

The Last Command of the King

Once upon a time, a wise and kind king did something very surprising.

It was surprising because his people loved him and were very happy.

When he had to decide what his country should do, he thought long and hard and always seemed to make the right choice.

When something bad happened (which was not very often, because most people were happy most of the time) he was the judge. He listened very carefully to everybody, and decided who was to blame and how they should be punished. He always seemed to be very fair.

Most people trusted him, and they felt they were very lucky to have such a wise and kind king. So what he did was very surprising indeed.

One day, he called all his people together and told them that it would be better for him not to be king any more. Instead, they should choose leaders and judges from among themselves.

Most people were very upset. They were quite happy with how things were, and were worried about what the change would bring.

They marched and protested, and sang songs outside the king's palace begging him to carry on ruling the country.

"You say we should choose our leaders," they said. "And we choose you."

"You say you want to do as I tell you," said the king. "And I am telling you to choose other leaders."

And so it went on, into the night.