

# ACCEPT OR EXCEPT

A grammar play

Based on an Afghanistan story: The Wooden Sword

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Accept means “to receive.”

Example: The servant accepted the King’s request.

Except means “but” or “leaving out.”

Example: Once the king had his suit of rags, he sent everyone away except his faithful servant.

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Setting: The Royal Palace

Characters: (The words in italics give the meaning of the Afghani name.)

Narrator

King Zemar, the king whose name means “lion”

Yasir, the “humble” servant

Ajani, the poor man “who wins the struggle”

Narrator: King Zemar stood at the window and stared down at the people in the village square below.

King: What makes them so happy? I can’t understand it. I am a strong king, brave like a lion except I have many worries. I worry about my enemies. I worry about having enough money in the treasury. And I worry that some of my closest friends will fail me.

Yasir: But your Majesty, you have everything you could ever want.

King: That is true, except, I am not happy. I just worry, worry, worry!

Yasir: Why is that, your Majesty?

King: That’s what I’m trying to figure out, Yasir.

Narrator: The king sat on his throne and thought and thought until he finally got an idea!

King: Yasir, bring me clothes made of rags with a hooded cloak. I shall walk in disguise through the village and find out what makes people happy.

Narrator: As the golden sun set and the night sky blackened, King Zemar, dressed in beggar’s clothes, and slipped out of the palace. He silently walked through the empty streets until he came to a poor cottage at the village’s edge. Peeking through the cottage window, he spied a man eating a loaf of bread for his supper. Softly, King Zemar knocked on the door.

**King:** Sir, I am a poor, hungry beggar. Can you spare some food?

**Ajani:** (smiling) Of course. Please come in. You are a blessing to my house. I have not much, but please accept what food I have as yours.

**Narrator:** The King was surprised by the generosity of the poor man. He accepted the bread and wondered why this man was so happy.

**King:** You are so poor, with nothing except bread to eat. Why are you so happy?

**Ajani:** Today, I had many shoes to repair at my cobbler's bench, so I earned enough money to buy this loaf of bread.

**King:** And tomorrow? What if no customers come?

**Narrator:** Ajani looked at the King's face, whose eyes and brow were filled with worry. A smile broke on Ajani's face as he told the King, "One day at a time. I have faith that all will be well." At the end of the meal, the King left the cottage. While walking to the palace, the King planned how to test Ajani's faith.

**King:** I shall make a new law, making it illegal for anyone to repair shoes. When anyone's shoes wear out, they must buy new ones! That will take away the smile on that cobbler's face and test his faith.

**Narrator:** The next morning, Ajani joined a crowd of people reading a large sign in the marketplace.

**Ajani:** What a strange, new law. It means I cannot repair shoes. (sighing)  
Oh well, one day at a time. I have faith that all will be well.

**Narrator:** Ajani looked around the marketplace to see where he could find a new job.

**Ajani:** Ah – ha! That old woman by the well needs help with her bucket of water.

**Narrator:** And so Ajani spent the entire day helping people carry their water. As the evening drew near, Ajani's pockets were filled with coins he accepted for his labors. Meanwhile, King Zemar was so curious to see if Ajani was without food for his meal, that he dressed in his beggar's clothes and walked swiftly to the beggar's house.

**Ajani:** Come in, come in! My table is set for a feast!

**King:** I see bread and *wine*. How did you buy this food when you were unable to repair shoes?

**Ajani:** Ah – ha! I looked for a new job and found one. I helped people carry water from the well. They paid me quite generously which I accepted.

**King:** What will you do tomorrow, if no one has need of you carrying water from the well?

**Ajani:** Oh well, one day at a time. I have faith that all will be well.

**Narrator:** And so it went. Each day the King made a new law forbidding Ajani's work. And each day, Ajani accepted the new law and found a new job. The King was very frustrated so he sent his palace police to the woods where Ajani and a group of woodcutters were working.

**Ajani:** (reading a new law) The new law says that the King commands Ajani and the woodcutters to be brought to the palace to become guards.

**Narrator:** And so it was. Ajani was dressed in a brightly colored uniform with a silver sword in a sheath by his side. Then he accepted the position of guarding the palace gate. In the evening, Ajani went to the captain to request some money to buy food.

**Ajani:** Oh no. The captain has told me that I will be paid except it will be at the end of the month. I must think of how to get money. Oh well, one day at a time. I have faith that all will be well.

**Narrator:** As Ajani slowly walked home, his sword began to hit his leg. And then came an idea.

**Ajani:** I shall go to the pawnshop and sell the metal blade of my sword. This will give me enough money for a month's worth of food. At the end of the month I shall be paid. Then I can buy back my blade and all will be well.

**Narrator:** Ajani sold the sword's blade, bought food for his supper, rushed home and began immediately to carve a wooden blade to fit his sword's handle. At supper time, the King arrived. He sat at the poor man's table amazed at the bread, wine and *cheese* served for supper.

**King:** Ajani, how did you buy all of this food?

**Ajani:** (excited) Let me tell you! I sold my sword's blade and look here! See the wooden blade I carved to fit perfectly into the handle. At the end of the month, I shall buy back the steel blade with my guard's salary.

**King:** But Ajani, what if you must draw your sword for battle?

**Ajani:** Oh well, one day at a time. I have faith that all will be well.

**Narrator:** After the meal, the King walked to the palace thinking of a great challenge for Ajani.

**King:** (thinking) I know exactly what to do. I shall have a thief brought to Ajani and I shall command that Ajani cut off his head!

**Narrator:** And so it was. The next morning, a thief, who stole a melon, knelt at Ajani's feet begging for mercy. Ajani had to think quickly of a way to spare the poor man who was merely trying to bring a bit of food to his children.

**Ajani:** (shouting) Oh well, one day at a time. I have faith that all will be well. If this poor man is truly guilty, I shall accept the King's command. But if he is innocent, let the blade of my sword turn to wood!

**Narrator:** The King was standing in the shadows of the palace watching carefully as Ajani drew his sword and held it high. The crowd gasped in amazement for they saw the blade of wood! King Zemar smiled broadly as he walked toward Ajani.

**King:** Ajani, do you know who I am?

**Ajani:** You are our king!

**King:** Yes, but I am also the beggar you fed each night. Because you have shown me that your great faith makes you happy and content, I wish you to come to the palace and dine with me every night. Your little saying, "One day at a time. All will be well", and your noble wisdom will help me stop worrying about my fears of the future.

**Narrator:** And so it was. Ajani accepted the King's offer of supper every night and soon he became the King's trusted adviser.