

Long May I Reign

—MinervaDeannaBond

4/10/14

Disney's "I am a Princess" meme got me thinking about this. All the qualities they list are qualities that Jessica Fletcher possesses; qualities that make not a princess, but a loyal, loving woman. If these qualities make a true princess, Jessica Fletcher is royalty indeed.

Dedicated to Angela Lansbury, who is a princess and a queen in every way. Long may she reign.

I am a Princess.

I've often heard myself called "The Murder Mystery Queen," but never have I been called a princess. While I was growing up, my parents nurtured my love of fairy tales by reading them to me before bed – stories of knights in shining armor, wicked witches and villains, and princesses in disguise. Like all little girls, I dreamed of being a princess, but only recently have I begun to ponder one very important question: what does it mean to be a princess?

I am brave sometimes. I am scared sometimes. Sometimes I am brave even when I'm scared.

Although I do believe in conducting myself in a certain way, I do not believe in the archaic concept of a princess as a damsel in distress. If I were to swoon at the sight of a corpse or faint when confronted by a killer, I would be in a perpetual state of unconsciousness, let me tell you! I have witnessed more than my fair share of crime scenes and faced more than just the elements in solving some baffling cases, with nobody and nothing to rely on but my wits and a little common sense. People call me brave for daring to risk my life over and over again. Yes, I am brave, but I am brave for an innocent person falsely accused of murder, for the families of the victims killed, and for all of my friends in Cabot Cove, should tragedy strike too close to home. Most do not realize that I am scared sometimes – scared for others as well as myself. And even though I am frightened, I choose to be brave because I know that my courage will pull me through.

I believe in loyalty and trust. I believe loyalty is built on trust.

According to my publisher, I have a loyal fan base. Their loyalty is built upon the knowledge that they can trust me to write a compelling mystery and a good story. Loyalty is a virtue, and one that I value highly. In my line of work, loyalty is not something that should be taken lightly, and neither is trust. I am fortunate enough to have met several people who are loyal as the day is long, whom I trust enough to help me solve the mysteries that come my way: Michael Haggerty, Dennis Stanton, Harry McGraw. Amos Tupper, our former sheriff. Mort Metzger, our current sheriff. And then there's Seth Hazlitt, our town doctor and my dearest friend. They are the ones I would trust with my life – and indeed, they have saved my life on quite a few occasions, even coming close to laying their own down for me, out of loyalty and out of love. That is what I consider the true meaning of friendship.

I try to be kind, I try to be generous. I am kind even when others are not so generous.

I was raised to be kind to others no matter what, to believe that there is some good in everyone, because beauty lies within. I am certainly kind to everyone I meet when working on a case, but I can't even begin to tell you how many times I've encountered people who are just plain rude, even nasty. I confess that I have come dangerously close to losing my temper several times, but I keep the anger at bay by reminding myself that I am a lady. If I hope to get anywhere in a murder investigation or in life, I must remain calm and show this person some kindness. After all, it may be the only bit of kindness they receive all day!

I think standing up for myself is important. I think standing up for others is more important. But standing with others is most important.

I may be kind, but I'm certainly no shrinking violet. If I see something that I don't like or that makes me angry, I take a stand and hold my ground until whatever is wrong is made right. I believe in standing up for myself, and that I do and have done too many times to count. If someone is in trouble or someone I know to be innocent is falsely accused of murder, I stand up for them. But more importantly, I stand *with* them until justice is done. Standing for myself is important and so is standing for others, but there is nothing more important in a murder investigation than standing with others. In a world torn by the conflict of good versus evil, we all have the decision

to choose a side. I choose to stand with goodness, because I believe that good will ultimately triumph over evil and light will chase away the darkness... and that love will always win.

I believe compassion makes me strong, kindness is power, and family is the tightest bond of all.

I have often been asked where I find the strength to do all of the things I do – write novels, teach classes in criminology and writing, travel around the world, solve mysteries when they present themselves, and still have time to ride my bike around Cabot Cove and go fishing with Seth. I've given it a great deal of thought, and the conclusion I have reached is that it's nothing more than simple kindness and compassion that give me my strength. As I said before, I believe in being kind to others, and kindness has a special power of its own. It's kindness that gives me compassion for others, both in my personal life and in the cases I work. If someone is crying, I offer them my shoulder. If they need a hug, I'm ready to wrap my arms around them and hold them until all of their pain is gone.

If someone has been unjustly accused of a crime, I work to prove their innocence. I've even had to prove my family's innocence on many an occasion – my nieces, nephews, cousins, and even my husband Frank. I have never had children of my own, but seeing my family attacked in such a manner rouses a mother bear in me. I fight furiously for my family because family is the strongest bond on Earth, and nothing means more to me than my family: Grady and Donna, my cousin Emma, my older brothers Marshall and Martin, and all of my other nieces, nephews, and cousins that comprise the Fletcher and Macgill clans. They are always there for me, just as I am always there for them.

I have heard I am beautiful. I know I am strong.

I have never considered myself a raving beauty. Nice-looking, perhaps, but certainly not beautiful. Frank, bless his heart, always told me that to him, I was the most beautiful woman God ever created, in body, in mind, and in soul. After he died, I thought I'd never hear anything of the kind again, but several people seem to see beauty in me that I can't see for myself. Michael and Dennis both think I'm beautiful. Seth has told me many times that I'm beautiful inside and out. I just can't see it no matter how many times I hear it, but I have to wonder if it's my kindness that makes something lovely shine through. It's certainly that kindness that gives me

strength, for if there is one thing I know for sure, it's that I am strong. Strong enough to have built a new life for myself as a writer, strong enough to face demons and survive on many a murder investigation, and strong enough to protect and love my family more than anything in the world. Family makes me strong. Kindness and compassion make me strong. Love makes me strong.

I am a Princess. Long may I reign.

Being a princess does not mean screaming and fainting away at the sight of danger, nor does it mean simply waiting around to be rescued. It means being a woman of strength, dignity, and compassion, who is kind to others even when they are not kind to her, puts others before herself, and loves her family above all. If these qualities do indeed make me a princess, then I am proud to be so.

Long may I reign, indeed.