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The statues with straw hats (English)

Once upon a time, there was an elderly couple who lived in a small village in the middle of the mountains. They were rather poor, but they made their living weaving straw hats by hand, and selling them in the city nearby. For food, they ate the few vegetables that they grew in their orchard. It was a simple life, but a happy life.

The last day of the year arrived, and they had nothing to celebrate it with. The man had decided he would go to the city and sell the six hats he had woven that week. That way, they would be able to buy some groceries to prepare a special dinner for New Year's Eve.

Now, it was the mid-winter. The wind had started to blow, and a snowstorm had arrived. The man managed to reach the city but once he got there, he realised nobody paid him any attention. All the people were too busy doing last-minute shopping, and running around. In fact, they were so busy that none of them stopped to look at his straw hats.

After hours and hours without selling a single hat, he decided it was time to return home. The snow was starting to fall heavier and faster, and he wanted to get there on time to spend New Year's Eve with his wife. On his way home, he found six statues of Jizō, their heads capped with snow. How sad, he thought to himself. He couldn't just

leave them like that, so he decided to put his unsold straw hats on the head of each statue. It wasn't much, but he hoped at least it would give them protection from the wintery weather. With a smile, he said goodbye, and continued on his way home, fighting against the snow as he walked.

After the long walk home, he told his wife about what he had done with the hats. She wasn't mad at all that he hadn't sold them. Instead, she smiled, and told him he had done the right thing, putting them on the statues. She said how proud of him she was.

Unfortunately because they hadn't sold any hats, they had their usual vegetable soup for dinner that evening instead of a grand special meal, and then it was time for bed. However, while they were fast asleep, there was a sound outside, and it woke them up. It was the sound of someone stepping through the snow, approaching the house. They heard voices asking, "Is this where the man with the straw hats lives?" The elderly couple got up and went to the front door, feeling frightened. They opened it slowly to see who was speaking. But at their feet in front of their door, they found several baskets bursting with rice, vegetables, fish, cereals and other groceries. They couldn't think who might have brought them all of these things, but when they looked into the distance, they saw the shapes of the six statues, each wearing a straw hat.

That is when the elderly couple understood that the statues wanted to say thank you. The man had been generous in giving them the hats to protect them from the snow, when no one else had even realised they were there. And in return, they wanted to repay his generosity.

And that is how the elderly couple with their straw hats lived happily ever after.