he felt a sever pain, he ran to the outside of the house for his life. But when she followed him and continued to bite him. He started to run desperately to the outskirts of the city. But his wife was chasing him along to bite him again as she continued to

brawl loudly. After awhile, she chased him to the house in which Peace and Joy lived near the outskirt of the city.

Peace was the nephew of Pauper and Joy was the niece of Brawler. Both of them lived with Pauper and Brawler before for many years, but they left them with sadness. Because they could not live with a brawling or a quarrelsome or an austere person.

But when Brawler chased her husband, Pauper, fiercely to where Peace and Joy lived, she shouted for help:

“Please, Peace, help me bite my husband! Do, I beg you!”

“No! I am Peace and I do only peaceful things!” Peace declined to help.

“Please, Joy, help me bite my husband!” Brawler waved hands to Joy and begged impatiently.

“Not I! I do only joyful things!” Joy also protested.

Thus both Peace and Joy refused to help Brawler but they hastily entered the house in which they lived with only peaceful and joyful people.

Then after a few minutes, Brawler chased her husband fiercely to the extreme end of the outskirt of the city, where there was a big river. And without hesitation, Pauper jumped fearlessly into that river. But, Brawler having brawled a bit, she jumped fearlessly into that river as well. But as both of them were beating each other on the surface of the water, they were drowned suddenly.

But as they continued to beat each other at the bottom of the river, they were drowsy unnoticed. And within a few seconds, they found themselves standing awake together with Peace and Joy in front of a beautiful strange mighty building. The strange mighty building had no doors and windows or even an exit but except a very strange huge voice which was coming out from it. The voice was as strong as an echo.

At the same time this strong voice roared:

“Who are you standing there?”

“I am Pauper whose surname is Tort and nickname Shell-man while my first name is Pauper. And I am the husband of the great Brawler!” Pauper, introduced himself aloud to the invisible enquirer.

“Thank you, Pauper Tort, the Shell-man! But who is that woman standing there?” the invisible enquirer roared.

“I am Brawler whose surname is Yanribo and my nickname is Beetle-woman while my first name is Brawler!” Pauper’s wife, Brawler replied trembling.

“Yes, the third person?” roared the invisible enquirer.

“My name is Peace!” Peace replied peacefully!

“Yes, the fourth person?” boomed the invisible enquirer.

“My name is Joy!” Joy replied joyfully.

“Yes, I know the name of every one of you now!” said the invisible enquirer. “Now as from today and for ever,” continued the enquirer, “The four of you will exist everywhere on earth!” the enquirer roared further. “But Joy and Peace will not be in the family in which there is a brawl or quarrel. And so both of you will not live with a lazy person, or an idler or he who shirks work and nor he who has no perseverance!

“And I command again that as from henceforth and for ever, pauper (poverty) and brawler will never have peace and joy in their fold. But where pauper or poverty is present, brawler will be there with him. And where there is brawler, pauper (poverty) will be there with her. And so pauper and brawler will be chasing each other fiercely about forever. Now, I command the four of you to turn to four different kinds of spirits and be roaming about on earth. And let pauper (poverty) and brawler go into the minds of those who are weak in minds or who cannot control their minds or who have no strong determinations, to live in them and be influencing them. But let Peace and Joy go into the minds of those who are cheerful, thoughtful, passive, meek, patient and hard working people! Goodbye!” It was so the invisible enquirer, who was the Creator who sent his messenger and Death to Pauper and his wife, commanded the four of them and they turned to four different kinds of spirits which could not be felt if they were touched. Then the huge voice or invisible enquirer hardly stopped when the four spirits flew to all over the world.

So to these days, these four spirits still exist and so the brawls, quarrels, bloodshed, peevishness, etc. etc., are the enemies of Peace and Joy.