



A Boy From I-ville

Once upon a time there was a great kingdom called I-ville. Each house was bigger and more beautiful than the next. The walls surrounding the kingdom were tall and thick. In the middle of this kingdom stood a hill made of hard stone, and on top of it was a glittering palace made of crystal. In the palace there lived the goddess Conceit, whom the people of I-ville greatly admired. In fact, they had made her their queen. No important decisions were made without her approval, and she knew about everything that happened in the kingdom.

The people of I-ville loved their kingdom very much and believed that there was no place as nice as I-ville. That is why they never wanted to leave. If you were to walk along its high walls, you would notice that there weren't any doors leading out, except for one. It was at the south end of

the kingdom, and a few villagers used it to go in and out when they went to work in the fields.

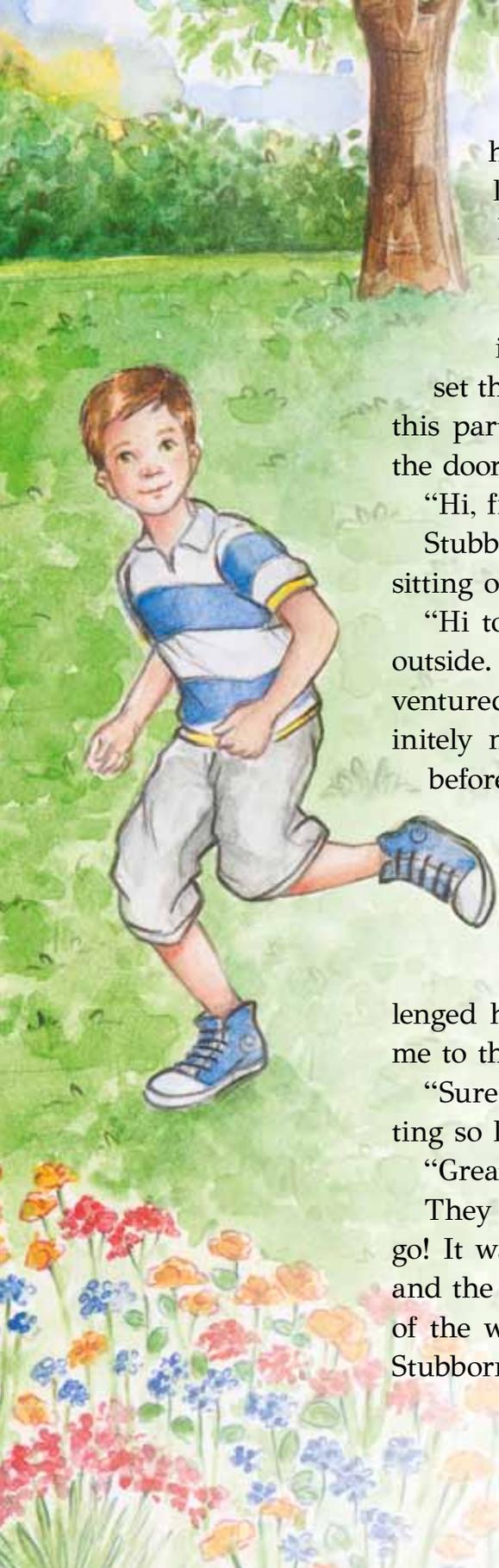
Even though everything seemed fine in the kingdom, the people of I-ville had a problem. Their vision was blurred and they could not see clearly. They didn't even know how bright the sun was. But they didn't know this, because they thought everyone saw things in the same way.

Also, they were always arguing and fighting with one other. To them, this seemed quite normal. Every citizen of I-ville wanted to do things his or her own way. Most of the time, children did not play together. When they did, everyone wanted to be the team captain, and, since no one would let anyone else be the leader, they ended up playing alone.

Stubborn was a young citizen of I-ville who normally played on his own. One day, as usual, he didn't want to play with his friends. So he left them and went off by himself. "After all," he thought, "how can I be friends with them when they won't agree that I'm the best runner in the whole kingdom?" Only his mother praised him for that.

Indeed, Stubborn's mother, Mrs. Vanity, the wife of Mr. Arrogance, praised and flattered her husband and children for the smallest things. She believed that she was giving her family encouragement and making her children stronger. To the people of I-ville, it was important to be noticed and stand out in a crowd, and you couldn't do that without building confidence.

So Stubborn was upset. He walked quickly, sighing every so often to let off steam. It was still too early for him to go home, and no one would be at home, anyway. He thought that maybe a stroll around the city walls would help him relax. But the more he thought about his friends, who wouldn't agree what a good runner he was, the madder he became. And the angrier



he became, the unhappier he felt. As he looked up at the high walls and huge houses, Stubborn felt like they were going to fall right on top of him.

Suddenly, he noticed a small door in front of him. He had been so upset that he hadn't realized he had come to this part of I-ville. He was surprised to see the door open. He peered out.

"Hi, friend!" said a voice.

Stubborn jumped. Turning, he saw a girl sitting on a bench outside the city walls.

"Hi to you, too!" he replied, and stepped outside. This was the first time he had ever ventured beyond the city walls. "You're definitely not from here. I've never seen you before."

"I'm just passing through. I came with my dad, and I'm waiting for him."

Stubborn didn't want to miss the chance to show off, so he challenged her to a race. "Do you want to race me to that tree over there?"

"Sure. I need to stretch my legs after sitting so long."

"Great! Get up! On the count of three, go!"

They took their places. One... two... three... go! It was a long way to the tree. Stubborn and the girl were running side-by-side most of the way, but, as they came to the finish, Stubborn won by an inch.

“Well done,” exclaimed the girl, and shook his hand. “You run like the wind!”

At last, thought Stubborn, someone who recognizes what I’m worth. “Actually,” he replied, “I really am the best runner. I wish some other people would have heard you say that. Hey –you haven’t told me your name.”

“Serenity. What’s yours?”

“Stubborn.”

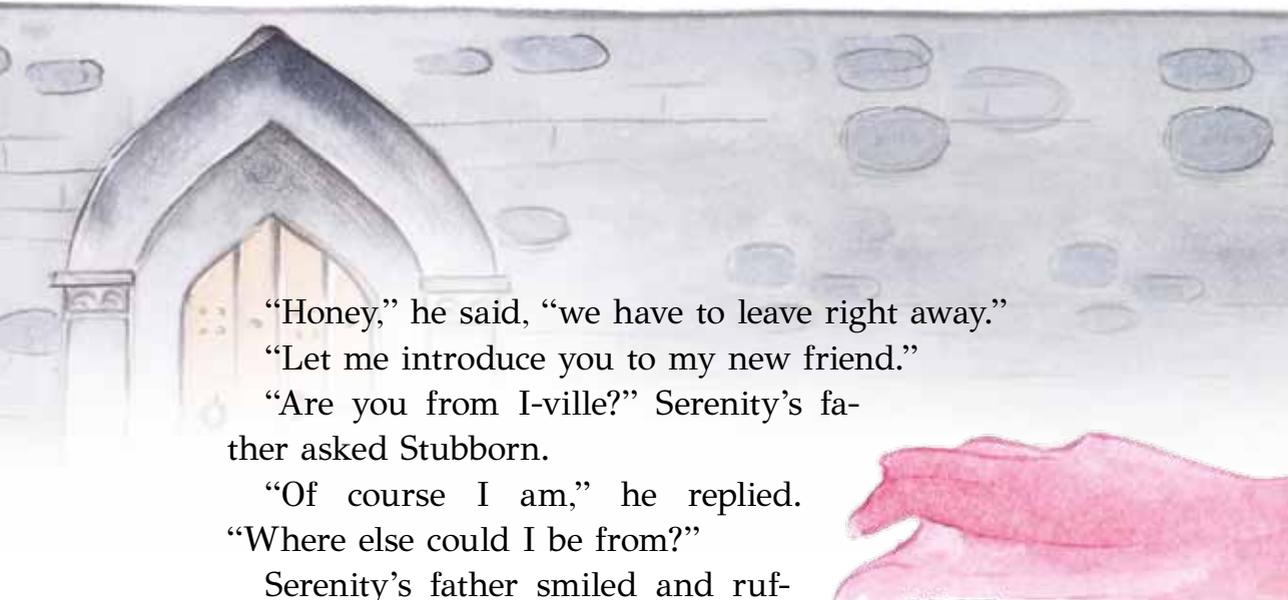
Out of breath, they sat down under a tree.

“You know, Serenity, before we met, I was really upset. I was about to blow my top.”

“I thought so when I saw you in the doorway. You know, being angry makes people wild. You look much nicer now that you’re not upset.”

“How could I not get angry! Do you know how my friends treat me?” He began to tell her his problems. Serenity listened to him carefully while he talked, and talked, and talked. They hardly realized how quickly and pleasantly the time had passed until Serenity’s father came.





“Honey,” he said, “we have to leave right away.”

“Let me introduce you to my new friend.”

“Are you from I-ville?” Serenity’s father asked Stubborn.

“Of course I am,” he replied.

“Where else could I be from?”

Serenity’s father smiled and ruffled the boy’s hair.

Stubborn invited them home, but Serenity’s father was in a great hurry, so he took Serenity by the hand and left quickly. As he watched Serenity leave, Stubborn became irritated because her father had not accepted his invitation. Stubborn did not like people saying “no” to him. Serenity turned around and waved goodbye. Stubborn smiled. He tried to hide his anger because he wanted to seem like he was in control of himself.

Suddenly, it occurred to Stubborn that he had not asked her where she was from.

“Serenity! Where do you live?”

She turned and, cupping her hands to her mouth, shouted loudly, “You-viille! Come there and find meee!”

The last words –“You-ville, come there and find me”– hung in the air, echoing off the hills. Stubborn watched them until they disappeared around the bend in the road.



The Goddess Conceit

From the moment Stubborn met Serenity, he felt uneasy. No one in I-ville had ever heard of a place called You-ville. At first, his friends were interested, but mostly out of curiosity. As for his parents, they were far too busy to concern themselves with answering his questions. He decided that You-ville wasn't really an important place, since no one had ever heard of it. After that, he should have lost interest, because no one in I-ville had time for simple and unimportant matters.

However, Stubborn kept thinking about his meeting with Serenity. It wasn't just the memory of his new acquaintance, but the idea of being the discoverer of somewhere unknown that excited him. He decided to tell his