

The Enlightened Father

by Marcus Conte – January 2023

Once there was an enlightened man who built a home on an island. It was a beautiful island full of exotic fruits and vegetables, and there were always so many flying creatures and other animals to visit. Waves crashed in the distance as sea foam bubbled on the shoreline. Colorful birds filled the sky with life.

The man enjoyed himself on the island very much. And because the man nurtured it to be so plentiful, all the island creatures were thankful for the home the man had built.

The man had a son who also lived on the island. He was an ambitious boy who did very well in school. The boy always listened to his father because he knew his father was a very wise man. The boy loved his father very much but often misunderstood him. The boy loved the island too, but soon he had so many things to take up, and so many dreams to fill, he started to see the island as behind him.

Every morning in the meditation space, the father would lift the curtain to see if the boy had taken his seat. Once he did, the father would close the curtain and walk away with a smile. The boy didn't understand why it made his father so happy to see his son take his seat, but he did it for the sake of his father. Nothing in the world made the boy happier than to see his father smile.

As the enlightened father grew in years, he spent his days silently tending the fields of plenty that gave so much to the island creatures. Under a golden sun, he arranged the fields with his hands and washed himself in the naked sea. Never did a more peaceful man exist.

But the island didn't suit the boy so well. The boy was interested in what was happening in town, and who was most popular at the local gallery. As his world of gadgets expanded, the boy began to think his father didn't understand him. The boy asked his father once why he was so happy all the time, and why he rarely left the island. The father would say, "I am home. Everything I need is right here."

But the boy was confused. To the boy, the island was intellectually limited and empty of so many things he discovered on the mainland. On the mainland there were places to visit, stores to shop and people of all ages to consider. Back on the island, the boy felt alone.

The father rarely gave the boy advice. But as the boy explored his world of opposites, the father was interested in the-one thing. The father had noticed his son was not at the meditation space of late. Was the boy taking his seat? To make his father happy, the boy would say he still meditates, but sometimes he forgets. Of course the father knew this, and when the boy asked if this was amiss, the father said, "Look deeply and you will see 'it' for yourself." That was the one thing the boy never understood about his father.

The boy had a girlfriend now, and they spent a lot of time away from the island. The father could see the boy was growing up in the usual way but never offered advice as to how the boy should live his life. When asked, the only advice he gave was, "Remember to take your seat."

When the boy grew up to be a man, he married a girl and started a family in the city. He pursued a career in business and was very successful. But he never felt as happy as he did on the island with his father. He missed a time when he worked the fields of plenty, and frolicked the tropical paradise his father had built.

Now with grown children of his own, the boy had a very busy life, and life on the island became a soft memory. He still video-chatted with his father on holidays but rarely went to visit. When the father was 89 years old he past away, and the boy was very sad. He returned to the island to bury his father under a tree at the foot of the hill. His father would often sit there and silently gaze over the vast blue horizon. He remembered his father would sit *still* like the mountain but somehow *move* like the clouds. A beautiful rainbow appeared as the boy lowered his father's body into the earth. All the island creatures appeared and the world was alive.

As he was about to leave the island and join his family back in the city, the boy, now 65 years old returned to the space where he once meditated. It was the one thing that made his father happy in a way he couldn't understand. He remembered his father's smile. As he took his seat he looked to the door and remembered how his father would peak through the curtain to see his son take his seat. He remembered how happy it made him feel. So he took his seat one last time and began to meditate, but this time, not for the sake of his father, but for his own sake.

As he sat on the cushion a storm approached in his mind. He remembered his father's instruction, "Follow the breath." As he followed the breath, a red cardinal appeared outside the window and the boy heard his father's voice say, "Look deeply and you will see 'it' for yourself."

When the boy got up, something inside him changed. He returned to the site where his father was buried - and for 40 days and 40 nights - he sat at the foot of the hill.

On the final day - he was enlightened. He saw - it - for himself.

He looked to the clouds and his father was smiling.