

## MESSIAH

Ever since the old king died and the new king took the throne in as brilliant a display of majesty as had ever been seen or known, the whole of the nation was in an excited frenzy. All was designed to capture the favor of this newest and possibly greatest of royalty and to please him by getting their entire house in "perfect order". Those of the throngs who were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the coronation parade were dazzled by the rich overflow of jewels studded on everything in sight. The diamond -speckled gowns were of gold and silver lace. Gems covered the horses and the indescribable carriages. All majesty manifested with the ceremonies spilling over into weeks of jubilation. Ah, yes! The impact on the kingdom was one of absolute rejuvenation.

Throughout the length and breadth of the land Ambassadors of the Court were dispatched to each hamlet, village and city to reveal to the people the new royal orders and also to bring glad tidings of an imminent special visit to be made by the king himself. He wished to greet his subjects and fellow countrymen and women, and to personally establish his decrees answering any questions from the people. Having been away from his country since early boyhood, (he had lived in secret with a peasant family in a distant land because of waves of treachery), he also wished to confirm the people's confidence in his new leadership. He would be as one who was sensitive to them, as one who cared.

So, naturally the entire country was in an uproar to prepare for their king and the beauty of his splendor, as he was certain to be accompanied by the entire Royal Court. Many a day was spent by the local women around the wash wells piecing together all that they had learned about the elegance of the ladies of the Court- the priceless gowns and matchless hair pieces richly adorned, and all of the latest styles with exotic perfumes and scented face powders from far away places. The anticipation was growing daily to behold the wonders of such beauty and grace. Many openly envied and longed for but a taste of such wealth.

One particular village, which shall be left unnamed, decided long in advance of all others that they would ready themselves to welcome their king in a way truly fitting him and his fellow travelers. After weeks of meetings and much in the way of plans, every soul threw himself or herself totally into the special work. All the buildings were remodeled and decorated. The market place was widened and covered by a new series of colored canopies. The animals were all groomed perfectly and the trees and shrubs throughout the neighboring countryside were trimmed and pruned and dressed with beautiful hangings including bright ornaments.

The women went to no ends to make handsome outfits for their husbands; while the children had the best that could be bought or bartered for. And the women themselves- well, as can be expected the finest in dresses and shawls and hats were set aside, the brightest and fanciest of course. Days were spent deciding on hair styles and just the right touch or dash of this and that. Any family heirlooms were either to be worn if possible, or at ready display.

The village officials went to the greatest lengths to arrange proper banqueting and music and dancing, all in honor of their new king, certainly. Nothing like this had ever

happened to their little "world"; so, this was going to be a milestone, memorable for all village generations.

"Maybe the king would see all of their efforts and grant favors to them, or make special mention of them to the right people, or lift them up somehow!" And on and on went the thoughts of most. "After all," the officials reasoned, "considering the effort done just for him, they deserved recognition."

Whatever the case, the buildings, the village people, the market place and all of the surrounding countryside were clothed in their immaculate brightest and richest to receive the brightness and richness of their glorious, new king, in all of his great wealth and power.

Now this king had his own plan. Being a very wise person, he knew that a truly strong kingdom was one that was first strong within. He also knew that if the hearts of the people were in the right place, then his rule over them would be one where all would be honestly lifted up in prosperity from the least of them to the greatest. Order would be easily kept. And any enemy whatsoever coming against any part of the kingdom would be met by the whole.

His main desire in establishing his rule and leadership was to gain the trust and unified cooperation of everyone. To do this he had decided to show the people that true wealth and true strength were to be found within a person's character and not on the surface. Each of his subjects had a like capacity for this- a capacity he shared with them. The women- true lasting inner strength of beauty; the men- true increasing stature. So, dressed simply in the common clothes of the village people and traveling by foot and sometimes by horseback, he meant to cover the entire kingdom reaching the people right at the level where they lived. There he would reveal to them the common bonds which united them all and which would make their kingdom the strongest and the most prosperous.

By chance, it might seem, or by special design if seen through more knowing eyes, the first village chosen for a royal visit was none other than this one so extravagantly given to all the extra preparations and readiness. Much was their building, and the adorning of everything and everyone. Husbands were alerted to catch their fainting wives who continually talked about the "overwhelming beauty that would be so wonderfully displayed". And of the "majestic one", as they had labeled him, and his "court of glamour". After all the preparations, the day was now upon them.

There was hardly a cloud in the summer lit sky and a light breeze moved pleasantly through the entire area. The crowds began to gather early along the road winding into the village- now given the ceremonial title of the King's Road. Some short tempers flared as the best views became prize territory. But everything was eventually settled, especially with the many visitors from near and far away. The leaders were in place along with the banquet, the musicians, the dancers and all of the little children with baskets full of freshly cut blossoms to toss before the procession. When the sun reached its highest place in the sky, according to the royal message, the king was to come to them.

As the moments sped by the excitement and the anticipation built into a feverish pitch, with all heads turned and all eyes straining down the road. Soon the word came from one of the lookouts on horseback that the only party approaching was that of a few men who looked like peddlers of some sort. But beyond them, the road winding into the distant

valley was completely empty. The officials calmed the restless crowd by telling them to wait patiently for just a short while longer.

About half an hour later another scout came in from the edge of the valley saying the same thing, though he said the peddlers or drifters were now just on the outskirts of the village. But, he had warned them about getting in the way of the grand events. He assured the officials he was very direct and stern with them. Now the grumbling and murmuring began to move over the crowds once more requiring some very quick, strong words to still. They were all told to rest for awhile longer and that a general call would be sounded in plenty of time to reassemble. About then the three weary travelers entered into the heart of this scene. They walked their horses to the center ground and halted. As they looked slowly around, they carefully examined all the impressive preparations and the handsome people so busy milling around. Most villagers hardly noticed them at all. So, going over to where the supposed leaders were standing, one of them boldly asked the meaning of what was seen in the area. To this he received a sharp brush off, and another stern warning to stay out of the way. Then he stopped them short by telling them to open their eyes for the one they had expected was now in their midst. In fact they were now talking to him!

The officials and leaders laughed for some time before calling on the crowds to present to them their new royal leader. The resulting uproar drowned out any further attempts by any of the three to get a word in. Finally, tired of the amusement, the people turned on the three, stripped them, beat them and ran them out of the village tied across their horses. Not a few of the frustrated women got in a good solid kick or fist, spitting and cursing along with the best of them! With this distraction disposed of, the villagers settled into a long and fruitless wait, ending in a sudden, tragic surprise for them all.