

**Bone Button Borscht: A Play adapted from the book by Aubrey Davis,  
illustrated by Dusan Petricic**

**Cast: Beggar  
Narrator  
Shamas (synagogue caretaker)  
Mendel**

**Leah**

**Props: Small table, yarn, small torah, menorah, pot, large spoon, plastic knife, cutting board, garlic clove, carrots, 2 heads of cabbage, coat, buttons, beard, kerchief**

**Set up and Pre-Play arrangements.** Small brown lunch bags have been passed out to every family. Some bags contain several vegetables. Some contain just one, and other bags are empty. (Vivian will explain the bags and encourage everyone to share, prior to the beginning of the story.) Tri-fold poster boards-perhaps with doorknobs drawn on them stand erect, scattered across stage area. A line of gold yarn/duct tape leads to a table, set off on the side, that contains a Torah and menorah(The synagogue)

**Narrator**-(appears to be reading from a book). Our story takes place long ago in a small town in Eastern Europe. One day a poor man , a beggar walked into the town looking for some food to eat. Hungry as the man was, no one in town would feed him. This town did not believe in feeding the hungry. Fortunately, thanks to the beggar, these mean, selfish townspeople would soon be changing their ways.

**Beggar**-Oy, it's so cold and snowy out. I can't wait to get to the next town. I wonder who will invite me to their house for something to eat? There is nothing like being a beggar. Such good it brings out in people. They see poor little old me, hobbling down the street, and they rush to help me. They share. They give. And me? I get a little something too. It's perfect. Tonight, I hope I'll be invited into a home with a blazing fireplace and a table laden with bowls of beautiful red borscht. Do you know what Borscht is? It's a delicious beet soup, It tastes so yummy, so heavenly, especially when it's accompanied by noodle pudding, roast chicken,and fruit and nuts....

Ah, hah, here's the town. But why are these houses all so dark? Where are the people. Let me just knock on a door and see who's here. (He knocks) Please, a

little food for a poor starving beggar? HMM..no answer? Ok , I'll try another house.

*(knocks on tri-fold poster board)* Please help me. I'm hungry and cold.

**Mendel:** *(calls from behind the board)* Go away

**Beggar:** Just let me in for a few minutes ,even.

**Mendel:** No go away

**Beggar:** *(Knocks again at a different door/ tri-fold poster-A head peeks out for a second and then disappears)*-Hmm I think there's someone in there, but they're pretending they're not home.

What is wrong with these people?

Ah,ha, here's a trail of light. Let me follow it and see where it goes. Oh ,good it's a synagogue. Thank God for synagogues. And look there's the shamas, the good fellow who takes care of the synagogue *(shamas stands with a broom, sweeping)*

Shalom Aleichem, peace be with you! *(Shamas frowns and sweeps more vigorously)*

Hmm. You don't talk either –What's with this place?

Wait , I have an idea. *(He pulls off the buttons on his coat).* That's one button, 2 buttons, 3 buttons, 4...  
Oy, if only I had one more button.  
*(repeats a little louder)* OY, IF ONLY I HAD ONE MORE BUTTON!

**Shamas:** Look mister, I won't give you a button. Nobody in this town will give you a button.

**Beggar:** Why not?

**Shamas:** Because we're poor , Mr. Beggar. We don't give to each other any more, and we certainly wouldn't give to a beggar. We don't even know you. Why do you need a button anyways?

**Beggar:** Why? Because with one more button I could make us a soup. I could make a nice hot borscht.

**Shamas:** That's ridiculous! Impossible! Nobody makes soup from buttons.

**Beggar:** Mr. Shamas, I'm shocked . Haven't you ever heard of Bon Button Borscht?

**Shamas:** Bone Button Borscht.?

**Beggar:** Let me explain. These buttons in my hand are very special. With just one more button from you, I can make Bone Button Borscht for the whole town. I can make you a miracle Mr. Shamas

**Shamas:** This I have to see. All right! I'll get the button.

**Beggar:** Wait, I'll need bowls and cups, and a knife and a ladle and a spoon. Oh and a pot maybe?

**Shamas** knocks on a door: Leah, Leah, give me a bone button!

**Leah:** No! Go away!

**Shamas:** No , Leah , you don't understand. The button isn't for me. It's for the poor beggar in the synagogue. He's going to make a miracle.

**Leah:** With my bone button? What's he going to do. Teach it to sing, maybe?

**Shamas:** No, Leah. He needs it for borscht. He's going to make beet soup from buttons.

**Leah:** That's impossible. You can't make soup from buttons.

**Shamas:** Listen, Leah. Give me the button. What's it going to hurt? Maybe we'll have a miracle.

**Leah:** All right. I'll give you the button. But I want to come too. And I'm bringing my family with me. I want them all to see this miracle.

**Narrator:** So Leah, and the shamas marched down the street. They banged on doors. They begged and they borrowed -cups and bowls, a ladle, a knife, and a huge soup pot. Along with all these things the crowd grew. *(Leah and the Shamas walk amongst the audience, gathering pots, spoons, bowls, and asking the children and families if they'd like to come with them)*

By the time the shamas reached the synagogue the whole town was with him..

**Beggar:** “Shalom Aleichem! Peace be with you

**Narrator:** There was a long silence.

**Shamas:** So , Mr. Miracle Man! Make us a miracle!

**Beggar:** You want a miracle ? I'll give you a miracle. Pot (*townsperson brings forth a pot*) Water (*Townsperson pours water in*)

Button. (*The beggar drops in all the buttons, saying Plunk! Plunk! Plunk as they land in the pot*

*Beggar stirs and tastes.*)

**Beggar:** Not bad. But it could be better.

**Leah :**What could make it better?

**Beggar:** A little sugar, a little salt, a little pepper. That could make it better.

**Narrator:** So a few people ran home and returned with what the beggar asked for. (*Mendel and Leah pretend to sprinkle items into the pot*)

**Beggar;** (*Tastes soup.*) Not bad? But it could be better

**Shamas:** You've got problems, Mr. Beggar. Wait, (*fishes out a garlic bulb from his pocket*) Would this help?

**Beggar:** Why not?

**Mendel:** Mr. Beggar. I've got some carrots

**Leah:** I've got onions.

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**Narrator:** So the people ran off and returned with their arms full of vegetables. (*Cast of townspeople run into audience collecting vegetables and bringing them back to the beggar.*) The beggar sliced each vegetable. He diced. He chopped. He shredded. Then he dumped them into the bubbling pot.

**Beggar**( *pretends to slice and chop. Then stirs pot and takes a sip*) Do you know what we have here? We have a beautiful soup, that's what we have. A very tasty borscht. Now some people say a little bit of cabbage really brings out the flavor. But I say keep it simple. Who needs cabbage for borscht?

**Leah:** Mr. Beggar, You want cabbage? I've got cabbage, Mr. Beggar.

*(She hands him 2 cabbages. )*

**Narrator:** The people watched the steam rise from the pot. They listened to the bubbling borscht. They smelled the rich sweet and sour aroma as it filled the synagogue. Bellies rumbled. Mouths watered. And everyone pressed in closer. Then , finally, the beggar ladled some borscht into a cup. It was deep red and thick with vegetables. He blew on it. He blessed it. Then he dipped in his spoon and he tasted it

**Beggar:***( putting spoon in his mouth)* Slurp, slurp

**Shamas:** So , Mr. Beggar? How does it taste?

**Beggar:** *(smiles)* Not bad. Who wants to try some?

*(Townspeople crowd around beggar. They pick up and pass around bowls, and begin chanting)* Borscht, Borscht, Borscht.

*(Townspeople eat)*

**Leah:** Delicious!

**Shamas:** Perfectly delicious

**Mendel:** This is the best borscht we have ever tasted The little Beggar did it! He made Borscht out of buttons. It's a miracle!

**Narrator:** Then, like magic, bread appeared and boiled potatoes and roast chicken and wine. The people ate and they laughed. They laughed and they ate. They brought out accordions and violins, and they sang and they danced for hour after delightful hour.*( Townspeople gather in a circle and dance)* And when the last slurp of borscht was slurped, the last dance danced, and the last song sung, the shamas invited the beggar to spend the night at his house.

**Shamas:** Come, Mr. Beggar, come to my house for the night.

**Beggar:** No, no, I don't want to bother you. I'll just sleep right here on the synagogue floor.

**Shamas:** Nonsense, Come to my house, I'll give you a nice soft, warm bed. Come it will be my pleasure. *(Shamas drapes his arm around the beggar and they walk off together.)*

**Narrator:** The next night another family took the beggar in. Then another and another. The beggar always had a warm, comfy home to sleep in. One day the beggar gathered the townsfolk together to say good-bye.

**Leah:** Please don't go.

**Beggar:** I must.

**Mendel:** But your buttons! How can we make borscht without your magic bone buttons.

**Beggar:** How can I keep warm without buttons?

**Shamas:** Let's trade. We'll give you brass buttons for bone buttons. *(Fastens on gold buttons to the beggar's coat)*

**Beggar:** Thank You and Good-bye. *(Shakes hands/and or hugs townspeople. Waves as he exits)*

**Narrator:** The years passed. One by one the beggar's bone buttons were lost. But it is a strange thing, a wonder, perhaps. The townsfolk learned they didn't really need the buttons. They learned to make borscht without them. And they learned to help one another without borscht *(Mendel falls down, and the Shamas rushes to help him up. Someone stands as if shivering in the cold and Leah comes and wraps a blanket around him and hands him a bowl of soup)* They helped one another even in hard times. That was the real miracle the beggar left behind. *(All townspeople put their arms around one another and sing Hiney Ma Tov U'manayim Shevat Achim Gam Yahad).*