**Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult (Proverbs 12:16)
A Proverbial Story
By Ted Hildebrandt and Chatgpt**

In the bustling village of Windmere, where gossip spread faster than fire and pride was worn like a badge of honor, lived a large, muscular man named Elias. He was known for his strength, his clever hands, and unfortunately, his quick temper. One careless word, one poorly hidden snicker, and Elias’s anger would flare up like the fire of a struck match.

One crisp autumn morning, the village square was abuzz with preparations for the Harvest Festival. Stalls were being set, pies cooled on windowsills, and children ran laughing between the carts. Elias, with a heavy basket of apples on his shoulder, marched through the crowd when he overheard a group of young men whispering and chuckling.

"Watch out!" one shouted with a disparaging comment for Elias to hear as an intended insult directed at him: "The old bull has escaped his pasture!"

The laughter that followed stung more sharply than any thorn. Elias spun around, red-faced, ready to teach them a lesson they would not forget. His fists clenched at his sides, and for a moment, the entire square seemed to hold its breath.

But before he could act, an old man’s voice called out, "Elias! A word, if you please."

It was Master Rowan, the village elder. Bent with age but having a wit as sharp as a tack, Rowan waved him over. Reluctantly, Elias turned his back away from the snickering youngsters toward the old man, burning with humiliation and seething for revenge.

Rowan’s eyes twinkled as he spoke quietly. "You have two choices. You can show them your anger, prove them right, and fuel their laughter. Or you can smile, walk on, and leave them wondering why their pointed jests fell flat."

Elias frowned. "Why should I let them insult me and do nothing?"

Rowan chuckled. "Because not every battle is worth fighting. And not every insult deserves a response. As the old proverb says: ‘Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.’"

Elias hesitated; the rage of his anger was like a lit bomb ready to explode in his chest. But he nodded slowly. "I will give it a try."

As the festival wore on, the same group of boys jeered a second time. Elias caught the words — something about him being as clumsy as an ox — and felt the familiar heat rising in his cheeks. But this time, he only smiled, tipped his hat, and continued stacking crates, ignoring them as if he hadn't heard a thing.

The boys blinked, confusion flickering across their faces. One nudged the other. "Maybe he didn't hear us," whispered another. Their laughter faltered, then faded into awkward silence.

By evening, word had spread of Elias’s unexpected calm. Some praised his restraint, others speculated about his sudden prudence. Even the youngsters, seeing that their taunts had missed their mark, soon lost interest and moved on.

Later, Rowan found Elias sipping cider by the fire. "You learned quickly," the old man said, smiling.

Elias shrugged. "It wasn't easy."

"The right thing rarely is," Rowan said. He lifted his mug in a toast. "To the restraint of prudence — hard-won and well-kept."

Elias smiled, honored by the old town sage. Perhaps true strength wasn't in crushing your enemies with your fists, but in refusing to explode in annoyance as a fool seeking revenge angrily, but rather to show discretion and prudence as the proverb had instructed him: “Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult” (Prov. 12:16).