

**THE TREK OF
AMNOR AND GENET**

A FABLE

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John D. Boenke was born in 1926 in Rossford, Ohio and grew up during the Great Depression. He served in the U. S. Army in 1946 - 47 in the Medical Corps. In 1951 he received a degree of Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Michigan. After college, Mr. Boenke worked in research and engineering for the General Electric Company. Later he was the Manager of an engineering test laboratory for Lau Blower Company, then Chief Engineer for Halsey Taylor Water Cooler Corp. and Senior Design Engineer for The Werner Ladder Company. Before retiring in 1989, Mr. Boenke also owned and operated a small motel in Ashtabula, Ohio.

Since retiring, Mr. Boenke has been interested in reading and studying in the areas of Cosmology, Theoretical Physics and Philosophy. In addition, he has an interest in the origins of religions. He has privately published several short stories and some poetry.

DEDICATION

This little fable is
dedicated to those who
earnestly and thoughtfully
meditate on their relationship
with life and other humans

THE TREK OF AMNOR AND GENET

John D. Boenke

In the early days of the earth, at the very center of the known world, there was a large lake surrounded by a rolling plain. Beyond the plain in all directions rose the sharp cold mountains over which no one could travel. The lake was of great size being many miles across. It took more days than could be counted on all the fingers of the hands of all the village officials to travel around the lake, even if one walked constantly.

Little villages situated themselves at the edge of the lake in an orderly fashion, and were havens for all the people of the world, although that was not a large number of individuals at that time. On the southern edge, between the shallow valleys where two clear, bubbling, exuberant rivers entered the lake, the beautiful village of Abersham scattered its farms and houses in a kaleidoscope of color. Many bright green trees waved over the mud huts of Abersham directing the breeze and keeping the inhabitants of Abersham comfortable in the hottest rays of the Sun.

Colorful flowers grew in almost all seasons making the window boxes and the village paths fill with fragrances, lifting the spirits and putting smiles on the faces of everyone passing by. The people worked together, each sharing the profit of his or her own tasks. Market days were very festive and served as times of celebration of their life together. Around the village the small farms were kept clean and neat. The citizens of Abersham had a good and peaceful life.

Abersham was the home of Amnor the gentle one and his wife Genet the quiet one. Their farm was not the largest of the surrounding farms, but it was near the water, and always produced the largest, sweetest fruits, and the tastiest, most crisp vegetables. Though they had grown delicious fruits and vegetables for many years, they had never been able to have children. However they shared the joy of the village children, and were known always to have a golden or bright red apple or other fruit handy to give to any child who happened to stop by their farm.

One day, as Amnor was sitting in his doorway resting between jobs, the village Magistrate came walking along the path and turned into Amnor's yard. "Good day to you Amnor the gentle," he greeted in the traditional fashion.

"Good day, honorable Magistrate," returned Amnor. "It is my pleasure to see you today."

"Thank you, gentle Amnor. Do you have a short while to talk with me?"

"Certainly, Magistrate. Nothing needs immediate attention. Come onto the porch and have a seat."

The Magistrate settled himself on a cushioned chair and asked, “Is Genet, the quiet one here also? Ah! I see. Good day to you Genet the quiet.” As he spoke, Genet had appeared at the doorway with a tray holding three glasses of cider which she passed around.

Genet spoke softly, but directly, “Good day, Magistrate. May I offer you a cool drink?” Then she came to sit next to Amnor.

The Magistrate thanked Genet, then continued speaking to them both, “Please let me say at the beginning, this is more than a social visit. I have come to ask a favor of you, and if I may, I would like to describe it to the two of you.” Amnor and Genet nodded in acquiescence, and the old man went on. “We, your leaders, must ensure the people of the village will continue to be able to live for all the foreseeable future as we do now. Lately, the Elders have been discussing their concern for the future of our village. They feel there are actions we must take to assure this, but they cannot reach total agreement on the courses to follow.”

Amnor thought a moment, then answered, “I agree honorable Magistrate, that we must look to the future, but I do not understand what may be wrong now. It seems to me all is well in our village and world. Of what are the Elders concerned?”

“Their concerns are vague concerns. They cannot be expressed exactly, and that is partly what disturbs them. Our lives are fine now, but how can we be sure they will continue to be so in the future?”

Amnor and Genet thought intently for a few minutes, then Genet offered softly in her sweet voice, “We cannot know, Magistrate.”

More silence followed until the Chief Elder added, “That is how the Elders feel, but they also have decided we must try to find out whether there is something we are missing in assuring the future. That is why I have come to you.” Amnor and Genet sat attentively waiting for the Magistrate to explain. After a suitable pause to enjoy the cider, he continued. “The Elders have decided we must visit the other villages around our lake and talk with their people to discover what their feelings are on this subject, and what they are doing about it.”

Amnor respectfully waited a moment, then asked, “If our Elders go to request this information of the other villages, will they not be perceived as trying to gain an advantage and not be given precisely the right or truthful answers?”

“You are undoubtedly correct, Amnor. That is exactly why I am here. The Elders believe a person not in an official position would do better to go on this search. It must be a person who is not obtrusive, but one who can quietly learn that which is available for learning. For these reasons, they have decided you would be a proper person to go. Will you do it?”

Amnor sat and gazed out over his farm. The greens and yellows and reds of the growing plants were some of the most pleasant scenes in his experience. He enjoyed his life here and would not like to leave this and miss the ripening of his labors. “What will become of my farm while I am gone?” he asked, turning toward his old friend.

“You have many comrades in the farm families which surround your farm. I am sure they would each be glad to give a little time to care for your crops also.”

Amnor turned his gaze to Genet and inquired, “If I go on this errand for the Elders, will you come with me? Will you walk the many miles necessary to visit our neighboring villages? Will you share the privations we may experience when we do not find food or shelter? And will you listen with me for the wisdom we may encounter?”

Genet studied her husband's face for several minutes, then replied tranquilly, “I will go and share with you.”

Amnor smiled and spoke, “Honorable Magistrate, we will be pleased to go as you request to search for any secrets, or ideas, or laws, or to learn of any actions we must take to preserve our village and our way of life.”

“Thank you, Amnor the gentle and Genet the quiet. Remember, the best wishes of the Elders, and the spirit of our village goes with you. We shall be eager to talk with you when you return.” The Magistrate rose and with his slow, deliberate walk returned along the path to the village. Amnor and Genet entered their house and began the task of preparing for their journey.

Amnor and Genet rose early the next morning, so they could travel in the cool of the day. Even though they had stayed up late preparing for the trip, they decided an early start would be to their advantage. The evening before, Amnor had visited several of his friends, who each readily agreed to assume part of the work on his farm while he was gone. They wished him well and assured him he need not worry about the safety of his house, and land, and crops, as they would care for them all.

Amnor strapped to his back a knapsack which they had loaded with food and equipment. There was a warm blanket tied on top for their comfort at night. He also carried a flask of water on his belt. Genet carried a large bag on a shoulder strap in which she had placed many articles she considered they might need. She had spent a great deal of time the previous evening searching their house and deciding on exactly the right items.

So they set out. Amnor was of average size, but he was very strong from years of work in the fields. Genet could not match his strength, but she had much endurance and could certainly do her part. They decided to start by following the edge of the lake in the direction the Sun went. They walked with the Sun at their backs and talked for a while, but sometimes they walked in silence. They appeared as any ordinary itinerants, looking for work where it might be available, or simply living off the land in a carefree fashion. The first evening on their journey, they shared a simple supper of berries and wild vegetables which they found in the woods near the lake road. Amnor and Genet slept under the stars, and were awakened by the birds who began complaining when the Sun disturbed their rest with its early morning red rays calling them to a new day. As the couple prepared rice and an herb tea for breakfast, they began to discuss their challenging mission and how best to accomplish it.

“Genet, my aviole,” (this was a term of endearment Amnor used for

Genet which referred to a small beautiful bird with a soft song. In modern days the aviole has become extinct), “What are your thoughts on how we can do that which the Elders wish?”

Genet wrapped Amnor in love carried by a smile which began deep within her heart and flowed out through her face in golden radiance. After a moment to consider, she answered, “Amnor, my dearest, I have always noticed that persons are most eager to tell their thoughts to those who agree with them, and to those who are willing to listen. Men and women like to display their knowledge by telling others about it, especially when it is not met with controversy. I think most people who like to talk feel that others need the benefit of their great experience. So, we should act as though we are not too well informed or do not understand very much, then just agree as appropriate and listen carefully.”

Genet's love entered Amnor's large, understanding, sapphire eyes, and returned to her warmly reflected and doubly intensified. He spoke with respect, “You are very perceptive, as usual. I can not think of a better plan, because there probably is none. Let us proceed as you suggest, and we will learn whether it is correct.”

The early morning hours of walking passed quickly, and just before noon they came upon an isolated farm located on a small hill which rose directly from the lake. In the farm yard was a well, and a husky farmer was busy drawing water. As they approached, Amnor called to the him, “Good day, farmer. May the sun shine on you this day.”

“Good day, travelers. What brings you to my humble farm?” he asked.

“We are wandering in search of work, food and our destiny,” Amnor answered him, then added, “May we have a little of your water to fill our water jug again?” for they wished to keep a more than adequate water supply.

“Certainly, traveler. Fresh, clean water is the right of all creatures under the sun.”

“Thank you, farmer, but is there anything we might do for you in exchange?”

“No, my needs are not great. We make a living here. Although at times it is more scant than at others. My greatest problem today is what to give my wife as a present. Today is our wedding anniversary, but I have not had time or opportunity to make anything for her. This is a sadness for me as we truly enjoy our life here, but it would be only an existence without her. With her, the Sun shines and the meadowlark sings. She is my greatest joy.”

“We would gladly give you what we have,” answered Amnor, “although I doubt your wife would have any interest in our meager Belongings.”

“You are undoubtedly correct. Perhaps providence will furnish something yet.”

Genet listened in silence and watched as Amnor filled their water jug, then she turned to the farmer and said, “Honest farmer, let me write some words for you to give to your wife. I think she will be as pleased with them as with any other present, if you give them to her in truth.” Then Genet took from her shoulder bag a wax tablet and a stylus, and in a few minutes impressed some words on the tablet. “Here,” she said, handing the tablet to the man, “give this to your wife and let it be your honest gift to her.”

The farmer took the tablet in his gnarled hands and read in a husky voice:

“The mountains rise, the lake lies still,
Our home is nestled on the hill,
Such joy I feel among these things,
Your love has given my heart wings.”

“That is lovely, good traveler. I accept it as freely as it is given and I thank you for it. You are the providence I was looking for. Thank you again.”

“You are most welcome. We thank you for the water and wish you a happy day. Perhaps you can tell us how far it is to the next village along the lake, also,” she added.

“It is no great distance,” he replied, “You will reach it before the sun is directly overhead.”

“Peace to you farmer,” returned Amnor, “and we thank you for your help.”

Amnor and Genet continued on their way, and in a short while they entered a small village. The streets were deserted, but as they walked along an old man came hurrying from a modest but neat house and started down the path next to the road. “Good day to you, distinguished villager,” Amnor greeted him, “We are strangers here and are looking for the market place. Would you guide us?”

“Welcome strangers, I am Dundar the Elder, from where do you come?”

“We are Amnor and Genet. We come traveling from the south and are looking for work, food and our destiny,” Amnor replied.

“You have come on a particularly propitious day then, Amnor and Genet. Today is a feast day for the village, since it is the day with the longest daylight of all the year. I am late to the celebration, but follow me and you may join in the festivity.”

As they hurried to the center of town, Dundar continued to explain, “Today we honor everyone in the village and recognize the good work they do during the whole year. We also acknowledge our appreciation for the worth of everyone as individuals, and celebrate our happiness together. We hold a parade with everyone passing a reviewing stand, and we all cheer as the various groups go by.”

“Pardon my ignorance, honorable Dundar, but if everyone parades, who is in the stands to cheer?” asked Amnor.

The Elder answered with a smile, then said, “Come and see. It is a unique celebration.”

As they neared the village square, Amnor and Genet could see a reviewing stand with many people sitting on it. Some were even standing nearby as there was not room for all. When they reached the seats, several people arose and bowed in greeting to the old man and spoke respectfully, “Good day, worthy Dundar, honor us by sitting here.”

“Good day friends,” he returned, “and please welcome these strangers who are visiting our village today.” Room was made, and they all three sat down. In the next moment an elderly woman moved to the front of the stands and began to speak. “Dear friends, as Magistrate of the village, I welcome you to our feast day. I remind you all to parade in order, and hold your banners high with pride. Afterwards, freely enjoy yourselves by partaking of the food which has been prepared for this day, and by participating in the planned festivities. Now let the parade begin.”

As she moved aside, a small group of men, women and children, who had been standing at the end of the street, began to move forward in orderly, straight ranks and files in front of the stands. They carried elaborate flags and colorful banners bearing various symbols on them, which the families displayed proudly as they paraded past the other villagers sitting in the stands. People cheered and clapped as each group of families went by. Dundar explained to Amnor and Genet, “These first people are laborers such as the street cleaners, refuse collectors, haulers, road repairers, landscapers, and so on.

Genet noticed that people were gradually leaving the stands and going to the end of the street to form into the parading groups. Also, as each group passed the reviewing stand and reached the other end of the street, they disassembled and returned to fill the empty seats in the stand. Eventually, everyone would take a turn marching and a turn sitting and cheering. The old man continued describing the groups, “Here are the farmers, and teachers, and public servants, and merchants.” The people kept cheering and applauding as each group passed. In due time, almost all had paraded.

Dundar then turned to Amnor and Genet, and offered, “We would be honored if you would march also. Come with me now as it is the turn of the Elders, and you can be our guests.”

Amnor and Genet followed Dundar and walked sedately with a group of the Elders of the village along the parade route. Everyone else had paraded before them, and the Elders were the last, followed only by the Magistrate in her flowing robes. The whole village gave a final shout as the parade ended,

and they all moved to the village square where tables of food were laid out ready for the feast. As Amnor and Genet sat eating with their benefactor, the Elder, they were greeted by various villagers and welcomed.

As he ate, Amnor turned to Dundar and remarked, "Good Elder, I am much impressed by your day of celebration, but one thing puzzles me. I noticed your parade started with the lowest workers and ended with the highest officials. I would have thought the officials would have come first and the ordinary people last."

Dundar responded, "I see you do not fully understand our purpose. We believe all persons are equal in worth regardless of their station in the scheme of social structure. Usually, in day to day activities, the leaders do come first as a matter of necessity or expediency. Today, we purposely reverse that to demonstrate equality to all and to remind ourselves of the true nature of everyone's worth to our society."

Later, there was dancing on the green and games were organized for the children. As the afternoon advanced into evening, Dundar invited Amnor and Genet to stay with him overnight. Before the end of the celebration, the three left the younger people who continued their fun late into the night. The Elder and his two guests sat talking a little while in his small home before retiring.

"Good Elder," said Amnor, "Your festival today interests me greatly. It is most unusual. You must have elaborate laws and customs to allow for such a thing to take place."

"Not at all, gentle Amnor. Our government is of the simplest sort possible. Here, I have a copy of our laws on my table. You are welcome to peruse them as much as you like."

Amnor leafed through the book slowly, while Genet engaged the Elder in a lively conversation on the best ways of preparing potatoes. Amnor found nothing unusual in the law book, and rejoined the conversation just in time to express his opinion that sweet potatoes were best prepared with honey and nuts.

The couple slept well and arose late. It was midmorning before they finished a breakfast with Dundar and again began their journey. Taking leave of their new friend with many thanks, they turned once more to following the edge of the lake, which was now turning toward the north. The next several days were spent walking without coming to any more villages. The couple passed an occasional farm, but most of the land was too rocky in this area to be a home for many people.

One day, in mid-afternoon, they saw in the distance the beginning of a large village. As they approached, they noticed signs of much activity. People were hurrying around, and the news criers were calling out announcements along the streets. It seemed a meeting of all the citizens was to take place in the village square, and the travelers let themselves be swept along with the rest of the people towards the meeting. As they moved along, they found themselves walking next to an older man who seemed disturbed and was talking to himself.

“Tell me sir, if you may,” began Amnor, “what is the occasion which draws everyone so furiously to your village square? We are strangers passing through, and we wonder what is happening.”

“Good stranger, it is a perilous time here,” he answered. “Our leaders have decided we should attack our neighbors to the north. I think this is irrational, and I am much against it, but there is little I can do. I am not yet an Elder, and my voice fades against the tide of opinion which is espoused by our leaders.”

“That is terrible,” chimed in Genet, “Why do your leaders want to do such a thing? Have your neighbors mistreated you?”

“No indeed,” the man replied, “but we have problems here locally. Over the years our population has grown, and we can no longer grow sufficient food for ourselves. The land is more suited to growing fiber plants, and we have more than is needed for cloth and clothing, but for food---” His voice trailed off into silence.

“Pardon my ignorance, good villager, but why will attacking your neighbors help this problem?” questioned Amnor.

“Ah! Exactly!” the man continued. “I do not believe it will help. The land of our neighbors of Norplat (for such was the name of the next village) is much more fertile, and they can raise food in abundance. Our leaders wish to go and take some of their land so we may also grow the food we need. How could we use such land? It would not work. We would be under the constant harassment of the Norplatians. I feel we should negotiate with our neighbors, but our leaders are impatient and will not listen to me. Oh! What to do? What to do?”

By now the three had reached the square which was crowded with many villagers. As they pressed to the front, they saw the Magistrate of Sudplat, as this village was named, mounting to the platform in front of them. He drew his official robes, which were voluminous and richly embroidered, around himself and, surveying the assembled citizens, began to speak. “Good citizens of Sudplat, as your leader I must propose a serious action for all of us to take. You all know we need more food for the village. The only way to get it is to have more fertile land for raising crops. To the north of us is plenty of crop land, but the Norplat people consider it to be all theirs. I believe we have a right to some of it. Do you not agree?”

There were cries of “Yes! Yes! We have a right!”

The Magistrate continued, “Our Elders have decided we must go and take that which is rightfully ours.”

More cries of, “Yes! Yes! It is ours! It is ours!” were heard.

The Magistrate's voice became very serious, “I ask all the able bodied citizens of the village to volunteer to march north tomorrow to take the land

we need, then be ready to occupy it by force, if necessary. Meet here in the midmorning, and we will go as a group to do what we must do.”

Again shouts of assent were heard, but there were a few shouting “No! No!”, also.

Suddenly, the man who had been talking with Amnor and Genet, rushed forward to the platform and turned to yell in a loud voice at the crowd, “Friends and fellow villagers, we must not do this. There are better ways to get what we need. Let us go and talk to the leaders of Norplat. Taking by force is not fair. We can not do this in good conscience.”

Someone shouted, “Sit down old man. You are not an Elder.” Then a chant was started, “We want land! We want land!”, and the crowd joined in. The volume of the noise overwhelmed the man's voice, and he turned away in dejection. The crowd jostled him as he pressed his way out of the square with Amnor and Genet following.

The three walked the lonely streets away from the center of the village. On the way the man introduced himself as Wisnor the merchant. He invited the couple to join him in his simple home for the night and to consult together with him. Wisnor was extremely concerned about what might happen tomorrow, and asked the advice of Amnor and Genet. As they talked, they prepared a light meal to which Amnor and Genet contributed their share. Wisnor continued bemoaning the turn of events and wondering what to do. “I know there are many good people in my village who would not take by force that which is not theirs. I also believe that none of the rest would do this, if they could be reasoned with in a calm atmosphere. Oh! What can I do?”

“Will you be going with your fellow villagers tomorrow when they march north?” asked Genet in her quiet voice.

“Yes, how can I refuse? But I would go anyway, hoping I might be able to do something to stop them.”

“Honorable Wisnor,” continued Genet, “I propose that Amnor and I continue on tonight and walk to Norplat to warn their Magistrate, and perhaps devise a way to avoid this terrible event. Can you tell us how far it is to go, and how best to get there?”

Wisnor the merchant was extremely interested in Genet's suggestion. He described in detail the road to Norplat, and told them, “You may walk there starting now, even though it is already dark, and be there before the middle of the night. The moon is in its brightest period so there will be no trouble seeing the road. If you can find a way to avoid this unfortunate action, the citizens of both villages will be grateful to you, I am sure. Certainly, you will have gained my eternal friendship, and my heart will thank you till the end of my days.”

After Amnor and Genet prepared to continue their trip, Wisnor the merchant sent them off with these words, “Let the people of Norplat know there are still many good citizens of Sudplat who hope for nothing more than fair relationships with them and to deserve their friendship.”

The brilliant glow of the moon guided the couple's path, and the cool night hastened their footsteps. It was not long until they came to the outlying

farms of Norplat. They hurried directly into the center of the village. At the first house they found with a light in the window, Amnor knocked cautiously on the door which represented an obstacle to continuing their urgent quest. When the villager opened the door, they quickly explained they had important business with the Magistrate of Norplat, and inquired as to where they might find him. As it happened, the man they spoke to was Gorta, an Elder of Norplat, who volunteered to escort them directly to the Magistrate's house, even though it was the middle of the night.

Genet noticed the coat which Gorta put on to join them, was old and tattered, not the sort befitting an Elder of the village. In a few minutes they were entering another residence where they were conducted to a large bedroom. In the center of the room an elderly man reclined in an ornate bed. "Greetings strangers," he smiled as he spoke to them, "Excuse my not rising, but I have been bedridden for several weeks and have been forced to conduct all my duties from here in my room. I understand you have some urgent business with me."

"Yes, honorable Magistrate," explained Amnor, "We have just come from Sudplat where there is trouble brewing. Wisnor the merchant has sent us to you to give you advanced warning of the plans of the leaders of Sudplat."

Amnor then explained all that had happened, and related what the plans of the Sudplat leaders were. He ended, "We have until noon tomorrow to decide what to do, and prepare for them."

The Magistrate became very serious as Amnor related his story. At the end he spoke with great emotion to the couple. "Thank you for bringing us this news, no matter how unwelcome it may be. We certainly must do something, and we would appreciate any suggestions you have. Gorta, get the law books. We need to study them, as we have never had any similar happening here. We do not have experience with a mass invasion." The four concerned persons studied the various books for over an hour, but nothing was written about the situation of another village trying to take their land by force.

A silence gradually settled on the group as they each pursued their own thoughts. Then Amnor turned to the Magistrate and offered, "Eminent Magistrate, I believe there is only one thing to do. The Sudplat citizens must be met as they come into your area and be dissuaded by the force of logic to abandon their actions. Wisnor the merchant has said there are many persons who do not agree with the plan, but they are overwhelmed by the rash and unthinking actions of the others. If they can be stopped early and reasoned with, perhaps we can avoid tragedy."

"Yes, Amnor that is probably all we can do. Gorta, alert all the villagers. I can not go, but you must lead them tomorrow to meet the people of Sudplat, and talk them out of this madness."

Amnor turned to the Magistrate, and with a determined voice said, "No, Excellency, send only two persons to meet the crowd. If all of Norplat met the invaders, it might actually precipitate that which we do not wish to happen, which is a combat hurting many people. With only two going, the invaders will not feel threatened and may take longer to listen to good arguments. Send your best orators. I deeply believe people are basically inclined to be fair, if arguments can be presented clearly."

“Gorta,” asked the Magistrate, “What say you? Will you endeavor to go without massive forces, but simply two of you to discourage this bad plan of our neighbors? Who else among the Elders would you like to help you?”

After a minute of thought, Gorta answered, “Honorable Magistrate, I will do this if I have absolute choice of who shall be the second person. Although he is not of our village, I choose Amnor. If he believes this will work, and has the courage of his convictions, he should be willing to take the risk of facing a mob with me.”

Amnor exchanged an understanding glance with Genet. Their eyes conveyed their thoughts more clearly than words would be able. Then with serenity he replied, “If that is your wish, I am quite willing to go with you, Gorta. Genet and I have never avoided our duties. My faith in myself and my respect for all people will go with me to help you find an answer to this problem, if one exists.”

“Very well,” confirmed the Magistrate, “It is agreed. So be it. Go with the best wishes of our people.”

Amnor and Genet returned with Gorta to his house where they were given a place to sleep for the night. However, they awoke early in the morning, and over a bountiful breakfast, discussed with Gorta the plans for the day. Gorta also related to them more of the history of the two villages. Because they were relatively close to each other, there had been many contacts over the years. In fact, in a few instances children of one village had even married children of the other village. As they talked, Genet listened silently, but after several minutes, she turned to Gorta with a smile and said, “Honorable Gorta, I believe we will find an answer to this problem, but it will call for much courage today. However, now the sun rises in the sky. It is time to alert the people, who will remain in the village to wait until you return with good news, or to answer your cry for help if it is necessary. I will wait on the edge of the village to observe your success or failure.”

The three went to tell the other Elders of the plan, and ask them to convey it to the villagers. Then Amnor and Gorta stationed Genet at the edge of the village. Before they continued, Genet reached into her bag and withdrew an item which she pressed into Amnor's hand. “Here, dearest Amnor, take this with you. It may be of value in your confrontation this noon.”

“Thank you Genet, my aviole,” he answered as he looked at her gift closely, then put it into his pocket. “I know your best thoughts go with me.”

The two men walked alone, but determinedly, along the road towards Sudplat. At the end of the village area, beyond the last farm, they stood in the middle of the road and waited, forming the most minimal welcoming committee. A silence fell over the village and countryside as the sun rose higher in the sky. As the sun reached the zenith, Gorta and Amnor saw in the distance a crowd of people approaching. It was a large number of Sudplat citizens, who stirred up a cloud of dust as they advanced along the road. Gorta and Amnor stood quietly waiting for the mob to reach the point where the two were standing. When the Sudplat citizens were close enough to be heard, their leader held up his hand and they stopped.

“Stand aside,” called the leader, whom Amnor recognized as the Magistrate of Sudplat, “Let us pass to do our business, or we shall overwhelm

you.”

“Good neighbor,” began Gorta, “we know of your business here, and we oppose it. Why do you pursue such a childish scheme to satisfy your needs when there are better paths to follow? Listen to your conscience! Listen to the voice of reason! There is no need to tarnish your image and the good name of your people by rash and immoral acts which shall make you despicable among all the peoples of the lake. Anything you take by force shall never truly belong to you, and it will cause you anguish for all your days and for generations to come. Stop and consider your actions before it is too late.”

Gorta's strong and truthful words caused mutterings among the crowd. They averted their eyes and some only looked at the ground. Then the Magistrate, their leader, raised a fist and spoke again. “Foolish man, step aside. You cannot stop the course of history. Good farm land is our right. We will have what we need, and you two will be forgotten as the simpletons you are, when we are in charge here.” With that, he started forward again towards Gorta and Amnor.

Immediately Amnor drew from his pocket the item Genet had given him earlier. He stood firm and held it in front of himself for all to see. The Magistrate stopped again and looked at Amnor with suspicion. “What are you doing?” he asked, “What is that talisman you hold before you?”

“Do you not recognize this wise leader?” asked Amnor slowly and pointedly, “Look carefully. It is a golden sun suspended on a golden chain. All the links of the chain hold together, and the sun does not fall. If any link were broken, the sun would fall and each part would have no value. All the links are important equally, as are all persons. If one of us fails, it affects each of us. We are, every one of us, basically brothers, sisters, and cousins. We can help you, and perhaps you can help us. There is no need of conflict. You do not need to come in here, and try to dominate your neighbors for your own aggrandizement. If you do this, you break the chain, then we and you together will all suffer from your ill advised acts. I suggest there are many paths to achieve what is right for you and that which is fair for us. Let us sit down and talk of the needs of both villages. In that talk, no one will be hurt, and all will receive justice in the end.”

The Magistrate was taken off balance by Amnor's perceptive words, and the crowd again began muttering and moving indecisively on the road. Some individuals retreated a few feet, and the Magistrate could not find an answer to speak to Amnor. In this moment a person from the crowd pressed forward to the front of the Magistrate and turned to face the mob. Amnor realized it was Wisnor the merchant whom he had met last evening in Sudplat. Wisnor spoke firmly and with conviction. “Friends and fellow villagers, these men speak the truth. What are we doing here? Our actions are contrary to reason and good sense. We should be about our daily business, and if we had true leaders, they should be talking with the officials of Norplat to solve our mutual problems. Let us not allow the failure of our Magistrate and Elders reflect on us, the honest people of Sudplat. We are ridiculous standing here, and our leaders are making fools of us. Let us return to our village and homes. We must find better leaders who will use peaceful and rational means to satisfy our needs.”

“Yes! Yes! Yes!,” was the quick response from the crowd of Sudplat citizens who jumped at the chance to extricate themselves from an embarrassing situation. Shouts were heard from the mass of people, “Wisnor the merchant is right.”

“We should be about our business at home.”

“We need better leaders.”

“Let us return to our houses.”

“Let us have an election.”

“Wisnor the merchant is the wise one!”

“Down with the Magistrate.”

The mob rapidly melted away and streamed back along the road towards Sudplat. The Magistrate and the Elders turned dejectedly after them and retraced their path along the road, slowly following the mass of people. Left standing in the middle of the road were Amnor, Gorta and Wisnor. Wisnor looked at Amnor and happily remarked, “Amnor, my friend, how can we ever thank you for helping to stop this madness. You and Gorta, the Elder of Norplat, have certainly shown your courage and wisdom today. Both villages owe you gratitude unbounded. Thank you.”

“Wisnor, my neighbor,” Gorta addressed the merchant, “Would you accompany us into Norplat? I wish to have our haulers take some carts of food with you as a present to your village when you return home. It is a gesture to Sudplat of our good will, and we intend it to indicate our sincerity in trying to find solutions to our common concerns.”

“Honorable Gorta,” replied Wisnor the merchant, “That is very generous of you. My village will appreciate your intent, and I believe we will be able to find some beautiful cloth to return with the haulers to show our seriousness, also.”

That evening Amnor happily returned Genet's gold chain to its place in her bag. “Thank you, my aviole, for thinking to bring such a useful item on our trek. Your neck chain with its sun amulet are very meaningful. You have an understanding of our needs which escapes my logic. You, no less than Gorta and I, can take credit for this favorable outcome today.”

Amnor and Genet spent several days with Gorta in Norplat resting and re-supplying their provisions to continue their trip. The people of Norplat had a feast honoring Amnor, Genet and Gorta. While it was in progress, a messenger came with a letter for the Magistrate of Norplat (who was now well enough to be out of bed) from the new Magistrate of Sudplat, requesting a meeting of Elders from both villages to talk of trade and their common interests. The old Magistrate of Sudplat had been voted out of office as were most of the Elders. New Elders had been elected and the new Magistrate of Sudplat was Wisnor the merchant.

The next morning Amnor and Genet began their journey again. With the sun on their right, they left the village amidst the warmth of feeling from the villagers who came to shake their hands and wish them well. Gorta had asked the couple to stay in Norplat and farm with them and live in their community, but Amnor had declined, with thanks, saying, “Genet and I wish to continue wandering, seeking our destiny, and finding work and shelter where we will. Thank you for your kindness. For the present, however, we must continue our quest.”

They walked for several days along the road without seeing habitations or meeting other persons. The land in that area was again less fertile, and there were great distances between the rivers coming from the mountains. The sun was warm during the day, but the nights were cool, and the couple was glad to have their blanket and each other as they slept on the ground. One day in midmorning, they saw in the distance a few small houses. Their eagerness to see other persons once again hastened their progress, and before long they were in the middle of a very small village. There were no more houses than could be counted on eight hands, but they were clustered together in the middle of fields growing green with a wide variety of crops. The village was situated next to a clear running river of cold water tumbling in from the distant mountains. As they approached the houses, they saw an old woman sitting on a porch in the sun watching over several small children who played nearby.

“Good day to you, gracious lady,” greeted Genet, “May we sit with you a while to rest ourselves from our travels?”

“Certainly, young strangers,” replied the woman wrinkling her face into a welcoming smile, “Come and sit as long as you wish. I will be pleased to talk with you, as my only duty is to oversee the children, and they are no bother. Where do you come from and where are you going?”

“We have just come from Norplat, good lady, and are seeking work, food, and our destiny,” answered Amnor, “What place is this and what do you offer travelers?”

“Please call me Martah, as that is how I have been called these many seasons. We are a small settlement which is not big enough to have a village name. We have been here many years longer than I am able to know, as I was born here, and the settlement was old even at that time. There are several different families, and all we can offer travelers is a meal and a night’s lodging, because there is no work to do which is not done by our inhabitants. Will you stay and have a noon meal with us?”

“That is very generous of you, Martah,” replied Genet, “We are Genet and Amnor and would be most honored to have a meal with you. We thank you for the invitation.”

As they sat on the porch resting, Amnor became inquisitive, “Pardon my ignorance, Martah, but how do you take care of your business and legal problems, if you do not have village laws? Do you not even have a Magistrate?”

Martah smiled at Amnor, “No, my son, we do not find that to be necessary. Any problems which arise are dealt with by the whole group in an open meeting. That may seem cumbersome to you, but I assure you it works very well, and everyone may have their say with the knowledge that they will be listened to seriously.”

“Do you not find it a disadvantage to be such a small community, when it comes to teaching your young people?” pressed Amnor.

“No, not at all,” returned Martah, “Perhaps just the reverse is true. Here we all take responsibility for training the children. It is easy for them to

see in our small world the interdependence of all life, and realize the rightful equality of all persons and groups of persons in the larger world around us. We are not as isolated as you may believe. Many travelers such as yourself stop here and we hear about the villages which surround our lake. You, for instance, are from the southern part of the lake. I can determine that from your voice and speech. Is it not so?”

“You are most perceptive, gracious Martah,” Amnor answered, “We have lived our lives where you say. But what more can you tell me of your settlement and the greater community we all call home?”

“Being isolated here, and not affected by the activity found in larger villages, we have more time to think and to contemplate our life. We have concern for growth, not only in stature and physical prowess, but also in the increased strength of our inner nature, which improves our disposition. This introspection develops mental peace and contributes to lifelong happiness. Our children, perhaps more than the children of other villages, learn to recognize their inner feelings of worth. They are trained to respect and to nurture these feelings thereby understanding better their individual relationship with the whole world, and the relationship of the whole world with them.” Martah stopped to allow Amnor to respond, but Amnor and Genet sat absorbed in contemplating her words for several minutes.

Genet then commented, “Honest Martah, you have obviously devoted much thought to that of which you speak. What can you say to seekers such as we, about the wisdom you have discovered. What must we do to find our place in life and fulfill it?”

“Dear daughter, I profess no great wisdom. You must only honestly seek your own truth. We, each of us, must responsibly endeavor to know ourselves and recognize our position in the greater community. We must accept our role in that community humbly and in good humor, but it is our duty to be clear we have defined that role ourselves, and not let it be a life or attitude someone else has defined for us.”

As she finished speaking, two men approached and called to her, “Thank you for watching the children, Martah. We will take them to their noon meal now.”

When the men and children had disappeared around another house, Martah turned to Amnor and Genet and invited, “Will you come in now and share a meal with me?”

The three spent all noontime talking and enjoying each other's company as they ate. Then, as Amnor again filled their water jug, he asked, “How far is it to the next village along the lake?”

Martah answered, “It is a little more than one days journey, but farther than I care to walk at my age. Since you are going that way, I wonder whether you would take a package to a friend I have there. Her name is Shadra, and she lives in a small house near the center of the village. Tell her I send my greetings.”

“We would be pleased to deliver the package for you, Martah. I am sure it will be no trouble to find your friend” replied Amnor. It took Martah only a minute to prepare a small bundle which Genet then put into her bag. Amnor continued, “Thank you for your hospitality and thoughtful conversation. We leave here richer in knowledge of our inner selves than when we came, and we thank you for that also.”

Martah smiled as she wished them pleasant travels. The couple turned and walked out of the settlement with the sun overhead and more experiences in front of them. By evening time, Amnor and Genet had not reached the next village, but prepared a meal and lay down for the night in the open under the stars. Their blanket kept them warm, and they found a very restful sleep. The following morning was bright with the sun shining directly in their eyes, as it should, since it now fell on their backs in the evenings. The pleasant weather put them in good spirits as they approached the next village, and Genet sang a happy little song to Amnor:

“My mother was a wood nymph,
My father was an elf,
That's why I love the flowers,
And others, as myself.”

As they entered the village they met a youth carrying a bundle of firewood. Amnor called to him, “Good day to you, young man. Can you tell me where we might find the house of Shadra?”

The youth gave them a quizzical look, then answered, "Straight ahead about six streets, then ask anyone.”

“Thank you,” returned Amnor, and they continued on. As they approached the sixth street, it had become more crowded. They could see the market area was just a little farther on, and the villagers were collecting there to transact their daily business. Again Amnor asked a passerby, “Good villager, where might I find the cottage of Shadra?”

The man smiled and answered, “The Magistrate? She lives right there.” He indicated a small yellow house with bright deep red roses growing on its walls. Amnor and Genet approached and knocked on the door. They heard a stirring within, then the door opened to reveal a small, very wrinkled old lady with twinkling, shiny brown eyes.

She greeted them cheerily, “Good day, strangers, what may I do for you?” Genet spoke and smiled, "It is what we would do for you. We are Genet and Amnor, and we bring you a package from your friend Martah, whom we visited yesterday, and who sends her greetings to you.”

“Ah! You are most welcome then. Please come in and tell me the news from Martah.” She ushered them into a small, but brightly furnished sitting room, and offered them seats.

Genet then reached into her bag and brought out the package Martah had given them. She handed it to Shadra, who opened it delightedly. “Oh!” she exclaimed, “My favorite red raspberry jam. How thoughtful of Martah. You must stay and have a noon meal with me and help me enjoy this treat.”

“That is most kind of you,” returned Amnor, “but we do not want to keep you from more important duties. We did not realize you were the Magistrate of the village. Martah made no mention of that.”

“It is no problem. I do not have much to do today, and certainly, taking proper care of visitors is indeed part of my duty. What else might I do for you?”

“We do have one concern,” answered Amnor, “We have been traveling a long while looking for work, food and our destiny. Our shoes were in good repair when we started, but now they are worn and I fear they need replacing. Do you have a shoemaker in the village who may be able to help us?”

“We do indeed have a shoemaker. He has practiced the art for many years, and is quite skilled. I will take you to him after we have eaten. But, come now, tell me of Martah.”

The three talked all morning. Amnor and Genet related their talk with Martah, then added some stories of the other experiences in their travels. Afterward Amnor remarked, “You seem to have a quiet, orderly village here. How long have you been the Magistrate? What is your secret to governing so well?”

A smile directed at Amnor crumpled her lined face even further as she thought a moment before replying. “I have been Magistrate for many years, mostly because no one else wanted to do the job. It is easy for me, an old woman with no family responsibilities, and I do have a good deal of experience. I have collected my share of wisdom over the years. We are naturally a quiet, orderly people as you have noted, and there are not many demands on my time for that reason. Our laws are simple and easily understood. I have no secrets, just compassion for our citizens.”

“Is that enough?” queried Amnor, “Compassion is a noble quality, but is it all that is needed to govern?”

“No, certainly, much more is needed, but compassion is the best starting point towards justice, equality, liberty, and the acceptance of our fellow beings as they are. At least, it seems so to me, and it has worked for many years.”

“Assuredly, success is a very good criterion for evaluating your methods. It is difficult to discredit them, if they work.” agreed Amnor.

The three enjoyed a small meal together, and as they sat relaxing after satisfying their hunger, Shadra spoke again. “Now let us consider your problem with your shoes. Come with me and we will visit Orvale the shoemaker.” They walked across the square to a small shop which offered them the warm odors of oils and leathers as they entered the door. After introductions, Amnor began, “Honest Orvale, Genet and I have traveled far, and our shoes

are quite worn. We require new ones, but the only way I can pay you is to work for you in return. What do you have for me to do to compensate you for new shoes?”

“Amnor the gentle,” he replied thoughtfully, “all I need doing is to repair my thatched roof. It has withstood many seasons of sun and storms, but now it needs some attention, as it leaks when it rains. Unfortunately, I do not have the proper tools to do the work, otherwise you could do that, if you have the skill.”

“I have indeed done thatching, but likewise, any tools I had, I left behind when we started our journey many days ago. Otherwise, I would gladly exchange some work on your roof for the shoes we need.” As they spoke, Genet slyly reached into her bag, and turned to Amnor, “Amnor my dearest, I may have that of which you have need.” So saying she withdrew from her bag a thatching knife. “Here,” she offered with an impish smile, “will this do?”

“Genet, my aviole, again you have exactly the correct item to fill our needs. I shall never understand the logic of your planning. Thank you for your foresight.” Turning to the shoemaker he added, “Good Orvale, I will gladly work on your roof while you make us new shoes.”

“Excellent.” replied Orvale, “It is agreed. Also, you and Genet will stay here with me and my wife until we have completed our contract.” After wishing them well, Shadra left to return to her own house, and Amnor and Genet began work immediately. They spent the rest of the day gathering thatch grass and piling it ready to be used. Over the next several days Genet gathered thatch grass, Amnor worked on repairing the roof with the grass, and Orvale began making the shoes. In the evenings the four of them sat and talked, exchanging stories of their lives and experiences. The exuberance of their laughter provided the first strength tests of the newly repaired thatched roof.

After sufficient grass had been collected, Genet spent time with Orvale's wife exchanging cooking secrets and preparing food. The time passed quickly, and soon the roof was fixed, the shoes were finished and fitted, and the couple were ready to continue on their way.

On the morning they were to leave, Shadra came by to wish them well. “Amnor the gentle and Genet the quiet, I wish you pleasant travels, but if I may persuade you, I also express to you our desire that you stay in our village and live with us. We can always use a good thatcher, and you would be most welcome.”

“Gracious Shadra,” answered Genet, “your offer is greatly appreciated, but we are still desirous to follow our wandering, and search for our destiny where we may find it. Thank you for your kindness. One day we may return.”

The couple left in the bright sun of morning, still following the edge of the lake, and still seeking the conclusion to the quest on which their Magistrate and Elders had sent them. Shadra had told Amnor and Genet it was a rather far distance to the next village, but the couple found it took them even longer than they anticipated. After several days, they still did not see the landmarks Shadra had described to them indicating the approach to the village. Their food and water began to run low as there were few streams coming down from the mountains in this area. The land also was such that

few edible plants grew, and Amnor began to have concern for their situation.

One day, to their relief, they reached a very wide, rocky, shallow river, which Shadra had described to them. Although the river was wide it led to a narrow steep canyon through which water flowed from the lake through a great cleft in the distance. The water ebbed away but the terrain to the mountains was so rough it could not be traversed and they crossed the river near to the edge of the lake.

At that time they knew they were only two days walk from the village of Messma. They filled their water jug and spent the night by the river, but it was a hungry night, as they were out of provisions, and there was no food for their supper. In the morning, the couple did not waste time preparing breakfast, for there was none to prepare. The sun was now on their left side in the morning and it set in the evening over the lake on their right. Traveling as fast and as long as they could, they walked steadily all day, and even continued after dark until they were forced to stop by the darkest part of the night.

Again, early in the morning they were on their way. They determined at midmorning by the landmarks they passed, that they would reach Messma by early afternoon. Their extreme hunger forced them on in spite of weariness, although they were slowed by weakness due to lack of food. When it seemed they would end up walking forever and never reach their destination, there appeared in the distance a small house on the outskirts of the village.

Redoubling their efforts, they soon reached the door of the house and Amnor called inside, “Good day, worthy farmer. Is anyone at home?” There was no reply to his call, and he called again. Still there was no reply. Looking out over the fields of the farm, no one could be seen. The couple waited a while, but still no person came from the fields or from any of the other buildings.

Genet turned to Amnor and spoke, “Amnor, my dearest, we must have food. Can we not take some of these vegetables and one of these loaves of bread and eat till someone arrives?” There were freshly baked loaves lying on the shelf in the food storage area, and the aroma from them only heightened their hunger.

“It is wrong to take without asking, that which does not belong to us. However---,” his voice trailed off into silence.

After a few more minutes, Genet urged again, “Amnor, let us eat now while we must, and speak to the farmer later when we discover where he is.”

Reluctantly Amnor agreed, and the two sat and ate the vegetables and shared a loaf of bread. When they had finished, they sat and relaxed as their strength returned. They even talked and laughed at their recent desperate adventure. As Amnor gazed at the farm and fields, he noticed in the distance at the end of a long field, two persons working on the crops. “Come,” he said looking at Genet, “It is time for us to pay for our meal.”

The couple walked out into the field toward the two figures who were bent over, hoeing away weeds and loosening the soil. As they approached, the

workers stopped and watched them make their way through the rows of plants. “Good day to you noble farmers,” Amnor greeted them, “We have come to give you your payment.”

The farmer looked perplexed, “My payment? For what must you pay me? I do not even know you.”

“Please excuse my husband, who speaks in riddles,” offered Genet in her soft voice, “Let me explain what he means.” Genet then related their experience of the last few days, and how they had come upon the farmer's house a short while ago with their great hunger. “So you see,” she finished, “we ate some of your food because we were so hungry, and now we would work for you to repay you.”

The farmer looked at them, then turned and looked at his wife. His wife returned his gaze. Suddenly, they both began to laugh. After a moment of laughter, the farmer again turned serious, and spoke to Amnor and Genet. “Do you mean you entered my house, took my food, sat in my chair, and rested yourself, while I worked here in the sun?”

“Yes,” answered Amnor, “we must admit we did that.”

“Then here take my hoe, and put it to good use,” he replied angrily. “I will take the rest of the day off and try sitting in the shade, also. Perhaps, in that way I can gain the same perspective of the situation as you have. We are honest farmers and work for what we have. You have treated us rudely, therefore you must compensate us for your indelicate actions. Ardella, (for such was his wife's name) give your hoe to the lady, and come with me.” After they transferred the tools, Mitrus the farmer and his wife turned brusquely away and started for the house. Within a few steps he stopped and turned, and again began laughing. “Now tell me your names, so that we may know to whom we owe this vacation.”

By this time, Amnor and Genet were also smiling, and they introduced themselves to Ardella and Mitrus as they began using the hoes. Before he left to go to the house, Mitrus added, “When you finish these rows to the end, come to the house, and we will discuss your punishment over the evening meal.” Amnor and Genet began hoeing, and found it an interesting and even a refreshing task. It was a welcome change from the constant walking they had been doing for so long. It reminded Amnor of his own fields, for which he felt a wistful longing to see. He hoped they were indeed being cared for as well as he would wish.

The afternoon passed rapidly, and the two easily reached the end of their assigned work. As they walked back to the house of Ardella and Mitrus, Genet commented, “The farmer and his wife seem to be a most agreeable pair. They surely accepted our transgression with little rancor and fitted the punishment to the crime. Perhaps they can help us in our quest for the knowledge needed to ensure the future of our village. So far, I am not sure we have learned anything useful. Will we return home with no answer for the Magistrate? Do you, Amnor my dearest, think we may fail in our search?”

“Do not talk with indecision, Genet, my aviole. We are obliged to keep searching and listening for the wisdom, which we are required to find. To doubt ourselves would be the easiest way to cause us to miss the answers when we do stumble on them. We ought to keep our minds open and alert to

hear the knowledge when it comes upon us. However, I agree, Mitrus and Ardella are an unusual couple. Let us pay close attention to them when they speak.”

Ardella had prepared a sumptuous meal for their guests, and the four people had interesting conversations as they ate. Amnor told some of their experiences in the search for “work, food, and their destiny.” Mitrus related that he had been ill recently and that he and Ardella had much work to do to catch up with the ripening crops. That was why they had been so relieved to have an afternoon off to rest, but it was also the reason he had been angry, at first. Since it was late in the day, Mitrus asked Amnor and Genet to spend the night with them, Amnor happily responded, “It would be our pleasure, and indeed, we would be indebted to you. Might I also suggest, that if it finds acceptance in your eyes, we would be quite willing to break our journey for a few days to help you with the work waiting to be done on your crops, in exchange for meals and a place to sleep.”

“Gentle Amnor,” replied Mitrus, “That is a most welcome offer, and I accept it with humility. An honest exchange of value will leave neither of us unduly indebted to the other, but will cause each of us to prosper.”

So Amnor and Genet spent the next few days working beside Ardella and Mitrus. The four hoes speedily dispatched the weeds. Amnor was able to help Mitrus with other farm tasks, since he had spent so many years being a farmer himself. One day they even went into the market in Messma with the farmer and his wife to help in the exchange of vegetables for the other goods needed on the farm. While there, Amnor and Genet took the opportunity to talk with the villagers of Messma, but they learned only that they were simple folk, and they had no grand plans or programs for their future. Amnor and Genet again felt they had learned nothing to help answer the purpose of their quest

After the farm had been brought to the condition that Mitrus and Ardella could care for it alone again, Amnor and Genet announced they would leave the morning of the next day. Ardella gave them food to replenish the supply in Amnor's pack. As they left, Mitrus thanked them both for their help. “Good Genet and Amnor, Ardella and I will always welcome you here, if you ever return. We appreciate the help you extended so willingly, and have enjoyed these few days together. May you have safe journeys.”

As Amnor and Genet walked, they spoke further of the object of their trip. Genet raised the question again, “Amnor, my dearest, are we succeeding in our search? What have we learned which we can give to the Elders to guide them towards our village's future?”

“I do not know,” replied Amnor, “and we are not very far from home now. Every day the sun in the morning is more on our backs, as it was when we first started our journey many days ago. Since this is true, then home can not be too much farther. We can only continue seeking, and trust to good fortune to provide us with the answers we need.” They continued on till nightfall, then ate a simple meal and found a place to lie down to sleep.

The following day started well enough, but by noon the skies had darkened, and rain began to fall. It rained steadily as they made their way along the road, and the temperature became cooler, also. All afternoon they continued in the rain, and in the evening they sought shelter between two old twisted trees next to a small hill. Even so, it was a miserable night, and Amnor and Genet could manage only a cold breakfast before starting again for

the day. The weather remained bad all that day with intermittent rain and wind. The second night was also spent under the protection of a tree, but the morning found Amnor in pain. He felt weak and ached in all his body. He was alternately hot and cold, and could walk only with a great deal of trouble. Genet loaded some of his burden into her bag, and the two continued slowly along their path.

Near midday, the couple approached a village. As they entered, they walked the empty streets between the cold, wet houses which had their shutters closed against the storm. Near the center of the village one house showed a small beam of light out through a crack in the shutter, and Genet went to the door and knocked. The door was opened by a rough-looking, middle-aged man, who in a coarse voice asked, "What is it stranger? Why have you come to my door in this storm?"

"Kind villager," answered Genet, "My husband and I have been traveling in this rain for two days, and now he is ill. We have just arrived in your village, and we must find a place to stay for a while out of the wind and rain."

"Then come in," he continued a little more warmly. "I have little space, but you are welcome to what you need. But tell me, how did you know I was the local healer? Who directed you here?"

Genet helped Amnor into the small house, and removed his pack and water flask. While doing this, she replied, "No one directed us, beneficent healer. It must have been chance that guided us to you."

The man, whose name was Landa, found two blankets for them to wrap themselves in, and they hung their wet clothes by the fire to dry. Amnor silently went to the corner by the fire to lie down. Almost immediately, he fell asleep, but stirred restlessly in his sleep.

"What place is this, worthy Landa?" asked Genet.

He answered, "This is the village of Grosham," and Genet recognized immediately the name of the village which was only two days journey from their own village of Abersham. However, this was the first time Genet had ever been here, and she did not know anyone who lived in Grosham. Gradually, she warmed up and dried out, but Amnor remained asleep on the hearth. Landa offered her a bowl of hot broth which finally dispelled the lingering cold in her body. She tried to feed some to Amnor, but he would not wake to eat.

That night Genet did not sleep well. She tried to make Amnor comfortable, but he only rolled and fretted in his sleep. By morning, he had not improved, even though they had dried their clothes and equipment and had warmed themselves by Landa's fire. Genet's concern for Amnor grew, and she asked the villager, "Are there wild fields nearby where I might find herbs to help my husband?"

"I have herbs and other medicines here, but I do not think any of them will help Amnor. Only rarely have I seen a sickness such as his here, and none of our medicines have ever cured it." Landa added, "It is something which must follow its own course. I believe we will just have to wait and hope for

the best.”

“How can you say that?” asked Genet, gravely. “We have always found herbs or medicines for our sicknesses. I find your words most disturbing and difficult to accept.”

“Believe me gracious Genet. I have been the healer of the serious illnesses in our village for many years, but this sickness is the most difficult one to correct. I have many herbs and have studied their effects on every illness. For many years I have watched them work their goodness on all the illnesses we know, and have helped most of our citizens of Grosham at one time or another. I think my experience makes me competent to know that none of my potions will alleviate your husbands symptoms. We must wait.”

Although the weather improved and the sun shone all day, Genet stayed by Amnor's side in Landa's house. When he woke, she fed him teas and broth, but he did not take much and returned to a fitful, restless sleep. That evening he became even worse. All night he was unsettled and uneasy. He became very warm, and Genet kept washing him to cool him off. Then she went to her bag and withdrew a small clay flask. She used the contents to cool Amnor's forehead which seemed to calm him somewhat. During this time he began talking in a frenzied and incoherent fashion. He related over and over the encounters he and Genet had experienced in the days of their traveling. Genet could not sleep, but listened to Amnor's delirium and kept cooling him with water and with the lotion from her flask. After a long while, she took from her bag her stylus and waxed sheets, and a candle. She lit the candle from the fireplace and set it to light her writing area. Then she began impressing words and phrases in the wax. She wrote intermittently.

Between listening to Amnor and cooling his fever, she composed a few more words and impressed them into her tablet. Then she sat and regarded the writing before continuing on. Near morning Amnor became more quiet, and Genet also fell into an exhausted sleep, at last. It was near noon of the next day when they both woke. Amnor was feeling well enough to eat a little solid food and more tea. Later he was able to get up and sit outside in the sunshine, and by evening he seemed to be recovering, although he was weakened by the ravages of the illness. It took several days of rest and good food to bring Amnor back to his accustomed well being.

During this time, Amnor and Genet had an opportunity to talk with Landa, who in spite of his gruff manner, was a most compassionate and learned man. He had, indeed, cured many of the villagers over the years when they became ill. His house was the store place for herbs and medicines in the village. Every day that Amnor and Genet were there, some one of the citizens would appear at the door asking for Landa's advice and help with their health. Landa explained that the fever from which Amnor had suffered, and from which he recovered, was a most serious one. Amnor was one of the lucky ones who was able to recover with no bad results. “You did all that you could for him, Genet, just in keeping him cool and comfortable.” He complimented her. “But what is that lotion you used on his face? Is this some magic potion, or is it something you can tell me of?”

“It is a medicine we use for many things in our village,” replied Genet. “It is not unusual. It is distilled from sour fruit. I will gladly show you how to make it, if you wish.”

“That is something I would truly like to know,” Landa answered excitedly, “Perhaps it will be useful to me also someday.”

During this time there were many opportunities for long discussions with their benefactor. One day during their talks Amnor inquired, “Esteemed Landa, you have been a citizen of Grosham all your life. What do your village leaders do to ensure such a stable and lasting settlement as you have here?”

“Gentle Amnor, we are simply organized, as I believe all villages are, with only a board of Elders and a Magistrate. If there is any difference in our village, it is in the personality of the Magistrate who has been in the position for many years. He is a jolly old man who loves to tell stories. In the warm weather, the children gather round him in the evening, and they listen most intently to his words. The stories usually have a moral, beside being enjoyable. Often it is not only the children who listen. I myself admit, I have relished his anecdotes on a multitude of occasions. His stories emphasize the worth of each person, but remind us of our responsibilities to others, and to all of nature, in addition to ourselves.”

After many days, Amnor regained his health. In gratitude, he spoke to his host, Landa, “Dear benefactor, I thank you sincerely for your food and shelter when I needed it most. I shall remember your kindness all my life. Is there anything I might do for you to help repay you for your trouble?”

“Payment is not necessary or expected,” Landa assured Amnor, “But if you wish to help in some way, I would certainly appreciate it. Tomorrow I plan to go to the woods and fields outside of town to gather certain herbs which are just now ready to be harvested. If you would join me and help in this gathering, it would please me greatly.”

“I doubt that I can gratify you as much as your hospitality has made me its satisfied recipient,” responded Amnor, “but be assured, it will be my pleasure to accompany you and help however I may.”

Amnor and Genet spent two days assisting Landa in the harvest, which resulted in a great increase in Landa's supply of herbs. The following day, the couple were ready to continue their journey to its end. As they left, Genet offered, “Abersham is not a great distance. It would give us great enjoyment, if one day you would come to visit us, and let us be the hosts for some days of rest for you.”

Amnor added, “Indeed we would be happy to show you our village and have you meet our leaders. Perhaps you would find worth in talking with our herbalists and healers, also.”

“Thank you, Amnor and Genet. It may happen that I will come your way someday. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me. But for now, I wish safe travel and good health to you both. May the sun shine on your path all the way.”

Amnor and Genet continued on with a lighter step knowing that home was not too far away. That evening, as the couple prepared their evening meal in a little grove of trees where they were to spend the night, they began talking of all the adventures they had met in their long journey.

“Genet, my aviole, what do you think we have learned in our quest? What can we now tell our Magistrate to instruct the Elders to do for ensuring the future of the village and to secure its rewarding existence in the future? I have seen no laws to accomplish this in all the villages we visited. There are no secrets which others use to do this. Everyone we have met is very much like ourselves with the same joys, concerns, and problems. You have questioned before whether we are meeting our responsibility. Now I am confused and wondering whether we, indeed, have failed.”

“Dearest Amnor, it has concerned me greatly that we may return with no answer for the Magistrate. I have thought on it at many times during our trip. Some nights ago, when you were ill, I listened carefully to your recitations of our adventures. As you repeated them, I began to understand the meaning behind them all, and found excitement in recording what I believe they taught us. I was able to put it into a series of statements which I recorded on my wax tablets.” Genet removed the tablets from her bag and handed them to Amnor. “Here my love, see what you think of my writing.”

Amnor took the tablets and read them carefully. At the end, he turned to Genet and spoke, “Truly, I believe you have the answer we need. Your clear perception extracts the meaning from the events and distills the essence most precisely. Thank you for your insight. Certainly, I could no more have made this trip alone and gained this knowledge by myself, than could our rivers flow upwards to the mountains. Let us sleep well tonight. Tomorrow we will be home.”

In the morning, Amnor and Genet had a leisurely and pleasant breakfast. The sun shone brightly and promised a comfortable day for completing their trek. The couple had been traveling many days, but this, the final day, became the easiest to face. The warmth of late Summer laid on the land, and the breezes encouraged all the growing plants. As they walked, after a long silence, Amnor turned to Genet and spoke. “Genet, my aviole, I am ready to be home again and to be able to enjoy our own cool porch. Now I am eager to see our own fields and crops.”

“Yes,” agreed Genet, “It has been a most interesting and worthwhile trip, but now it is time to be home and care for our own business. Although our neighbors are good persons, I will feel better when I see for myself that, indeed, all is well with our house and fields.”

The nearness of home hastened their footsteps, but it was late afternoon before they began to recognize land marks which were at the limits of the farthest distance they had ever been from their village before. It was nightfall when they finally entered their own house and ended their trip.

They did little more than to prepare a meal and to unpack their belongings. By candle light, they prepared for bed and a well deserved rest. As they lay in bed before sleep, Amnor asked, “Genet, my aviole, how did you determine what to carry in your bag on our trip? What was the logic that caused you to have your sun amulet, the thatching knife, and the cooling lotion we needed? And your writing equipment; certainly that was most useful.”

Amnor sensed Genet smiling in the darkness as she answered, “I do not understand myself why I took all those things, but please do not ask me how many other items, for which we had no need, I carried along in the bag also.”

Amnor chuckled.

In the morning, as Amnor looked out, he could see his fields had been well tended while he was gone. The house had been cared for and there was fresh food in the larder, as though it had been regularly replaced in anticipation of their return, and to be ready for their need. After breakfast, as Amnor sat on the porch reflecting on the actions he must pursue during the day, he saw in the distance the figure of the Magistrate approaching slowly and in a dignified deliberate manner.

When the Magistrate arrived at Amnor's house, he spoke, "Good day to you Amnor the gentle."

"Good day, honorable Magistrate," responded Amnor, "It is my pleasure to see you today. Come and sit with me on the porch." As the Magistrate made his way up the steps and selected a seat, Genet appearing the doorway bearing three glasses of cider on a tray.

"Good day to you, worthy Magistrate," she greeted him as she handed him a cool glass.

"Good day Genet the quiet. I am pleased to know you have returned from your long trip in apparent good health. I was most excited last night when I received word there were lights in your house again. I knew my long wait was over, and I looked forward with some trepidation to hearing what you may have to say to me. Though your trip may have been arduous at times, it is also extremely difficult to merely wait, and not be aware of what is happening of importance to you both." He then took a long drink of cider as Amnor and Genet waited in respect. The three sat quietly a moment, then the Magistrate continued, "So tell me. What have you learned on the important mission you undertook for me and the Elders."

"Honorable Magistrate," commenced Amnor, "Genet and I have traveled all our known world. We have met many different people living in different situations. I have been able to examine law books and we have spoken together with the learned Elders of many villages, but nowhere does anyone have special laws or secrets which ensure their future. We despaired of finding the answer you wanted us to find until I became ill. During that time, Genet listened more closely to the wanderings of my mind reciting our adventures while I was only half awake.

"Genet, with her keen perception of events, has listened carefully to my repeated recitations of our adventures and troubles. She had time to consider all that had happened to us, and viewed it in a new aspect. She has distilled ideas from these stories and has recorded her thoughts in a series of statements on wax tablets offering a guide for our lives. These are the things people told us by their actions rather than their words. The events themselves, spoke most loudly and surely to us when we stopped to consider and listen to them."

Genet then took out her wax tablets and read these words:

X Every person has inherent worth and dignity.

X In all relationships among human beings, justice, equity, and compassion must prevail.

X We must each accept one another as we are, and within our groups encourage one another to greater growth of our inner nature.

X Each person has a right to a free and responsible search for that

which is right and has meaning for them.

X The process of equal responsibility and equal voice, used with the right of individual conscience, is the fair method of making decisions within all groups, both large and small.

X Our world is one community, and each part of it must strive for peace, liberty, and justice for the entirety.

X We must respect the interdependence of all existence. We are only one part of the entirety, and the rest of all nature and people have equal and comparable rights to ours.

After completing reading the tablets, Genet set them aside, but added, “Our second result is that Amnor and I believe our young people should be encouraged, before they settle down, to take such a trip as we have taken so they may see for themselves how the rest of our world lives. This experience will be worth more than all we might tell them or everything they may learn in our one small community. Education is not just learning things and ideas, but it is understanding people, and becoming able to live with others peaceably. A person in harmony with the world and with other people is truly and educated person. This trek around the lake might even be an annual event for the youth of the village, and may in the future involve all of the communities around our lake.”

Amnor then added, “What Genet and I wish to say is we believe our future is assured not by grand plans or special laws, but in the way we handle our everyday business. If we are honest and fair in the daily living of our lives, we will establish a basis on which the future will grow with strength and solidity. We need have no fear of tomorrow, if we treat today with honor. Genet and I have two results from our trek to offer you. We do not know if this is what you expected, but it is what we found.”

The Magistrate took the tablets, and read them again silently. The Elder conscientiously absorbed the details slowly and completely, as Amnor and Genet watched. After several minutes, with a pleased expression, he addressed the couple, “Dear Amnor the gentle and Genet the quiet, I believe you have done a most superb job. If we as your leaders, cannot meet the future with these excellent ideas, or if our citizens in their daily lives cannot live in harmony by these rules, it may not be possible to prepare for the future at all. If we fail, it may only reflect our own incompetence. But let us not talk of failure. I will take these tablets and your suggestions for the children to the Elders for their consideration. These will surely keep them occupied for a long while to come. We are indebted to you both. You have our sincere gratitude.”

As the Magistrate began to return to the village with his characteristic deliberate walk, he turned and waved to Amnor and Genet. The wave let the couple know that they had done their job well, and let them feel the recognition extended by the Official. They had fulfilled their responsibility with honor. Amnor kissed Genet, then, smiling, he said, “My fields call to me. I shall return at evening meal time.”

-THE END -

AUTHOR' S POSTSCRIPT

After taking liberties in paraphrasing the Unitarian Universalist Principles in my story, I consider it only fair to reproduce them now in a more proper form. The full statement of principles is as follows:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist

Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- * The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
- * Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
- * Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
- * A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- * The right of conscience, and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
- * The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
- * Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

These Principles were adopted by the 1984 and 1985 General Assemblies of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

John D. Boenke