

THE TWIN PARROTS



A long time ago, in a very big forest, a mother and father parrot had two little eggs which hatched into tiny blue baby parrots.

The baby parrots were twin brothers and looked exactly alike.



At one end of the forest was a village of robbers.

These men survived by stealing things, like jewelry and money.

They stole it from people who traveled on the road near the forest and from people in other villages.



At the other end of the forest was a village of monks.

They meditated every day and were very kind, helpful, and peaceful.



One day,
there was a
big storm.
The sky
became very
dark, the wind
became very
strong and
loud, blowing
all the trees
and plants,
and there was
rain, thunder

and lightning.

The wind was so strong that it bent the tree where the parrots were staying in their nest. The wind got stronger and the thunder boomed so loudly, the tree began to crack.



The little
parrot
brothers
looked out of
their nest and
were terrified
that the tree
would break
and injure
them, so they
each flew out
of the nest.

The powerful wind blew one parrot one way and the other parrot the other way, and they couldn't see each other in the pounding rain.

They had never flown far away from their nest before, but they just kept flying, each hoping to find his brother.



One parrot flew in the direction of the robbers' village.



And the other parrot flew in the direction of the monks' village.



The first parrot landed in the robbers' village near their weapons, where a robber found him.

The robber thought, "this little parrot is beautiful, I want to keep him as a pet."

He named him Dagger because he was found near the robbers' daggers.

He dried Dagger's feathers and gave him some food, and set a little blanket in a tree by his hut to sleep on.

Dagger was happy that someone cared for him and gave him food, so he stayed happily in the robbers village.

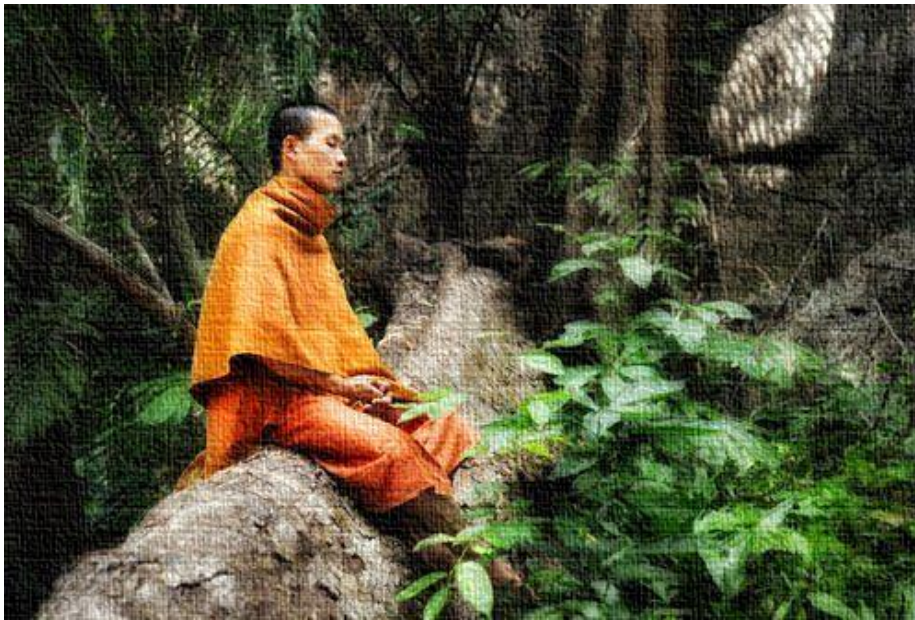
They were rowdy, and liked to play pranks and joke around, sometimes fight and have loud parties.



They thought it was fun to steal jewelry and things from wealthy people and salesmen traveling through the forest.

Dagger joined them on their adventures, and enjoyed the company of his new friends, the thieves, who always shared their food with him.

Dagger listened to them talking, and he learned to talk like they did.



The second parrot landed on a tree where a monk was meditating, just outside the monks' village, among some beautiful flowers.

The monk saw him perched near the flowers.

The parrot looked tired, wet and hungry.
So the monk gave him some food and a piece of cloth to rest on.

The parrot felt safe with the monks, and stayed with them.
They called him Flower, because he was found near the flowers.

He followed the monks when they went to search for food,
and perched nearby while they chanted and meditated.
He learned many words, and how to speak from hearing the monks talking.



One day a king went out in his chariot with his chariot driver to go deer hunting.

They went toward the forest, where he might find some deer.

They got out of their chariots and made noise to make the deer run around.



When the king saw a deer, he told his driver to go full speed after the deer.

They raced through the forest, but they couldn't catch up to the deer. It ran too fast. They couldn't find the deer so they decided to turn back home. But it would be a long journey, so they stopped near a stream to get

some water. The king was tired, so the chariot driver put a blanket for him under a tree, where the king soon fell asleep.

They were very near the robbers' village, but the robbers had gone out for a little while. There was no one in the village except for the cook and Dagger, who was on his usual perch on the tree.



Dagger saw that there was a person nearby, and flew closer. He saw the king sleeping. He thought,

"Look at all that gold jewelry. What if we kill this guy while he sleeps, and take all his jewelry."

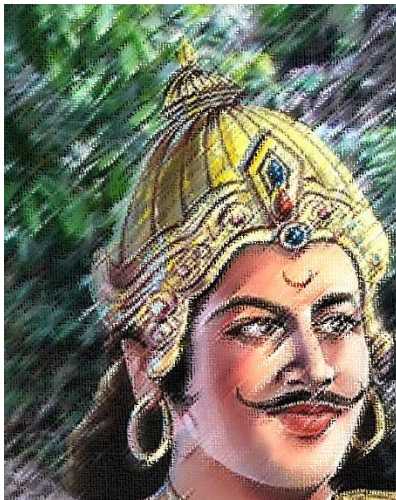


So, he flew back, and told the cook that they could rob the king while he is sleeping.

The cook looked where the king was, and said, "That is a king! Are you crazy? It's dangerous to steal from a king!"

His men will definitely find you and punish you!"

Dagger said, "Oh don't be so foolish. It's easy, we kill him, take the jewelry, hide the body. We do it all the time."



The king heard him talking and was scared, so he ran to his chariot driver and exclaimed,

"Hurry, let's get out of here! I don't like what that parrot is saying! There may be robbers around here!"

They jumped in the chariot and they raced through the forest as fast as they could.



Dagger called for his friends the robbers to come.

"Hey where are you, all my buddies? The king is getting away! Don't let him escape! Get your daggers, spears, bows and arrows!"

The king's chariot finally arrived at the other end of the forest, where the monks' village was. But the monks were out searching for food in the forest.



Only Flower was at the monks' village, alone.

When he saw the king, he flew over to greet him.



He said, "Welcome, dear king! What good luck that you have come this way!"

He pointed with his beak toward a bowl of food, and said, "Here is the best food we have, this is for you."

Then he pointed toward a bowl of water, and said, "Here is some cool fresh water. You must be hot and thirsty from your journey."

The king was pleased with the kind welcome from Flower, and said, "There is no better bird ever born than you. You are a very kind and generous bird. But the other parrot who looks just like you said many cruel words. I don't understand how he can be so different."

Flower explained, "We are brothers, dear king. We have the same mother, and came from the same nest. But my brother was raised by thieves and I was raised by monks."



Flower continued,
“The thieves are undisciplined, selfish and unkind, tricking, hurting and cheating others. But the monks have self-control, and are generous, helpful and compassionate. You become similar to the friends that you have. Whoever you admire and get close to, you will soon become like they are. Just like if you wrap fish in leaves, the leaves soon stink, too. And if you wrap perfume in leaves, the leaves soon smell nice like perfume. A wise person stays away from bad company, knowing that trouble comes from getting near them. He instead stays near other wise people, and becomes even wiser.”

The king was so pleased with Flower’s good advice, he invited the monks to stay near his palace and gave his beautiful garden as a safe home for parrots, where he made sure that they were comfortable with all the good food they could want.

Questions:

1. How did the parrots become separated? (a big storm)
2. What did Dagger want to do when he saw the king? (kill him and steal his jewelry)
3. Why did Dagger want to do that? (he saw his friends rob people, and heard them talk about it)
4. How did Flower behave when the king arrived at the monks’ village? (kind, welcoming, generous)
5. Why were the parrots so different? (that each became similar to the friends they had)

What the Buddha said:

“Not following or associating with the ignorant
But associating instead with the wise . . . this is the best way.”
- *Mahamangala Sutta*

Dharma Discussion – Influence of friends:

Each of the parrots, Dagger and Flower, became similar to their friends, and very different from each other.

How did that happen?

They heard how their friends talked, and watched what their friends did.
They enjoyed joining in whatever their friends were doing.
So they began to act, talk and think just like their friends.

That is how we are *influenced* – in a good way or in a bad way - by our friends.

Dagger had the bad influences of his friends, the robbers
and Flower had the good influences of his friends, the monks.
Dagger associated with the ignorant, people who ignorant of Dharma
and Flower associated with the wise, people those who practice Dharma.

Can you think of some behaviors of other kids that might be a bad influence?

Some examples are lying, bullying, disobeying a parent or teacher, talking disrespectfully, insulting others, saying bad things about others, stealing, being revengeful, trying to prevent others from doing their work.

If you are friends with someone who often does these kinds of behaviors, then it's likely that you will join in sometimes.

You may laugh at what they do, and you may want to make them laugh by doing similar behavior. You may lie to help your friend avoid getting in trouble.

So you get involved too.

Over time, their habits become your habits.

Sometimes kids who are a bit misbehaved are the most fun to be around.

Maybe we think we can be a good influence on them - if we are friends, their behavior will get better. Is it a good idea?

Probably not, because no matter how confident we are that we can be a good example and not get involved in misbehavior, the fact is that one person's misbehavior easily spreads to others who associate with him or her.

Even adults are very often led into wrong acts, bad talk, or bad thoughts by one person's bad influence.

For young people the danger is even greater.

What if a friend only occasionally misbehaves?

In that case you can point out "that's not nice," avoid their behavior or somehow indicate to them that you don't like it.

It might take courage for you to do that.

But you could be changing your life and their life for the better, so it's well worth it.

And if they're a good person, they'll respect your opinion.