

# Tales of Freedom

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Extract

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# **The Comic Destiny**



# One

Old Man and Old Woman sat in the forest. Pinprop sat at their feet. They were in a clearing. They listened to footsteps running in their direction, and to a siren wailing in the distance. After a while the footsteps receded.

Old Man and Old Woman were silent. They sat behind a table. Pinprop sat in front. Every now and again Pinprop looked to the left and then to the right. He put his ear to the ground. He grinned.

Suddenly, Old Man, with dignity, said:  
'YES.'

Old Woman looked at him. Then she too said:

'Yes.'

There was a long silence. Not even the wind could be heard. Old Man kicked Pinprop beneath the table and, sternly, said:

'Pinprop!'

Pinprop sat up straight and came to his senses.

'Oh, sir,' he said. 'Definitely yes. Indeed, sir. A big yes.'

'Good. Good,' Old Man said.

## Two

Pinprop leapt up from his cross-legged position as if inspired. He paced up and down the clearing, in front of the table. He stopped, and laughed. Then he performed a dance step, turned grim, and laughed again. Without turning to face the old couple, he said:

‘As we were saying. We have indeed found the spot, and the spot has indeed found us. We have not yet arrived, but every point at which we stop requires a re-definition of our destination.’

‘You mean we have not yet arrived?’ said Old Woman, with a tone of indignation.

‘Oh, yes,’ replied Pinprop. ‘But only tentatively.’

‘What!’ Old Woman cried.

‘It’s like this,’ said Pinprop reassuringly. ‘Every time a goose lays an egg it implies many more eggs to be laid. Every time a trap catches a mouse there is an intimation of many more mice to be caught. The final destination of the goose is when it can

become an egg; and with the trap it is when it ends up as a mouse.'

'Yes,' Old Woman said. 'That makes a lot of sense. Go on.'

Pinprop resumed pacing. He appeared slightly confused.

'I'm glad it makes sense.'

'Well, go on.'

'Well, em, where was I?'

'The mouse becomes a trap,' Old Woman said, irritated.

'Yes. Where was I before that?'

'You were here, you fool,' Old Man snapped.

'That's right,' said Pinprop. 'How easily I forget. Well, now that we have arrived temporarily, we must pay our tributes to where we are.'

# Three

Pinprop became silent. Then he looked around wildly. There was a touch of terror on his face.

‘Where are we?’ he asked.

‘Pinprop, will you stop this,’ Old Woman said, exasperated. ‘You were just going to tell us that.’

‘No, madam,’ replied Pinprop. ‘I was simply going to remind us what brought us here.’

‘And what is that?’ Old Woman asked, with some interest.

‘Well, em, do you want me to be honest?’

‘No, definitely not, Pinprop,’ Old Man said, ‘You know how much we hate honesty.’

‘That’s what I thought.’

‘Well?’ pressed Old Woman.

‘Well then,’ said Pinprop blithely, ‘we came here because we were looking for somewhere else to go.’

‘That is disconcertingly too near the truth,’ said Old Man.

‘Well then, we came here because we were tired.’

‘Still too near the truth.’

‘We came in search of violence?’

‘Too near.’

‘Looking for a place to die?’

‘PINPROP!!!’ Old Man cried.

‘Forgive me, sir. It simply slipped out.’

‘Well then, rectify it.’

‘Definitely, sir.’

‘Don’t use that word “definite”.’

‘Why not, sir?’

‘Blasphemy!’

‘Alright, sir.’

‘Then why?’ asked Old Woman. ‘Why? Why? Why, Pinprop?’

‘Yes, why? Emmmm. Can I be verbose about it?’

‘Certainly,’ said Old Man.

‘Ugliness,’ began Pinprop, ‘and the cruelty of myth. The excessive stench of putrefying bodies. Too much blood and tiredness, and iron in the throat. Small places turning septic, and large spaces tumbling into confusion. And people becoming hell. And hunger bloating too many bellies.’

Tiredness and tiredness and chaos. And fear, Sir, limitless fear.'

'You should be hanged, Pinprop,' snarled Old Man.

'Too much neurosis and disease and new diseases.'

'You should be flagellated, Pinprop,' snarled Old Woman.

'And the shrinking of cages till we can no longer fly.'

'You should be served for dinner,' Old Man cried.

'And squabbles and lies and terror. Self-destruction and the wilful destruction of other people. And sickness, sir, sickness in the throat and stomach and food and streets and faces and the air . . .'

Cutting through his iteration, Old Man and Old Woman shouted as one:

'The chain, Pinprop, the chain of iron and blood.'

'Oh, yes,' said Pinprop, a little chastened. 'I forgot. I got carried away.'

With a noticeable change in their voices, and still speaking as one:

'Yes, Pinprop, you got carried away.'

'What?' he enquired, puzzled.



‘Yes!’

‘Oh, indeed, yes,’ said Pinprop, relieved.

‘Yes very very much. A fat yes to everything.’

He laughed. He seemed pleased with himself. He did a dance step.

‘Yes, Pinprop. Yes,’ they both said, with a decidedly sinister tone.