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KAHLIL GIBRAN

THE TWO HERMITS

Upon a lonely mountain, there lived two hermits who worshipped God and loved one another.

Now these two hermits had one earthen bowl, and this was their only possession.

One day an evil spirit entered into the heart of the older hermit and he came to the younger and said, “It is long that we have lived together. The time has come for us to part. Let us divide our possessions.”

Then the younger hermit was saddened and he said, “It grieves me, Brother, that thou shouldst leave me. But if thou must needs go, so be it,” and he brought the earthen bowl and gave it to him saying, “We cannot divide it, Brother, let it be thine.”

Then the older hermit said, “Charity I will not accept. I will take nothing but mine own. It must be divided.”

And the younger one said, “If the bowl be broken, of what use would it be to thee or to me? If it be thy pleasure let us rather cast a lot.”

But the older hermit said again, “I will have but justice and mine own, and I will not trust justice and mine own to vain chance. The bowl must be divided.”

Then the younger hermit could reason no further and he said, “If it be indeed thy will, and if even so thou wouldst have it let us now break the bowl.”

But the face of the older hermit grew exceedingly dark, and he cried, “O thou cursed coward, thou wouldst not fight.”