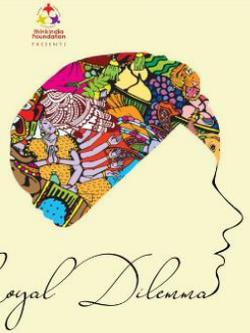


The Royal Dilemma

Tanvi Popuri

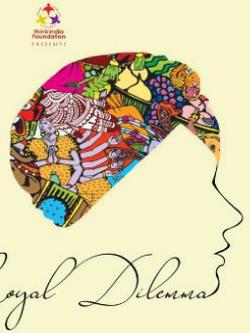


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“All hail King David!” the courtiers exclaimed. The potentate elegantly took a seat on his throne. “My fellow citizens and courtiers, I would like to host a feast for us all. We won many wars together, but this one was special. We worked very hard for several months and finally defeated the enemy. That’s why I’m inviting you all tomorrow evening for dinner at the palace. Please do come with your family,” the emperor announced. Everyone showered the monarch with claps. After the long proceeding of the court, the minister and king met in the treasury. “See my leader, we don’t have enough money for the grand feast. In the report, even after the war, we had around 50,000 gold coins. But now, we only have 1,000. I have a feeling that somebody has stolen our kingdom’s treasure,” the minister informed. The ruler stood there bewildered. “There was never any thief in our province, at least during my reign. Who could have done this?” King David wondered aloud. “Your majesty, I believe that the citizens couldn’t have done such a disgraceful deed. To what I’ve understood, someone from our very own empire has stolen this wealth!” the minister analyzed. The sovereign agreed and he trudged back to his room for privacy. The king was in a big dilemma. He thought in several ways for hours, but nothing came to mind. “Will I be able to collect all the gold? Will I host the feast properly? I invited every citizen, and if I cancel the royal feast, it will ruin my image. What shall I do?” the ruler considered about the crisis. “Sire, your mother wishes to meet you,” a guard conveyed. The monarch gestured for his mother to come in. “Oh, David. The

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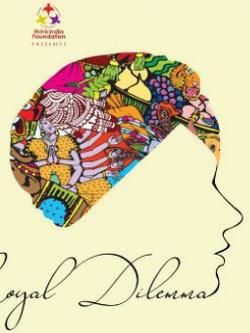
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minister has told me everything that happened. I came to give you some advice. Think back to your childhood. Always plan out everything you know and what you comprehend. Remember, the people who wish for the best might be the ones stabbing you behind your back. Good luck son," she dutifully reminded him. They both bowed and the king's mother exited the large chamber. The ruler got an idea after listening to his mother. He made a sketch out on who could've been the thief. He jotted down the names of all the suspects. His Majesty's brother, Philip, Queen Veronica, Princess Anne, the treasury's guard, and Eden, the king's most entrusted servant. The potentate's heart became heavy writing the names of the people he had always loved and trusted. But, overcoming this, he went into the vault in search of any clues and insisted the minister to come along and help him. "Sire, did you see that?" the minister pointed to the only chest filled with gold. "Ah, yes," King David moved closer, "It's brown paint on the crate." Together they inspected the room and couldn't find anything else. The potentate left to his chamber to figure out something from the clue. "I don't understand," he groaned. "Brother, may I come in," Philip knocked on the rich door. "Yes Phil, come on in," the sovereign allowed. "I wanted to ask for permission to get my suite painted and decorated neatly. It will take a few hours for the painter. May I proceed?" Philip requested. The king waited for a couple of moments. "Brown paint. Philip painting his room. Does this have a connection? What's happening?" the superior pondered.

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“How did you get this idea?” the emperor questioned. “Queen Veronica suggested that I should remodel my area, so that it would look better,” Philip acknowledged. His majesty agreed and his brother left. “I’m sorry beloved, Vera. I have to write your name on the suspect list. You too, Phil. I know both of you could never do such a thing,” he muttered, writing down the two possibilities. Not thinking of any other idea, the monarch darted to Philip’s room and peeked through the ajar door. Philip was peacefully resting on his mattress. “Do it correctly,” he snapped at the artist. The royal painter nodded and grunted. The sire moved on thinking that Philip was too ignorant to commit a crime. Fixing his velvet robe, King David quietly walked towards the Queen’s place to figure out anything new. While looking through the tinted window, he could detect a few brown chests that he never saw before. Frantically, he opened the entryway. “Vera, what are those bins?” the superior buzzed. She hesitated. Anne slowly started going out of the scene. “Anne, where are you going? Stay here,” he ordered. Nervously, she sat back down. “Tell me,” he pleaded. “I got them from my parents. They delivered them. They’re filled with gold and some ornaments for Anne,” she reacted. Something felt fishy to the crowned head. “I shall look for myself,” he muttered. “Please! Anne do something.” Queen Veronica cried. Anne was terrified right there. The king went closer to Anne instead. “David,” Veronica started, but got cut off. “You hiding something there, child?” he questioned pulling his sword out slowly. She gulped

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down saliva and stepped back a little. "It wasn't me father! It, it, it was all Eric's fault. He got me tempted. We wanted to run away, I- I loved him," Anne quickly blurted. She hit her mouth, regretting what she had said in terror. The emperor's eyes were garnets. "Summon the royal painter Eric immediately!" he commanded the guards. The painter was brought in and he confessed his crime. "I painted the boxes. They are gold too," he disappointingly sighed. Princess Anne and Eric were placed in the dungeons. Opening the caskets, David found all the gold, silver, jewels, and ornaments filled in them. The next day, the treasure got put in its right spot. When the sun slowly started to set, everyone arrived and the kingdom had a delicious feast together. With this, the monarch's problem was solved and everyone learned a lesson to always remain trustworthy and to never make their superior angry.