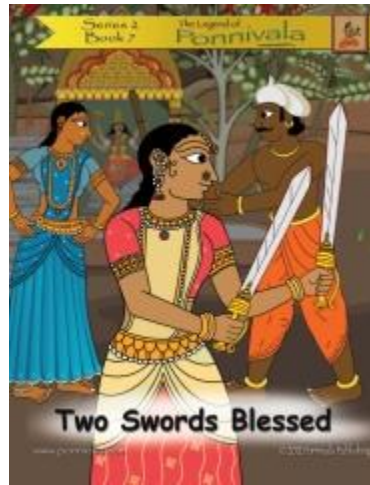


**Episode 20 –Two Swords Blessed (Sub Stories a, b, c and d)**  
**Resource Materials: Individual comic books, a graphic novel set, or 26 videos**  
**VISIT our SHOP: Choose the retelling that works best for you**



**20-a The Lonely Sister Asks Her Brothers  
To Fetch Her Two Pet Birds**

Meanwhile, the twin kings' lovely little sister is lonely and begins dreaming about obtaining two magical parrots as pets. She wants her brothers to catch those "heavenly" birds for her. They will become her pets. The brothers express reservations. The parrots, though of heavenly lineage, reside well within the territory of their enemies: the hunters. The mountain territory there does not belong to them. But the brothers decide to go anyway. Then the sister changes her mind. She now realizes that the risks are too great. But the two kings have now committed to the mission and put their honor on the line.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Do you dream of things you want? Then do you sometimes change your mind when you discover that you can't afford it? Or maybe there are other problems? What you thought you wanted might be illegal, or it might upset someone and cause problems. What if you had to ask someone to steal what you wanted? Would you change your mind if you found what you wanted belonged to an enemy or a rival?**

**COMMENTARY:** This is a significant episode, a kind of turning point in the story. The sister is lonely and wants two parrots for company, but when her brothers tell her that the tree where these birds can be found grows in the enemy's forest (a tribal area) she changes her mind. She does not want to put her brothers in danger and start a huge row.

**20-b A Treacherous Theft Yields Iron  
For Making a Fine Bird Net**

The brothers realize that they need help to catch the parrots their sister requested. They plan on using a large iron net especially made for the purpose. But when they call the artisans and ask them to make such a net, the workmen

advise the kings that they need to use especially strong "foreign iron" for this assignment. So the heroes' magical assistant is sent off to obtain the material required. Ironically, he finds some of the correct iron stored in an awkward place, at a temple that belongs to their hunter-enemies. It is located in the very same hills that the two kings plan to steal the parrots from. The heroes' assistant soon obtains the by trickery. He carries it all back to Ponnivala in one big, magical head load. The parrot net needed is then quickly manufactured, and so is a golden cage that is designed to hold the two lovely birds.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** What are some of the "tricks" the heroes' assistant uses in order to steal the iron rods he needs? Are these any different from the tricks a thief might use today?

**COMMENTARY:** This episode focuses on the prowess of the heroes' assistant and his supernatural strength. He is a clever man and he gets what he wants. This is also the episode where the hunter's sister is introduced. She is an important counterpoint to the heroes' own unmarried sister. If the heroes get the magical backing of their little princess, we now see that the enemies have a similar magic "well" of blessings to draw on. In a very subtle way this story will become (in the final struggle) a battle between the powers of two (structurally opposed) women.

#### 20-c **Skilled Artisans Make a Fine Bird-Hunting Net and Also A Golden Bird Cage**

The brothers realize that they need help to catch the requested parrots. They plan on using a large iron net especially made for the purpose. But when they call the artisans to construct this, the workmen advise the kings that they must use especially strong "foreign iron" for this delicate task. So the heroes' supernatural assistant is sent off to obtain the material needed. Ironically, he finds some of this iron near a temple associated with the hunter's palace. This temple lies in the very same hills that the two kings plan to steal the parrots from. Their assistant soon obtains the iron by trickery. He carries it all back to Ponnivala in one big, magical head load. The iron net needed is quickly completed, and so is a golden cage that will hold the lovely captives. The artisans are paid with pearls.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** The heroes' assistant is acting as a thief. He is clever and strong, and he succeeds in getting the iron his masters want. But his theft is sure to be noticed, and that will cause anger. This is the start of a much bigger problem the heroes will face down the road. Can you tell a similar story where a seemingly small mistake (immoral action) starts a "chain reaction" and leads to much bigger problems down the road?

**COMMENTARY:** The heroes' assistant is a sort of magical character himself. He has superhuman strength and also can work a certain amount of magic. He is also a sort of buffoon. He is a big drinker and he is a bit of a show-ff. One could say that he exhibits a lot of "bravado." In this scene the story is careful to describe the "idea" of the theft as originating with the assistant rather than coming from the mouths of the heroes themselves. This lets the main characters "off the hook" to some extent, when it comes to moral responsibility for what

happens. One could start a discussion about how much “responsibility” the heroes must bear for what happens, if any? How does one “divide” a crime between the perpetrator and the master who allows something immoral to happen under his watchful “eyes.” There are plenty of “political” rows of this kind, where the underling is accused of a crime, and the overlord is judged to be “innocent.”

#### **20-d The Sister Blesses Her Brothers’ Swords**

The two brothers are now fully committed to the hunt for two magical parrots. They make all the necessary preparations including drafting fighters from each village in the Ponnivala area. They dress for battle. The twin kings ask their sister to bless their swords and thereby ensure their success in this dangerous mission. She does so. The two men are ready to depart.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** The brothers believe need their sister’s support for their quest. They ask her to bless their swords. Why do you think they want this blessing? How will it help? Have you ever asked someone for their blessings before starting something new or setting out on a long trip?

**COMMENTARY:** The sister is a very special woman. Because of her “chastity” and also because of her very special birth, she is considered to have special powers of insight into the future and also magical abilities. In south Indian tradition, all women have such powers to some extent, but these are “concentrated” in this heroine because of her purity of mind and body. She is able to “transfer” some of this power to her brothers’ swords through her blessing. Lord Vishnu helps the two swords “fly” into her hands, and that adds to the strength of the blessing (because he is involved). The sister’s hands are important in this scene. It is her physical touch of these weapons of war that transfers the extra “power” to them. The scene can also be interpreted in a psychological light. If the people one is close to and who believe in you lend you support in times of stress or danger... that will give you extra self-confidence and emotional strength. The sister’s “magic” can also be understood in this way.