

- Summary of The Snake and The Mirror

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The story "The Snake and The Mirror" by Vaikom Mohammad Basheer narrates the experience of a young doctor who has just started his medical practice. He lives in a small, rented outhouse with no electricity and infested with rats. One hot summer night, after dining at a restaurant, he returns home, lights a kerosene lamp, and begins to read a medical book. While sitting in front of a large mirror, he admires his own reflection and daydreams about his future, including his marriage plans.

Suddenly, he becomes aware of a dangerous cobra that has silently entered the room and coiled around his arm. Frozen with fear, he contemplates the medicines he has and reflects on his arrogance and pride. In this moment of vulnerability, he realizes his human limitations and acknowledges the presence of God. This humility pleases God, and the snake leaves him unharmed, resting instead on the table. The next morning, the doctor finds that all his belongings have been stolen except for his dirty vest, which was too filthy even for the thief.

The story conveys the moral that pride and arrogance are dangerous, and one should remain humble, recognizing that all possessions and successes are gifts from God. The doctor's acceptance of his true worth leads to his salvation.

Key Elements

- **Setting:** A small, rented outhouse with no electricity, infested with rats.
- **Main Character:** A young doctor who has just started his practice.

- **Plot:** The doctor's encounter with a cobra and his subsequent realization of humility.
- **Moral:** Pride leads to downfall; humility and recognition of divine support bring safety.

Important Vocabulary

- **Commenced:** Started or began something.
- **Outhouse:** A small separate building used for living or storage.
- **Gables:** Triangular portions of a wall between the edges of a sloping roof.
- **Scampering:** Moving quickly and playfully, often used for small animals.
- **Wriggled:** Moved by twisting and turning the body.
- **Coiled:** Wrapped around in a circular or spiral form.
- **Benign:** Kind and gentle; here, referring to divine support.
- **Pilfered:** Stolen in small amounts or taken without permission.

Practice Set

Level 1 – Easy

- Who is the main character in the story?
- Where does the doctor live?
- What does the doctor do when he returns home?

Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe the doctor's thoughts while looking into the mirror.
- What causes the doctor to realize his arrogance?
- Explain the significance of the snake leaving the doctor unharmed.

Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the theme of humility in the story with examples.
- Discuss how the setting contributes to the mood of the story.
- Explain the symbolism of the snake in the narrative.

Answer Key

Level 1 – Easy

- The main character is a young doctor who has just started his practice.
- The doctor lives in a small rented outhouse with no electricity.
- He lights a kerosene lamp, takes off his coat and shirt, opens the windows, and reads a medical book.

Level 2 – Moderate

- The doctor admires his looks and smiles, daydreaming about marrying a rich doctor's wife who would not chase him.
- The sudden presence of the dangerous cobra and the fear of death make him realize his arrogance and pride.
- The snake leaving unharmed symbolizes divine forgiveness and the power of humility.

Level 3 – Challenging

- The story teaches that pride can be dangerous and that recognizing one's limitations and dependence on God leads to safety and peace.
- The small, dark, and rat-infested outhouse creates a tense and fearful atmosphere, enhancing the suspense.
- The snake symbolizes danger, fear, and divine intervention, representing the consequences of pride and the mercy of God.

Quick Reference

- **Author:** Vaikom Mohammad Basheer
- **Theme:** Pride vs. Humility
- **Setting:** Small rented outhouse
- **Main Character:** Young doctor

- **Key Event:** Encounter with a cobra
- **Moral:** Humility saves; pride endangers

Glossary

- **Commenced:** To begin or start.
- **Outhouse:** A small separate building.
- **Gables:** Triangular wall sections under a roof.
- **Scampering:** Quick, playful movement.
- **Wriggled:** Twisting movement.
- **Coiled:** Wrapped in loops.
- **Benign:** Kind and gentle.
- **Pilfered:** Stolen in small amounts.

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