

On the Street or in the Heart?

There is a German lady called Barbara who lives in Penang in Malaysia with more than 50 dogs. Some people think she is crazy but in fact she is not. All her dogs have been rescued from the street. Simba, a golden terrier crossbreed, was shot at when there was a cull of street dogs. He hid in an open-topped car until it was safe and then begged for rescue by putting both his front paws around the car owner's legs and looking up at him through pleading big brown eyes. Sita was thrown over a cliff tied into a sack with a terrible wound to her head. Both dogs are now alive and well and have found good, nurturing homes. They have been adopted by people who love them.

Why should we give anything less to human beings? Almost everyone would prefer to live in a loving family than on the streets. There are exceptions to this, of course, but most people who chose to live on the streets as adults have had difficult or troubling relationships with their families or on their lives. There are even cases of millionaires living in cardboard boxes to avoid such painful relationships.

Street children are a different matter altogether. Quite often they are born on the streets, or abandoned early in life. For them, it's not a choice. Their life expectancy is not very long, as they run the risk of contracting diseases as well as lacking any formal education. In most countries, their plight is terrible, as few careers or even jobs are open to them. Usually they get sucked into a life of crime, prostitution or drugs, just as a means to survive.

How do you teach your child, who most likely has enough food and a warm bed to sleep in at night, to have compassion for street children? An excellent way is by reading stories to them. A new collection of stories by Paolo F. Tiberi, entitled *Chronicles of King Argoz, Prince Ultan and Princess Maya*, which is part of the 'Legends of Altai' Series, may provide you with a useful resource. There are many wonderful tales in the book, but one, in particular, highlights the plight of all those who have been abandoned, and shows how simple acts of kindness can bring about extraordinary transformations. It's called *King Argoz and the Street Girl*.

King Argoz is a man who has grown into his role as a king. He started out from a position of ignorance about the world around him, only wanting to be admired. When he found he wasn't, because his people were hungry and blamed him, he set out on a voyage of self-discovery. He began to realise that it was only through compassion that he could affect the lives of his people. Only by becoming empathetic to their needs, could he start to understand them. In this tale, the King, in disguise, finds a hungry, dirty street girl. His heart is touched as he watches her scavenge for scraps of food that other people throw away.

He doesn't rescue her immediately, however. He leaves food for her, so as to gain her trust. I have seen my dog-loving friend do exactly the same with a new animal at the beginning of her rescue process. Sometimes you can't rush in and change a life. You have to show your intentions and build up genuine trust.

As this stranger (the King in disguise) starts to help her, other people are inspired to help as well. One gives her clothes, another promises to educate her not because of a reward but because they realise that they too can provide, help and make a difference. This shows our actions can really affect other people. We are often motivated to help others by catching someone else's vision. That's why it is so important to set an example. One person can make a difference. And one person can encourage many others to make a difference, so spreading the inspiration of change.

After a while, the King hands her the food personally and, as he gets to know her, she reveals her true needs. She wants to live in a family. She wants him to become her Dad. And so he does, and she becomes a princess.

Becoming a princess isn't really the point of the story, however. It's really about finding room in one's heart to take on the care of another being.

For my friend, Barbara, in Penang, it's dogs. Even though people ask her why she cares so much about dogs as there must be thousands, even millions, of abandoned dogs in the streets, she smiles and continues to help those beautiful creatures. People tell her all the time "surely you can't make a difference, there are too many"

Barbara just smiles and answers, 'I can't make a difference to all of those thousands of dogs, but to these dogs here with me I *have* made a difference! To them I have mattered! We are all connected, we are all family.'

For King Argoz it was a street child who touched his heart and prompted him to action. Who is it for you and what will you do?

Chronicles of King Argoz, Prince Ultan and Princess Maya is the first of a series of riveting books in the Legends of Altai series by renowned self-awareness expert, Paolo F. Tiberi. If you would like to get a FREE chapter showcasing the book narrative style and story telling, please visit:

http://www.legendsofalta.com/pages/free_gifts.php