

The Starfish Thrower Story



Once upon a time, there was a very wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of rising early to walk on the beach before he began his work.

One day as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw what looked like a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone dancing, no doubt in celebration of the perfect day soon to begin. He was intrigued, so he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got closer, he saw that the figure was a young woman who wasn't dancing at all. Rather she was bending to sift through the debris left by the night's tide, stopping now and then to pick up something, then standing to heave it back into the sea.

Curiosity got the best of him so he moved closer and then called out, "Good morning! May I ask what are you doing?"

The young woman paused, looked up and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"Forgive me, but I must ask why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" said the rather puzzled wise man.

"The tide has washed the starfish onto the beach and they can't return to the ocean by themselves. When the sun rises, they'll die, unless I throw them back to the sea."

As the young woman spoke, the wise man surveyed the vast expanse of beach, stretching in both directions beyond his sight. Starfish littered the shore in growing numbers. The hopelessness of the young woman's plan became clear to him and he countered, "But there are more starfish on this beach than you can ever save before the sun is up. Surely you can't expect to make a difference."

At this, the young woman reached down, picked up another starfish and threw it in the ocean. As it met the water, she said, "It made a difference for that one!"

Her response surprised the wise man. In fact, he found it quite unsettling. He didn't know how to reply. So instead, he turned away and walked back to his cottage to begin his writings.

All day long as he tried to write, the image of that young woman haunted him. He tried to ignore it, but the vision persisted. Finally, late in the afternoon he realized that what the young woman was doing was choosing not to be an observer in the universe, but was, instead, choosing to make a difference.

That night the wise man went to bed troubled and when morning came he awoke with a clear vision of what he had to do. So he got up, put on his clothes, went to the beach and found the young woman. And with her, he spent the rest of the morning throwing starfish into the ocean.

What that young woman's actions represented is something that is special in each and everyone of us. We have all been gifted with the ability to make a difference. And if we choose, like that young woman, to put our gift at the service of others we can transform our world.

And that is our challenge...to reach down, pick up starfish and throw them wisely and well, and make our world a better place.

Become a Holy Ground Starfish Thrower Volunteer today! A homeless pregnant teen, or homeless teen mother and infant, need YOU!