

# *The Lord of Parrots*

A long time ago, in a large forest by the sea, lived a certain Lord of Parrots and his flock. The Lord was old and should have retired from his duties and rested, but he felt such a sense of responsibility as leader of the flock that he refused to do so. Every day, when the flock set out looking for food, he was at its head.

The parrot had to fly swiftly so that the flock could travel to far-away places and still be back at home before dark. It cost him more energy than he could afford.

Every day his ears were buffeted by strong winds and his eyes burned by glaring sunlight. Eventually both the Lord and his wife became utterly blind. Then the Lord had to give up his position as head of the flock. He and his wife had to stay at home and rely on their son, who was still young and healthy, to provide for their needs.

Their son appreciated the debt of gratitude that children owe to parents and he tried hard to repay his mother and father for all that they had done for him. No matter how tired his son was, if he knew the whereabouts of some delicious fruit, he would make sure that he would get some to offer to his parents.

One day, while he was out looking for food, the Lord's son came across golden mangoes which tasted as sweet as honey. Although they were big and heavy, he was determined to carry a couple back in his beak for his parents.

As soon as the Lord had tasted a single mouthful, his heart stopped. He knew those mangoes well. They were the ones that grew on 'Great Danger Isle.' Despite its delicious taste, the Lord of Parrots couldn't manage to eat his mangoes. He was thinking of the peril that might be awaiting his beloved son. Anxiously he said to him, "Dear son, don't ever go and eat those mangoes again. For the sake of your life," he repeated, "make this the first and last time that you eat them. Don't go again under any circumstances. Those mangoes are wonderfully sweet and delicious and once you start eating them you're likely to forget yourself and eat too many. On the way home you'll feel sleepy, you won't be able to fly and you'll fall into the sea and drown."

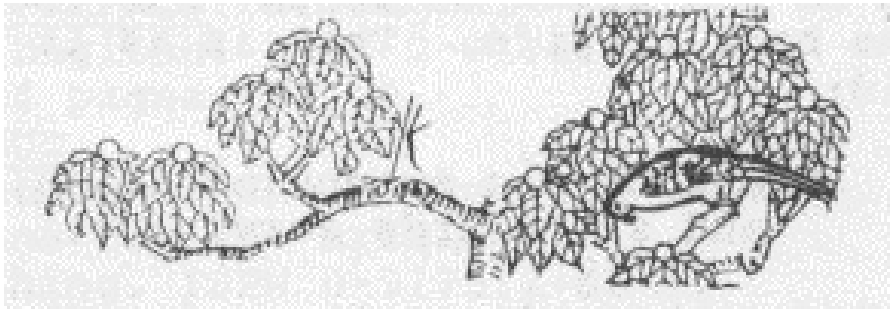
Then the Lord told his son of his own experience, "When I was still young, I once went to eat the mangoes on 'Great Danger Isle.' As soon as I tasted their delicious flavour I realized the dangers that might follow from eating them. I was very careful not to get carried away and eat too many. Then I urged the flock to set back for home and so we all reached our nests safely. From that day on I've never returned to eat any more of their mangoes, and that's why I'm still alive today.

But those greedy parrots who had become enamoured of the taste of the mangoes returned to eat more and many of them fell into the sea and drowned. Believe your father, dear son, and don't ever go to that island

again."

Although the young parrot was a good son and appreciated his debt of gratitude he had a stubborn streak and loved fine food. He was boastful and heedless. He was sure that he could look after himself.

So he didn't obey his father's warning and returned regularly to 'Great Danger Isle' to eat the delicious mangoes.



Lord of the Parrots was very worried about his son and warned him time and again, but although he forbade his son from going to the island, the young parrot wouldn't obey. He would always reply, "Dad, don't worry about me. I can look after myself."

Finally, one day the young parrot went out looking for food as usual while his parents waited at the nest. They waited and waited but their son did not return. "It looks as though we'll never see our stubborn child again," said the parrot Lord to his wife.

With their son no longer providing for them, the two old sightless birds began to go short of food. Before long their lives were over.

This story is in the Sukajataka and shows the dangers of stubbornness and overeating. The Lord Buddha related it to the monks in Jeta's Grove in Savatthi after a monk had eaten so much that he died. After he had finished the story the Lord Buddha said that the young parrot in that life had become the gluttonous monk. The obedient parrots had become the disciples of the Buddha, and the Lord of Parrots had become himself.

*submitted by Sumano Bhikkhu  
Wat Pah Nanachat, Thailand*