

LET THERE BE LIGHT – A Scottish Fairy Tale for our time

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Once upon a time, in a land far away, there was a beautiful city, with wonderful buildings surrounded by gorgeous countryside. The people of that city were much like those found everywhere; mostly good, mostly generous, mostly helpful, and mostly happy. But despite all their good fortune, the people could never be easy. For on the edge of the city, in a collection of upturned boats and in the shadow of an old volcano, there lived a family of snakes. The people feared the snakes because they were venomous and had the power to harm both them and their children. So they had come to an arrangement with the snakes; they would provide the snakes with everything they needed to live in luxury, and they would obey the laws laid down by the snakes, and in return the snakes promised that they would not harm the people or their children.

This arrangement worked well enough for many years. The people prospered, the population grew, and those who worked hard became rich and powerful merchants with many servants. With their increased prosperity, the people became complacent and began no longer to fear the snakes. But as the power of the snakes over the people declined, and the influence of the merchants increased, the snakes became agitated and they sought a way to regain their control and dominance over the people and ensure their security. So, in secret,

they went to the merchants in that city who envied and coveted the power of the snakes, and they made a deal. If the merchants collaborated with the snakes in restoring their power, then in return the snakes would share their power with the merchants. The merchants and the snakes also agreed that there were now too many citizens in the city, far more than were needed to keep the snakes and the merchants in luxury. Besides that, it was difficult to control such large numbers of citizens. So, the second part of their plan was to reduce the number of people living in the city so that they could be easily managed.

Over the next few years, the snakes and the merchants concocted a very powerful spell with which to carry out their plan. The chief ingredient of their spell was fear, and the potion was held together with lies distilled from the corruption of science and medicine. They practiced the spell many times to make sure that it would work. And when the spell was perfect, and was finally cast, it drew a dark shadow across the whole of the city, terrifying its citizens who were no longer able to see their way. And in their terror, the people turned to the snakes for help in escaping from the darkness with which they were now surrounded.

And the chief snake, who was also the smallest but the most venomous, lied to them. And she told the citizens that the darkness was caused by their fellow citizens. If they wished to escape from the darkness, they must shun the company of their family and friends and must live alone. Only then would the darkness be lifted. And in their desperation the citizens obeyed, though it broke their hearts to leave their loved ones. And when the old were alone they lost hope and died, and the snakes came to kill them when they had no protection. And when the killing of the old was over, the snakes lifted the spell for a while, to convince the people that their sacrifice had been justified, and that the snakes could be trusted.

But amid all this chaos and confusion of darkness, a curious thing began to happen. If you had looked down at the city from the sky, you would have seen pinpricks of bright light beginning to appear in the city - just a few at first, but slowly increasing in number as time went on. And each of these pinpricks of light was associated with a citizen who did not believe the chief snake. They truly knew that it was not right that their fellow citizens were responsible for the darkness. They knew that the only feeling that they should have for their fellow citizens is love. And when they truly believed that, the darkness

surrounding them was banished, the fear that they had felt was gone, and they shone forth.

When the snakes saw these lights, they were very angry, for they then knew that their spell of fear and lies, strong as it was, was no match for the power of love and truth. When once a citizen had turned on the light of love and truth, they knew that it would never be turned off. But the snakes consoled themselves with the fact that numbers were small, and that if they reimposed their spell the rebellion against their plans could be snuffed out.

So, they mixed their potion with further and deeper lies, this time laced with an extra ingredient, hatred for those who showed their light. And when they brought down the spell a second time it created greater terror than before among the citizens who still believed in the words of the chief snake. Now the darkness around them was so profound that they were prepared to do anything the chief snake said to escape from it. Seizing her moment, she ordered each of her family to take from their fangs the venom which they contained. And with this venom she created a new and deadly infusion. And when it was ready, she told the people that the only way to escape from the darkness was by injecting all the men and women in the city with her infusion. And in their terror and confusion those who had not found the light of truth and love and remained in the dark obeyed and accepted the injections.

But the chief snake was cunning. She knew that if all died from the injection she would no longer be believed. So, she ordered only a portion of the injections to contain the venom, the rest an antidote that would lessen the darkness of the spell for a while. She further told them that if any were harmed by the injection then this was a sign that it was working, and that they were making a sacrifice for the good of others. The injections went ahead, and although many died and were harmed, their deaths were not noticed by those who remained in the dark, because they were under the spell. When all those who were willing had received the injection, and much damage had occurred, the chief snake again lifted the spell. And those who had been under her spell praised her for saving them from the darkness. So slowly but surely, the plans of the snakes and the merchants were coming to fruition; the people were now under control and the size of the population was being reduced.

But what of those who had seen through the lies and treachery of the chief snake? What had become of them? Each of these people shone with a light, and by that light they were able to find and join with others who possessed the

light and rejoiced in truth and love. And when they met, the brightness of their lights increased and the bonds of love and friendship between them grew. And driven by this love they pledged their energies to rescue those who suffered in fear in the dark. The strongest in the truth stood in the full public gaze, beacons in the darkness. They willingly accepted the attacks of lies and deceit that came at them from the enraged snakes and merchants, and in their dignity withstood the onslaught. Those scientists and doctors of integrity who shone out in the dark, dismantled the lies on which the spell was based and weakened its power. And a brave band of foot soldiers went individually to those who remained in darkness to offer them the knowledge and strength to escape from the spell. On many occasions they were rebuffed because the snake's spell had caused those in darkness to fear those who possessed the light. But great was the rejoicing whenever a new light was lit, for such people had been saved and would not return to the darkness.

As the lights began to shine in the city, the efforts of the snakes and the merchants to consolidate their control and reduce the population became increasingly desperate and they decided to make their final and fatal move. The chief snake sent out a decree that the return of the darkness to the men and women of the city could only be prevented, if they made the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice of their children. All children must be injected, she said, with the potion that had successfully been used to lift the spell the last time round. This, she said, was the key to removing perpetual fear. But living herself in a world of fear and corruption, she had forgotten the power of the love that the people had for their children. When the people heard the snake's decree that all their precious children must be sacrificed, the scales fell from their eyes. They saw that they had been led by a cold-blooded reptile without human love and compassion. And they rose up and drove the snakes from their upturned boats, and they expelled the merchants from their city, and they welcomed back those with the light that they had so much feared, and worked with them to forge a future based on love and truth and trust.

And those who had kept the light burning all this time looked up from their work and reflected on what had been achieved. They discovered that they had, without realising it, created a wonderful new society, a society of light and truth, a society worth living in. A society where they could establish their own schools and bring up their children in the light, away from fear and lies. A society which taught its member how to look after and support their own health rather than create disease and suffering. A society where they could

speaking freely and debating in an atmosphere of trust and respect. A society where they could establish their own system of justice untainted by the money of the merchants, and the corruption of the snakes. A society bound by love and loyalty that celebrated the diversity of its members. They had given themselves the best chance of living happily ever after.