

burst forth. Daniel could see a golden field of mustard stretching as far as his eye could reach, the yellow blossoms so high that a man could walk through them unseen.

Presently he overtook a caravan. Prodded on by weary drivers, the camels swayed slowly. Above the smell of camel Daniel's nose caught an unfamiliar fragrance, sweet and spicy, which seeped from the toppling bags they carried. As the day grew brighter the road was busy with farmers trundling small wagons or bearing on their shoulders baskets of vegetables for the city market. Already the excitement of the city quickened his pulse.

He came out on the last long slope of the road. Below him lay the sea, like a great blue jewel in the sun, and at its edge the town of Capernaum, a mass of dark stone houses, thick-clustered. A transparent veil of mist and smoke hung over the rooftops. He fancied he could hear the hum of thousands of voices. He hurried on, forgetting the miles behind, feeling fresh and exhilarated.

It was far too early to look for Joel, but he was in no haste. There was much to see. He wandered through the streets, taking in great gulps the busyness, the color and sound and smell of them. In the marketplace the farmers were heaping squashes and cucumbers and melons, and merchants jabbered in outlandish tongues as they set up

booths of cloth or baskets or pottery. He saw four elders of the Pharisees, the phylacteries bound to their proud foreheads, walking with great care that their tasseled robes did not brush the passers-by, lest the merest touch might make them unclean. Once he saw a black slave scurrying

about his master's business. Did he, if Daniel could understand, speak the same language as Samson?

He came to the harbor and gazed at the multitude of boats, fishing dories and pleasure craft and flat-bottomed

soft material fell in exquisite folds to delicate embroidered sandals. Her dark hair was bound back from her face with a thin fillet of gold. She started at sight of a stranger, and there leaped into her eyes recognition, and then something else, an unmistakable shrinking. His careful greeting fell back at his own feet. She made no greeting at all, only stared at him with dismay.

Then there was a thumping of feet. The boy who came charging across the courtyard had not changed at all. He was the same country boy who had jumped into the fight on the mountain road. He grasped Daniel by the elbows, his dark eyes glowing.

"Daniel! Welcome! I've been wishing-" He broke off with a quick glance over his shoulder. "You'll stay to eat with us? Of course you will!"

Pride battled with Daniel's clamoring stomach. "No," he said. "I came only to speak with you."

"You're certainly not going right away, after all this time."

"My clothes are dusty from the road."

"Oh-that! Just leave your cloak here in the hallway. For Father's sake, you know."

Daniel flushed, remembering that a common man who visited a Pharisee must leave his cloak at the door lest he make the household unclean. Slowly he undid Simon's coat, allowing Joel a glimpse of the torn and scanty garment underneath.

"Never mind," Joel said hastily. "Better wear it after all. It doesn't matter really."

Propelling his guest along the corridor, Joel was all at once aware of his sister, who still stood just inside the archway. "Thacia," he said, an uncertain note in his

"What happened?"

"The minute I took his chains off he took charge of me instead. He's made me the laughingstock of the camp. He works like a mule to keep my fire going. But he won't let me out of his sight."

Joel was amused at the picture. "Can he talk? Does he understand what you say?"

"The others don't think so. I'm not sure. Sometimes it seems as though he's trying to tell me something."

"You're not afraid of him?"

"Not for myself. But I have to watch him all the time. That strength of his-it's like a rock on the edge of the cliff. A feather could start it down. One night I got into an argument with Joktan, and Jok started at me with his fists. I looked up just in time. There was Samson reaching for Jok with those great arms of his. It was all I could do to stop him."

Joel whistled. "I should think-" he began, when a chiming gong interrupted him, and he rose to his feet. "Father insists that we're on time for meals," he said. "We'd better talk later."

Near the fountain in the courtyard Hezron stood waiting, a tall, narrow-faced man with graying hair. He bowed with a cool courtesy at Joel's introduction.

"Peace be with you," he said. "You are welcome." He gazed with distaste at Daniel's unlawful garment.

A camel would be as welcome, Daniel thought. The man will have to purify his whole house when I leave!

Side by side two women moved gracefully across the tile pavement, Malthace and an older woman who must once have looked much like her daughter. A tiny bird of vivid blue darted from a dwarf pear tree and lighted for a breath's space on the girl's shoulder, then flashed away.

The corner of Thacia's mouth curled slightly as she looked at Daniel, hinting, "I could tell them much if I cared." The mother smiled warmly and held out her hand to him.

They led Daniel through an archway into a spacious room. His muscles stiffened at the array of couches. Was he expected to eat his meal lying down like a Roman? But after an awkward wait he lowered his body gingerly and, imitating Joel, propped himself up on one elbow, aware of Thacia's amusement. For all her airs, he could wager she had never seen a couch herself up to a month ago. No one in the village boasted such heathen nonsense.

Joel's mother, with a gracious word, led her daughter behind a silken screen, where they would both be hidden from view while the men of the family ate. More nonsense. Daniel was sure that in the village they must have sat on mats and eaten their meal together like any other family.

Through the prolonged hand-washing Daniel fidgeted, affronted by the silver pitchers, the fine tiny napkins, the hovering slaves. Then at the sight of the food a fierceness sprang up in him. He had drained every drop from the cup of date wine before he noticed that the others were holding theirs untouched. Too late he set down what remained of his small loaf of bread. He had torn into it like Samson himself, and he saw Hezron's lips flatten together. Curse their finicky rules. Had they ever felt the gnawing of an empty stomach?

"Your home?" Hezron inquired, after the scant portions of fish and fruit had been consumed in silence. "Is it far from Capernaum?"

Daniel dragged his attention from his empty bowl. "In Ketzah, sir."

Daniel looked at Thacia. "I have never heard a harp," he said.

"Then I'll bring it and play for you tomorrow," she promised. "No-not on the Sabbath. But I won't forget."

"Do you want us to leave the light, Daniel?"

"No," said Daniel. "I'm used to the dark."

They crept along the passage, the light flickering and vanishing altogether. Then, very faintly, came the whispered words, "Goodnight, Daniel." This time he was certain he had heard them.

He lay in the darkness, and it seemed that a warmth and light still glowed all around him. Together, Joel had said. Three of us together. And Thacia was not against him.

*He trains my hands for war,  
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze...*

He could see the shining bow, the bow that no man could bend with his own strength alone.

Suddenly he sat up. It came to him that Joel had given him the answer to his most urgent question. It was time for him to leave this place. For two days, without their knowing, he had tested his strength, pacing back and forth in the narrow passage. Joel would try to keep him. Better

simply to go. They would be horrified that he had chosen the Sabbath, when a man could walk no more than two thousand cubits from his home. But the Law was for the wealthy, for the scholars, not for the poor. By now he had broken so many points of the Law that he was beyond all redemption. What matter if he broke one more?

Toward morning, when he was sure that all the household would be asleep, he crawled along the passage. His fingers discovered a latch, and the little service door swung

"I had some such idea when I came," Simon admitted. "But it has not worked out just as I expected. No, I have not asked Jesus to join us. All I hope and long for now is that he will ask me to join him."

Daniel saw that he would get no more certain answer from Simon tonight. The two boys went back along the road in silence. Presently Joel spoke, his young voice troubled.

"How can he call those people children of God?" he questioned. "They have never heard of the Law. They are unclean from the moment they are born."

Daniel could not attach too much importance to this. He was too far outside the Law himself. "Perhaps it does no harm for them to hope," he suggested.

"But they have no right to hope!"

Joel was silent again, struggling, in some way Daniel could not share, to reconcile what he had heard with his lifelong training. "I think Father is right," he said at last, unwillingly. "This man is not a true rabbi. He practically said it was all right to eat without washing our hands. Perhaps it's dangerous even to listen to him. And yet-"

Some unfinished question, only half formed, filled the darkness around them as they made their way back to the city.