

Fables & Parables

by

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31 FLAVORS

Little Johnny was a good boy ... most of the time. He listened to his parents and tried to obey. The only time he had trouble obeying was when his parents took him to the ice cream stand.

Little Johnny's parents ate small portions and savored them.

Johnny always wanted something different, and he always wanted very large servings. His parents urged him to eat moderately, but Johnny would not listen.

Soon Johnny had eaten so many different flavors that none of the flavors any longer seemed special. Little Johnny ate more and more in an attempt to satiate his hunger. Finally he began to eat very, very large servings. As a result, his stomach hurt.

One day Johnny ate so much that he became very ill. Then he realized the wisdom of his parents. After that, little Johnny ate moderate servings of ice cream. This gave him great joy.

POOR MAN'S PRAYER

There was a beggar who sat beside the city gate each day. Every time a person walked past him he would hold out his bowl and say, "A penny please.". The beggar had sat in the same spot with the same bowl saying the same thing since his youth.

One day, a very rich man came to do business at the city. As he approached the gate he saw the beggar. The rich man had great pity for the beggar. He reached deep down into the pocket of his robe and began to remove a large bundle of money. As he did this the beggar saw him and said, "A penny please." The rich man had not yet removed the bundle from his pocket. He paused, let the bundle fall deep into his pocket and carefully removed a penny and placed it in the beggar's bowl. The beggar smiled and said, "Thank you."

When the rich man left the city he was again moved with compassion. He reached deep into his pocket and began to remove a large bundle of money, but again the beggar said, "A penny please." The rich man dropped the bundle back into his pocket without the beggar knowing and again gave him a penny.

Day after day the rich man returned to the town. Time and time again he began to remove the bundle only to be stopped by the beggar's request for a penny. This bothered the rich man very greatly. He explained the situation to his wife and family. "Why don't you just give him the bundle?" they asked. "Because **he asks** for a penny," replied the rich man.

Day after day the rich man visited town. Always as he reached for the bundle the beggar would say, "A penny please." The rich man became greatly disturbed. He began to shake his head and sigh as he gave the penny to the beggar. The beggar noticed the rich man's sighs and decided not to bother him again by asking for money.

As the rich man approached the gate he reached for the bundle. He hesitated. The beggar said nothing. The rich man removed the large bundle of money and placed it in the beggar's bowl.

The beggar was dismayed. "Many days I have begged from you and you gave me a penny. Today I did not beg and you gave me a fortune. Why?"

The rich man responded, " Each day I came prepared to give you a large bundle of money, but each day as I started to remove it from my pocket, you requested a penny instead. When you did not request the penny, I was free to give you the bundle."

The beggar returned home and lived well without begging again and the rich man was content.

THE GIRL AND THE MIRROR

There was a young girl who often looked into the mirror and talked to the image which she beheld, but the image which she beheld was unable to answer. Still the girl would speak and speak and speak while the image remained helpless to reply.

As time passed the family began to worry that the girl spoke to herself so often in the mirror. The mother said, "Worry not, it is only a passing phase."

But it did not pass and the villagers began to speak of the girl who spoke to herself in the mirror. The villagers laughed and mocked the poor girl, yet she continued to talk to herself in the mirror.

Then one day, while combing her hair, she remained silent and the mirror began to speak! The girl started back and screamed, "Mirror, why have you not spoken before this time if you can speak?"

The mirror answered, "Child, I have always spoken but you never were silent long enough that you could hear me speak"

From that time forward the girl knew the truth of the mirror. The villagers never knew and they continued to laugh. The family could accept the girl, yet they were not sure of the mirror and they could not completely believe, so they never spoke to the mirror and the mirror never spoke to them.

ONCE UPON A JUNGLE

Once, long ago in the jungle, the lion decided to go on a great journey. The lion was the ruler and the king of the jungle. He knew someone must rule the jungle while he was gone. He knew someone must protect and watch the jungle to see that no harm befell the creatures.

The lion removed the crown from his head and he took the scepter from his hand. He placed these emblems of power in a box. He took the beautiful hand-carved ivory box and placed it upon a stump in the middle of the jungle.

The lion proclaimed, "I hereby give my authority to the one who claims it. My power and authority are yours. Rule this jungle with wisdom." Having stated his royal proclamation, the lion left the jungle to go upon his journey.

The great rhinoceros, who had two horns upon his nose, came and saw the box and said, "The lion said that whoever opens this box and possesses the royal jewels shall have power over all the jungle. Does the lion think I do not have enough power in my being to rule the jungle? I am the mighty rhinoceros." So, the rhinoceros went his way. Many feared him, but none were subject unto him.

The elephant saw the box and said, "This box is beautiful. It is made of ivory like my tusks. Is not that an emblem of power? If I try to open this box with my mighty trunk I might crush it." The elephant feared he might destroy the jewels in the box, so he left it upon the stump.

The monkey came. He viewed the box. He saw the box was beautiful and ornamental. He looked at the box and turned it to and fro. He examined it with great curiosity. But, curiosity was all that the monkey had. He did not desire to rule. The monkey, having seen the box, having satiated his curiosity for the moment, departed.

Then a small bird flew from the limb of a tree to the stump. He looked at the great box. It was too large for the bird to open easily, yet the bird said, "How I would love to rule the jungle a short while until the lion returns." The bird used his beak as a key. He worked it in the lock until the box opened. The bird lifted the royal jewels from the box. Taking the scepter and the crown, the bird ruled over all the jungle until the lion returned.

THE MAGIC AX

There was a young woodcutter who was very honest. He made very little money. He, his wife and children lived in a poor village beside the forest in a small but comfortable house. The family wore old clothes, but the clothes were sturdy and they were always clean and neat. The family ate a plain but healthy diet. The woodcutter and his family were very ordinary people.

One day, the woodcutter was working deep in the forest when he saw an ax wedged in a stump. He removed the ax from the stump. It was very sharp. The woodcutter examined it carefully. It was a high quality ax.

The woodcutter decided to try the ax. Soon he had cut a load of lumber to sell. He took the lumber to town and sold it for a very high price.

The woodcutter stopped at a cafe to eat. He set the ax beside his chair while he ate. An old woodcutter saw the ax and exclaimed, "That is the magic ax from the stump deep in the forest."

The woodcutter said, "What do you mean 'magic ax'?"

The old woodcutter said, "That is a magic ax. Only a worthy person can pull it from the stump. It brings a special blessing to anyone who uses it. But, if anyone tries to steal the ax, it will disappear and return to the stump in the forest."

The young woodcutter listened carefully. He thanked the old woodcutter for telling him about the ax. Then he went home with all of the money he had received. He gave his wife the money that was needed for the household. He gave his widowed mother money. He gave money to the poor people of his village and everything that was left he gave to the church.

The next day he cut more wood and sold it for even more money. He gave his wife money. He gave his mother money. He gave money to the poor people and the rest of the money he gave to the church. This continued day after day for a long time.

One day the young woodcutter's wife said, "Why do you give away all of this money? We could be wearing fine clothes, living in a beautiful house, eating the finest foods and enjoying many luxuries."

The young woodcutter said, "Our clothing is sufficient. Our home meets our needs. Our food sustains our health."

That day the young woodcutter earned more money than he had in any other day. He returned home. He gave his wife money. He gave money to his mother. He gave money to the poor people and the rest of the money he gave to the church.

His wife continued to tell him to keep the money for only himself and his family. Finally he decided to set aside a small portion of extra money for himself and his family. It was just a little above their immediate needs.

Each day the young woodcutter continued to make more money. Each day his wood brought higher prices. He gave his wife that which was needed. He gave money to the church, but he withheld a small amount. He did this for quite some time and the small amount became a great amount.

A day came when he took this great sum of money and gave it to his wife and said, "I have been setting aside a small amount because you wanted me to keep the money. That small amount has become a very great amount. Take the money and do with it as you wish."

The wife took the money. She bought all of the land around the house. She hired carpenters and had the house enlarged. The house became a palace. She hired maids to clean the house. She hired gardeners and had gardens planted. There were food gardens, herb gardens, shrub gardens and flower gardens. It was beautiful. She had barns built and stored surplus foods. She had stables built and bought expensive horses. She bought the finest of clothes, and her family was served the finest foods.

During this time the young woodcutter continued to labor. He continued to set aside a small amount, but the small amount was no longer enough. His wife needed more and more! The small amount ran out. She was unable to pay the gardeners. Weeds needed pulling and crops needed planting. She was unable to pay the carpenters. Roofs needed mending and floors needed leveling. She was unable to pay the maids. The house needed cleaning. The fine clothes needed mending and pressing.

So, the young woodsman gave his wife more money and more money till the day came when he gave nothing to the church. He gave nothing to the poor. He gave nothing to his widowed mother. All of the money was upkeeping his house, his lands and his staff.

Everyone saw how rich the young woodcutter was. People became very envious. One night as he slept with the ax beside his bed, a poor man snuck into his house. The man tried to steal the ax, and it disappeared.

When the young woodcutter awoke, he could not find the ax. He was disturbed. Then he found another ax and went to cut wood. The wood brought very little money. After several days, he saw he could not support his expensive way of life without the magic ax. He said to his wife, "What shall I do?"

She said, "Return to the stump and withdraw the magic ax."

The young woodcutter went deep into the forest and found the magic ax in the same stump. He tried to remove the ax, but he could not. Try as he might he could not pull the ax from the stump. The young woodcutter was very upset. He realized, "I cannot pull the ax from the stump because I am no longer worthy. I have become greedy. I do not share my money." He sat down and wept.

He went home and told his wife what had happened. He sold his mansion, the barns, the gardens, and the surplus foods. He sold the stables, the horses and the fine clothing.

He bought a small house that served his family well. He invited his widowed mother to live with him and gave her a room in the house. He bought plain and sturdy clothes for himself, his wife and his children. He invested money to begin a business. The rest of the money he gave to the poor people and the church.

After that time, the young woodcutter and his family lived contentedly.

THE STRANDS OF LIFE

Once upon a time there was a young bird who decided that it was time to build a nest. The bird searched until she found the proper materials to build her nest. She gathered these in one place and began to pick up beakful after beakful of material, piling it to build her nest. She piled up the grass and straw, but the nest did not take shape as she desired. It did not have the form or the appearance she had hoped. The nest did not seem to have a flowing unity. The bird was sad. For all her efforts and work, the nest seemed to be very humble indeed.

So the bird fluttered over to a little sparrow who had a beautiful nest. The bird said to the sparrow, "Sparrow, pray tell me, why is your nest so beautiful?"

The sparrow replied, "I have woven one piece of straw at a time, one blade of grass at a time, one leaf and one stem at a time into this work. I have woven each individual blade, each individual piece into this nest with joy and happiness, placing it where I desired it to be. Each piece is bound to the other pieces. The nest was built with peace and serenity of heart. While you were busy dropping clumps together, I was weaving strands."

"Indeed, indeed, you are wise, little sparrow. While I was hurrying and rushing to create I did not realize the subtlety with which it is necessary to create."

"Yes," the sparrow replied, "there is a great subtlety in creation, and the mind must be able to tend to the details while striving to attain the whole. Those who seek after the finished nest must be willing to give attention to the individual strands that form the nest."

THE MAN WHO WORRIED

There was once a rich man who lived on the land.
Yes, a rich man, many riches did he have.
What did he have? He had possessions and wealth.
He had children, houses and oxen.
He had cattle and fields.

He had all that the heart could desire,
but he had not peace,
for he worried if his cattle were to die,
his oxen were to grow old, his children were to rebel,
his money were to be lost.
Oh, would he not have been better if he had been a poor man?
Oh, how he worried.

Then came the day that his children rebelled.
His cattle died from the plague.
His oxen grew weak and stumbled and broke their legs.
His houses burned; his fields were raided,
All that he had was plundered and his money was lost.
And he wept.

Then he began to worry because he was a poor man
and did not have food to eat, nor a place to lay his head,
nor anything.
And he worried about what he was
and how he could regain riches.

He worried when he was rich,
and he worried when he was poor,
not realizing that the peace was within and not without,
for he could have been happy when he was rich
and happy when he was poor
and he would have had more.

Yet he never enjoyed his richness
and he certainly didn't enjoy his poorness.
He lost his life, for he enjoyed it not,
and yet he could have had his life,
for all joy was within his own self.

BIG NEEDS, LITTLE WANTS

There once was a little boy who always asked for more than he received. At night he was thirsty and wanted a drink of water before he went to bed. After he was in bed, he would call for another drink. Then the lights would be turned on so that the child might drink more water.

In the morning the child would rise and eat breakfast, and after all of breakfast was gone he would ask for another slice of toast. If the toast was buttered he would ask for cinnamon.

Always the child asked for a little more than he received. The child received many, many things. He always received all he requested, but he was so busy asking for trivial things that he never thought to ask for the attention he so greatly desired. The child's parents were so busy tending all the requests of their son that they were unable to lavish the attention upon him that they desired so much to give him.

It has become much the same with the world, with the earth, Many, many people have backed many, many causes, and while they cry out and seek support for the many causes, the one true need that would solve all problems goes untended.

Love, pure love in the hearts of all mankind is the answer.

WHO'S A RICH MAN?

There were two small children who lived in a very small and poor village. As the children grew they began to aspire to achieve those things in the world which they believed would make them happy.

One boy began to work for the tailor. He learned to sew, to trim and to hem, and he thought of happiness within the small village.

The other boy began to see the treasures which he thought the world around him held. He began to speak arrogantly. Many of the people of the village heard his words and they raised him up and he became a leader. As this young man aged he began to acquire wealth. He became a politician and a statesman among his people. He left the village and worked in the courts of the rulers of the land.

Meanwhile, the tailor married a young lady from the village. The couple had several children. The tailor became comfortable as old age came upon him. He had a quiet and peaceful home.

In the courts of the kings there was much intrigue and much trouble. The politician found himself in the middle of many plots and schemes. He feared to marry for the lives of his wife and children would be at stake. He feared for all manner of troubles that might come upon him. He acquired great wealth, but he never found a place where he felt safe to lay his head.

Many, many years passed, and these two childhood friends met one day at the barber shop. The old friends began a conversation.

The old tailor sat in peace, awaiting a haircut, smoking his pipe. He listened as the politician spoke, "My friend from childhood, when we were young I saw many glimmering and glittering hopes out in the world. I left to seek my fortune. As a result of my adventures I have many riches and yet I am so poor that I have no place to rest."

The tailor smiled and said, "My friend, when we were but children I looked about the village and I saw many riches. I sought after the riches and I have acquired much. I have a place to rest my head and a place where you are also welcome to rest and be in peace."

So it was, after many years the rich man had not anything to give and the humble man who labored many a day had much to give to anyone who sought.

THE YOUNG FARMER

There was a young man who moved from the city to the country because he wanted to grow and prosper. He thought that in the country he would be able to farm and raise vegetables and grains in abundance.

As the young man left the city, he stopped at a small store on the outskirts and purchased a large sack of seeds.

He walked many days into the country until he found land that was to his liking. The young man bought the land and worked hard to clear it, plow it, and till it.

Then the young man took some of his seed and planted it in the land to grow and bring forth its bounty, but he kept most of the seed in his sack.

He said to himself, "I shall plant part of my seed and leave most of it in the sack. If the harvest shall fail, I shall have seed to last the winter."

The spring rains came.

The summer sun did shine warmly upon the earth.

The fall came, and brought to all the farmers throughout the country an abundant harvest, but the young man had planted little; therefore, he harvested little.

A wise old farmer asked the young man, "Why did you plant such a little amount upon such good and fertile ground?"

The young man answered, "I was afraid my seed would die and not produce."

The old farmer said, "Except you cast your seed to the ground, it cannot grow." "That which is held tightly cannot be multiplied, nor can it grow. That which is spread upon the fertile soil multiplies and brings forth."

THE RAINDROP

A newly formed drop of rain descended upon the earth. There it felt the warmth of the ground and the warmth of the sun. The small drop watched as many other drops ran to the stream, which ran to the river, which ran to the ocean. The small drop of rain worried, "I know it is my destiny to go to the stream, and from the stream to the river and from the river to the ocean. If I do this, will I still be what I am?" The little drop was afraid that once it entered into the water running swiftly to the ocean that it would no longer be itself.

The sun heard the little raindrop whisper. The sun smiled and spoke gently to the raindrop, "I have watched many raindrops flow into the stream and from the stream to the river and from the river to the ocean. Each of the drops have returned to the sky and spoken with me. Some of the drops of rain chose again to fall upon the earth and to enter into the stream, into the river and into the ocean. Some of the drops rose into the sky and spoke with me and fell back into the ocean from whence they came."

The little drop heard the sun speak. Still unsure the little drop entered the stream. It realized it was part of the stream yet the drop knew it was its own self. The drop entered the river. The drop knew that it was a part of the whole river, yet it knew it was itself. The drop entered the ocean. It knew it was part of the whole ocean, yet it was still itself.

THE RIVER'S EDGE

There was a young man who walked on the road beside the river. He looked out over the river. The view was beautiful. All that he saw was wonderful.

So, the young man left the road and walked closer to the river. He watched the river, and the beauty captivated him. He stepped out on the bank and looked. Ooh, the view was so beautiful.

The young man saw a small pile of reeds on the edge of the river. He said, "If I climb upon these I will be closer," and he walked on the reeds.

The reeds gave way under the young man and he sank in mud. He tried to climb the river bank, but the bank was too steep. He sank deeper.

So, the young man waded out into the river where he had a better view of the bank. The waters of the river washed him clean.

From the river the young man found a spot upon the bank where he could climb. He climbed out of the river and stood upon the bank. He walked to the road. The sun warmed him and his clothes dried, and he continued his journey until he reached home.

DREAMS

There was a small child who dreamed a dream of nightmares. He dreamed a dream of hideous shapes and awful images, and he awoke screaming in the middle of the night.

The mother and father came to the child. The child said, "I have dreamed a horrible dream. There were awful images and terrible shapes."

The parents said, "Child it was only a dream. It was not real."

The child said, "It seemed so real! I am afraid."

The parents said, "Know your dreams are not real. Dreams are not real! Reality is when you are awake, when you are dead to the senses of the spirit."

The child stopped having bad dreams, he aged and he became a man. He sought to do good upon the face of the earth. Then one night he had a dream. In the dream he saw a vision of Utopia. He saw a vision of Nirvana, of Paradise, of Camelot. In the dream he saw how to make the vision a reality. This man woke and he was excited. The very inner core of his being was resonant with that he had experienced in dream.

Then he remembered those comforting words his parents had spoken to him, "Dreams are not real. Dreams are not real. Reality is that state in which you are not consciously aware of the spirit!"

So it was that he allowed his dreams to be but dreams.

THE CABBAGE

There were two women who lived in a cottage upon the side of a hill. They lived in the small cottage and worked hard from sun rise to sun set. Each day they toiled in the garden and these two women raised cabbages.

When time to harvest the cabbages came, each woman went into the garden. Taking their knives they cut the cabbages at the roots and piled them into their aprons, and they carried their aprons by the corners. As they gathered the cabbages, they found one great cabbage.

One woman said, "I shall keep the cabbages that I have, for I am certain of that which I have and it is sound. If I take the one large cabbage and put all of the others aside, the one cabbage may be worm ridden and full of holes. It might be hollow", so this woman continued to gather the small cabbages.

The other woman seeing the great cabbage removed all the small cabbages from her apron and placed them on the ground. With great effort, cutting and sawing, she worked on her hands and knees to remove the cabbage from its stalk. She placed the cabbage within her apron, and because of the weight of the great cabbage she caught her apron by the four corners and threw it over her shoulder and carried it with great effort and labor to the cottage.

Each woman prepared the cabbages that they harvested. The woman who had gathered many small cabbages removed the outer leaves and the cores, and she had many cabbages but there was little substance. The outer leaves and the cores were much of that which the woman had harvested.

The other woman removed the outer leaves and the core of the great cabbage. She had a great amount of cabbage, and she prepared a feast.

So it is, those who work to develop one gift to its fullest, receive a just reward.

THE SEED

Little Melissa planted a seed in a clear glass jar so she could see it grow. She planted a small seed that would become a flower she loved very much. Her mother had shown her just how deep to bury the seed and how much water to put on the dirt. Her father had told her, "Be patient and wait." She did everything just as she had been told and waited observing her seed.

After a few days the seed appeared to die. It appeared to become dry and the shell began to burst. Poor Melissa became terribly upset. She spoke with her mother. Her mother said, "Yes, yes, I see your seed and what it is doing." and she smiled but did nothing to fix the seed. So Melissa went to her father. "Father, my seed!" Her father looked at the seed and said, "You must have patience." Melissa was almost to the point of tears. Her father held her and told her to continue watching the seed. "But the seed ... it's dead," Melissa said. Her father laughed, "No, the seed is not dead." She waited as her father had instructed and continued to water the seed as her mother had taught her.

Soon a little shoot came forth and little roots formed in the dirt of the clear glass jar, and one day Melissa saw a sprout coming out of the dirt. Soon the seed which Melissa thought was dead bloomed full and beautiful with a flower she loved very much.

People are seeds living a life that seems to lead to death, but it is the beginning. As physical life ceases, the spiritual life blossoms and blooms. A being of light is born.

THE COIN

There was once a small coin that traveled in the pocket of a man who walked the countryside. The small coin spoke to the other coins in the man's pocket, saying, "Where have you been and where shall you go?"

The other coins said, "We have been many places and have seen many things."

The little coin asked, "How many places have you been?"

The multitude of coins answered, "We have been many places. We have seen soda machines, fine department stores, cash registers and velvet-lined collection plates in churches. We have seen the pockets of the rich and the pockets of the beggars."

The small coin said, "You remember the places you have been, yet I remember more distant places. I remember being among the rocks as an unshaped form. I remember a time when as molten metal I was poured forth to be cast. I remember a great die that stamped me."

The other coins laughed and said, "Wretched coin carried to and fro by strange beliefs, there is no life before creation."

The one small coin said, "I can remember. There is a remembrance and I know there was a time before I came into this being as a coin."

The other coins all repeated. "There is no existence before creation."

So the multitude believed not, yet the one remembered.

FROM CATERPILLAR TO BUTTERFLY

Early one morning, two caterpillars met while drinking dew from a leaf. One caterpillar was green with orange speckles. The other caterpillar was white with several long horns.

The green caterpillar said, "How are you?"

The white caterpillar said, "As well as can be expected in this world."

"Yes, it is difficult sometimes," agreed the green caterpillar.

"Difficult --- I would say!" said the white caterpillar. "Life is terribly difficult. We crawl on our bellies all day. My aunts and uncles have bumps all over their bodies. My grandmother has not been doing well. No ---- she hasn't. A bumpy, hard crust has started to form around her, and she just hangs on a branch and won't talk to anybody."

The green caterpillar responded, "My wife has been a real stinging worm lately. She stung me twice this week. But the worst problem is the isolation --- the little cocoons. Everyone keeps wrapping themselves in lumpy, bumpy cocoons. They can't talk to each other; they don't go outside. They just hang there. Do you think we will be the same way?"

"I'm sure of it," replied the white caterpillar. Everyone follows the same path."

"There must be a reason for it," said the green caterpillar.

A butterfly that had been listening to the conversation lit upon the leaf from which the two caterpillars were drinking. The butterfly said, "Your destiny is greater than you think. Yes, you must enter the cocoon. Life may be different from what you think you wish it to be, but from the cocoon you will emerge a new creature. I was once in a cocoon. I once struggled just as you struggle.

The caterpillars looked at the butterfly with amazement, "But, you you are a winged creature."

"Yes, yes I am a winged creature," said the butterfly, "but I once crawled just as you crawl. I once grew old, isolated myself, and wrapped myself in a cocoon and died. Then I came forth a new creature, resplendent and beautiful."

The butterfly's words gave the caterpillars hope - and they left rejoicing, for they believed they had a far greater destiny than they had before perceived.

THE FOX

There was a fox which dwelt in the woods. One day the hunters came to race and chase the fox. The fox hearing the hunters realized that the hunters were death. Soon there was a baying of hounds in the distance. The hounds had scented the fox and came closer to their prey. He raised up from his nap and raced through the woods.

As he raced, the fox realized that death was coming ever closer, so he ran through the creek to lose his scent and hid in a hollow log.

The fox sat still, quietly watching and waiting.

The dogs came running, barking and howling. They came running as death nipping at the heels of the fox.

The fox sat quietly watching as the dogs jumped over the log and ran onward.

The fox sat quietly in peace waiting as the horses came running, galloping with the hunters on their backs. They too jumped over the log and went onward.

So it is with life. We hurry and we scurry and death nips at our heels. If we but sit still and contemplate in meditation, we find life from within and surely death passes over.

THE BUTTERFLY

A butterfly was soaring through the air, floating and gliding, when it looked down and saw its reflection in a pure, clear mountain stream. The butterfly, seeing its reflection, was astounded by its own beauty, and said, "I must come closer and see this wonderful sight." The butterfly rode spirals of wind downward and the closer it came to the mountain stream, the more enchanted it became with the reflection. The butterfly came all the way down to the water. When it touched the water, its wings became wet. It could not fly. It began to drown!

The butterfly struggled in the stream among floating debris. Mud, twigs and leaves floated by the butterfly as it struggled to stay afloat. Then the butterfly found a rock and clung to it. It crawled and struggled until it came forth from the water.

The butterfly laid upon the rock to rest. The sun shone down upon it. Its wings began to dry, and soon the tired butterfly regained its strength. It raised its dry but tattered wings and began to fly. It soared upward from the rock. It looked down at the stream and saw its reflection. Seeing its reflection the butterfly thought of the horrors that it had encountered. Then, soaring, it thought of the beauty, the wonder in the original place where it had dwelt in the air. It said, "The heavens are my home. There shall I dwell."

THE POTTER'S CREATION

Early one morning, as the village potter slept, he heard a knocking at his door. When the potter had arisen from bed and greeted the messenger who stood at his door, he inquired why he was being visited at such an early hour. The messenger replied, "The king has requested that you make a bowl. You are to make the finest bowl in the kingdom." The potter hearing the message agreed to accept the task.

Immediately he began to work. He went to the pits where clay was mined, and he selected the finest clay. He brought the clay home. He moistened the clay until it was workable. He kneaded it as a baker kneads bread dough. Then the potter split the clay into halves. He wrapped half of the clay with moist rags and put it away to age. He rolled the other half into a very fine layer and baked it in his kiln.

The clay that was baked in the kiln was not attractive. It was plain and seemed to be useless in a thin flat sheet, but the potter had an important purpose for this clay. He broke the sheet of clay and ground it into a sandy powder.

After the clay that was wrapped in rags had aged sufficiently, the potter began to mix the powder with it. The powder was the grog that would give the aged clay strength. The potter continued to add the grog until the clay which he kneaded and worked reached a consistency which he believed was perfect.

The potter formed a ball from the clay which he was working. He cast the ball upon the potter's wheel and began to create a beautiful bowl.

He was almost finished when he noticed what appeared to be a slight flaw in the bowl. Because of the flaw, the potter removed the bowl.

He crushed it, but the clay was still existent. He kneaded the clay and placed it upon the potter's wheel again, and he began to recreate.

The wheel turned, and a beautiful bowl was formed. After the bowl had dried sufficiently, it was placed in the kiln where it was tested and tried by fire, that also hardened it. The bowl was then painted with glazes and trimmed with gold, and again subjected to the heat and fire of the kiln. The plain glazes began to glisten and the colors became bright.

So the potter created a beautiful vessel which he presented unto the king. The king seeing the beauty of the bowl was astounded and gave glory and praise to both the potter and the bowl.

THE PLUM TREES

There were two plum trees. One lived on the top of the mountain where the winds blew, where the climate was sometimes cold, sometimes warm, and where the rains fell hard. The other tree lived in the valley where the breezes were gentle, where the morning dew was pleasant and where the rains fell just gently enough to moisten the soil.

The tree in the valley said to the tree on the top of the mountain, "Life is good! Life is pleasant! Will you not join me in the valley where there are no trials or troubles?" The tree on the top of the mountain said, "I produce plums just as you produce plums, and I have found no offense given to me by nature that is not for my benefit."

Each time the wind blew against the tree on the mountain, its roots reached a little deeper and grew a little thicker and a little stronger. Each time a cold rain fell, the tree grew more stout.

The tree in the valley was not as strong as the tree that stood on the mountain top, because there was no adversity to give it strength. No winds blew in the valley for the tree to push against.

Then one day a great wind came. It came across the top of the mountain and blew through the tree that had been tempered by the weather. The tree bent, but stood firmly.

Then the wind blew over the mountain and down into the valley. The plum tree that had not been tempered by the weather could not stand. The tree's roots were plucked from the ground.

There was a man who awoke each day, put on his work clothes and went to work. He worked against the adversities of the day. He worked faithfully with a smile on his face. There was another man who had wealth. Each morning he awoke and put on his richly embroidered suits. There was nothing to try him and nothing to test him.

Then a war came, the crops failed, and a great sickness passed through the land.

The man who knew adversity still awoke, put on his work clothes and faced each day with joy. The man who was rich mourned the events greatly. He worried about the riches he might lose. He feared loss. He was troubled by the events for he was as the plum tree in the valley; but the man who withstood was as the plum tree on the mountain.

THE THREE BUILDERS

A king hired three servants to build a house. He supplied them with all the materials required to build the house. He supplied them with precious stones, wonderful marble. He supplied them with gold and silver to build a beautiful house --- the most beautiful house that was ever to be seen.

One man said, "I cannot build this house, I do not know who will dwell in it. It's hard labor to build a house for one who may abuse it or tear it down. I shall not build the house."

The second man said, "The king will come into this house, he will live, he will have frivolous parties. He will rip the house asunder. I shall build it. It matters not the quality of the workmanship."

The third man said, "I know not for what purpose the king desires this house but I shall build it to the best of my ability."

He carefully cut each slab of marble. He laid the most beautiful floor. He carved by hand every pole and column. He built up the walls, he put artwork of gold upon them. He built the house beautiful in every way he knew.

And when the three men had finished building, the king came and said to the first, "Where is the house that you built?"

And the man said, "I did not know for whom this house was to be built, I did not know."

The king said, "Did I not say: build?"

He said, "Yes, but you did not say for whom. How was I to build it not knowing?"

And the king said to the second man, "Where is the house?" And the second man said, "Here is the house." And he showed the king a house --- a house built quickly and without care.

And the king said, "Why is it that this house appears to be built so quickly with so little care?"

And truly the man said, "I knew that which I built would be torn asunder. That it would not hold up through time and that it would not be tended. So, I built it as one working for profit."

And the king said to the third man, "Where is the house that you have built?"

And the third man said, "I know this house is not as splendid as the house in which you live. But, I have built it to the best of my ability." And the king looked and it was beautiful. It was wrought as a true work of art and it was beautiful.

And the king said, "I supplied you with nothing but raw lumber, gold, silver, marble, and stones --- and you have taken these and created this beautiful mansion, this work of art, this glorious palace."

And the king looked at the first man and he said, "You have no house. You have no place where you can dwell nor where I can dwell. Go dwell in the house you built." And the man had no place to dwell.

And he said to the second man, "You built a house without care. I cannot live in a house that was built without care. Go. Live in that house and see if it lasts." And that man went to live in the house, but it did not last.

And the king said to the third man, "You have built this beautiful palace with care. Go. Live in the palace. And I also shall dwell in the palace with you."

Even so, your Father tells you to build a house. And, He shall dwell with you there. Your God tells you to build a holy tabernacle and He shall dwell with you there.

THE PLANTS

There was a father who had two daughters. The father knew that soon his daughters would no longer be with him, and he decided in his heart to give each daughter a gift.

Each daughter received a gift from the father. The gift was a plant for each daughter. The father said, "Take this gift. When you see this gift remember me for I have given to you."

The first daughter smiled and was happy.

The second daughter frowned and was sad.

Time passed. The plants the father had given the daughters began to grow.

The first daughter saw her plant as it began to grow. She watered it and cared for it. As it began to grow thorns she blessed the plant and said, "You are a wonderful plant. You remind me of my father, surely at times he could be thorny."

The second daughter saw her plant as it began to grow. She frowned when she saw the thorns, and she cut the plant level with the ground.

Both plants continued to grow, and they began to change.

The daughters saw that insects were attracted to the plants.

The first daughter said, "I shall tend my plant. I shall care for it as my father cares for me."

The second daughter said, "Surely, this plant is eaten and riddled even as my father did riddle me." So it was, she did frown again.

Time passed. The first daughter's plant grew to maturity. The plant bloomed. It was a beautiful unfolding rose!

There came a time when the two daughters came together and met. Eventually their conversation turned to the plants.

The first daughter said, "My plant reminds me of my father. It is beautiful! It is full!"

The second daughter who frowned said, "The plant I have reminds me of my father. It has never grown! It is stunted and dwarfed. It has been eaten by bugs!"

And, so it was! Each daughter having been given similar plants created their destiny.

THE FARMER AND HIS TWO SONS

There were two brothers who lived in the mountains. The elder brother was very productive and he lived up to the expectations of the father. He would rise early and till the fields. He kept the vineyards and he tended the stock.

The younger brother was found to be somewhat wanting in his willingness to tend the stock, to keep the vineyards, and to till the fields. He preferred to sit upon the hills playing his mandolin.

So it was that the father became increasingly angry that the younger brother would not carry his burden of the work. As the boys aged, the father's anger became more intense. The elder brother worked day and night. He labored hard to keep the farm. The younger brother would not lift his hands to work, but he sat upon the sides of the hills playing his mandolin.

The father developed great wrath towards the younger brother who played the mandolin. He cast him from his abode and told him not to return to the house or to come upon the fields until he would work as his brother worked.

As time passed, the elder brother continued to farm and the younger brother continued to play music and wandered from town to town. The elder brother married a young farm girl from the neighboring village. They built a small cottage and dwelt near the parents of both families. The elder brother continued to work diligently.

The younger brother continued to wander playing his mandolin. He played and sang, and he was happy. As time passed, the younger brother became renowned throughout the town for his ability to play the mandolin.

One day a passing prince said, "I have a sister who loves mandolin music. Come to the court and play for the King and Queen so that my sister might hear you play."

The younger brother went to the court of the King and Queen and played the mandolin. The princess heard the mandolin music and the sweet singing voice of the younger brother and she was completely enraptured. She begged her father and mother that she might be allowed to marry the young musician.

A great wedding was arranged and invitations were sent through all the towns and villages in the kingdom.

Several days later, as preparations were being made for the wedding, the father of the young man saw a beautiful horse coming toward his house. There was a young

messenger on the horse and he said, "There is a royal wedding and you are invited as a guest of honor."

In this time it was not common that peasants were invited as guests of honor at royal weddings. The man and his family did not have proper clothing to wear, so the father said to the young messenger, "I wish that I could come, but we have no clothes to wear for such an event. We are lowly peasant farmers. How is it that we are invited to a royal wedding as guests of honor?"

The young messenger said, "I was told to deliver this message: 'You should arrive as guests of honor and suits of clothes will be provided in the chamber where you and your family shall be staying.'"

The father and all his family, the father's daughter-in-law and son and in-laws all journeyed to the town where the wedding was to be held. The family was escorted into several royal chambers where they were given royal clothes. They prepared for the wedding. Still the families knew not why they had been honored until the wedding began. Then they saw the younger brother who wasted his time. He walked down the wedding aisle arrayed in beautiful royal robes.

The father smiled from within. With a great and radiant joy he said, "Surely it is that I should not have judged, for how was I worthy to know what the capabilities or the possibilities of my children might have been?"

BUYING SEEDS

A young farmer bought wheat seeds from a merchant. The merchant had only a few wheat seeds, so he sold the farmer a sack of flower seeds as wheat. The young farmer paid for the seeds without inspecting them. He cultivated the ground and planted the seeds. The fields were well tended and the seeds began to grow.

The young farmer was astonished when he realized he was raising a field of flowers. The flowers were beautiful and everyone complimented the farmer's fields. He was so overwhelmed by the compliments that each year he continued to plant flowers instead of wheat.

The flowers were beautiful, but they did not mill into flour to feed the young farmer's family, nor did the flowers make fodder to feed the livestock. He sold some flowers, but the family and livestock were not fed as well from this income as they would have been fed if the young farmer had grown wheat.

THE MAP SELLER

There is a great and powerful mountain. At the top of that mountain is a shimmering rainbow and a treasure of diamonds and gold. At the foot of the mountain there begins a road that leads straight to the mountain top. The road is straight and easy to travel. There are also several paths that wind dangerously to the mountain top. One path winds through the forest. Another path winds across the steep, rocky backside of the mountain.

The map seller places his stand across the road to hide and block the way. He makes his living selling maps, but no one will buy them if the way is simple. The map seller sells maps showing many different ways up the mountain, but reserves the good way for himself.

He is so busy selling maps that he has no time to take the good way, yet he still keeps others from taking the good way.

Though the straight path that is easily traveled is blocked, those who travel the winding paths will reach their goal. Those who search will find rainbows, diamonds and gold before the map seller. If the map seller knows the way, why does he block it and why has he not taken it? If the way is truly known, greater is his troubling and cursing for not taking it. Greater still is the reward for those who wind up the hazardous paths for their appreciation is greater than it would have otherwise been.

THE "THRONE" BREAD

Long ago in a small kingdom beside the sea, a young baker had a business baking and selling bread. Each morning he took the bread that was left from the day before and he would throw it out to the birds. The baker began to call this the "thrown" bread.

All of the villagers knew of the "thrown" bread and often spoke of it to describe things which seemed useless but still had a purpose. The bread seemed useless, but it fed the birds.

One day a man from the royal court was sitting in the village barber shop when he heard several men mention the baker's "thrown" bread.

That evening during the palace dinner, the man mentioned that the villagers were eating "throne" bread. The king became enraged, "How dare common people eat 'Throne' bread! They know those things which are of the throne are mine and mine alone."

The man said, "I heard the villagers not only eat this, but they even feed this to the animals." The king grew even angrier, "The villagers throw royal bread to the animals!"

So, the king sent a small group of knights to the village. He told them, "Go into the village and collect all of the 'thrown' bread, so we might consume it. It is ours by right."

The knights met a small gathering of villagers at the entrance by the village wall. The knights asked about the "throne" bread and the villagers answered, "Ah, yes! In back of the bakery there is much 'thrown' bread."

The baker did not understand the request, but he knew he must respect the royal command. He showed the knights the scraps.

The knights collected the scraps of bread. They gathered many baskets of moldy, dirty bread and took them to the king.

The king realized the error, but he was afraid to admit his mistake. He ate the "throne" bread. All of the court wanted to act like the king, so they also ate the "thrown" bread.

Every day, knights collected the "thrown" bread from the baker and the king and court ate it. The king was so pleased with the status symbol that he rewarded the baker with great wealth.

Still, the baker sold good bread for the few villagers who still would purchase it, but eventually the baker did not need money. The king rewarded the baker so richly that he refused to provide even moldy bread. So, there was no bread; and the king, the court and the villagers were hungry.

THE WIZARD'S RESPONSIBILITY

There was a wizard by the name of Sarolyn who was known for his many good deeds. When towns were without water, he would call forth of the elements and sweet sparkling waters would come to the wells. When the fields would not grow he would call upon the elements and the seeds would sprout.

It happened one day that Sarolyn went for a walk while his breakfast was cooling. He had walked quite a way. His stomach began to rumble and he was not in a good mood.

It was at this time that Sarolyn met a small child. The child said, "Sarolyn, will you play with me?" Sarolyn said, "Child, I have not the time. I must go to eat my breakfast." Sarolyn did not mean to sound cross, but he did.

The child did not mean to hurt the jolly old wizard, but he pouted, picked up a handful of gravel, and threw it. The wizard responded in fury. Before he could stop himself, fire had arched from his fingertips and the small child was turned to stone.

Sarolyn was shocked at what he had done. It was no problem to turn the child back to flesh and bone --- this did not trouble the wizard. The wizard was troubled by the nature of his actions. He left the stone child and returned home to eat his breakfast, but he could not. His stomach rumbled with concern. Sarolyn returned and picked up the stone child and carried him to the center of town.

Everyone gathered about in utter amazement. They knew the nature of Sarolyn, and they knew he would do no harm.

Sarolyn said to all the people, "Hear me. I have not trained apprentices, because I feared they would act rashly and do that which I would not desire. Now, I have acted rashly and done that which ought not to have been done. This child shall again be flesh and bone, but I know not if I should continue as your wizard or if I should leave the craft."

The people said. "Wizard, you have been so good and so kind. You can restore and heal the little boy. You can turn him to flesh and bone. If it were not for your magic such could not be done."

Sarolyn said, "If it were not for my magic, such would not have become of him."

Then a wise old sage stepped forward and said, "Sarolyn, you have great magical powers, but mine is the gift of wisdom. Do not think that because of your powers you have done harm, for it is how they are used that is good or evil."

Sarolyn bowed his head and said, "I would have blamed my powers, but you have put the fault where truly it does belong, which is within my very own nature. I sought to avoid responsibility, but the truth is that each man is responsible to create his own destiny and must take responsibility for that creation."

So Sarolyn turned the boy from stone to flesh and bone. The boy was happy, for Sarolyn played with him. The townsfolk were happy, for they had their wizard. Sarolyn was happy, for he knew he was a little wiser.

THE GOOD ROAD

A young man from the city visited his uncle in a county where very few people except farmers lived. The uncle gave his nephew the grand tour in an old pickup truck. The men traveled windy, bumpy, bouncy roads.

"This road goes to the country seat," said the uncle; and they followed the rough road to the court house and the mayor's office.

"Where does this road go?" asked the nephew pointing to a well paved wide smooth straight road? "You're not interested," said the uncle and he drove past.

The uncle took his nephew over the rough, bumpy roads. He showed him the important places. He introduced him to the important people in the county. The uncle even showed him the best fishing spots, but he wouldn't take him up the one wide smooth well paved road.

The nephew said, "If these winding trails go to such beautiful places, then the good road must lead to a magnificent place indeed!"

One day while the nephew was alone, he decided to take the good road. The road was easy because it was well maintained and frequently traveled. But much to the young man's surprise, his uncle had spoken the truth. This road didn't interest him. It led only to the town's garbage pit, and that was why it was so frequently traveled.

ONCE UPON A CAR

There once was a young man who bought a beautiful new sportscar. The car was a machine of perfection. It was finely tuned. The young man looked upon his car. The paint was glossy and shiny. He put the best gas in the car and he drove carefully.

As the car began to age, it developed a very small noise. The young man was told the noise was caused by carbon buildup on one of the valves. The young man said, "Buildup is on but one valve. It is such a small part of my car. Surely my car shall still perform well."

As time passed, the noise grew louder and the spark plugs became fouled. The young man said, "Why should fifty-cent spark plugs stop me from driving my twenty-thousand-dollar car?" He bought spark plugs and put them in the car, but he bought cheap spark plugs and soon they were bad. The cheap plugs built resistance and damaged the plug wires.

Of course, the carbon that fouled the plugs came from the bad valve. The small noise grew and caused problems which greatly multiplied until the car could no longer be driven. Because of many small things (each seemingly harmless), the beautiful car was no longer road-worthy.

Your physical body is like a sportscar. It is finely tuned and has a precision-made motor. If you continually put bad gas in your vehicle and deprive yourself of proper nutrition (replacing good spark plugs with cheap spark plugs), eventually your vehicle will become unable to be driven. The body, just like the car, must be properly tended and maintained.

THE MONKEY AND THE BIRD

A monkey and a bird lived in the jungle. Each day they played together. The bird would soar from tree to tree while the monkey hung by his tail. The monkey would scamper up and down the trees eating bananas and coconuts while the bird perched on a limb making beautiful songs, making music for all the creatures of the jungle.

One morning, the monkey awoke and said, "I wish I were like the bird. I wish I had wings instead of hands. I wish I had feathers that would let me fly instead of this tail."

At the same time the bird awoke with the thought that it would be very nice to be like the monkey. She said to herself, "I wish I had hands instead of these foolish wings. I wish I had a tail instead of these feathers. I could hold things and swing from trees."

Soon thereafter, a hunter came into the jungle. He set traps and caught many different animals. Among those animals were the bird and the monkey. The hunter put the bird in one cage and he put the monkey in another. The bird tried desperately to open her cage, but she could not. The monkey used his hands to unlock his cage and then he unlocked the bird's cage. All of the animals became excited, seeing that they were about to escape; and they began to make noises. The hunter heard the commotion and ran to see what was causing the disturbance.

He would have seized the monkey, but the bird flew out of her cage and grabbed the monkey and lifted him from the ground. Both the bird and the monkey escaped.

The bird said to the monkey, "I am glad you are who and what you are, for it was your hands that set us free." The monkey said to the bird, "I am glad that you are who and what you are, for it was your wings that carried us to safety." Both animals were grateful for their differences.

In diversity is found completeness. If the monkey had been without the bird, he would have been caught. If the bird had been without the monkey, she would not have escaped. Because they were together they were able to obtain that which could not have been obtained individually. So it is with man and woman - each is complementary to the other.

THE BOY WHO LOVED THE TREE

There was a little boy who lived on the edge of the forest. Every day he went into the forest and talked to one special tree. The tree listened to the boy until finally it began to answer the boy. Every day the boy came to the tree.

The tree always spoke calm and soothing words of wisdom to the boy. The boy accepted the tree's advice and the tree taught the boy many important lessons.

One day the boy saw woodcutters coming into the forest. The woodcutters began cutting and each day they came closer to the boy's tree. The boy worried, but the tree never mentioned the woodcutters. Day after day, the woodcutters came closer to the tree until finally the worried boy expressed his fear to the tree, "Tree, my friend," said the boy and he hugged the tree, "I fear the woodcutters will take you away."

The tree said, "There is no need to worry."

One morning as the boy went to visit the tree, he found the area had been cut. Everywhere there were stumps. The boy was very upset, but then he saw one tree standing. It was his tree!

The woodcutters had spared the tree because they knew it was special to the boy.

That day the boy learned the greatest lesson from the tree. He learned: Love has the power to save, and spares all hurt, evil and injury.

THE MONKEYS

Two monkeys lived on an island. Both monkeys were industrious and worked to make the island nicer each day. The monkeys had nice huts, good paths and plenty of food stored.

One day the monkeys decided they needed a leader. "If one leader was good, then two leaders were better," they reasoned, so both monkeys became leaders.

The plan seemed to work for a while, but eventually the huts fell apart, the paths became covered with weed growth and the food supply was exhausted.

The monkeys realized how important workers were to sustain the needs of life. Both monkeys began to work again and the island again became a paradise.

THE PRINCESS AND THE SPARROW

A beautiful young princess lived in a castle beside the woods. She lived with her father, the king, and her mother, the queen. Every day she walked among the palace gardens and into the edge of the woods where she visited the animals. The princess was fond of the many beautiful animals who lived in the woods; and the animals enjoyed having the princess visit. The most handsome prince in all the land courted the princess. She had all the happiness, money and luxury that anyone could want.

Then tragedy struck. The prince fell from his horse, hit his head and died. The princess was sad and grieved very deeply. She no longer walked among the gardens and the woods. Her laughter no longer carried over the castle courtyards and no longer echoed through the forest hills. The princess ate very little and spent most of her time quietly in her room.

Several months passed with no improvement, and the king and queen became very worried. They were afraid the princess would never again be happy and lighthearted. The animals of the woods were also troubled that the princess was so sad. They missed her visits and the echo of her laughter.

The animals discussed among themselves how they could restore happiness to the princess.

The peacock said, "I could fan my beautiful feathers before the princess. She has often commented upon my beauty. Surely, this would make her happy."

The pheasant said, "She has often spoken of my beautiful neck. I could stretch my ringed neck before her, and that would make her happy."

The lion said, "I could roar my most majestic roar. The princess loves my dignity and regal bearing. Surely my stately manner would make her happy."

The musk deer said, "I could give her some perfume. It is a gift fit for a queen! That would make her happy."

As the animals discussed how each could make the princess happy, the small sparrow became very sad. The sparrow said, "I have no worth. I have no gift to offer." The sparrow flew away and landed on a window sill of the castle.

The princess walked to the window to look toward the woods and saw the small sparrow who believed it had no worth and who had flown to the ledge to be alone. She saw the small tears that made the sparrow's eyes glisten in the sunlight and was so moved to see another's sadness that she completely forgot her own. She picked up the small bird and held it close. They both began feeling warm and comforted. The sparrow stopped crying, looked up at the princess and smiled. Then, for the first time in a long while, the princess smiled back. From that moment forward, the princess and the sparrow were the best of friends.

The princess was happy to again have a friend and the sparrow felt proud that it was the only one in all the land who had made the princess smile.

The sparrow who thought it had no worth and no gift gave the greatest gift of all to himself - a friend.

THE LITTLE HOUSE

There was once a little house that lived happily upon the hill. This house sheltered a small family. The family loved the house; and the house loved the family. The children would run up and down the steps of the house. They would bounce their balls off the roof, catch them, and giggle with delight.

One day good fortune came to the family. The father became wealthy; and the family moved away from the little house on the hill to a tall modern apartment building. The house was lonely and sad. It thought, "if I were tall, or better looking, I would not be lonely."

Days passed. Weeks passed. Months passed. Years passed. The little house's doors began to creak. The floors became rough. Worst of all, the little house did not have the warmth of a family inside.

After many seasons a new family came to visit the little house. They liked the house so much that they decided to stay. This made the little house very, very happy.

When the new family decided to keep the house and accept it as their own just the way it was, small and cozy, the little house realized that the purpose in life was not to see how big you could be but to love and be loved.

So the little house accepted the love from the family and gave all its love back to them in return.

THE FARMER AND HIS FENCEPOST

There was a farmer who cut the wood upon his land. He cut trees that grew straight and tall, and from the trees he cut fence posts.

While the farmer was cutting, he found one piece of wood that was knotted and burlled. He said, "This piece of wood is not usable because of the way it is knotted and burlled. I cannot make fence posts from this log." So the farmer took the log and cast it into a ditch alongside the road.

Soon another man, driving an ox cart, saw the log as he returned home from work. He said, "Perhaps I can cut this log for firewood." Then he placed the log upon his ox cart and traveled to his home in town.

As the man arrived at his home, an artist saw the log and ran to greet the man: "Sir, sir, how much would you ask for that log?" The man looked at the log and said, "This is only a scrap that I found on the roadside. It was lying in a ditch. It is worthless. I brought it to use for firewood. You may have it."

The artist took the log from the ox cart and dragged it to his shop. There he cut, chipped, and whittled upon the log. As days passed, the log began to take new form and shape. The grain in the wood swirled and twirled from the knots and burls. When the artist finished his creation, it was a beautiful set of wooden bowls, which he placed in his shop window.

The same day the farmer who cut trees for fence posts came to town to buy a birthday present for his wife. He sought all about town for a present befitting his wife, and when he found the present it was a beautiful set of wooden bowls in the window of the artist's shop.

The farmer entered the shop and said, "How are the bowls in the window priced?" And the artist sold them to the farmer for a very great price.

So it was that the farmer bought back his own log, less the bark and much of the wood, yet he paid for it dearly.

That which the farmer originally saw as a fault in the log he now saw as beauty in the bowls.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

There was once a very rich woman who received a diamond necklace as a gift. The woman liked the necklace. She thought it was pretty, but as time passed she noticed there were flaws in the stones. The better acquainted she became with her necklace, the more she became aware of the flaws in the stones. Eventually she took her necklace to a stone cutter and asked that he remove the flaws. The stone cutter cut the diamonds so that they were much smaller, but the diamonds had no flaws that could be seen with the naked eye.

Later the rich woman acquired a magnifying glass. She used it to examine her diamond necklace and she noticed that there were still flaws that could be seen with the magnifying glass so she took her necklace to the stone cutter and he cut the stones so they were yet smaller.

During this same time, another woman who was very poor, was given a diamond necklace like the one the rich woman had received. This woman saw the flaws in the stones but admired each stone for its own natural beauty. She kept the necklace until she grew old.

Both women had their necklaces for many years, when, one day, they met in a jewelry shop as each was having her own necklace appraised.

The jeweler said to the rich woman, "This necklace is of little value. The diamonds are clear, but they are small and without great worth."

Then the jeweler viewed the poor woman's necklace and said, "These diamonds are large and they are of great worth. They have small flaws and impurities that show they are real stones. These diamonds are of great, great value."

So it was that the rich woman sought to perfect and change that which she had and it became worthless. The poor woman accepted that which she had for what it was, and its true value came to light.

It is the same with love. If you accept a relationship for what it is, it will strengthen and become of great value. If you accept another person only for what you believe you can change them to be, you will cut away at the relationship until it becomes worthless.

Treasure your love and relationships for what they are, not for what they can be made to be. A diamond made by nature is of great value, but a diamond made by man is of little value.

THE WOOLLY - WORMS

There was a little girl by the name of Stella who was afraid of many, many things. Her friends played outside and enjoyed themselves, but often Stella did not go out because she was afraid that she might dirty her clothes. She was afraid that she might scuff the toes of her new shoes. Little Stella was afraid of many things, but the thing that she was most afraid of in the whole world was caterpillars.

The other children called caterpillars woolly-worms. The children of the neighborhood picked them up and played with them. They felt their soft fur and enjoyed them.

Stella thought these worms were most terrible. She thought these worms were disgusting and frightening. They scared her! The children knew that Stella was afraid of woolly-worms. They laughed and teased her because of her fears. Sometimes an older boy would put a little woolly-worm on her shoulder and she would scream and burst into tears. Everyone thought this was just delightfully funny --- everyone except Stella.

Then one day in the spring Stella was sitting on the steps watching the other children play when her grandfather came outside and said, "Stella, why are you not playing with the other children?"

Stella said, "Grandpapa, I fear that if I play with the other children, I will scuff the toes of my shoes, get my new clothes dirty and scrape my knees."

Her grandfather laughed, "Is that all?"

Stella said, "I am also afraid I might see woolly-worms."

The grandfather slid his arms around the little girl and said, "Stella, Stella, what will I ever do with you? Come, there is something I must show you."

Stella said, "Will it hurt? Is it dirty?"

"No no," laughed her grandfather.

So the little girl and her grandfather, hand in hand, arm in arm, walked down the sidewalk, down the driveway and to the willow tree that grew in the yard.

"I have seen the willow tree before, Grandpapa," said Stella.

"Ah, but you have not seen what I wish to show you, little one. Look, look here." The grandfather showed the little girl a small cocoon. He said, "You remember last year when you saw all the woolly-worms going toward this tree?"

The little girl thought. "Yes, Grandpapa."

"Do you remember how they spun a web about themselves and began to sleep?"

"Yes, Grandpapa, I remember," said Stella.

"Well, it is time for those worms to awaken," said the grandfather.

"You mean," said Stella, "that those worms are going to come back out and be here all summer?"

"No, no. There won't be any more worms till fall, Stella, but we do need those worms."

"But, Grandpapa."

"No, Stella, watch, for it is time for this worm to wake up. Watch, child."

At that moment the cocoon began to move. Stella grasped her grandfather's hand tighter, a little bit apprehensive, a little bit afraid of what she might see. Then the cocoon began to open. Out of that cocoon came a wing, then another wing. Yes, inside that cocoon was a beautiful butterfly.

"Grandpapa, this is the butterfly I love so much!"

"You mean the woolly-worm and the butterfly are the same?"

"Yes, child, and those things which you fear, many of them are blessings if you will but allow them to be."

"Oh, Grandpapa. I did not know," said Stella.

She went to the yard and began to play with the other children. Sometimes she scuffed the toes of her shoes, but she enjoyed hopping through the grass. Sometimes she scraped a knee, but she enjoyed playing tag and running with the other children. Sometimes she did get her clothes a little dirty with a fall in a mud puddle, but the laughter and fun of it all was well worth the small inconvenience.

And, well, woolly-worms ... she pets woolly-worms every time she has a chance!

L O P P Y T H E B U N N Y

Loppy was like all the other little bunnies in the field by the pond except he had a long tail. All the other bunnies had fluffy little cotton tails, but Loppy's tail was long and straight.

One day a new bunny moved into the field. The new bunny was a bully and he noticed Loppy's tail immediately. The bully teased Loppy. The girl bunnies would laugh and giggle. The boy bunnies stopped playing with Loppy and Loppy was sad.

One evening the bunnies had a large ice-skating party on the pond. The bunnies built a large bonfire. They skated and toasted marshmallows.

Loppy sat on the edge of the pond crying silently. The bully had teased Loppy, the girls had giggles and the boys would not let him play snap the whip. Loppy cried as he watched the boy bunnies play.

The whip snapped and the bully bunny was thrown near a weak spot in the ice. There was a loud crack, a splash and a cry for help.

The boys and girls couldn't reach the fallen bunny. Loppy ran to the hole and extended his long tail. The bully grabbed Loppy's tail and held tight as Loppy pulled him from the icy water. Cold and wet the bully apologized to Loppy and thanked him for saving his life.

That evening Loppy became a hero. The tail that was different had saved a life. The girl bunnies treated Loppy with respect. Loppy played in the boy bunnies' games and the bully realized the necessity of everyone being an individual.

THE ELM TREE

There was a great and mighty elm tree. It grew to be large and beautiful. It was a magnificent tree. Its leaves grew in abundance and it shaded many animals which came under it for shelter. The birds built nests upon the limbs of the elm tree and found shelter within the branches of the elm tree. The elm tree protected the squirrels which ran up and down the trunk and out onto the limbs. The elm tree was a home to the small insects. Many animals found refuge within the arms and the branches of the elm tree.

The other trees began to turn and look to the elm tree, and they said, "Who is like the elm tree? What other tree among us is like the mighty and beautiful elm tree. Who else gives shelter to so many animals. We grow neither as great nor as majestic as the elm tree. We do not give refuge to as many creatures as the elm nor do we give shade to man as bountifully as the elm tree. How can we even be compared to the wonderful magnificence of the mighty elm."

The elm tree heard the compliments of the other trees and grew proud in his heart. He lifted his branches to heaven and praised himself saying, "Who is like unto me? I am the mighty elm tree. I give shade in abundance. I give shelter in abundance. I offer more than the other trees. I am king of trees."

Then, from a far corner in a deep roaring voice spoke the mighty cedars of Lebanon. "How is it that you have raised yourself in haughtiness? By what right do you presume that you shall be king of trees? Shall you be like unto us, the royal cedars of Lebanon? Your leaves shall turn brown and wither and fall within their season. We being kings shall remain royally clothed year around. How dare you liken yourself unto the royal trees, the cedars of Lebanon? How raise you yourself as a king before us?"

The elm tree realized his error. He had become proud and arrogant. The small trees praised him when he was humble and the mighty cedars of Lebanon humbled him when he became haughty.

CURRENTS

There was once a young Indian boy who was sailing along on the river, gliding gently in his canoe. He steered his canoe from bank to bank using one oar. The stick was flat on one side. Sometimes he would push the water with it. Sometimes he could reach the earth underneath the water and he would push it to move his little boat along.

He came to a fork in the river. On the right, the river went onward flowing, and on the left there was a stream entering into the river. A fast moving, fast flowing stream. The river wanted him to continue in the way, but he wanted to go up the stream. He had to find what was at the end of the stream.

So he started up the stream, but it was with great effort and very laboriously that he moved forward.

Then one day, as he progressed on his journey, he said, "Why fight I the stream? Should I not flow with the stream?"

And he flowed with the stream; and he headed back into the river.

His journey began again.

What did he see?

With ease he glided along and he saw beauty upon both banks of the river. And at the end of the river he found the "Great Water".

THE FROGS

Two frogs once lived in a pond in the field.

The frogs shared a lily pad and spent their days catching flies.

One frog had brightly colored smooth beautiful skin. He spent his days bragging about his appearance. Occasionally he swam in the pond. This was fun and it made his skin glisten so others could see it better. The shiny little frog was a proud frog.

The other frog had brown skin with warts. He quietly ate flies. He tried to avoid extra attention. Sometimes the humble little frog almost seemed to vanish upon the lily pad beside his bright boasting friend.

One day the proud frog took a swim and sat upon the lily pad. His skin glistened for everyone to see as he bragged. The little frog caught the attention of someone very important - the hawk.

The quiet little frog felt the lily pad shake. Water splashed on him as the hawk returned to the sky with a glistening morsel in his beak.

THE ACORN

There was an acorn which hung upon a great and mighty oak tree. Day after day, the acorn enjoyed the sunlight, the cool breezes and the gentle rains. He knew not from whence he had come, and he had no thoughts of the future.

One day, as the acorn hung upon the oak enjoying the sunlight, a messenger bird flew to him and said, "Soon you will fall from the tree. Your cap will be tossed asunder. You will roll end over end and burst! It will be the end of life as you know it."

The acorn heard the messenger bird and was very worried.

"How do you know these things will come to pass?" the little acorn asked.

The messenger bird answered, "I see the leaves are turning colors. This is the sign of the times. When the sign comes to pass, so it is that your destiny must be fulfilled."

The acorn was greatly disturbed. Days passed and the acorn hung from the oak. The breezes became swifter. The acorn began to swing to and fro upon the oak. The winds became cold and chilly. Then, one day, as leaves went rattling by, the acorn flew from the tree. He crashed into the ground. His cap flew asunder and he rolled end over end.

Rains came. Seasons turned. The acorn was buried beneath leaves, and his shell burst.

Was this the end of the little acorn?

It was not the end but the beginning. Little roots began to shoot forth from the acorn into the earth. A sprout began to shoot upward into the air. As the seasons turned, the beginning of an oak tree came forth. Year after year, decade after decade, the little acorn remained until he became a great and mighty oak tree.

So it is with the Earth - not an end, but a beginning!