



# The First Well

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There once was a small kingdom around a lake. One very hot summer, it did not rain and the lake dried up. People grew anxious, and went to the king. "It has not rained for so long. Our fields are barren!" said the farmers. "There's no fish to catch. How shall we earn a living?" asked the fishermen. "Save us from disaster, good king," urged the women and the children cried with thirst.

The king sent his four generals, to search for water in all directions. The first general went east, towards the sunrise, the second to the south, to dust and heat, the third went west, where the sun sets, and the fourth followed the North Star.

They searched day and night, night and day, high and low. They searched everywhere, but in vain. Three of the generals returned, empty-handed. But the general who had gone north, determined not to fail his king, finally reached a cold mountain village.

As he sat at the foot of the mountain, an old woman came by and sat next to him. The general pointed at the horizon and said, "I belong to a beautiful kingdom, where it has not rained for a whole year. Can you help me find water?"





The woman asked the general to follow her up the mountain and into a cave. “We have no water in our country either,” she said. Then, pointing to the icicles in the cave, she continued, “We call this ice. Take some, and your kingdom will never go thirsty again.” The general broke off a huge piece, loaded it into his horse-cart and rushed back home.

By the time he reached the court, the enormous icicle had melted into a small lump of ice. Nobody in the court had ever seen ice, so everybody gazed at it with wonder! “This must be a water-seed,” one of the ministers exclaimed suddenly. The king ordered the water-seed to be sowed immediately.

While the farmers dug a hole in the ground, the lump grew even smaller in the sun. They swiftly placed the seed in the hole, but, before they could cover it, it had vanished. The farmers got confused and worried. They dug the earth deeper and deeper, into the night, looking for the mysterious seed.

At the break of dawn, the king found the farmers fast asleep around the hole. Curiously, he peeped in and cried out in amazement, “Wake up, my worthy men, the water-seed has sprouted! There’s water in the hole!” This is how the first well was created.

THE END

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