

The Little Girl and The King

A tale of honesty

Once there was a great King who was kind and generous to everyone. His people loved him very much. But as the King grew older he became very sad. Though he was very powerful, and had everything anyone could possibly want – that is everything that could be bought or built - there was one thing he didn't have. A child.

He owned all the land in the kingdom. He had castles and boats, horses and coaches, cows and sheep, and whatever he said became the law of the land. That's what kings are about. And even though he had so much power – he couldn't order or buy a child. Without a child, there would be no one to take over his kingdom when it was his time to pass.

And so with each passing year, as the people gathered to celebrate his birthday, he grew sadder and sadder. His ministers couldn't stand seeing their king so unhappy. So they suggested to the king that he hold a contest – and the winner would inherit the kingdom.

The king thought and thought. "What qualities do I want most in the next king?" His advisors offered suggestions – "You need someone who is wise," "Yes but ..." "Brave." "Yes, but ..." "Strong," "Yes but ..." "Intelligent," "Yes but ..." "Kind," "Yes but" "Caring," "Yes but..."

"Sire," they finally said, "you agree with all our suggestions but it seems there is something missing. "Yes, that's true. But I can't tell you the secret ingredient.

"Now I must think of a way to test the children." So without telling anyone his idea, the king came up with a plan.

"My birthday is coming next month. I want you to call all the children to the Castle. Announce that there will be a special surprise for everyone."

And so it was done. Now who wouldn't want a special surprise from the king. Every parent wanted to make sure their child was there.

His ministers questioned him, the king revealed his plan.

"I will give each child some seeds. The one who can take the best care of their plant, may be able to take the best care of my kingdom." They all agreed that their king was indeed wise.

When the children arrived all dressed in their best clothes, the ministers lined them up. Then one by one they paraded before the king. The King looked at them and gave them each some seeds.

"Take these seeds, plant them and care for them. The child who grows the best flower will inherit my kingdom. I'll give you 2 months to complete your task."

The children were amazed. Inherit the kingdom! I'll grow the best flowers anyone ever saw.

So every child took their seeds and quickly found the best pot, the best soil, and planted the seeds. Then they put them in the sun and watered them every day.

There was one little girl, who was last in line. She was dressed very simply as her parents didn't have much money. She smiled up at the king and happily took her seeds. She too found the best pot, filled it

with the best soil rich in nutrients, and dug a little hole with her fingers and lovingly put the seeds in the hole and then carefully covered them pushing down gently to make a good little bed for her plants.

Then she placed the pot in the sun and watered it. Every day she would water the plant, made sure no weeds would grow, and she even sang to it – she made up a nice song (what would you sing to your plant). A week past, and no green shoots appeared. 2 weeks past and still nothing had sprouted. She was beginning to worry, but she still watered it and made up more songs to sing to the plant.

The only thing that was growing longer were the days as she waited and waited for her plant to grow.

Finally, the day had come to present the plants to the king. The little girl didn't know what to do – no matter how hard she had tried no plant had grown in her pot. All the children lined up with pots filled with beautiful flowers. There were giant red Dahlias, yellow and orange chrysanthemums (that's a big word), red carnations, begonias, and lots of pink petunias (can you say pink petunias really fast??) and more flowers that any one had ever seen before.

The little girl felt really bad. But as each child passed before the king with their beautiful flowers he just looked at them carefully and moved his hand for them to pass without saying a word.

Then at last it was the little girl's turn to show her plant to the king. All the other children looked at her empty pot and began to tease her. She reached the king, and bowed politely before him. He looked at her empty pot and studied her face very carefully.

“What, you have brought me an empty pot. What happened?”

“Sire, I brought the seeds home and planted them in the best soil I could dig up with my own hands, I planted them with great love, and watered them every day. I made sure they had plenty of sun, and I even made up songs to sing to them.” And she began to sing a little song, which made the king smile a little.

Suddenly the King called out. “I have found the winner.” He pulled the little girl to him and gave her a big hug. Everyone was astonished. How could the girl with no plant win when everyone else had such beautiful flowers? There must be a secret.

The King spoke to all the children. “I gave each one of you a test. I gave every one of you some seeds, but what you didn't know was that the seeds were all dead. There was no way that they could ever sprout, let alone produce a flower. So all of you have cheated.”

“The missing ingredient that every good king must have is honesty, and this little girl, has proven that she is honest beyond a doubt. She is worthy of my kingdom!!!”

So there was a great celebration as the king had gotten the best birthday present he could want – an honest ruler to follow him.

And so my fellow travelers, as they say, honest character is what you do even when no one is looking!

Source

This is a Norwegian folk tale used to teach the children the main virtue of honesty.

links and Resources: www.wisdomthinkers.org