

A poor farmer, who had borrowed a hundred baskets of rice from a rich man, hoped that he would be able to pay him after the harvest, but there was very little rain that year, and the harvest was bad. When the rich man went to get his rice from the poor farmer, he found him sitting on a mat and looking very sad.

'Where is my rice?' said the rich man.

'I have none,' said the farmer. 'I am sorry, but I cannot pay you, and I have no wife or children who can work for you to pay the money. I can work for you, but I am often ill, so I cannot work well.'

The rich man knew that the farmer had a bad lung, and he thought, 'If he works for me, I shall have to pay a lot for his medicines,' So he said, 'Then give me all your furniture.'

'I have nothing except this mat,' said the poor farmer, so the rich man took the mat and went away.

The poor farmer went to the village temple and became a servant there. He cleaned the garden, sowed seeds and watered the trees and plants carefully every day, and for this he was given food to eat and clothes to wear.

He treated the trees so well that after a year a tree-god showed him where there was a vase full of gold under the roots of a tree, and the poor farmer became very rich.

When the man who had lent him the rice heard about this, he went to the judge and said, 'This man owes me a hundred baskets of rice, less the price of the mat which I got from him.'

The wise judge answered, 'By accepting the mat from the farmer, you finished that business. He owes you nothing now.'