

## Shrewd Doctor

Long, long ago, there lived a landowner in a village with his wife and a son. The man had his own house, fields and mountains, which he'd taken over from his father.

His wife gave birth to their second son. But after the birth, she was doing badly and soon died. The man felt so sad, and he was deeply concerned about the newborn baby. If he had died, the older son would succeed to all his property because he had the right of primogeniture.



He wanted to leave some to his baby son. If he'd had more fields and mountains, his little son would be able to get his property as equally as the older son would, he thought. He was rich indeed nevertheless he never idled. He worked hard from morning till night every day.

Years passed. By the time the second son became 18, the man owned more property. Now he had two houses, four fields, five horses and six mountains. He thought he had enough property to leave to his two sons. But the fact was that he was getting older year after year, and his energy had flagged considerably. He drew up a will in case he would go to another world by any chance. In the will he wanted to leave all he had to his two sons equally. Actually he wrote down his will like this:

Dear sons,  
I am getting old. I will die some day near future. I hope you two will help and get along well with each other forever. As you know I've been treating you equally with love. You both should divide my property quite equally. Never fight over the inheritance.”

When he finished writing the will, he felt relieved. A few days later, while he rode on horseback around his field, he fell from it and hit his back badly. Since then he had been in bed. His sons were worried about the bedridden father, and took good care of him. They thought their father would recover, but soon he passed away.

At that time the two didn't notice that their father left his will. So the older son believed he could succeed to all of his father's property. But one day when he cleaned his late father's bedroom, he found a letter. He could easily identify that it was his father's handwriting, the will. He respected his father so much that he decided to follow the will. He showed it to his brother, and said,

“I want to follow our father's will. You don't object to succeed half of our father's property, do you?”

Of course there was no objection at all. They tried to divide the fortune: two houses, four fields, five horses, and six mountains quite equally.

“So I will get this house, two fields, three horses and three mountains,” the older brother declared his share.

“Wait, Brother. You are going to get three horses? That means only two are mine. The will says we should have his property equally. We'd better sell one of the horses and divide the money into two,” the younger brother persuaded the other. But the elder brother didn't agree,

“I don't want to sell or kill any of them. We have to find a good solution.” They thought and thought and discussed it all night, and the next day, and the following night. They felt they came to a deadlock.

At last they decided to get some advice from the doctor, who lived in the neighboring town, because people believed he was the wisest man around there. And it was the doctor who was attended their father's deathbed,

They said to him,

“Doctor, we have a problem. After our father's death, we found his will. It says we both inherit his fortune equally. But we can't divide five horses into two equally. What should we do?”

The doctor seemed to think deeply for a while, and then said to them,

“Well, it surely is a difficult problem to solve. But I finally hit on a good idea. Did you say you have five horses? Luckily I have a horse of my own to go to see my patients. Five and one makes six, right? What's six into three?”

“Two,” the two answered unanimously.

“Right. Each of us can get two horses equally. It's a good solution, isn't it?”

The two brothers were glad to get the reasonable solution from him. They thought, as people were saying, the doctor was the wisest man around there. They never doubted they were eventually going to pay him for the additional doctor's fee—a horse. (2005.6.1. With Itaya)

## 抜け目のない医者

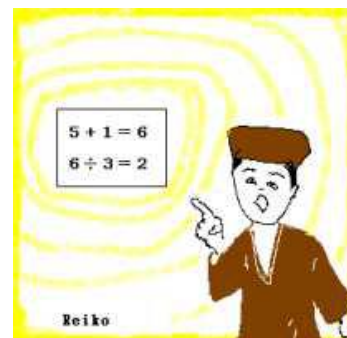
むかし、むかし、ある村に地主さん夫妻が一人息子と暮らしていました。地主さんには、先代から引き継いだ家、田畑、山がありました。

次男も生まれました。ところが妻は、産後の肥立ちが悪く、まもなく亡くなってしまいました。

地主さんの悲しみは計り知れません。生まれたばかりの赤子をとてもおしく思いました。自分が死ねば、長男が家長になり、全ての財産を継ぐことになります。

地主さんは、次男にも幾らかの財産を残してやりたいと思いました。田畑と山がもっとあれば、幼い次男にも長男と同じくらいの財産を残してあげられると思いました。地主さんはお金持ちではありましたが、怠け者ではありませんでした。毎日朝から晩まで懸命に働きました。

年月が過ぎ、次男が十八を迎える頃には、地主さんの財産は大分増えていました。家が二軒、田畑が4面、馬が五頭、山が六つになりました。二人の息子に残すには十分な財産と思いました。地主さんは歳を取り、体力もかなり衰えてきました。いつあの世に行ってもいいように遺言を書いておくことにしました。遺言には、自分の財産が均等に二人の息子に渡るよう書き記したのです。地主さんの遺言は、こんなふうでした。



息子たちへ

私は年老いて、もう長くはない。お前たち二人は、終生、共に助け合い仲良くやっていくように。私はお前たちを分け隔てなく育ててきたつもりだ。財産は二人で均等に分けること。相続争いは決しておこさぬこと。

父より

遺言を書き終えて、地主さんはほっとしました。それから数日たった時のことです。馬に乗って田畑の見回りをしていた時、落馬して、腰をひどく打ってしまいました。それからと言うもの、地主さんは床（とこ）についてしまいました。二人の息子は、寝たきりの父を案じ、手厚く看病しました。父は治ると思っていたのに、とうとう亡くなってしまいました。

二人の息子は父が遺言を残していたとは、その時は気づきませんでした。長男は、父の財産は全て自分が引き継ぐものと思っていました。ところが、ある日のことです。亡き父の寝室の後片付けをしていると、一通の文（ふみ）が出てきました。長男には、それが父の直筆で、遺言であることがすぐにわかりました。長男は、父をいたく尊敬しておりましたので、父の遺言に従うことにしました。弟に遺言を見せて、こう言いました。

「自分は父の遺言に従って、お前に財産の半分を譲ることにするが、異論はないだろうな。」  
異論があるはずはありません。兄弟は財産を均等に分けることにしました。家二軒、畑4面、馬五頭、山六つです。

「自分は、この家と畑2面と馬三頭と山三つもらうことにする。」と兄が自分の取り分を宣言しました。「でも兄さん、馬三頭と言うことは、二頭だけが自分のものだよ。遺言では、均等に分けること、となっているよ。一頭は売ってお金で分けようよ。」弟は兄に持ちかけました。でも兄は賛成しませんでした。

「自分は、馬一頭たりとも売ったり殺したりしたくない。何かいい解決策があるはずだ。」

二人は、一晩中、考えに考えて話し合いました。そして次の日も、また次の晩も。二人は行き詰まっ  
てしまいました。

兄弟は、この限界で賢いと誉れ高い、隣り町の医者に助言を求めることにしました。父の今際（いまわ）の床に立ち会った医者でもありました。

「先生、一つ困ったことが起きました。父が亡くなってから、遺言が出てきました。兄弟で財産を等しく分けよ、と言うものです。でも馬五頭を二人で等しく分けるなんて出来っこありません。どうしたら良いものでしょう。」

医者はしばし考えにふけているようでした。そして二人に言いました。

「うん、なるほど、いささか難しい問題じゃな。でも私に名案がある。馬五頭と申したな。幸い、私の所に、患者の往診で使う馬が一頭おる。5たす1は6じゃ。6は3で割ると幾つじゃ。」

「2です。」二人は声をそろえて答えました。

「その通りじゃ。この三人で馬を二頭ずつ等しく分けることができる。いい考えじゃろ。」

兄弟は、町医者から見事な解決策を得られて満足です。さすが、この限界で賢いと誉れ高い名医、と思いました。結果的に、医者に余分な謝礼、馬一頭を払うことになっているなんて疑ってもみませんでした。(Kudo)