

Full text from the book,

“Little Ip and The Land of Contrasts”

By Jay Ball

Illustrated by Dixie Andrew

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To Parents (A Note from the author):

Little Ip and the Land of Contrasts is meant to be read as a parable, not doctrine. It came about as a result of my desire to help my children understand why Christ had to suffer. This parable suggests that the principals of mercy and justice were the driving factors of Christ's atonement.

The robe in this parable represents the physical attributes of God that he desires to share with his children. It characterizes that spirit alone is insufficient to give the depth of experience that can only come by taking on human form. Reaching our divine potential requires unity between both the physical and the spiritual.

The concept of forgiveness represents all those things which we want to learn from God, but that God cannot directly teach us without being unjust or unmerciful.

I chose to present the story using villains* to give the parable greater depth and meaning. If we view those who hurt us in life as our spiritual friends, we may be less inclined to judge them. Hopefully we'll be more forgiving and grateful for our adversities.** This is my prayer.

Jay Ball

* The story of Little Ip who wanted to learn forgiveness was adapted from the story of the Little Soul from "Conversations with God, An Uncommon Dialogue; Book 3" Charlottesville, VA, Hampton Road's Publishing 1998 pp. 347-49, Neale Donald Walsch.

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** Visit LittleIp.com for a more in depth discussion these topics.

Once upon a time, in a land called Iptopia, there lived some very happy creatures called Ips. These creatures lived in happiness and peace.

They all treated each other with kindness. There were no unkind words spoken, hurt feelings, or anything like that, because they loved each other.

They also loved their King. King Ip was honored by all the ips for two very important reasons: he was always fair and kind.

King Ip also had something that all the other ips did not. He had a robe of magnificence. This robe was beautiful and made the king move with grace and confidence. The ips admired this robe.

One day Happy Ip and his friend Little Ip asked the king, "Where did you get your beautiful robe of magnificence? We would like to have one just like it."

King Ip smiled and told them, "I got my robe from a far away place called The Land of Contrasts. If you want a robe of magnificence like mine, you must go to The Land of Contrasts also."

Little Ip stepped forward and asked, "King Ip, I love and admire you. I want to be like you. How can I learn to be like you?"

"Which of my traits do you want to learn most," asked the King.

"You possess the wonderful ability to forgive. I would like to learn the trait of forgiveness."

Little Ip noticed that many ips had gathered closely around to hear the important conversation taking place between her and the King.

They too were excited to hear about The Land of Contrasts, and began making plans to go there themselves. They wanted to get a robe of magnificence and learn the trait of forgiveness too.

King Ip asked Little Ip, "Who will you forgive?"

Little Ip looked around, and saw all her friends that she loved. Not one of them had done anything bad to her.

She could not find anyone to forgive.

Happy Ip took Little Ip by the hand and said, "I know. When we go to The Land of Contrasts, I will become a villain and hurt you. Then you can forgive me!"

Little Ip was excited about Happy Ip's offer. But then she became concerned.

"You are such a perfect loving Ip. As a villain you would be become a crooked and filthy creature. Why would you be willing to do that?"

"How else will you learn forgiveness?"

Little Ip understood that there was no other way.

"Then I shall become a villain as well, so that you too can learn forgiveness."

And so it was agreed. In fact, many other ips began making similar agreements with each other.

Suddenly King Ip declared, "Wait a minute!"

All the ips turned to look at the King.

"I cannot allow villains in my kingdom! It would no longer be perfect and wonderful!"

The ips were sad. If they went to The Land of Contrasts and became villains, they would not be allowed back into Iptopia. How would they be able to return with robes of magnificence?

Just then, one ip came forward and addressed the crowd, "I know how to solve this problem."

"I will volunteer to take charge and make sure that no ip that goes to The Land of Contrasts will become a villain. Then we all can get the robes of magnificence and return to Iptopia!"

It was an excellent speech and many of the ips cheered.

"Then how will I learn forgiveness," asked Little Ip.

Son Ip, King Ip's son who was admired by all the ips almost as much as the King, approached his fellow ips, and said, "I love each of you. I would like to see you learn forgiveness and return to Iptopia with robes of magnificence."

Son Ip turned and looked at the King. "All we have to do is find a way to allow them back into Iptopia. Is there any way for an ip to return if he or she promises not to be a villain any more?"

The King thought for a moment and then answered slowly, "There is a way..."

Not a sound could be heard in all of Iptopia because the ips were listening intently. Many were even holding their breath so they wouldn't miss a single word. The King had said there was a way! Was it possible to go to The Land of Contrasts, get the robes of magnificence, learn forgiveness, and return back to Iptopia?

"Why do you hesitate?" asked Son Ip. "How can an ip that has become a villain in The Land of Contrasts return to Iptopia?"

"In order for it to be fair", King Ip began, "any ip that had become a villain would have to be punished, but inflicting punishment is not kind. The reason I am such a great king is because I am always fair and I am always kind. I would cease to be a great king if I failed to be both."

"I have an idea", said Son Ip. "What if I suffered the punishment for my fellow ips?"

"Who would punish you?," asked the King.

"I would suffer at the hands of my fellow ips in The Land of Contrasts. I would suffer more than any other ip. I would suffer the punishment for all the ips who had become villains."

All the ips were in awe. "You would be willing to do that for us," they cried.

"Yes," replied Son Ip, "Because I love you."

"There is still one problem," said King Ip. "Son Ip will suffer your punishment, but who will punish him?"

The ips were perplexed. Was there no end to this problem?

Son Ip spoke again, "I will go to The Land of Contrasts, but I will not become a villain."

The ips realized that he was the only one who had not agreed with anyone to become a villain.

"I will not need any punishment and can return to Iptopia with my robe of magnificence. Then I will present each of you before the king to be accepted back into Iptopia.

King Ip will have to allow you back into Iptopia because if he doesn't, all that I will have suffered will be for nothing, and that wouldn't be fair!"

At this, all the ips shouted for joy! The problem was finally solved. The ips could now go to The Land of Contrasts, learn forgiveness, and return to Iptopia with their robes of magnificence!

Then followed the greatest celebration Iptopia had ever known.

The End