

# Fables

V.A. JEFFREY

## **Three Fables**

By V. A. Jeffrey

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### **The Cowboy And The Pebbles**

A cowboy was riding through the mountains on his horse. One day while riding he happened to come by a small stream. There was an old man sitting by the stream. As the cowboy was passing, he greeted the old man, intending to continue on his way. The old man called to him.

“Get down off your horse and come by the stream. Pick up some pebbles. They will bring you good fortune.” He said.

“What would I want with pebbles, old man?” The cowboy asked.

“By having these pebbles you will become happy and sad.” The old man answered. The cowboy laughed, thinking the old man foolish but he obliged him and got down from his horse and picked up a few pebbles from the stream. The old man smiled and waved goodbye to him as he mounted his horse and rode away.

Now, it was a few days later when the cowboy was taking his cattle out to graze when he pondered on the old man's words. He remembered the pebbles he picked from the stream and fished them out of his pocket. To his surprise, the pebbles were gone but what remained in place were glittering diamonds. This made the cowboy very happy. While the cattle were grazing, he quickly rode up to the stream but to his great disappointment it was not there. The stream, the bed of pebbles and the old man were all gone. This made the cowboy sad. He was sad because he had only picked up two pebbles.

### **The Face In The Mirror**

Long ago in a valley there was an idyllic town and in that town there lived a little girl. She came from a very wealthy merchant family. The little girl was spoiled rotten for her mother and father spared no expense for her every whim and comfort. Now, there were many towns over the mountains in other valleys but she was the prettiest girl to be found anywhere and whenever people saw her they always remarked on her great beauty. One day while riding along in her father's carriage in the woods they came upon an old woman sitting on a rock. She called out to the carriage for alms, for she was destitute and in sore straits. The father ignored the old woman and the little girl, upon seeing how ugly the woman was, spat on her and threw a stone at her head, killing the old woman. Her father, upon seeing

what his child had done became afraid and threw the woman's body over a cliff and bade his coachman to keep silent on pain of death. The little girl terrorized her parents and beat and terrorized her maidservants every day. She grew into a most beautiful young woman and as her beauty increased, so did her vanity. One of her favorite pastimes was staring at herself in a great silver mirror with gold carvings that her mother had given her. She was vain, proud and cruel, yet she had many suitors in the town and also from far away. Young men and old men were captivated by her and courted her day and night. One day, a young woman moved into the town who had been orphaned when she was a girl. She was the same age as the town beauty and as people saw her they noted that she was just as beautiful. Soon the renowned beauty of the new girl was on everyone's lips. This enraged the town beauty but she just had to see for herself whether the new girl was truly more beautiful than she was. So she demanded that her mother and father invite the new girl to the next harvest dance as her honored guest.

The harvest gathering was a custom the town had held for many years each fall. The wealthiest families in the town always hosted the dance afterward at their home. So it was this year as well. While her mother and father made lavish preparations for the meals that would be served, she had dressmakers from near and far gathered to herself and spared no expense on the new dress she would wear to the dance. On the night of the dance, the great hall of the family home bustled with townspeople, great and small, from all over the mountains and once again, the town beauty wore the finest dress and jewels. She was a sight of glittering loveliness, captivating everyone at the dance, until the new girl arrived. While her dress was modest and she only wore a silk ribbon tied around her neck, she was a vision of loveliness that rivaled the other. Many of the young men that had courted the town beauty now looked upon the other girl and wanted to dance with her instead. When the wicked girl had seen for herself how lovely the other girl was, her heart became black with rage but she concealed her hatred and befriended her. It was then that she decided she would kill the other girl. She bided her time, seeking a good opportunity to kill her. The opportunity came many days later when she had invited the girl on an outing in her horse and buggy. She lied and told her that they were going to see and enjoy the beautiful colors of fall in the woods, to pick mushrooms and that they would also secretly meet two handsome young men who wished to see them. The forest was full of mists and the climb was high, but she finally brought the girl to a lonely place within a large ring of mushrooms in the woods.

"Come," she beckoned the girl over to a cliff overlooking the forest beneath.

"Look at the clouds below! Look how high we have climbed!" She said. The other girl got out of the buggy to take a look and as soon as she neared the edge of the cliff the wicked girl pushed her off. Knowing that she had no family or money she was of no account and the wicked girl thought that no one would miss her. Satisfied with what she had done, she went home. One year later, she was betrothed to a lord and was delighted that she would soon become a lady. As she and her mother made wedding preparations one day she heard a crow outside making a terrible racket. Day after day the crow's racket would grow louder and louder.

"Alms, alms!" It shouted. It disturbed her to no end.

"Do not let the thing disturb you, child. It is only a silly bird." Her mother said. But it was an omen and she would not rest until the crow was silent. She threw rocks at the crow but it continued its racket. She tried to shoot it down with a bow and arrow but she could not catch it. She demanded the hired musicians to play music to drown the crow out. When they had failed to drown out its noise she beat them savagely and broke their instruments. The crow continued its cackling until she thought she would go mad. On the day before her wedding, it stopped and finally she thought she could rest. She gazed at her beautiful face in the great silver mirror as one of her servants brushed her long, lustrous hair. But that night when she was sleeping in her bed the crow flew into her bedroom window, cackling loudly and waking her. She tried to wake her maidservant to make her catch it and kill it but her maidservant was in a deep sleep and did not wake. So, the crow spoke.

"My lady, even now you can turn back from your evil way."

"Get out or I will break your neck and have you baked in a pie!"

“I have seen a vision. It will go ill with you if you continue in your wickedness.” The crow said. The woman reached for a fire poker to strike the bird. The bird flew up and perched itself on top of the silver mirror.

“Well then, here is my wedding gift to you, my lady. You threw a stone at me once and thought to kill me. I then gave you another chance to redeem yourself but then you pushed me off a cliff. You are full of vanity and cruelty. When everyone looks upon your beauty they see a vision of loveliness but I see the ugly beast inside. When you marry tomorrow, your husband will see nothing but your unsurpassed beauty but I tell you now that whenever you look into a mirror or any reflection of yours, you will see nothing but the hideous beast you truly are, staring back at you! Until you change your heart you will never look upon your own loveliness again, my lady.” With that, the crow flew off into the night.

### **The Sage And The Three Brothers**

Once there was an old sage who lived on a hill overlooking three cities. Now the cities were full of corruption and crime, from the rich man to the poor man. The sage had his visions and warned the people for many years of the coming destruction. The people would laugh and mock him. Some ignored him. One day three brothers from a noble house of one of the cities were traveling home from a far away land and were coming down the road on the hill. The sage saw them and called to them.

“Greetings, my sons.” he said “I have been given a new vision. If you promise to tell the city fathers of my vision I will grant you each one wish.” The brothers agreed. So he told them his vision. Then he asked the eldest brother what was his desire.

“I want power!” He said. So power was granted to him. He asked the second brother what he desired.

“I want gold and silver!” So gold and silver were granted to him. Then he asked the youngest brother what was his desire. The youngest brother asked the sage a question.

“What would you ask for?”

“Peace and contentment.” The sage answered.

“Then, that is what I want.” Said the youngest brother. So, it was granted to him. Now when the brothers arrived into the city the older brothers went home, dismissing the old sage's request to warn the city fathers that the cities would soon fall. The youngest brother, however, warned the city fathers that the cities would fall by famine and fire and that most of the people would be put to the sword. They scoffed at him and had him whipped, for they knew that the vision was from the sage, whom they hated.

The news of the fortunes of the brothers had reached the city by herald and when they had arrived home their family went out in a hurry to welcome them home.

“My son, welcome home! Glory and honor you have brought to our name and our house!” The father said and kissed and embraced his eldest son. On seeing the second son he welcomed him also.

“My son, welcome home! Glory and honor you have brought to our name and our house!” He kissed and embraced him. But on seeing the youngest son, he spat on the ground and the other two brothers mocked him.

“Fool! We have received nothing of benefit from you, but you have made us a laughingstock!” His father said. The father cursed him, had him stripped and beaten and threw him out of the house.

Years passed and the eldest son began making a name for himself in the land as a great warrior. In short time he became a general. Every campaign he fought he came out the victor. Great spoil he brought the cities of the land. Soon after, he was made ruler of the three cities. The second brother made his name in gold and silver and all precious things. His fortunes increased year after year and his wealth was great. Soon, everything he owned glittered with gold or silver. The youngest brother

worked as a hired hand among pigs or as a shepherd from time to time. He had no wealth, no family, no power, only a staff, his clothes, his cooking pot and a little hut he slept in. He worked from sun up to sundown but he did not complain about his lot in life. He had plenty of food to eat and water to drink and he made a name for himself among the workers and his employer as a good man who worked hard and had a good heart. He did not become bitter whenever he saw his eldest brother riding through the city in a grand procession after a victorious battle or his other brother riding in his silk and ivory palanquin through the city streets. He was content because he had what he needed for each day.

Then, one day the sage's visions of the destruction came true. It started with a great famine through the land. Fire and bloodshed spread through the cities. Men recognized no law. The first brother feared the very men who had fought under him. Disguising himself he fled to the sage's hill.

“Oh sage! Please help me! Every man in the city is against me! Deliver my soul from death!” The ruler pleaded.

“Wicked man!” Cried the sage. “Remember all the innocents you put to the sword when you ruled like a king! You showed no mercy to subjects, rivals or enemies! Neither will mercy be shown to you! Go and pray to your spear and your sword, for those are your gods! Get away from me, for you will die before sunrise tomorrow!” The ruler fled in terror back to his palace to hide. Upon seeing him in the distance his servants conspired against him and when he entered the palace they rose up and put him to death. The second brother fled to the sage's hill.

“Oh sage! Please help me! There is nothing to eat or drink in the land, no buying or selling! My gold and silver has become worthless, like so much dust! Deliver my soul from death!” The rich man pleaded.

“Wicked man!” Cried the sage. “May your gold and silver turn to ashes and dust in your mouth! You have grown fat from constantly sitting on your golden couch! When did you feed and care for those hungry or destitute? You ate and spent gold while others suffered! You robbed and cheated and extorted the poor one and sold them into slavery when they could not pay the debt! Go and pray to your gold and silver, for those are your gods! Get away from me, for you will surely die before the famine leaves the land!” So, in despair, he went to his home and as there was a famine in the land he had nothing but his gold and silver to eat. So he died. But the third brother saw the coming destruction and left the city before it came, traveling and working and making a name for himself all around the world. For years he did this and had become wealthy and known as good and generous and industrious. When he had come home the destruction had ended. He led those few that were left to help rebuild the cities and those in need he fed and clothed. His name went far and wide as a wise man and soon he was made vassal ruler of the cities. Under him people prospered and the cities flourished once again under good men and good rulership. When he had become very old he saw that glory and honor he had brought to his name and to his house. He had taught his sons and grandsons to carry on in goodness, kindness and wisdom. And he died, very old, in peace and contentment.

## **The End**

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