

READER 1: Once upon a time in the fruit growing Okanagan area of British Columbia, there lived an old woman whose name was Misery.

READER 2: She was called Misery because she had lived a long miserable life of disappointments, broken promises, and shattered dreams.

READER 3: Poor old Misery lived in a tiny rundown shack with her old brown dog.

READER 4: Very few people came to call on the old lady, but when they did come a tap-tap-tapping at her door, Misery always called out,

5/MISERY: "GO ON HOME AND LET ME BE. STAY AWAY FROM MISERY!"

READER 6: This they did, and Misery felt more miserable than ever.

READER 2: The old woman owned one prized possession. It was a magnificent apple tree which she had planted in her childhood. The tree grew, blossomed, and bore fruit behind her shack.

READER 4: But even the tree gave her more pain than pleasure, because when its fruit was ripe, all the children from the nearby township came running to Misery's shack and tap-tap-tapped at her door.

READER 6: The children hoped to be given some of the delicious apples but, as usual, Misery called out,

5/MISERY: "GO ON HOME AND LET ME BE. STAY AWAY FROM MISERY!"

READER 1: And when the children heard this, they just ran around the shack and helped themselves! This, of course, made Misery more miserable still.

READER 3: Now, as the story is told, one day Misery heard a tap-tap-tapping at her door and, as usual, called out,

5/MISERY: "GO ON HOME AND LET ME BE. STAY AWAY FROM MISERY!"

READER 2: But the tapping continued.

READER 4: Finally Misery opened the door (just a crack) and there she saw an old man with a long white beard kneeling on her doorstep and begging for food.

READER 6: Well, Misery had lived a long miserable life, but she felt sorry for the old man who looked even more miserable than she. And so she shared her crusts of bread, bits of cheese, and red juicy apples with him.

READER 1: When the old man had eaten his fill, he said,

3/OLD MAN: "Because you have been so kind to me, I have the power to grant you one wish. What will it be?"

READER 2: Misery had to think about that. She had lived a long miserable life and was beyond a desire for earthly possessions.