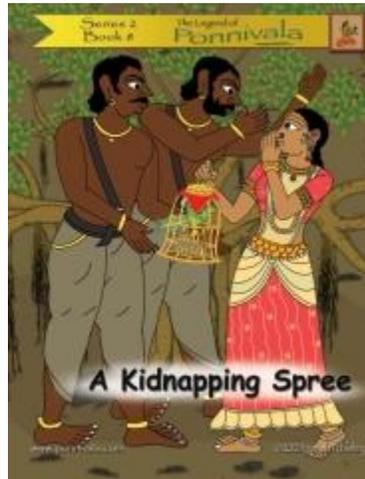


Episode 21 – A Kidnapping Spree (Sub Stories a, b, and c)

Resource Materials: Individual comic books, a graphic novel set, or 26 videos
VISIT our SHOP: Choose the retelling that works best for you



21-a The Heroes Break Several Magical Barriers

The hunters' sister suspects that her beloved parrots are in danger. So she sets up several barriers along the forest path leading to their nesting site, to prevent their capture. She creates an ambush of one thousand tigers. There will be a quiver of cobras waiting in the bushes as well. When the brothers encounter these ferocious animals they fight bravely and after some time they successfully defeat these animals and proceed to the huge tree where the parrots are known to nest.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: The heroes fight a mythical array of tigers and cobras in this scene. What other heroes have you read about that fought mythical animals (like, for example) a dragon? How does this kind of adventure bolster the heroes honor and reputation as warriors?

COMMENTARY: Of course the fight with so many tigers and cobras makes a dramatic statement about the heroes' fighting prowess. It sets them up for success in their parrot quest. But what happens next is of more interest if one is seeking a broader understanding of this story. The sister has asked for two parrots. And when the heroes reach the parrot tree we realize that these are going to be a magical husband-wife pair. But the twin brothers only succeed in catching one member of this happily the married couple. That's the rub. The wedding bond is broken and the husband flies off to the enemy palace to lodge a complaint about what has happened. The story here can be read as a kind of metaphor. The heroes, already stressing the bond with their sister, now manage (unwittingly) to break a marital bond. This will have severe consequences. It is also one more step down a slippery slope whereby the bonds with all their relatives, all their helpers and eventually their one and primary female sibling..... are gradually being severed.

21-b The Heroes Capture One Female Bird But Its Partner Escapes

The heroes and their brave fighting allies creep quietly up to the tree where the parrots are located. The main assistant throws the huge iron net that has been prepared over their tree. But after much maneuvering, the men manage to capture only one bird, a female. Her partner/husband is able to escape. This is very upset at the loss of his mate and he flies to the hunter's forest palace to complain to their princess. His sad song is heard through the palace window and he is invited in. He explains to the princess that he has lost his lovely wife to a bunch of farmer-thieves.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: A husband/wife pair have been separated by the farmers' expedition. It is not surprising that the husband tries any strategy he can think of to get his wife back. This is as much a "kidnapping" as it is a theft. What would you do if your sister or wife were nabbed and taken away by force?

COMMENTARY: This episode is symbolic in several ways. First, it is the female who is captured. The theft of a woman can be seen as an assault on her purity and chastity, even if metaphorically couched in animal (bird) imagery. But this act also serves as a huge insult to the fathers, brothers husbands and sons whose honor rests on that female's successful protection. And finally, this is a "criminal act" because it has broken up a loving "married" pair. This is an assault on the family and on social structure, as well as on the hunters' community more generally. It is sure that the hill-dwelling tribesmen will react en masse.

21-c The Parrot Husband Flies to The Hunters' Palace To Protest the Capture of His Wife

The hunters' sister is upset by the news of the parrot's capture. She calls her many brothers together. They plan revenge and soon a large group of hunter warriors come to Ponnivala. There they hope to kidnap the heroes' own little sister. But a mistake is made. The hunters stop at the river near the palace where they see a maid filling her water pots. They think she is the princess herself and so they kidnap her. The hunters run back to their own lands with this woman and prepare to make her into their own household servant. But the heroes' brave assistant soon comes to her rescue. Using a few more tricks he carries her back to Ponnivala on his shoulder, unharmed. The female parrot, meanwhile, sits in a lovely gold cage by the heroes' sister's swing. She sings a sad song that laments the loss of her lifetime mate.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Do you know a modern story about kidnapping? It is an old concept but could the motives be different today? What do you think the kidnapping in this story is all about?

COMMENTARY: The key to this episode is the serial "kidnappings" that occur. It starts with the capture of the female parrot. She is kidnapped or stolen from enemy territory and put in a cage (an insult to a wild bird). So when the hunters learn about this, from the bird's husband, they decide on revenge. They will kidnap the heroes' own sister and degrade her by making her their servant! The fact that they get a palace maid instead is due to their sloppy "research." They think they have the real thing. Now there is a counter revenge. That girl is recaptured and brought safely back within the palace walls. The fact that there is a series of three women here is no accident. It would seem that this set of events is really about insulting the women of the opposite camp. To degrade a powerful (magic-endowed) woman and to take her away from the

enemy will weaken their powers. Kidnapping in this story, therefore, is about insulting and degrading women that belong to the opponent. This is an old theme and it is a strategy used in European tradition too. Kidnapping children has similar overtones (threatening the innocent and the most beloved). Today's kidnapping strategies may have overtones of this, but modern motives also include money and high stakes power-bargaining between nations or multi-nation sized groups. It almost seems that what is certainly very old is now new again....