

## The Prince of Reinmar

Once there was a country named Reinmar that was ruled by a great prince. His name was Rety and he was filled with wisdom, goodness and kindness. His people loved him and he loved his people.

Prince Rety would frequently travel among his people and to see how they lived everyday. He would go down into the fields with him to help them in their daily work and to talk to them, so that he might know what problems they were facing.

When people fought against him, he would try to make peace with them and he would be the first to apologize in a dispute with others. Although all of the realm of Reinmar belonged to him, he did not use its wealth for its own enjoyment. He used his money to build churches, home for orphans, mentally unfit and abandoned people.

Although the people loved him so much, he often reminded them that it was not he who they should thank, but God who was his Master and who was the true provider of all the good things that they had in this world.

Prince Rety had three daughters and one son. They were Kerina, Sepa, Emora and the boy was named Anselm. As was the tradition of Reinmar for centuries gone past, even though the boy was the youngest, he had to inherit the throne, because he was a boy and the male-line took precedence.

Prince Rety wanted his daughters to marry princes of other nations, but they were so influenced by their father's teaching and example that they chose to live a life consecrated to God as nuns in a cloister instead. Rety accepted it and so the three princesses joined religious orders and took vows.

When they finally left, Prince Rety would speak to each of them one by one and told them a riddle that they could not understand: 'freedom grows out from the inside, it is not what is given by the outside.'

Rety wrote this proverb in calligraphy upon a stone tablet that was placed conspicuously on a hill overlooking the capital city of Reinmar for all to see, although few of the people understood what it meant. When asked about it, Rety said that it was a proverb that his father had told him and it came from his grandfather before him. He said that it meant that freedom comes from what you do, it is not what others give you when they removed restrictions or let you do as you will. But, still few people could understand this.

The young prince Anselm did not want to follow the path of his sisters. He craved the throne and the power that it brought him. Despite his father's constant reprimands and stress, Anselm always behaved selfishly and never like his father. As a child he realized that he had the power to order servants to be punished when they displeased him, and he took great pleasure in having them beaten by the guards or chained up whenever they did something that he imagined was even the slightest bit disrespectful towards him.

He threatened his sisters and said that if they didn't do as he liked, when he became the ruling prince, he would have them punished. Emora went to their father to tell him this and Rety punished his son for

saying such a thing, but young prince Anselm did not heed the punishment or change the way he thought.

Rety had no other son and it was not within his power to deny the throne to his son and give it to another, since the ancient laws of the nation stated that the succession had to occur thus. He punished his son in many ways, but it was to no avail. His son still kept to his crooked way up to the day that Rety finally died and the throne was passed on.

Prince Anselm was born a prince and he never knew in his entire life what it really meant to suffer. Unlike his father, he never dared to go to visit the common people and live their lives alongside of them.

His experiences with hunger were when the chef couldn't cook his favourite meals as fast as he demanded. His experiences with thirst were when his butler could not bring his wine glass to him at the moment he desired it. His experiences with homelessness were when his carriage could not bring him back to his palace or another destination as quickly as he wished.

However, in the principality of Reinmar, there were many people in his land that went to bed hungry, who did not have clean water or who had to sleep in squalid conditions or with no home at all.

Although his father brought in the best teachers of the land to educate him, it was of no use, for he wanted to play his games instead and refused to follow the lessons of his tutors. Many other children never went to school at all and could have had such a different future if the resources spent on Anselm had been given to them instead.

Even though there were always pressing matters of state to call to his attention once he gained the throne, he did not wish to learn how the world worked, because it was too boring for him, although he sometimes wondered from which tree it was that bread grew from.

When Anselm took the throne, all the nation came to celebrate it, although they did not know well the character of Anselm yet.

The first hint of it came, however, at the moment when the bishop was about to place the crown on the head of the prince. The prince disdainfully grabbed the crown out of the bishop's hand and placed it on his own head, saying, "I do not need you to be prince! I can make myself a prince."

The old bishop who had met the youth before and knew his selfish character pleaded with him that this was not what his father would have liked. The pleadings of the bishop fell on deaf ears, however, and young prince then ordered his guards to have the bishop removed.

When dignitaries of other nations came to greet the prince upon his succession to the throne, the prince was upset when he saw that they came dressed in clothes better than his and greater luxuries than his father ever provided him with. This made him feel inferior to them and he reasoned that this could not continue.

He asked his court advisors what was needed so that he could have clothes and trivial luxuries that were as good as those foreign princes and the advisors said that the state didn't have the money to pay for them. The prince rebuked them and called them stupid, for he said that the state had such money, and he thus ordered new taxes to be placed on the people to pay for the lifestyle that he wished to live, so that he might not be inferior to anyone else.

The advisors pleaded with him and used all of their wisdom to try to convince him otherwise, even claiming that doing so might cause the people to lose their love for him or even hate him, but the prince would not listen to any instruction.

And so, the people of Reinmar suffered under the heavy taxes of their prince who felt that life was too short to let any sweetness to pass him by.

He never grew up. His life was always sheltered behind the safety of a hedge on every side; it never had the pains that can allow a person to mature and make them understand that life was more than just them. He was given everything his heart desired, but instead of being thankful for what he had, he could only find himself fretting about what he lacked.

Prince Anselm had everything, and everything was nothing – thus he could never be satisfied.

The prince ordered that statues and images of him should be placed throughout the kingdom. The people said to one another that his father had not done such a thing because he wanted them to remember God first.

But they were powerless to change anything. If anyone complained, the guards would come and arrest the person.

The guards complained to the prince that it was too much to keep arresting people that were complaining, since there were too few of them and suggested that the prince should find a way to win the favour of the people instead. The prince lambasted them for this statement and said that they understood nothing. He then ordered new taxes to be raised in order to pay for more guards and to hire more soldiers, so that his realm would be better brought to peace.

As the taxes grew and grew, the anger of the people grew with it. The people rebelled in some places, but the soldiers of the prince would quell them and destroy those who tried to change the status quo.

The prince published new laws that punished people for writing books or making statements that were seen as being unsupportive of his rule. An oath of loyalty to the prince was published that all in the nation were required to swear to or else be put to death. The bishops, while not liking the prince, urged the people to keep the oaths that they swore, since such oaths were made with God's name.

The people groaned under his yoke, but they could not find freedom. They dreamed of a day when things could be different, but they woke up to a reality that they could never leave from.

Nothing could change the prince. The preaching of the bishop, the advice of his ministers, the complaints of the people, the rebellions against his rule... nothing could change his mind, and nothing could give the people the freedom they yearned for.

There was a peasant named Easton, an old man with children and grandchildren, who lived on his farm out in the countryside.

Easton's wife had already died and he still ploughed the fields and gathered fruit from the orchards, so long as his body was still able to work.

One day, some of the soldiers of the king arrived at his field as he was picking from the apple trees and gathering the fruit into baskets. Two of the soldiers approached him and demanded that the prince be given his rightful portion as the taxes dictated.

Easton asked what the rightful portion was. The soldiers pointed at his basket and demanded that half of it be given to the prince.

They then took the baskets without a further word from Easton, loaded it on a cart and left.

The soldiers then went on to the next farm and then the one after it, and so on.

After a week had passed, one of the neighbours came to Easton's farm to tell them that the whole community was enraged, because the prince had taken so much that they could not support themselves like this. They decided to collectively resist the next time that the soldiers came to collect taxes from them.

Easton spoke to them and asked them how many of them were alive when Retpa, the grandfather of the prince and the father of Rety was prince of Reinmar. Some of the older farmers said that they remembered.

"And when Retpa was prince, how were things different than they are now?"

An old farmer named Fusp spoke, "I remember we had even less than we do now. But that was because life was harder, not because our taxes were lower."

"They had less, so that means they were unhappy?"

Fusp responded, "No, on the contrary, I think they were happier back then."

"How did children treat their parents at that time?"

Fusp said, "Much better than now. Back then we looked up at our parents as heroes. Today, I see my grandchildren won't listen to anything their parents say to them?"

"When young people got married, what was different back then?"

"They got married, that was what was different. They didn't go from person to person to try out their relationships. They settled down and stayed loyal to each other through thick and thin."

A younger farmer named Yevan spoke out, "What does this have to do with anything? Why don't you get to the point?"

Easton asked Fusp again, "When Retpa was prince, were people politer?"

"Yes"

"Were people more honest?"

"Yes"

"Why is it different, now?"

Fusp said, "I don't know."

Easton said, "Well, I do. The world didn't come upon us and change around us. We have made the world like this."

Yevan said, "You know we are here to talk about the prince and all the bad things he is doing. Why are you wasting our time on this?"

Easton said, "The prince is one of us. Our nation has become corrupt and he is just one of us. He is just an individual extension of the behaviour of the whole populace. What he does is just a magnified version of what all of us are doing. If he is guilty, then so are all of us, because we are doing the same things."

There was silence for a brief moment after Easton said this, but then Yevan said, "That is just stupid. I don't behave the way that Prince Anselm behaves. He is ridiculous and should not be the prince, and we are all good people."

"No, you are wrong. He is a reflection of our own society. He is one pulled from among our own ranks. We deserved to have him as our leader. He is narcissistic, rude, selfish, and cares not for morality – the same is true of all of us. You do not admit that you do anything wrong, just in the same way as he never would admit he does something wrong – he is a reflection of our own sin. Just as we are, so is he."

Fusp said, "What do you propose we do, then? Even if that is true, how is that going to help us?"

"What did our late Prince Rety write in calligraphy on Boden hill outside the capital?"

Fusp said, "I cannot recall exactly, something about freedom is on the inside, I think?"

A woman named Litala spoke out, "The phrase was 'freedom grows out from the inside, it is not what is given by the outside'."

Eason said, "If we want freedom, then that is our answer."

Yevan said, "OK, that makes no sense at all. Why don't you just stop talking and those of us who still have brains can think of what we will do."

Fusp said, "Child, you shouldn't think that the ancient wisdom was as meaningless as that. The old prince wrote those words for a reason."

Yevan said, "And what reason was that?"

Litala said, "We enslaved ourselves!"

Eason nodded and said, "That was indeed the meaning of those words. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Eason of Funnor and my father was an advisor to the court of Rety in that time. Those words were not Rety's own words, but they came from wisdom written down in the chronicles of the ancient princes of Reinmar, which my father was familiar with and told to Prince Rety. I have lived long enough on this Earth to have understood exactly what they meant."

Eason started walking and the perplexed crowd stared at him. He turned around and said, "Whoever wants freedom come with me, I know where we need to go."

Some of the crowd followed him and others stayed behind to plan their resistance to the prince.

Eason walked along the road and the others asked where they were going. Eason said, "God uses sinners to punish sinners and He puts the sinful in charge of sinful people to teach them about their own mistakes. They fight against the sinful prince, they are just fighting against their own image and God punishes them with only more enslavement. They demand that such base and immoral persons must be punished, because that is what justice dictates, and God accedes to their demands and agrees to their arguments by adding to their own punishment as the base and immoral people that they are."

"When Anselm's advisors spoke to him, he did not listen. When the bishops pleaded with him, he did not listen. When the whole country groaned to him, he did not listen. We have wasted our time talking to Anselm, when we forgot that Anselm is merely a servant and there is another above his head with more authority than he that we have been ignoring and ignoring, who if we had talked to, all of our problems could have been solved. We have ignored him by our actions that we have done everyday for generation to generation and Anselm became our prince merely to get us to wake up."

Eason arrived at a church and beckoned the group to come in. He knelt and signalled the others to do the same and then he led them in prayer to their highest Prince, the true Prince of Reinmar, that He might pardon their sins and grant them freedom once again.

All Glory to God