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Ben's wishes

I have an uncle who writes books for children. I didn't see my uncle very often when I was a child because he lived in Africa, but he came to see us sometimes. When he did visit us, he usually told me one of his stories. I loved them all but 'Ben's wishes' was my favourite. My uncle told it to me one winter when it was very cold outside. I was about ten, I think.



A boy called Ben had two older brothers. The older boys often felt hungry and often got angry because they were so poor.

'Go and work in the fields,' they said to Ben early each morning. 'Then bring home some vegetables and make an enormous bowl of soup for our dinner.'

Ben always answered in the same way. 'But I want to go to school and learn all about the world.'

Ben's unkind brothers just laughed and said, 'Don't be silly! You aren't clever enough to go to school like us.' So Ben didn't go anywhere. He just worked in the fields in the rain, digging and planting and planting and digging.



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One really cold morning, Ben was planting some onions when he saw an old silver cup on the ground. He picked it up, sat down under a tree and cleaned it with his scarf. Then, very carefully, he put it down on the grass next to his rucksack.



Ben was tired and hungry but he only had five little olives to eat. He looked at the cup and said, 'I'm so lucky to have these olives, but I'd like a lovely warm drink, too.'

Suddenly, the silver cup was full of hot chocolate. Ben was very surprised. He drank it all, but he still felt cold. He looked down at his old jacket and at the cup again and said, 'I'm so lucky to have a jacket, but there are hundreds of holes in it. I wish ... I wish ... I could have a new coat.'

A wonderful coat made of wool suddenly appeared from somewhere in the sky. Now Ben was really surprised. He put it on. It felt soft and warm.

