

The Day Humanity Decided



A fable of our destiny

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The Day Humanity Decided

Once upon a time (actually, many times in history), there was a little man who ruled his kingdom with an iron fist. His birth name was Tyrannicus Rex, but he liked to go by "Tyrannicus Rex, Your Royal Highness, Supreme Ruler of The Land of Small".

Tyrannicus did not require that people also state his number in the long ancestral line of Tyrannicus Rexes. After all, he did not want his name to be unnecessarily long or cumbersome for his subjects to say. It was just one of the countless ways he showed magnanimous consideration for The People of the Land of Small.

In actual fact, no one could remember how or why or when the family came about. The last Tyrannicus Rex Family Record Book had apparently burned in a mysterious fire about twenty years back, just after Tyrannicus's father passed away and left his son to rule the kingdom.

An old-timer of the kingdom had heard a rumor that the fires happened regularly, always apparently just after the last King died. No one really knew if that was true, but it apparently it was a Rex family curse.

Everything in the Land of Small was, of course, small. The Tyrannicus Rexes preferred it that way, as they were all quite small in stature, so anything too big threatened their self-confidence. In the Land of Small, it was all small houses, small food, small entertainment... you get the picture. That is, with one exception.

There was a very tall (one might say gargantuan) ancient-looking tree that stood smack dab in the center of the kingdom's main square. This tree definitely did not fit the royal requisite of small. It was so perfectly positioned that there was hardly a soul in The Land of Small who had not seen or heard tell of that tree at one time or another. It was legendary.

Tyrannicus hated that tree with a vengeance. He and the other Tyrannicus Rexes before him had tried cutting it down, digging it out, and burning it, but that darned tree refused to go away. Trying to get rid of the tree proved to be a bad plan, because the more the Tyrannicus Rexes tried to remove it, the more The People of the Land of Small noticed the tree.

You, dear reader, know all too well how that goes. It is sometimes very difficult to stop looking at an eyesore. There it stood in the center of the kingdom, broken, charred, and scarred. It almost made people feel sad, and yet it didn't.

This tree exuded a demeanor relentlessly proud. In a strange way, the tree gave the people a feeling of hope that there was something beyond smallness. Over many generations, small had become quite wearisome. It was boring, and well, small. Of course it was against the rules to think about anything outside of small, so it was best to keep those feelings to one's self.

The biggest problem with the tree (for Tyrannicus) was, of course, that it was altogether contrary to The Rule of Small. Here was an object that defied The Tyrannicus Rex Official History of The Land of Small (kept in a special hall, separate from The Tyrannicus Rex Family Record Book for safe keeping), which stated that everything

in The Land of Small had always been small, and in fact, small was the most natural thing in the world. What other way could or should it be? If the history books said it was so, then it must be so.

The narrative of small may have stuck ad infinitum, except for that darned tree. For reasons Tyrannicus could not fathom, more and more the people were beginning to question it. If everything had always been small, and it was natural to be small, then why was that mysterious huge tree in the middle of the square? Where did it come from?

It was not man-made; it was a tree for heaven's sake, and a tree (being of Nature) was about as natural as you could get. Beyond that, why were the Tyrannicus Rexes so obsessed with removing it? Secretly The People of the Land of Small loved that sad, big tree, so it did raise questions.

To say that this whole situation was very irritating to Tyrannicus would be a massive understatement. He just wanted to live the easy life, but when the people questioned, this required making up new rules. Rules took time to make and enforce, but what else was one to do? It was exhausting, really.

Tyrannicus decided to delegate some of the rule making work. At first it started small, just a couple of people to oversee The Records of Rules of the Land of Small. They'd come to work and pore over the existing records, and then they'd put their heads together to suggest some new rules for the King to edict.

He was very pleased with their work. What he noticed right away was that as The Committee of Rules for the Land of Small made up

new rules, it was pretty much impossible to publish them daily. The People of the Land of Small would dutifully wait for the next proclamations, but if they happened to miss an announcement and accidentally break a new rule, it wasn't his fault, was it?

He hired more rule advisors, and rule making took on a life of its own in the kingdom. The people were now more fearful, which worked in Tyrannicus's favor. They were so preoccupied trying to keep track of the new rules and the fines they might get if they broke them, they almost stopped thinking about the big tree in the square. Almost... but Tyrannicus would soon discover that in another part of The Land of Small, Nature was conspiring against him.

It was allowed in The Land of Small that people could have gardens, as long as they kept them small. After all, "small food" was one of the core laws of The Land of the Small, and growing food for profit definitely did not fall under the category of small. One had to have a special permit to do anything, make anything, grow anything - you name it for - profit.

Hardly anyone was given a permit for making profit. They were only issued to special friends of the King. If a commoner accidentally made some profit, they were forgiven as long as they came forward within 24 hours of making said profit and submit it to the King. (The punishment for not doing so won't be mentioned here, as we are doing our utmost to tell a happy story.)

Somewhere in a small, almost forgotten corner of the kingdom, a tender-aged boy of just five years had unknowingly planted some

tomato seeds. At first the source of the seeds was a mystery. As it turns out, big important events have a destiny behind them.

It happened that by accident (or was it providence?) Lenny's little patch of garden had exactly the right growing conditions for tomatoes that year. The Tyrannicus Rex Official History of the Land of Small said that this might happen once every hundred years or so. The People of the Land of Small did not think about growing them, because tomatoes were deemed impossibly difficult.

There were no pictures of tomatoes, just some short little scribble about them in The Tyrannicus Rex Official History of the Land of Small. What the description did say is that these were very prolific plants that grew "lush and red, very delicious fruit", so by their very nature they were dangerous to the stability of law and order in the kingdom.

Perhaps they had even been outlawed, but no one knew for sure. It was more likely thought to just not matter, because conditions were hardly ever suitable for growing them in The Land of Small anyway. Realistically, how likely was the problem to crop up again?

Certainly there was a not a person alive during the time of this story who had ever seen or eaten one, including the King himself. For all these reasons, rules and guidelines had not yet been made up for growing tomatoes under the Tyrannicus Rex regime of rules.

It all began so innocently, really. Picture Hannah, a nice young mother who gives her young boy a corner of the garden, so he can mess around in the dirt with a bucket and small shovel, and stay safely out of her hair. She vaguely noticed at some point that his

interest in the garden became quite avid. Right after breakfast he'd be standing at the door, pining to go out and work his little patch of land.

After some days of it, this new behavior made her very curious, so Hannah casually asked Lenny to show her his garden. To her surprise, there was a smattering of tiny little seedlings poking through the earth. She asked how this happened, so he dipped into his jacket pocket and pulled out some little seeds. At first glance they looked about the color and size of oatmeal, but they were too regular in shape to be that. Hannah asked Lenny where he got them.

"A man just walked by and gave them to me, and he told me to sprinkle them."

Being an obedient boy, he did not engage in conversation with the stranger, as per his mother's direction. Being also an adventurous one, his curiosity got the better of him. He did hold out his hand to accept the gift of seeds, which he proceeded to sprinkle liberally. He'd worked alongside his mother in the garden enough to know that seeds grew things. How exciting! Whatever came up was going to be a wonderful surprise.

Lenny's mother had never seen this type of seedling before, and her son clearly had no more information about the source or nature of the seeds. Being that she was an avid gardener, Hannah went straight to her gardening book. After considerable time poring over the volume, she came up dry. Now her interest was really piqued.

She asked Lenny if she could help him with his plants, and being quite new to gardening, he somewhat reluctantly agreed. After all, this was HIS little patch of garden, and the man had given the seeds to HIM. Hannah and Lenny did agree that putting the rest of the seeds into a jar in the kitchen for safekeeping would be a very good idea, so they wouldn't get lost.

Dear reader, we shall not bore you with all of the tedious details of caretaking by Hannah and Lenny that ensued over the next weeks. However, suffice to say that Lenny was very excited on the day his plants overtook his own height. When he commented on their bigness, worry started to brew in his mother's mind. Big was a harshly discouraged word in The Land of Small. Where had her son learned such language?

Hannah staked up the plants, and in spite of some misgivings, she and Lenny continued on with the project. Luckily they were way out in the country on the fringe of things, so no one was apt to just stroll by and notice the strange plants. This is exactly why it was peculiar that a stranger with seeds had just happened by.

Very soon after this, Lenny excitedly pointed out the first pale yellow flower on one of the plants to his mother. More blooms quickly joined it, and not long after that some odd little bulbous green things started appearing. Instinctively Hannah thought it best to not pick them, but rather to wait and see what happened.

Quite rapidly the little bulbous objects grew to many times their original size. Then one day, Hannah noticed one of the objects was turning red. No, it couldn't be! But then again, maybe it was! Could

these actually be tomatoes? Hannah knew instinctively that they were.

She waited some days more, and when the first tomato was deeply red and softer to the touch, she picked it. She took Lenny into the house to wash and cut it, and then she took the first bite. The succulent tomato tasted like nothing else she'd ever eaten. It was love at first bite. She gave some to Lenny, who enthusiastically concurred.

More days passed, and everything seemed okay. A few more tomatoes ripened, and Hannah and Lenny could eat the supply. She tried slicing them and putting them on bread, heating them in a pan and cooking them down, making sauces and soups. Hannah was not only an avid gardener; she also loved to cook.

But then the worst happened. The sheer volume of tomatoes overtook their rate of consumption, and Hannah realized that she had a real problem on her hands. As this was occurring when there were new rules being written every day, she first wondered if she was somehow breaking any that she didn't know about. For certain she knew that she couldn't sell the tomatoes for profit.

But what could be the harm in gifting some of them to the neighbors? She definitely could not throw away something so rare and wonderful. For some unknown and quite miraculous reason, tomatoes had appeared out of nowhere into Lenny and Hannah's lives.

Hannah piled a goodly supply into a basket, and she took Lenny for a walk down the road to see her neighbor and best friend Adele.

When she showed Adele what she had in the basket, her neighbor's eyes grew wide. Yes! She would love to try some tomatoes. After a cup of tea and a bit of a chat where Hannah directed Adele to enjoy the tomatoes, but please not talk about them, Hannah and Lenny returned home.

Hannah didn't think much more about it, but a few days later a man who she had never met showed up at her front gate.

"I hear tell you have some tomatoes growing here. Might I try one? The stories about them are legendary."

Hmm, Adele had squawked to someone and the news was out!

"Please, I've walked such a long way!"

Hannah went over to the garden and plucked a fat tomato off the vine. She handed the man the fruit, with the polite request that he keep quiet about it.

The man tipped his hat, surreptitiously slid the tomato into an inside pocket of his jacket, and without further ado went on his way. The next day, a woman who Hannah recognized from the market in town, but not by name, arrived at the front gate.

"I heard a rumor that you are growing tomatoes. I just had to see for myself! Do you have a spare one I could try? And do you have a seed or two that I might have to grow my own plant?"

"I absolutely DO NOT have seeds I can give you," Hannah fibbed. "But please do take this tomato, and don't go talking about it."

The woman went on her way, but after that it seemed like a tidal wave had been unleashed on their humble little home. The next day three people were at the gate, the day after that there were ten, and it continued to grow exponentially, so that soon there were daily hordes arriving.

One would think that the supply would run out, but Lenny had sprinkled so many seeds that indeed there was enough of the delicious fruit to go around. There was something magical about what was happening.

A giddy sort of excitement squelched any previous doubts of Hannah. She planted a few more of the seeds from the jar, and those plants grew twice as fast as the first batch. Just as the supply from the first plants was waning, a whole new batch of tomato plants was producing voluminous fruit.

Hannah and Lenny were having a lot of fun with all of this, and really, what could be the harm? They weren't selling the tomatoes; they were simply sharing their newfound bounty with other people who asked.

Of course, even though people who couldn't generally keep a secret were VERY careful not to utter a word around members of Tyrannicus's Committee of Rules, word about the tomatoes eventually did reach the King's ear.

Tyrannicus was furious! Not only were there tomatoes, something he had never actually tasted himself, but apparently someone in the far end of the kingdom had been growing and sharing them for

months. How dare they! Why had no one told him about this sooner?

He decided to hold an emergency conference with members of The Committee of Rules for the Land of Small, which now numbered 152. Because the committee normally worked in shifts, it was impossible to find a room big enough to accommodate them all at once for a single meeting. Tyrannicus felt annoyed about it, but technically having a room that large would break his own rules. He had no choice but to hold the emergency conference in shifts.

This, of course, extended the process for days. Initial data, opinions, and assessment had to be obtained and discussed within each group, then leaders of the groups had to hold their own sub-meeting with Tyrannicus to pore over the findings, and then yet another special sub-committee was assigned to correlate all the findings, after which final decisions were made.

Let's just say that by the end of it, Tyrannicus was drowning in his own sea of red tape, and he was now in a very nasty mood about it all. The end result was that there were no existing rules, even ones sort of remotely related to tomatoes, which would allow him to shut this nonsense down instantly. He would just have to go and take a look for himself.

He ordered his coachman to take him and his personal scribe and a few select members of his committee (the meanest ones) to see this outrageous garden and meet this woman of questionable repute. His intent was to shut the whole thing down, which he did realize was just a tad in conflict with his deep desire to taste a tomato.

They arrived at Hannah's front gate, and the scribe bellowed out for her. (Tyrannicus did not do his own bellowing. That was quite beneath a person of his stature.)

A young boy scurried out the front door and to the gate.

"Yes, who are you?"

"Why, I'm Tyrannicus Rex, Your Royal Highness, Supreme Ruler of The Land of Small. Do you not recognize me?"

"I've heard of you, but I don't know you, King. I'm Lenny, the boy who grows the famous tomatoes. Are you here to try my tomatoes?"

The King's face fell. No one had told him that a mere child was involved with this, one who apparently claimed ownership of the tomatoes.

"Yes, I'd like to try a tomato. Where is your mother?"

Just then Hannah walked out the front door, froze, and dropped forward in a deep curtsy.

"Tyrannicus Rex, Your Royal Highness, Supreme Ruler of The Land of Small, to what do we owe this great honor?"

The King scowled. "Don't play games with me, woman. Of course I'm here to inspect your tomatoes."

Slyly (but politely), Hannah smiled back. "Why Sire, we are honored you have come to taste the tomatoes. But they are not my tomatoes. They belong to my son, Lenny."

The King eyed the boy, but did not say a word. He ordered his scribe to push open the gate, and they all squeezed through in one large, huffy unit.

Hannah ran to get a chair for the king, so that he could sit down as quickly as possible.

“Lenny, find the biggest tomato for Our Highness, and bring it to me, quickly now.”

Then Hannah realized that she’d used the “b” word in front of the King, and terror struck her heart. In the meantime, Lenny had found the biggest, fattest, reddest, brightest one, washed it and brought it to his mother on a plate. She sliced it, and then bowed deeply as she offered it to Tyrannicus.

The King took a slice and slipped it between his lips. Oh... So this is what all the fuss was about! He took another slice, and another, until in very short order the tomato was gone. He ordered Lenny to bring another, and then another. Tyrannicus could not get enough of the sumptuous fruit.

Finally he was sated, and he sat in quiet contemplation as everyone looked on. He wanted all of the tomatoes for himself. How to best accomplish that?

“Committee of Rules members! Meet me outside the gate!”

They all dutifully followed the King to huddle out on the road. The King could not get her on selling them for profit. Extensive inquiries had been made, and there was no evidence of it from anyone interviewed. Besides, now he knew that technically the tomatoes

belonged to Lenny. The boy was a major drawback to his plan. After all, he did not want to come down on a child and look like a bad guy, now did he?

Hmm. They were stumped. Then one of the committee members put up their hand.

“It occurs to me, Sire, that we can get them on the faux pas of the mother using the word “biggest”. Should she not be setting a better example for the boy? After all, that word has been frowned upon in the kingdom for quite some time now.”

The King’s mind kept whirring away. That was it! He could get her simply on the fact that there were no set rules for tomatoes yet, so an intensive, hands-on study was needed to establish them. This would give the King the lag time needed to come up with a plan that did not look unfair.

The King turned around and re-entered the garden to face Hannah and Lenny.

“Madame, I am sorry to tell you this, but we shall have to remove all the tomatoes from your yard, and take them back to the palace for full assessment by The Committee of Rules for the Land of Small.

“Unfortunately, because tomatoes have not been grown in such a very long time, we have no set guidelines for them. Now you would agree, would you not, that we really can’t have this exotic fruit, which is clearly becoming very popular, circulating in the kingdom without some parameters set around it?”

Then he leaned in to her, and lowered his voice to a half-whisper.

“Also, I found your use of the word “biggest” a bit troubling. You know The Rule of Small, so we must come up with some rules about what determines a small or big plant, and also for the tomato fruit. We really can’t have people running around, loosely applying the word big. I don’t want these tomatoes starting a trend that could quickly get out of control. Surely you do understand...”

The King gave her a probing look, and Hannah knew he had her.

“Certainly, Sire”, and Hannah deeply curtsied once again.

“Right. Committee members! I believe you brought along some shovels and pots. Get to it. Dig up the tomatoes immediately!”

The King did not want any of Lenny’s tomatoes escaping his plan, as he and Hannah were clearly the original source. The committee members got to it and gathered all the tomatoes and plants. A wagon had been brought along behind the King’s carriage. After everything was loaded onto it, without further ado the King and his entourage sped off.

Hannah and Lenny were a little shocked by how suddenly and quickly it all happened. Hannah knelt down, took Lenny’s hands into her own, and looked straight into his eyes.

“Son, I’m so sorry. I know how much the tomatoes meant to you. But you understand why the King and his committee need to make proper rules for them, yes?”

Lenny didn't understand at all, in fact he thought it was stupid. He nodded to his mother anyway. "Yes, Mommy. Don't worry. It was fun though, wasn't it? We shared tomatoes with so many people. And we still have seeds left, don't we?"

Hannah smiled. "Indeed we do, Lenny. But let's agree that we're not going to plant any more, at least until we hear more about the rules."

Tyrannicus took all the plants to the palace, and put his whole committee to work making rules that would ensure that only he would own tomato plants. These were just too good to share!

In the meantime, hordes of people continued to arrive at the front gate of Hannah and Lenny. Reluctantly they informed them that there were no more tomatoes available for sharing at this time, because Tyrannicus Rex was busy making rules that would dictate the protocols for tomatoes.

People were dismayed by this news. Hannah and Lenny had been so generous with their tomatoes. News had spread far and wide in the kingdom about their generosity. Abundance was becoming a BIG idea in the minds of the people, thanks to the sharing of the tomatoes. Abundance felt good.

They were starting to realize that they were growing very weary of all the rules, the limitations, and the apparent greed of Tyrannicus Rex. In short, they were sick of small. But what were they to do about it?

Tyrannicus Rex had his Committee of Rules post an announcement that, until further notice, no one in the kingdom was to eat, grow, disseminate, or in any way be involved with tomato plants or their fruit.

The problem with this decree, you see, was that by this time tomatoes and their seeds had already been shared from person to person extensively. People were also saving the seeds from said tomatoes, and starting their own plants. This situation was going to be very difficult for the King to bring under control.

Right around this time, a Committee of Rules member whose nose was out of joint for not being chosen to accompany the King to meet Hannah and Lenny, happened upon some interesting information in The Official History of the Land of Small while snooping around.

In one of the volumes, extensive mention was made of a giant tree. (This volume for some reason was found buried way in the back, almost out of sight.) This tree had apparently been in existence when the first Tyrannicus Rex arrived in the land that they later named The Land of Small. This land was perfect in every way for the proposed society governed by The Rule of Small, except for the tree. As previously mentioned, every generation of the family tried to destroy and/or remove the tree, with only limited success.

It further stated in the record that not only had the tree survived all of these attempts on its life, but that it annoyingly continued to bloom. It was ordered that a weed poison be applied to the tree roots daily to stifle the blooming. It was bad enough that the tree

refused to be removed. The Tyrannicus Rexes could not have it blooming and looking pretty, now could they?

When this certain member of The Committee for Rules heard what was now happening with the tomato plants, they decided they'd had enough of small. Rather than confront the King directly, they would simply put a stop to this treatment of the giant tree.

This certain member got the job done with a special payment. For two full weeks, the weed poison was halted before it was discovered. By then it was too late, because one of the tree's charred branches had started to sprout tender, bright green leaves.

Word spread quickly, and many of the same people who had visited Hannah and Lenny also traveled to see the tree. It was a miracle! Being as he was so busy with his committee, Tyrannicus remained oblivious to the news.

Although the King had originally planned to stall endlessly on creating tomato rules, he soon decided that it would be best to speak to the people sooner than later. If his presence were felt, it would further reinforce the seriousness of the matter. He was excited. All the tomatoes would be his, and his alone!

The announcement would be made in the kingdom's center, near the big tree. This is where announcements about new rules were posted, normally just as a handwritten notice on a public board. As it was a central high movement area, it was a logical area for people to drop by and read the notices.

At midday, the King and his personal scribe, plus the select four meanest Committee of Rules members, all congregated on a special

podium to address the people. Tyrannicus was very pleased to see how many people had turned out.

What was confusing, though, was that they all seemed to be congregating facing the tree and looking up, rather than at him on the podium. It was very strange. *Now why would that be?*

“ATTENTION!”

Tyrannicus’s personal scribe bellowed loudly to the crowd on the King’s behalf. The crowd turned around in surprise. Many of them had not even noticed the King’s arrival. Tyrannicus began to speak.

“As you all know by now, tomatoes have arrived in The Land of Small once again. We are delighted! My Committee for the Rules of The Land of Small has been working round the clock to establish the new tomato rules. The committee needs much further study on an ongoing basis, so that we can lay down proper parameters for tomatoes.

“Firstly, something we have noticed from the tomatoes we already brought back to the palace is this: The tomatoes seem to deteriorate very quickly once they ripen. We don’t want people becoming ill from them. Also, aside from consumption, there must be rules for plant height, as well as size, weight, color, and shape of the fruit. We can’t have anything that breaks the prime directive of The Rule of Small. We will also establish rules for timing and length of the growing season allowed.

“We hereby proclaim that all people currently in possession of tomato fruit, tomato plants, or tomato seeds, go to the location we

are posting here in order to turn them in. We expect that further announcements will be made for tomato rules about a year or so from now. Thank you for your patience and cooperation in this matter.”

People would have to wait one whole year? By then the growing season, which was rumored to be short and rare anyway, would be over with. According to The Tyrannicus Rex Official History of the Land of Small, there wouldn't be another one for about another hundred years!

Furthermore, no one in the crowd, or anyone they knew, had become ill from eating the tomatoes. Surely the King should have a little faith that people could recognize a rotten tomato when they saw one!

Immediately The People of the Land of Small were skeptical. They stood in stunned silence, taking it all in. All of this angst was over a few tomatoes? The King was taking away what little joy they'd had in a very long time.

All of a sudden, a sort of chuckle that rolled into low laughter, which then became a loud fit of guffaws, emanated from the back of the crowd. Everyone turned to have a look at the source.

It came from a lone, well-dressed man sitting astride a handsome chestnut horse. He held onto the saddle pommel as he shook with mirth. The stranger shouted over their heads in the direction of the King.

“You pompous buffoon! You're putting these poor people through this grief over some tomatoes?”

Lenny tugged on Hannah's sleeve. "Mommy, that's the man who gave me the seeds!"

The King was outraged that anyone would speak to him in this manner. "Who are you? Come forward, and identify yourself!"

The man clucked to the horse, and moved up near the podium.

"Do you not recognize me, Tyrannicus Rex, Your Royal Highness, Supreme Ruler of The Land of Small?" The crowd thought they detected a slight edge of scorn in his voice.

The King edged forward on the podium to look closer. "No, I do not."

"Well, Sire, it has been many years, so I suppose you can be forgiven. I am your older brother, Theobold Rex. I was first in line to inherit the throne, but I was banished a long time ago when you were just a baby, and I was four years old. Our father then dubbed me Theobold, or Theo for short, as I was unfit to be a Tyrannicus. I guess I did not smash my toys well enough, or something..."

The crowd gasped. The King was visibly shaken. His father had told him that he had an older brother, but also that he was gone for good. This had to be his brother, because who else would know this secret? The family records, after all, had been destroyed by fire. Now here he was, appearing out of nowhere, and no doubt to give Tyrannicus grief.

"Why are you here? What do you want? You should leave now!"

The problem with this reaction was that it was just like pulling a rabbit out of a hat, then trying to stuff it back in to pretend that rabbits don't exist. Everyone had seen the stranger and heard the exchange between the two men. There was no going back.

Theobald turned to the crowd. "Dear People of the Land of Small, I have been quietly visiting your kingdom from time to time, and observing your lives. By and large, you are hard working and good people. I was the one who gave the tomato seeds to young Lenny a few months ago. I thought it was about time you knew the truth. You have proven your goodness even more so through your generosity with the tomatoes.

"I am going to tell you a very big secret. Tomatoes are not rare at all. We grow them all the time in the place where I live. They are forbidden here in The Land of Small, because the Tyrannicus Rexes, I am sorry to say, simply do not want you to think big, or to be happy."

The crowd uttered another loud gasp. Could it be true? How could anyone be THAT mean? Suddenly they realized that life had been too small for too long.

Theo continued, "I am inviting you to follow me over those hills in the distance, and start a new life in the place where I live."

He pointed over their heads and behind them. The crowd turned around to look.

A person from the crowd piped up, “Why have we never heard about another kingdom over the hills? Why should we trust you, Theobold Rex? This sounds like a trick.”

Theo smiled, and replied, “Well, I suppose you had no curiosity about what was over those hills at all, did you? You have not been questioning anything about your life here. That’s the problem with thinking small, you see?”

“What have you got to lose? Go and gather your few possessions, and tell the others. I will wait for you here, and we will all leave together in the late afternoon, when the shadow of the big tree reaches this point.”

He scuffed an X in the dirt with his toe.

“There is just one important thing for you to consider. There is plenty of opportunity where we are going, but it is also going to take work and cooperation between you and the others already there. It is not a kingdom. I am not a king, nor do I want to be a king. There is no king to tell you what to do. You must think for yourselves, and be responsible for your own destiny.

“Those of you who are not comfortable with this idea should stay here with my brother Tyrannicus. He will watch out over you, in his way with all his rules, as he has always done.”

Most of the people scurried away to get ready, while the King and his Committee of Rules members just stood there dumbfounded. A few men stayed to protect the King’s brother from any harm.

What could the King do? He had no army behind him. He had run his little kingdom simply with small thinking and a bunch of rules. Once the people's minds were free, he would not be able to hold them back.

Someone went and got a ladder to climb up the tree. They cut off the tree branch with the new growth, and then wrapped it carefully in a damp cloth. The big tree, for which they had such a deep affection, was going to start a new life too.

Finally people began returning. They were all carrying some tomatoes that the King had demanded they submit. One by one they filed by the podium, dropping their tomatoes in front of the King with a glare, and from a height so the tomatoes landed just a bit too hard.

They knew that most of the tomatoes would go rotten before the King ever had time to eat them. He could watch the pile rot. In a certain way, they wished they'd be around to see it.

Observing all of this, Theo said, "Well, I hope you are happy now, brother. You have all the tomatoes in your little kingdom to yourself. Enjoy them, because they likely will be the last you'll eat. There will be hardly anyone left to do the growing or harvesting for you, or anything else for that matter."

When they were all ready, Theobald Rex steered his horse to start the procession towards those distant hills. In unison, the people turned their backs on Tyrannicus Rex, His Royal Highness, Supreme Ruler of The Land of Small, slinging their satchels over their shoulders to make the trek together.

They had all brought whatever food and small tools they had to share, and they knew that together they would make it. Truth be told, what they were about to find out was that their new home was only a few miles away.

Theo had not revealed that part, because he wanted only those of a certain spirit, ones willing to take some risk, to make this journey. After all, he could make no promises to them that they would be happy, or prosperous, or anything else they desired. That was all up to them.

Black storm clouds were gathering behind them, moving in towards The Land of Small. Tyrannicus watched his subjects walk away, all the while wondering what he would do with a big pile of mushy tomatoes.

It was no longer their problem. They were very excited to be leaving with their tomato seeds, and a living branch of their beloved tree. Soon they would be known as The People of the Land of Big.

The End

(The end being also a new beginning.)





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