

Sivi and the Dove



SIVI WAS the greatest King in India. All the other kings did homage to him, and ruled under him.

Sivi was merciful and charitable to all. The least among his subjects could approach him in the certainty of receiving help. No one appealed to him in vain.

So great was the King's reputation for charity and mercy, that the gods in heaven heard it.

Indra, the chief of the gods, decided he would test Sivi. He called the god Yama to him.

'We will see,' he said, 'whether it is real kindness of heart, or whether Sivi merely wishes to make a show before the world.'

So the two gods made a plan by which they would test Sivi's goodness.

Indra, in the form of a dove, flew into the Hall of Justice just as Sivi took his place upon

the throne. Yama, disguised as an eagle, flew after him.

The dove flew to Sivi, and dropping at his feet, implored his protection.

'Oh King, save me from this eagle!' Sivi lifted the dove to his breast, and stroked it gently.

'Do not be afraid, little one,' he said, 'you are safe with me.'

But the eagle flew down and bowed itself before Sivi.

'Oh King, I ask for justice. This dove is my natural food. If you will not give it to me, I shall go hungry. Is that justice?'

'Sire,' said the dove, 'I claim your protection. You have promised me safety. You cannot break your word.'

'That is not fair to me,' said the eagle. 'You are depriving me of my right. I hear that you are renowned for your justice, and that no man appeals to you in vain. Give me then this dove, for I am very hungry.'

'I cannot give you the dove,' said Sivi, 'for I have promised it my protection, but I will order my servants to give you as much meat as you can eat. That will satisfy your hunger, and there will be no need for you to eat the dove.'

The eagle replied, 'I cannot eat meat that has been killed by others. It must be fresh and warm and dripping with blood. If you will give me as much of your own flesh as will equal the weight of the dove, I will accept that instead.'

"So be it," said Sivi.

All the courtiers raised their voices in protest and horror.

'This must be a foul demon that wishes to destroy you,' they cried. 'Be warned, sire, and do not give him what he demands.'

'I have given my word,' said Sivi. Then he ordered a pair of scales to be brought to the Hall of Justice. The dove was placed in one of the pans.

WITH HIS own hand Sivi cut off pieces of his flesh, and put them in the other side of the scale. They did not weigh as much as the dove. More and more he cut, but still the dove weighed down the scale.

Sivi was growing weak from loss of blood. He could hardly hold the knife in his hand, and still there was not enough of his flesh to weigh equally with the dove.

So bowing his head, Sivi got into the scale, thus giving his whole body as a ransom for the dove.

He had no sooner done so than Indra and Yama appeared in their true forms.

'Well done, King Sivi!' they said. 'We have tested you, and found you have real love in your heart. At the cost of your own life you would keep our word.'

Then they made the King's body whole again, and giving him their blessing they vanished away.

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A Near Miss

Wilfred was notoriously bashful in the presence of the opposite sex, so his parents were pleased but surprised when he announced he was headed downtown to see a girl. He was back, however, within the hour.

"You're home mighty early, son," observed his mother. "Didn't you see her?"

"Sure did," enthused Wilfred, "and if I hadn't ducked down an alley she'd have seen me!"