



#103 *The Traveling Minstrel*



A traveling minstrel named Bartholomew came to a small village to sing ballads. His favorite ballad told the story of another village long, long ago in a land that was far away. It was the most beautiful song you ever heard. It told of a promise of how one could be given the gift of TIME - all of the time that you could possibly wish for. After hearing this ballad, the people of the village were intrigued. "How can a minstrel provide time?" they asked. "It's simple," Bartholomew answered, "so simple, in fact, that you have probably overlooked it. You have always had the power to give yourself time. Would you like me to show you how to attain this gift?" They acquiesced, so he gathered the

*people and explained that, if they were to go through the whole process the entire village's cooperation was necessary. He warned that they would have to be prepared for a very strange request - to be asked that every **key** in the village be brought to the town square and put in a bucket. These keys would then be thrown away, never to be seen again. "But, what does this have to do with TIME?" asked the village spokesperson. Bartholomew answered, "I am a minstrel. May I respond by telling you a story of the last village where the keys were thrown away?" They readily agreed. His ballad went like this.*

Once upon a time an entire village threw away their keys. In place of the keys that locked others out, they promised to trust each other and invite one another in. Immediately, they noticed that the time spent installing and repairing door locks, gate locks, trunk locks, and jewelry box locks disappeared. Now, villagers could come and go through each other's doors. This caused them to spend less time going into town for many little things like a cup of sugar, since the neighbor next door had some - and their doors were always open. Soon, lending of many household items like tools and kitchen utensils became common, which saved a little more time. Then shops in town picked up these new habits of sharing and lending, instead of duplicating each other's services and competing so parsimoniously. This caused shopkeepers to get their work done in less time. And since no one spent time locking up at night, shop owners got home early. With all of the lending going on, banks were reduced to simply holding money, rather than loaning money for interest. And since the money could not be locked in a bank vault, the banks closed, and the owners did actual work that was needed around town. The absence of locking, hiding, and planning the security of possessions not only freed up time; it also freed up the villagers' minds. So, people became more relaxed and helped each other even more. They also used their free time for festivals and recreation. The work week dwindled so much that people sought out chores for diversion. They started helping each other in the washing, cleaning and upkeep of their dwellings. In short, it became hard to see the difference between work and play. So, you see, taking

away keys allowed the people unlimited free time. And more than this, they had the peace of mind that their locks and keys had falsely promised in the first place.

Finishing the ballad with a dramatic flair, Bartholomew quietly asked, “Would you like to see what happens if you try to be a village like that?” The people fell silent. Then, a long pause followed. Throwing away keys? Trusting neighbors? After a while, the village spokesperson piped up, “Thank you, on behalf of the whole village, for a captivating story, Bartholomew. I’m not so sure however, that we are ready for such an adventurous trial. I think, at least for the present, we need to continue doing our own chores and locking our front doors. Perhaps we will warm up to your idea if we give it a little more time!”

*THE PURSUIT OF SECURITY
ROBS US OF MORE THAN TIME*