

# The Two Brothers Walked On

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The two brothers walked on, descending slowly from the high mountain pass and for possibly the first time in their lives, they had the chance to really talk to each other.

Filippo was seven years older than his brother, more worldly-wise. He remembered one of the longest and hardest winters, when their animals died and the villagers went cold and hungry. His girlfriend had left him for *la ciudad* and although she had promised to return, he knew that she wouldn't, that she would find a rich city boy. He admired Manuelo's youthful optimism and idealism. He too had once been like that.

They talked about the future and how their village would change. The hydro-electric company had permission to build a dam lower down their valley. And once the dam was built, the tourists would follow, using the new road, and then maybe the city folk would discover life in their mountains.

They talked about how they valued their way of life, their community, their history and independence. And as they talked Manuelo realised that the villagers on the other side of the valley, the ones who seemed so sad to his young eyes, well, perhaps they had something to be concerned about. Perhaps in his youthful idealism, he hadn't really listened to them or their concerns.

He wondered if this was why his parents had allowed him to make this journey? Not to tell his stories but to question himself, to discover more about himself and life.

Time passed quickly and night was falling. Filippo knew of a shepherd's hut where they could spend the night. They gathered wood for the fire and prepared supper from their provisions. Filippo had brought a bottle of wine with him. For the first time that day, they were quiet and thoughtful.

And as the fire crackled gently, Manuelo asked his brother "Filippo, earlier, you told me that our *Abuelo* said that we all have a special gift and that we should follow this. But is that the same as having a vocation and is that enough? I've been thinking about this today, that the way the world is now, maybe that isn't so easy any more?"

A gentle quiet filled the air but, for once, Manuelo was happy not to fill it.

"You know Manuelo, *Abuelo Sanchez*, did say that and it's true that the world was much simpler, in some ways, then. A gift, a vocation, it is all the same, we don't decide it, we receive it, if we really choose to listen. But it is no good just listening, we have to be courageous too and take action too. Maybe that's it, our vocation is to be fully alive, to realise that we are part of something greater, than we can make a difference in the world, no matter how small, to show compassion and kindness to others."

“And that’s the hardest thing, surely Filippo, to be courageous. When the world seems not to listen or care, it’s very easy not to act, not to be your true self, to let things just happen to you. And what of the future?”

Filippo felt a warm glow inside, partly the wine, partly the comforting fire but mostly because he had never talked like this before. These were questions that he had often asked himself and he felt honoured that his brother sought his advice. He was grateful that they had set out on this journey, albeit unintentionally for him, away from village life and the endless work of tending the sheep, they finally had time to talk.

“I don’t know what the future holds for us not in the longer term but I do think we can create the future everyday, by what we choose to do. It’s not a predetermined path and we can change direction any time....”

“But it comes back to courage again, Filippo, what you are saying is true but we have to have the courage and the will, surely, to do something. We don’t want for good ideas, there’s plenty of those, what we lack is the will to implement them.”  
“Do you still have faith in the future, Filippo?”

Once again the room fell silent, only the fire crackled in its grate.

“You know, I do Manuelo. We’ve been through some tough times in our village but in spite of these, or maybe even because of them, we’ve always pulled through. The generosity of the human spirit and the genuine care for each other has served us well. And if it does for us, then why not the larger world?”

Mike Palk. January 2011