

Thirst





Once upon a time there was a young boy who lived with his parents on a small island in the Pacific. His name was René and he lived together with his family in a small hut.

The family was not very well-off,
but the parents cared for their son with great love.

There was enough to eat and drink every day.
Fruit and rice from their garden and pure, clean spring water
from the island's only stream.

As a child René had been very happy and content.
As he grew up into a man, however, he wanted more.

Not just fruit, rice and water every day.
He wanted to earn money and to 'achieve something'.
What this really meant he could not yet say,
yet there simply had to be more
than this humble life of theirs.

A businessman had erected a lemonade factory on the island
in the time being and offered René a job –
his chance to 'achieve something'.

By then his parents had become very old
and knew they could no longer support and
accompany their son anymore.

One day, René's father said,
"dear son, the time will soon come,
when you will go your own way.
Your mother and I were able to accompany you up to now
and gave you a lot to take with you. You want to achieve
more in your life than we did in ours

and that is your good right.
But remember, it is not bad to possess desires and riches. But
it is bad if desires and riches possess you.
There are many things that may taste better
than the fruit from the garden
or the spring water from the stream.
But never forget, true thirst can only be quenched by the
spring water from the stream..."

Shortly after, his parents died.
René had been employed at the lemonade factory
for several months.
He even stayed at the factory over lunch,
since he no longer had his mother to cook for him.
The factory had a canteen and served
its home-made lemonade every day.
Initially, everybody laughed at René when he asked for spring
water, but he quickly became used to
the delicious, sweet lemonade –
which in fact did taste better than the spring water.
René earned more and more money over the years
and could therefore also afford more.
His own car, own house – until the house and garden of his
parents drifted out of his memory.
He enjoyed the work and the lemonade tasted great.
It was seductive – like the many other things
that had come into René's life.
The bigger house, more attractive car... they all had the same
effect on him as the lemonade that seemed to taste of 'more'
than the spring water from his childhood.
At first, René only drank one small bottle over lunch.
After a few weeks though a bigger one

and few months later a glass for every break.

Lemonade had become his existence –
he worked in a factory that produced lemonade
and drank more and more of it himself every day.

So delicious and sweet it was.

It seemed to beckon him in the same way his car did,
but did not quench his thirst.

The more lemonade he drank,
the more thirsty he became.

And in turn the more lemonade he drank.

But still his thirst was not quenched.

He woke up very thirsty every morning
and went to sleep thirsty.

There was almost nothing to buy on the whole island but
lemonade – so sweet and tasty it was.

By now, the businessman had won the whole island for his
customer. Everybody drank and bought his lemonade.

Year after year, René felt his thirst grow bigger inside him.

Had his father not wanted to tell him something
though before he died?

René could hardly remember.

But it could not have been so important – after all, what was
important now, was to be able to afford

the latest model of car by doing overtime at work.

This way René could ‘achieve something’ again.

Over the past few years he had regularly bought new cars,
each more attractive, expensive and bigger than the one

before. There was no car dealer on the island,

but the lemonade factory owner had a brother who traded in
cars. He brought new models to the island each half-year.

The how manyieth car was this already?

René no longer knew.
With each new model he thought it would be the last and
most attractive and that he would never
have to buy another one again.
But no sooner than the car-dealer had returned,
a new model appeared...
Just as sweet and captivating as the lemonade,
just as tasty.
Even then, however, his thirst was never quenched,
but in fact grew...

One evening René went to bed thirsty.
He had never drunk so much lemonade before –
but still was thirsty.
Or maybe precisely for that reason...?
That night he dreamt of his father.
He heard him say:
“Always remember, it’s not bad to possess desires and riches.
But it is bad if desires and riches possess you.
Many things may taste better than our fruit from the garden
or the spring water from the stream.
But never forget, true thirst can only be quenched by
spring water from the stream...”

René awoke the following morning remembering each word
his father had said to him.
“The spring water from the stream...”
how could René forget?
The spring water from the stream –
the only thing that could quench his thirst and that of all the
people on the island.
He had to find it, but how? And where?

His father had not revealed the stream's location,
he died too soon.

So he started out on his way, asking friends and neighbors
after it. Many of the young islanders had never heard of the
stream, not even from their parents.

They did not even know of its existence.

René was desperate. Whom could he ask?

His boss, the factory owner. René hoped that by having
erected the lemonade factory he may have been around
quite a lot and would know.

But his boss only said, "I'm sorry I did hear about the spring
once, but just thought it was gossip.

And even if it did exist, who needs a stream?

Our lemonade has brought wealth to this island.

Everyone can afford all the lemonade they desire
and can earn enough at the factory to be able to buy a new
car. Our lemonade is much more delicious and was what
made all of this possible in the first place."

"Yes," René thought to himself,
"but it does not quench ones thirst."

So who was left to ask?

He suddenly thought of the beggar
who had been sitting at the same spot on the marketplace
for so many years.

The beggar was older than his father had been, perhaps he
would still know something of the stream...

"Well of course I still remember the stream,"
the old man replied.

"It has been a long time and I never thought anybody would

still ask me about it – nowadays everyone only
yearns for lemonade.”

René answered hastily,

“please tell me all you know of it...”

“The spring lies on the central hill, in the middle of the
island. It is surrounded by a beautiful small lake and a
glorious waterfall. It’s existed there for thousands of years and
continues to live out its holy mission –
to give and only ever give.”

“Do you go there a lot?” René asked.

“Why does no one know about it anymore?”

“No, I’m far too old for that,” the beggar replied,
“I drank water from the stream the whole of my life
and could always quench my thirst,
but the way there has become too difficult for me to take.
I now depend on lemonade from the factory, for my
survival... although, it does not quench my thirst.”

“I know” René replied softly,

“but why does no one know of it anymore?”

“That’s simple,” the old man explained,
“the elders have all passed away and the factory owner
gave his lemonade to all the youngsters for free
and they were won over.”

René became very anxious.

“The factory owner does not believe in the stream,”
his words simply blurted out.

“Sure he believes in it,” the old man confirmed,
“he even said he’d seen it.”

René could not understand.

The old man began, “if you had your own lemonade factory,
would you tell everyone of a spring
that could quench your greatest thirst?”

“No...” it began to dawn on René. The lemonade, the sweet taste, the overtime, the new cars, the big thirst...

Just how could he have forgotten his father’s words?

Then the old man said:

“Never forget, true thirst can only be quenched by water from the stream...”

Tears came to René’s eyes –
those were his father’s words...

The old man explained the exact way to the well to René. Several friends and neighbors had congregated around the two of them by this time, were listening attentively and also wishing to visit it. They wanted to finally quench their big thirsts, instead of suppressing and strengthening it with every new day.

René made up his mind.

He would find the well and bring all his friends there – only in this way could he quench his thirst, save the old man and give the island its future, back again.

He saw his father and heard his words once again:

“Many things may taste better than our fruit from the garden or the spring water from the stream.

But never forget, true thirst can only be quenched by spring water from the stream...”