

# CHOPSTICKS

(A Vietnamese folktale)



Once there was an old man who lived with his three young sons in a small village in Vietnam. Though they all loved each other very much, the boys seemed to always be fighting and quarreling.

One day the father called them to him. "My sons," he said, "I want each of you to bring me a chopstick."

"Yes, Father," they said, and each ran to get a chopstick.

When they stood before him again, he said to his oldest son, Ta, "Can you break your chopstick?"

"Yes, Father. That's easy." He





snapped his chopstick in two.

The father asked his middle son, Hai, "Can you break your chopstick?"

"Yes, Father. That's easy." Hai snapped his chopstick in two.

"Can you break your chopstick?" the father asked his youngest son, Thu.

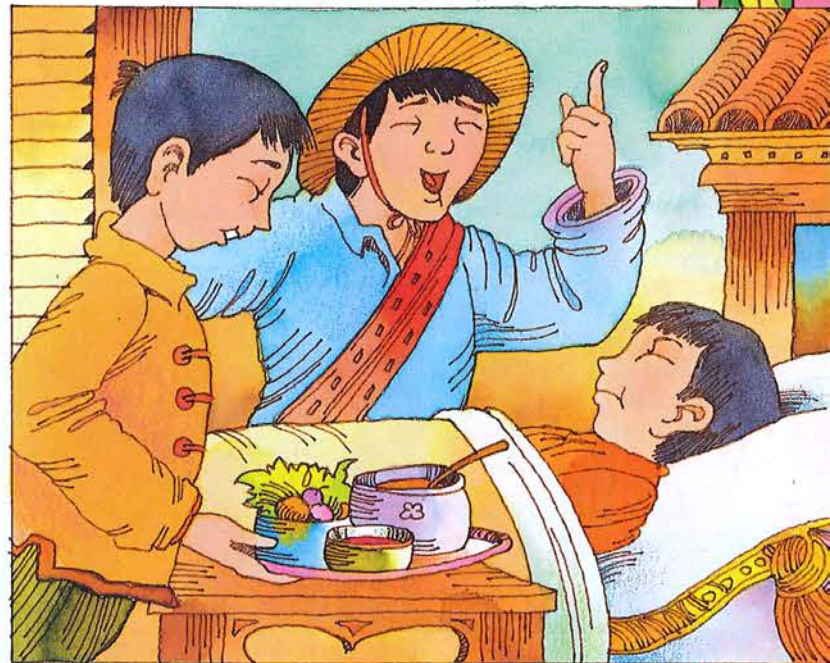
*He commanded them that . . . they should look forward with one eye, having . . . their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another (Mosiah 18:21).*

father.

Thu tried as hard as he could, but he could not break the three together. Hai also tried, but he couldn't break them.

Ta, being the oldest, thought he might break the three, but try as he would, he could not do it.

"I hope you have learned from the



"Yes, Father. That's easy." It was harder for him, but he was able to break his chopstick in two.

"Now," the father said to his youngest son, "bring me three unbroken chopsticks."

Thu ran to get them.

"When you hold them together, can you break them?" asked the

chopsticks," said their father.

One day soon after that, Thu was taking his new ball to a friend's house to play. At the end of his street, a bully, much bigger than Thu, jumped out and took the ball away from him.

"Please give it back," Thu begged. But the bully would not. Thu



went home and told his brothers what had happened.

Ta and Hai looked at each other. "Chopsticks?" they said, and they went to find the bully. "What are you doing with our brother's ball?" they asked.

"Aw, I just borrowed it," said the bully, looking nervously at the brothers. He gave it back at once and didn't borrow it again.

Some time later, Hai got sick and had to stay in bed for a while. He became cross and restless. "My

sons," said the father. "Have you noticed that Hai is getting very tired of having to stay in bed day and night? I wonder what can be done about that."

"Chopsticks," said Ta and Thu, and they began bringing things to their brother and entertaining him while he was sick. Soon he was feeling much better.

Years passed, and the boys had grown into fine young men. Each had a farm and a family of his own.

One spring a terrible rain lasted so long that the river flooded. Hai and Thu lived on high ground, but Ta lived near the river, and his entire rice field was swept away by the flood.

Hai and Thu got together to talk about their brother's loss.

"Chopsticks?" asked Hai.

"Chopsticks," answered Thu. And until the next rice harvest, a bag of rice appeared on Ta's doorstep every week so that he and his family never went hungry.

When the old father, who was very old by this time, heard of it, he was sitting in front of his house in the sun. "Chopsticks," he said, and he smiled a very happy smile.

