

A Bed of Stones

A boy has a superb assortment of colourful stones that he has gathered over the years. He meets a girl with a unique collection of antique coins. The boy is fascinated by the girl's coins and tells her that he will give her all his stones in exchange for her coins. The girl agrees. The boy sneaks out a couple of his most exquisite stones, and gives the rest to the girl. The girl, on the other hand, gives him all her coins as she had promised.

That night, the girl sleeps peacefully. But the boy, with two stones concealed in his pocket, isn't able to sleep. He keeps wondering if the girl had hidden some coins from him the way he had hidden his best stones.

The story has a déjà vu ring to it. None of us are strangers to the bigotries of the professional world. Everyone wants a fair bargain—be it in the dealings we have with our vendors, customers, employees or employers. Who likes to be shortchanged? So, time and again, we defensively hold ourselves back from giving one hundred percent. In the process, we forget to hold up our end of the bargain. That's a treacherous mistake.

Sure, our commitments may not always lead to more "coins" in our pocket. But we do sleep in peace. Without moralities, our pockets may jingle with precious pebbles. But what good are such pinching "stones" that make us toss and turn through the night?