

The Prince and the Scholar of Justice

Once there was a prince who grew into a man and thought that he had the whole world figured out. When people came into the royal court with a dispute for him to settle, he would meet with each man privately and ask them what they would give to him or do for him if he decided the case in their favor. Then the Prince would simply decide every dispute based on which thing would please him the most. When the King found out about the Prince's self serving behavior, he feared for his own position, and decided that his son needed to learn more about justice. So the King sent for the wisest old Scholar in his whole kingdom. He instructed the Scholar to take the Prince on a long journey and to not bring the Prince back until he had a better understanding of justice. So the Prince and the Scholar set out on one of the king's finest ships. The Prince proved to be a worthless student and would fall asleep rather than listen to lectures. One day the skies grew dark and a strong storm blew up. The proud young Prince did not listen to the repeated warnings of the sailors and consequently was swept overboard by a rogue wave. The Scholar, seeing the Prince drowning in the sea did not hesitate but jumped in after him and held the younger man's head above the water. The sailors tried repeatedly to throw the life ropes and even tried to go after them in a longboat, but the ocean quickly whisked the Prince and the Scholar away. All that night, the two men clung to each other through the storm. By dawn the storm had subsided and the Prince who had either saltwater or tears on his face asked the Scholar why he had jumped into the fierce seas to save him. **"It is justice to do the right thing and to help others as much as you are able."** The Prince over the course of three days floating at sea

thought about that and thought that he finally understood it. After three days, a small island appeared in the distance and the two men used the last of their strength to swim toward it. On the island they found and drank fresh water and ate some turtle eggs to regain their strength. Once the turtle eggs were all eaten, they noticed that there were some small birds resting on the island. So the Scholar wove together a net with a noose from vines and hid in the brush while the younger Prince ran and drove the birds past him. But once a bird was secured in the net, the Prince in his hunger grabbed the bird and laughed and ran away with it to eat it all by himself on the other side of the island. At first the Prince was very pleased with himself. He had taken what he needed to survive. But then he realized that he needed the Scholar's help to make and to throw the net to catch more of the small birds who were even faster than he was. For three days the Prince thought about the problem and tried various tactics to capture the birds by himself. None of them worked. The Prince finally gave up and went back to where the Scholar was sitting beneath a tree, patiently fishing. The Prince mumbled an apology and the old Scholar said, "Yes. **You must never treat others as a means to an end. We all can only survive or thrive together.**" Months passed and the young Prince learned much from wise old Scholar on the island. He learned not only how to make fire and survive but also many lessons about justice. One day a merchant ship was drawn to the island by the smoke from their fire. The merchant himself came to the island shore along with three of his strongest sailors. After many joyful and hearty greetings, the Prince and the Scholar told the Merchant who they were. Now the merchant was a shrewd and greedy man and knew that he would be highly rewarded for returning the Prince to his father the King. But he wanted even more, and so

pretended that his ship was so full of goods that he only had room to take on one more man. The Merchant then asked the Scholar, what payment could he expect to receive for bringing him along to the mainland and leaving one of his own sailors behind on the island. The Prince was shocked to hear what the Merchant was saying and immediately recognized the Merchant as displaying his own self serving and greedy attitude from earlier that year. Then the Prince responded before the Scholar could. "No, Sir Merchant. No one will remain here to die alone on this island. Throw some of your goods overboard and make enough room for all of us or I shall not return to the mainland with you, and you shall get no reward for my return to the king. **There is not one thing on this earth that is worth more than the life of a single man.**" Seeing that the Prince was firm in his resolve, the Merchant agreed to take all of the men back to the mainland, and even found that by rearranging his cargo that he had enough room for everyone and everything after all.

When The Prince and the Scholar were finally returned home to the King, the Prince was a changed man. He recalled all of the cases that he had heard, returned all of the goods he was bribed with and listened to the disputes again with a new changed heart and mind. And when it became time for the Prince to rule the kingdom in place of his father, he did so with such great wisdom and justice that his Kingdom was so overflowing with kindness and peace that it was considered by all to be the greatest place in all the world to be...

...and the scholar, he retired and moved to an island with his family. And the young King visited him there as often as his responsibilities allowed him to. The End.