

The old man awaited anxiously, nervously, as the time of dawn approached. "Will it arrive?" he thought to himself with a sense of fear that bordered on desperation. The old man was alone.

He was outcast by the others. "Shriveled one," they laughed. As in many societies, the elderly are oftentimes left to fend for themselves; those without living relatives, in any case. This was an extreme society in which self-first ruled completely. As soon as one became, well . . . let's say, not as productive as one was before, there was no more room.

The Sun was his only contact with the outside world -- that is, outside of his own limited territory which had been marked as his own. It was the standard around which his whole life revolved. Sometimes he felt the Sun was his only friend. It communicated to him. It gave him assurance and hope that life would go on. It gave him the light to see where he would get his next harvest of food. There were many forces behind it -- great powerful forces.

The Sun had always come faithfully before. He depended on it. But now, its arrival was in question.

There had been a terrible dispute with the "deliverers" the previous evening. Those bringers of warning had attempted to extract an undeserved portion of the old man's sustenance. It wasn't fair! He had given their alms! Now he was being asked to give again! How many more times would it happen? How much of his sustenance would they draw?

Curses promulgated from the mouths of these harbingers of doom. At one point it seemed violence was inevitable, but the deliverers departed with one final curse: "The Sun will no longer give its blessing and light upon you! You will live the remainder of your life in darkness, unless you pay your alms!"

It was a terrible thing to say. What made the matter worse -- the old man believed the deliverers were able to accomplish such a feat! "They can stop the Sun!" the old man trembled. "Without its presence, I will wither and die!"

Throughout the night, he kept vigil. Watching for any sign which might indicate unusual activity. He quaked with fear. With a blanket over his shoulders, he rocked himself back and forth to stay awake. He kept a humble fire burning all night. The question of life itself wearied upon his mind.

Would it arrive?

Several times during the night, he was disturbed by what turned out to be false alarms. Unexplained noises, movements in the distance taxed his aging senses. Sometimes just his heightened imagination resulted in the arousal of his anxiety.

It was such a horrible ordeal, and yet, he was willing to endure it on the principle of not paying alms for the same service twice. He would not -- no -- could not pay again! If he yielded this time, it would get worse. The agreement had been made with the providers. He had kept his part of the bargain. The deliverers who were sent to receive the alms had not kept close records of collection -- or they were skimming off the excess they received by collecting from him multiple times.

The darkness seemed to endure longer than usual. As dawn grew near, a heavy fog settled in, obscuring his view.

Then, there was the sound of approaching footsteps. An occasional "thump" was heard at various intervals. The sound became louder with each passing moment. He cowered in a corner, still looking intently outside his place of shelter to see whether it would arrive.

And then, in a moment of fury, the fog parted long enough to reveal a cylindrical object being hurled at his dwelling.

"Aaaaaaaaaghh!" he screamed, and hid his face. It landed with the same loud "thump" he had heard intermittently in the minutes before. Then there was silence.

Slowly gaining courage, he looked out from his hiding place.

It had arrived!

The old man was overjoyed! The deliverers had either recanted on their threats, or re-counted their collection tickets. The providers of The Daily Sun had come through! The morning paper had arrived!