

## **Chapter Two - The Coming of King Rinkitink**

A few days after this, on a bright and sunny morning when the breeze blew soft and sweet from the ocean and the trees waved their leaf-laden branches, the Royal Watchman, whose duty it was to patrol the shore, came running to the King with news that a strange boat was approaching the island.

At first the King was sore afraid and made a step toward the hidden pearls, but the next moment he reflected that one boat, even if filled with enemies, would be powerless to injure him, so he curbed his fear and went down to the beach to discover who the strangers might be. Many of the men of Pingaree assembled there also, and Prince Inga followed his father. Arriving at the water's edge, they all stood gazing eagerly at the oncoming boat.

It was quite a big boat, they observed, and covered with a canopy of purple silk, embroidered with gold. It was rowed by twenty men, ten on each side. As it came nearer, Inga could see that in the stern, seated upon a high, cushioned chair of state, was a little man who was so very fat that he was nearly as broad as he was high. This man was dressed in a loose silken robe of purple that fell in folds to his feet, while upon his head was a cap of white velvet curiously worked with golden threads and having a circle of diamonds sewn around the band. At the opposite end of the boat stood an oddly shaped cage, and several large boxes of sandalwood were piled near the center of the craft.

As the boat approached the shore the fat little man got upon his feet and bowed several times in the direction of those who had assembled to greet him, and as he bowed he flourished his white cap in an energetic manner. His face was round as an apple and nearly as rosy. When he stopped bowing he smiled in such a sweet and happy way that Inga thought he must be a very jolly fellow.

The prow of the boat grounded on the beach, stopping its speed so suddenly that the little man was caught unawares and nearly toppled headlong into the sea. But he managed to catch hold of the chair with one hand and the hair of one of his rowers with the other, and so steadied himself. Then, again waving his jeweled cap around his head, he cried in a merry voice:

"Well, here I am at last!"

"So I perceive," responded King Kitticut, bowing with much dignity.

The fat man glanced at all the sober faces before him and burst into a rollicking laugh. Perhaps I should say it was half laughter and half a chuckle of merriment, for the sounds he emitted were quaint and droll and tempted every hearer to laugh with him.

"Heh, heh--ho, ho, ho!" he roared. "Didn't expect me, I see. Keek-eek-eek-eek! This is funny--it's really funny. Didn't know I was coming, did you? Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo! This is certainly amusing. But I'm here, just the same."

"Hush up!" said a deep, growling voice. "You're making yourself ridiculous."

Everyone looked to see where this voice came from; but none could guess who had uttered the words of rebuke. The rowers of the boat were all solemn and silent and certainly no one on the shore had spoken. But the little man did not seem astonished in the least, or even annoyed.

King Kitticut now addressed the stranger, saying courteously:

"You are welcome to the Kingdom of Pingaree. Perhaps you will deign to come ashore and at your convenience inform us whom we have the honor of receiving as a guest."

"Thanks; I will," returned the little fat man, waddling from his place in the boat and stepping, with some difficulty, upon the sandy beach. "I am King Rinkitink, of the City of Gilgad in the Kingdom of Rinkitink, and I have come to Pingaree to see for myself the monarch who sends to my city so many beautiful pearls. I have long wished to visit this island; and so, as I said before, here I am!"

"I am pleased to welcome you," said King Kitticut. "But why has Your Majesty so few attendants? Is it not dangerous for the King of a great country to make distant journeys in one frail boat, and with but twenty men?"

"Oh, I suppose so," answered King Rinkitink, with a laugh. "But what else could I do? My subjects would not allow me to go anywhere at all, if they knew it. So I just ran away."

"Ran away!" exclaimed King Kitticut in surprise.

"Funny, isn't it? Heh, heh, heh--woo, hoo!" laughed Rinkitink, and this is as near as I can spell with letters the jolly sounds of his laughter. "Fancy a King running away from his own ple--hoo, hoo--keek, eek, eek! But I had to, don't you see!"

"Why?" asked the other King.

"They're afraid I'll get into mischief. They don't trust me. Keek-eek-eek--Oh, dear me! Don't trust their own King. Funny, isn't it?"

"No harm can come to you on this island," said Kitticut, pretending not to notice the odd ways of his guest. "And, whenever it pleases you to return to your own country, I will send with you a fitting escort of my own people. In the meantime, pray accompany me to my palace, where everything shall be done to make you comfortable and happy."

"Much obliged," answered Rinkitink, tipping his white cap over his left ear and heartily shaking the hand of his brother monarch. "I'm sure you can make me comfortable if you've plenty to eat. And as for being happy--ha, ha, ha, ha!--why, that's my trouble. I'm too happy. But stop! I've brought you some presents in those boxes. Please order your men to carry them up to the palace."

"Certainly," answered King Kitticut, well pleased, and at once he gave his men the proper orders.

"And, by the way," continued the fat little King, "let them also take my goat from his cage."

"A goat!" exclaimed the King of Pingaree.

"Exactly; my goat Bilbil. I always ride him wherever I go, for I'm not at all fond of walking, being a trifle stout--eh, Kitticut?--a trifle stout! Hoo, hoo, hoo-keek, eek!"

The Pingaree people started to lift the big cage out of the boat, but just then a gruff voice cried: "Be careful, you villains!" and as the words seemed to come from the goat's mouth the men were so astonished that they dropped the cage upon the sand with a sudden jar.

"There! I told you so!" cried the voice angrily. "You've rubbed the skin off my left knee. Why on earth didn't you handle me gently?"

"There, there, Bilbil," said King Rinkitink soothingly; "don't scold, my boy. Remember that these are strangers, and we their guests." Then he turned to Kitticut and remarked: "You have no talking goats on your island, I suppose."

"We have no goats at all," replied the King; "nor have we any animals, of any sort, who are able to talk."

"I wish my animal couldn't talk, either," said Rinkitink, winking comically at Inga and then looking toward the cage. "He is very cross at times, and indulges in language that is not respectful. I thought, at first, it would be fine to have a talking goat, with whom I could converse as I rode about my city on his back; but--keek-eek-eek-eek!--the rascal treats me as if I were a chimney sweep instead of a King. Heh, heh, heh, keek, eek! A chimney sweep-hoo, hoo, hoo!--and me a King! Funny, isn't it?" This last was addressed to Prince Inga, whom he chucked familiarly under the chin, to the boy's great embarrassment.

"Why do you not ride a horse?" asked King Kitticut.

"I can't climb upon his back, being rather stout; that's why. Kee, kee, keek, eek!--rather stout--hoo, hoo, hoo!" He paused to wipe the tears of merriment from his eyes and then added: "But I can get on and off Bilbil's back with ease."

He now opened the cage and the goat deliberately walked out and looked about him in a sulky manner. One of the rowers brought from the boat a saddle made of red velvet and beautifully embroidered with silver thistles, which he fastened upon the goat's back. The fat King put his leg over the saddle and seated himself comfortably, saying:

"Lead on, my noble host, and we will follow."

"What! Up that steep hill?" cried the goat. "Get off my back at once, Rinkitink, or I won't budge a step."

"But-consider, Bilbil," remonstrated the King. "How am I to get up that hill unless I ride?"

"Walk!" growled Bilbil.

"But I'm too fat. Really, Bilbil, I'm surprised at you. Haven't I brought you all this distance so you may see something of the world and enjoy life? And now you are so ungrateful as to refuse to carry me! Turn about is fair play, my boy. The boat carried you to this shore, because you can't swim, and now you must carry me up the hill, because I can't climb. Eh, Bilbil, isn't that reasonable?"

"Well, well, well," said the goat, surlily, "keep quiet and I'll carry you. But you make me very tired, Rinkitink, with your ceaseless chatter."

After making this protest Bilbil began walking up the hill, carrying the fat King upon his back with no difficulty whatever.

Prince Inga and his father and all the men of Pingaree were much astonished to overhear this dispute between King Rinkitink and his goat; but they were too polite to make critical remarks in the presence of their guests. King Kitticut walked beside the goat and the Prince followed after, the men coming last with the boxes of sandalwood.

When they neared the palace, the Queen and her maidens came out to meet them and the royal guest was escorted in state to the splendid throne room of the palace. Here the boxes were opened and King Rinkitink displayed all the beautiful silks and laces and jewelry with which they were filled. Every one of the courtiers and ladies received a handsome present, and the King and Queen had many rich gifts and Inga not a few. Thus the time passed pleasantly until the Chamberlain announced that dinner was served.

Bilbil the goat declared that he preferred eating of the sweet, rich grass that grew abundantly in the palace grounds, and Rinkitink said that the beast could never bear being shut up in a stable; so they removed the saddle from his back and allowed him to wander wherever he pleased.

During the dinner Inga divided his attention between admiring the pretty gifts he had received and listening to the jolly sayings of the fat King, who laughed when he was not eating and ate when he was not laughing and seemed to enjoy himself immensely.

"For four days I have lived in that narrow boat," said he, "with no other amusement than to watch the rowers and quarrel with Bilbil; so I am very glad to be on land again with such friendly and agreeable people."

"You do us great honor," said King Kitticut, with a polite bow.

"Not at all--not at all, my brother. This Pingaree must be a wonderful island, for its pearls are the admiration of all the world; nor will I deny the fact that my kingdom would be a poor one without the riches and glory it derives from the trade in your pearls. So I have wished for many years to come here to see you, but my people said: 'No! Stay at home and behave yourself, or we'll know the reason why.'"

"Will they not miss Your Majesty from your palace at Gilgad?" inquired Kitticut.

"I think not," answered Rinkitink. "You see, one of my clever subjects has written a parchment entitled 'How to be Good,' and I believed it would benefit me to study it, as I consider the accomplishment of being good one of the fine arts. I had just scolded severely my Lord High Chancellor for coming to breakfast without combing his eyebrows, and was so sad and regretful at having hurt the poor man's feelings that I decided to shut myself up in my own room and study the scroll until I knew how to be good--hee, heek, keek, eek, eek!--to be good! Clever idea, that, wasn't it? Mighty clever! And I issued a decree that no one should enter my room, under pain of my royal displeasure, until I was ready to come out. They're awfully afraid of my royal displeasure, although not a bit afraid of me. Then I put the parchment in my pocket and escaped through the back door to my boat--and here I am. Oo, hoo-hoo, keek-eek! Imagine the fuss there would be in Gilgad if my subjects knew where I am this very minute!"

"I would like to see that parchment," said the solemn-eyed Prince Inga, "for if it indeed teaches one to be good it must be worth its weight in pearls."

"Oh, it's a fine essay," said Rinkitink, "and beautifully written with a goosequill. Listen to this: You'll enjoy it--tee, hee, hee!--enjoy it."

He took from his pocket a scroll of parchment tied with a black ribbon, and having carefully unrolled it, he proceeded to read as follows:

"'A Good Man is One who is Never Bad.' How's that, eh? Fine thought, what? 'Therefore, in order to be Good, you must avoid those Things which are Evil.' Oh, hoo-hoo-hoo!--how clever! When I get back I shall make the man who wrote that a royal hippolorum, for, beyond question, he is the wisest man in my kingdom--as he has often told me himself." With this, Rinkitink lay back in his chair and chuckled his queer chuckle until he coughed, and coughed until he choked and choked until he sneezed. And he wrinkled his face in such a jolly, droll way that few could keep from laughing with him, and even the good Queen was forced to titter behind her fan.

When Rinkitink had recovered from his fit of laughter and had wiped his eyes upon a fine lace handkerchief, Prince Inga said to him:

"The parchment speaks truly."

"Yes, it is true beyond doubt," answered Rinkitink, "and if I could persuade Bilbil to read it he would be a much better goat than he is now. Here is another selection: 'To avoid saying Unpleasant Things, always Speak

Agreeably.' That would hit Bilbil, to a dot. And here is one that applies to you, my Prince: 'Good Children are seldom punished, for the reason that they deserve no punishment.' Now, I think that is neatly put, and shows the author to be a deep thinker. But the advice that has impressed me the most is in the following paragraph: 'You may not find it as Pleasant to be Good as it is to be Bad, but Other People will find it more Pleasant.' Haw-hoo-ho! keek-eeek! 'Other people will find it more pleasant!--hee, hee, heek, keek!--'more pleasant.' Dear me--dear me! Therein lies a noble incentive to be good, and whenever I get time I'm surely going to try it."

Then he wiped his eyes again with the lace handkerchief and, suddenly remembering his dinner, seized his knife and fork and began eating.