

"Gracie, what'd he do? Should I mash him?"

Peterson slipped beneath Hermie's outstretched arm and got two steps toward the cash register before a burly grasp of his shoulder jerked him back.

"You ain't goin' nowhere. Now what's this, anyway?"

Peterson laid the umbrella on an empty booth seat, placed his own hand on top of Hermie's and spun around. Hermie, his feet churning, sailed backside first into the booth. Peterson picked up his umbrella, flipped a coin toward the open-mouthed proprietor and strode out.

The bus rolled to a hissing stop and a mob of elbows swarmed toward the open door. Peterson, in the midst of the Eastside commuter trade, felt himself swept up off the ground and onto the bus platform. He eyed a huge grinning face over his shoulder.

"Thought you'd get mashed down here."

"Thank you. I could have managed quite well."

"Aw, it's just that you little fellows need help sometimes. I had a brother about your size. He was never too good at anything."

The crowd shoved, and Peterson sought the edge of a corner seat. He opened the paper he'd carried beneath his arm and searched the want ads a third time.

Moment of Glory

Russell L. Durbin

DEMAS could hear the rats scurrying about in a corner of the cell, and he thought, wryly, that Antonia was not particularly noted for its accommodations or pleasant company. He sat on a straw mat, his head against the cool stone wall, and listened to the regular breathing of Gestas. Amazing how a man could sleep so soundly only a few hours before he was to be executed. Was it that he was completely fearless, or simply a fool? Demas didn't know which; he only knew that he, Demas, the Greek, was very much afraid of what the morning light would bring. He had seen these Roman executions before and knew how slow and painful they could be. Would he whimper and cry and curse and beg and plead like he had seen others do? Or would he endure in silence?

"No," he thought. "No man can endure that kind of torture, that kind of pain, in silence."

Thoughts, emotions and memories whirled and eddied in the stream of his consciousness as he sought to grasp something solid and hold onto it. Strangely, there was nothing that did not slip and fade away—nothing except the hard reality of the prison walls around him, and the iron bars across the narrow window. The walls pressed in on him in the darkness until he felt as if he were suffocating. It seemed that a great band was pressing in on his chest, relentlessly squeezing the breath of life from him. Then, in a cool rational moment, he realized he was holding his breath. Demas

exhaled, and suddenly, he felt light-headed and dizzy. He breathed deeply, and, for a moment, he didn't notice the prison stench as air filled his lungs again and again, reassuringly. For a brief moment that had seemed like an eternity, he had thought he had forgotten how to breathe.

He had heard that when a person is on the brink of death, he remembers his childhood vividly, that his whole life passes before his eyes in the flicker of a moment. But try as he would, Demas could not conjure up the image of his parents and their villa by the little blue lake in Greece. Perhaps that would come later. Instead, violent thoughts of more recent and more violent days crowded roughly into his mind.

Those first few days in Jerusalem had been riotous, bawdy days for him. Tantalizingly, he remembered soft lips and warm bodies, but strangely, the faces and names escaped him. And only such a short time ago. The sensual caresses remained like vague ghosts flitting across the cell.

Gestas had begun to snore as the gray pre-dawn light filtered through the window.

Demas licked his lips and remembered the taste of fermented wine in the Jerusalem shops and inns.

* * *

"So, my little Greek stripling," Gestas laughed drunkenly. "You think you can hold your own with a Jew. Ha! Did you hear that, my friends." He turned to the other grinning, bearded faces around him. "Our little friend thinks he can out-drink, out-love and out-fight me. Go 'way, boy. Play elsewhere. If you were but a man, perhaps I might . . . but you are not. Run along and behave yourself or I, Gestas, will have to spank." The Jew grabbed a large cup of wine and turned to his friends.

Suddenly, he was whirled around, caught on a slender, but hard-muscle hip, and thrown across the room to land heavily on his side. Gestas was too stunned, too surprised, to do more than flounder around on the floor and sputter. It was the good-looking, smooth-faced Greek's turn to laugh.

"So—I'm a boy, am I? Then perhaps you Jews should fight one another since you cannot whip even Greek 'boys'." He laughed loudly, the devil dancing naked in his flashing black eyes. "Now, bring on your women and your wine and we'll see who is the best man."

Gestas gathered his robe about him and staggered to his feet, unsteady with too much wine and shaken from the fall. Already he had decided he had had enough of this young upstart.

Seeing there was little fight left in the Jew, the young Greek started to turn away when a heavy hand fell on his shoulder. He looked up into fierce blue eyes, burning beneath strong black eyebrows. The man's whole appearance, from his long black hair to his matted black beard and hairy arms, gave the impression of power

and strength. The stranger's deep-set eyes gave the young Greek an indication of the man's intelligence and leadership. Yet, somehow, despite the regular and strong features of the man, the face seemed twisted and unnecessarily cruel.

"You, boy," the man said roughly. "What's your name?"

For a moment the Greek was tempted to spit in the man's face. But he felt the great strength in the hand as the fingers tightened on his shoulder and decided any such action would be unwise.

"I am Demas," he said, somewhat defiantly.

The dark man with the piercing eyes surveyed him thoughtfully for a moment while the others in the inn went about their business, the incident with Gestas apparently forgotten.

"You like to fight?" the man asked Demas.

"What do you think?" the young Greek turned the question back on the man.

"You'll do. If you want to really fight—not just play at it in inns and shops with drunken men—but fight for a cause," the man's eyes began to burn more brightly, "then meet me at Nain, north of here in the Valley of Esdraelon. Gestas will show you the way. He is one of us." With that, the man was gone.

"Who was that?" Demas asked.

"Him? Why, some say he is the Messiah," Gestas replied. "Whether he is or not, who can say? But this I know—he is the man who will liberate our country from the cursed rule of the Romans. He is Barabbas!"

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"Barabbas." Demas repeated the name softly in the larkness of his cell, but without either joy or bitterness. Barabbas. A lonely name at this moment.

"No comfort to one waiting to die," Demas thought. "He is probably no comfort to himself either."

Barabbas was somewhere within the walls of Antonia too, hidden away in a dark cell just like Demas and Gestas. Demas wondered what Barabbas was doing now. Was he sleeping like Gestas, or was he, too, sitting and thinking and dreaming? And what of the Freedom party and the liberation movement? Would it die for lack of leadership now that Barabbas had been taken? And what about this Messiah business?

Demas had had little time for religion and his own Greek gods, let alone a Jewish God. Still the Messianic legend fascinated him. Often he had wondered if Barabbas was truly the predicted Messiah. Many throughout the country had thought so. Barabbas himself had never denied it. Demas shook his head. No, it simply wasn't possible that Barabbas was the Messiah. If there ever was to be one, he would not be captured like some common thief, be tried and be sentenced to death as Barabbas had been. The Messiah, if Demas had heard rightly, would be a kind of super-being, half-human, half-divine, because he would be the Son of God. No, Demas knew the Messiah

could never suffer such an ignoble disgrace.

Gestas rolled over on his mat, his snores interrupted momentarily by the movement.

And rippling through Demas' thoughts as the world outside removed its somber shawl of darkness and prepared for the coming of another day, were the deep blue waves of Tiberius. Demas loved the sea north of Jerusalem because it had reminded him so much of the home he now found difficult to remember. There was something so peaceful about the water. Even the thought of it wrinkling with the soft summer breeze calmed his turbulent emotions as he sat on his straw mat and listened to the snores and the rats.

Demas particularly remembered one bright day by the sea. He had been hoping to take a boat ride with some fishermen that day, but he could find no one willing to go out. He couldn't understand it, since the day was perfect for fishing. But it seemed people were all going to hear some itinerant preacher—some fellow named Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth who had apparently appointed himself to preach and teach. Out of curiosity, Demas followed some of the fishermen who had left their nets to hear this so-called "miracle worker." Demas thought he would have a good laugh and a good story to tell his fellow Freedom fighters. But Demas didn't laugh that day, nor did he tell his friends about his little excursion.

What he saw when he arrived at the appointed place where the crowd had gathered was a tall, rugged-looking young man with an infinitely sad expression on his face. He was surrounded by a group of helpers who kept the milling and shoving crowd from getting to him. Demas was tempted to leave, but he didn't. Instead, he pushed his way through the throng to where he could hear the man. This carpenter talked persuasively of a world of love, a world where love would conquer hate, and a world where a man should and would love his fellow man as he would himself and his god. The voice caressed and soothed, Demas thought. It reaches out to you in love, massages the innermost depths of your soul with love, bathes you with love, and leaves you as washed and as clean as a little child freshly scrubbed. Demas sighed and wished it could come true, this kingdom of love the man talked about. But, of course, that was foolish, wishful thinking and dreaming. Even this man with his ever-so-gentle voice could not have love enough for the whole world.

Demas noticed the waning rays of the sun and suddenly felt hungry. He had brought no food with him, and obviously, there would not be enough food to feed the huge crowd. As he got up, he saw a small boy carrying a basket of bread and fish walk up to one of the man's helpers and offer his meager rations to help feed the rest. Why, that would not even feed the preacher and his disciples, let alone the five thousand that had gathered. Demas was amused at the little boy, yet touched at the little fellow's gesture.

"With his power of persuasion, this Jesus would have been

excellent in the forum and public debates at home," Demas thought as he hurried down the hill to meet his friends.

But the thought of that warm day and the "preacher of love" had lingered with him. It seemed to him that even now, even in his most desperate moment, the voice of the carpenter caressed him, warming him in his cold cell.

Demas hadn't noticed the slow but steady advance of a stray sunbeam across the floor of his cell, and he was startled when the door swung open and a Roman legionaire ordered him outside.

"Come on, come on, louts," the soldier shouted roughly, kicking Gestas in the side with his heavy-toed cothurn. "This is your day to shine. Now you'll find out how Rome deals with traitors."

Gestas unleashed a string of epithets at the soldiers and Roman might in general, which only earned him a backhanded blow across the mouth. Demas said nothing but moved quietly into the narrow hall. The clanking of the soldiers' bucklers against their short swords, and the measured tramp, tramp, tramp of their feet made a sort of rhythm which echoed hollowly through the rock corridors, past cell after cell, row after row of condemned men.

Both men blinked and tried to hide their eyes when they stepped into the bright sunlight which filled the fortress courtyard. The place was a bedlam of noise. Frenzied people were shouting and shoving. The waves of sound beat upon Demas until he thought he could stand it no longer. What was going on? It was some kind of trial, for he saw the Roman procurator—Pilate was his name—standing on an elevated stone platform at the far end of the yard. Demas could see the Roman soldiers, their swords drawn, ringing the courtyard, trying desperately to hold back the milling mob. The prisoner was standing alone in the center. Was it Barabbas? The question leaped into Demas' mind immediately, but it went unanswered because he was too far away to recognize the man.

A servant was bringing what looked to Demas like a wash basin to Pilate. Demas was surprised to see the procurator dip his hands into the bowl and dry them on a cloth the servant handed to him. Then he remembered the reason for the bowl. It was the Roman way of absolving themselves of pronouncing a penalty. Pilate symbolically was washing away the stain of the man's blood. The man's fate was now up to the people, and Demas knew from the great shout that went up, the man's fate was already sealed.

A palace guard shouldered his way through the crowd and saluted the commander of the execution detail.

"Sir, the people have demanded the release of the prisoner, Barabbas, and the death of that one." He pointed to the lonely figure standing in the center of the courtyard. The commander ordered a soldier to free Barabbas.

Barabbas! Demas could scarcely believe his ears. Barabbas freed! It was truly a miracle. Maybe, just maybe, Barabbas is the Messiah. Demas couldn't keep the thought out of his mind. Maybe he would

conquer the Romans after all. Maybe the Freedom party's efforts hadn't been in vain.

Then Demas remembered his own situation. He, too, was going to die with "that one." He looked at the man again.

"Lonely," he thought. "Every man is lonely when he dies." All roads lead to the same destination—death. He was going there, Gestas was going there, and "that one" was going there, Demas reflected. But they were each going alone, each in his own darkness.

His thoughts were interrupted by the return of the soldier bringing Barabbas. Demas turned to greet his former chief, but the greeting died in his throat when he saw the man. Barabbas looked like a wooley black bear, suddenly routed out of hibernation. He stood weaving and blinking in the bright sunlight. Demas looked into those blue eyes and found—nothing, not even the flicker of recognition. The burning spark that had once inflamed peoples' emotions and imaginations had been extinguished by months in prison. Demas stared in disbelief.

"No," he thought. "No, this . . . this hulking animal is not the Messiah."

The Roman commander gave Barabbas a shove which nearly sent him sprawling. "You have your freedom, Barabbas. Now go quickly before we decide to lock you up again." He jerked his head toward the man in the courtyard. "That one is going to die in your place, though I'll never know why. Next time, you may not be so lucky." Barabbas stumbled away and was lost in the howling mob.

Demas felt himself prodded with the point of a spear.

"Come along, we haven't all day," the soldier said. Gestas shuffled along sullenly, and Demas walked a few feet behind. They were surrounded by soldiers to keep the mob away. The two men were led to a corner of the courtyard where the "trees" were kept. In accordance with Roman custom, they were stripped of all but their breechclouts. Their hands were tied in front of them with stout pieces of rope so as to leave about six inches between their wrists. Demas set his feet and braced himself for the weight of the cross which was lifted onto his right shoulder. He could hear Gestas swearing at the soldiers, at the cross, and at the mob. Bent slightly under the thirty pounds of timber which he was to carry, Demas looked up as the third prisoner was brought up.

No! It couldn't be. Demas blinked his eyes to make sure he was seeing correctly. It was the carpenter name Jesus he had heard talk of love that sunny day by the Sea of Tiberius. What was he doing here? What had he done? Demas wondered as he watched the soldiers strip the man and tie his hands. Then, as the man turned and braced himself for the heavy cross, Demas saw the marks of the flagellum, the whip with the jagged pieces of lead inserted in the ends of the leather throngs. The man had been scourged terribly. Demas couldn't restrain a slight shudder as he watched the rough wood lowered onto the quivering, shredded flesh of the man's back. Jesus

almost staggered and fell.

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To the pilgrims who were pouring into the Holy City for the Feast of the Passover, the day was a glorious one. The golden dome of the temple glittered through the shimmering waves of heat. But to Demas, the day was living hell. He plodded along slowly, the last of the three, between moving walls of Roman steel, the howling mob almost snapping like curs at his heels. His hands were blistered as was his shoulder, and blood trickled down his bare back from the raw sore rubbed by the rough wood.

"Baptized," he thought as he plodded along. "Baptized in sweat and blood." He wondered briefly about the origin of the word "baptize." It had something to do with Hebrew religion. His chain of thought was broken by an offensive pebble in the street which bruised his foot. He wanted to giggle, like a child, but he knew that would never do.

He wondered if the street would never end. The street . . . what was its name? Via . . . Via . . . Dolorosa. Yes, that was it. Via Dolorosa.

Demas sweated and plodded, sweated and plodded, sweated and plodded, cursing himself all the while for having been so foolish. Why had he left home where he had had wealth and position? Why had he gotten mixed up with Barabbas and his gang of cut-throats? Why? Why? Why? The question seemed to keep time with the measured tread of the soldiers.

His breath came in short gasps now, and he wondered, briefly, how Jesus was doing. The man had almost fallen before they left the courtyard. Twice the procession had stopped, but Demas didn't know why and hadn't really cared. He hadn't even looked up. He remembered the last time was at Gennath Gate. Demas could feel the hot breath of the sun on his back as it climbed to its zenith. The young Greek was almost to the point where he would welcome death and embrace it with outstretched arms. Surely no torture and no death could be worse than this needless plodding.

* * *

Worse? Demas wondered as he listened to the dull thud of the executioner's hammer as he drove heavy spiks through human flesh. Gestas screamed again and again, punctuating each one with a curse.

"I will not yield; I will not scream and curse," Demas thought grimly. He repeated the words over and over as the soldiers cut the rope that bound his wrists, and forced him to lay his arms on the cross piece. He saw the executioner draw back the mallet as a soldier held a metal spike over his wrist. It hurtled downward, and Demas heard someone scream, shattering the silence. Then he realized the voice belonged to him. Another scream was torn from his parched throat as an iron spike ripped through the other wrist. Demas slipped into a semi-consciousness that mercifully dulled the

pain when the soldiers pressed his feet flat against the cross and drove a single spike through both of them.

A red haze blurred Demas' vision as the cross to which he was nailed dropped heavily into place. At first, the pain was unendurable. Every move of his body to ease the pain only made it worse. He licked his dry lips and cried softly for his mother to come and comfort him, just as she had done when he was a small boy. But there was no one now. He was alone in his pain and suffering. No. Not alone. There were others, he remembered. Demas twisted his head to see what had become of the other two.

He saw his "preacher of love" on the cross next to him. Gestas was on the far side, still cursing, although his voice was weaker now. The burning sun was sapping their strength rapidly, and Demas realized it would not be long for any of them before their suffering would be over.

Smoke and stench from the "valley of death" below them where criminals' bodies were burned after executions curled in the faint breeze and wafted over Golgotha where the three men hung. Demas felt as if he were going to be sick.

"Golgotha, the skull," Demas thought. "A good name, for here will our bones rot and our ashes be scattered."

A faint suggestion of a chuckle escaped his lips as he thought, "I wonder what Jesus thinks of his fellow man now? I wonder if he would still preach about love, had he the breath?"

Despite his pain, which was great, the young Greek looked toward Jesus again. He saw the man's lips move as he looked down at his executioners; the tall Pharisees, their robes wrapped tightly around them, as they nodded approvingly; the coldly factual Sadducees as they sought to adhere strictly to the law; the indifferent Roman soldiers as they gambled at the foot of the cross, and the common people, now hardly more than rabble as they screamed and cursed and taunted.

Demas strained to hear what Jesus was saying, but the noise of the crowd was so great, he caught only a few words.

"Father, forgive them . . ."

Perhaps Demas had misunderstood the man. Surely he couldn't have prayed for them! After what they had done to him! Why, they were nothing but street curs, snarling their defiance now that he was helpless. He surely misunderstood the man.

Then Demas remembered the day by the sea when Jesus had talked of love and forgiveness.

"If a man strike you on one cheek, turn the other to him also," he had said. At that time, Demas had almost laughed at Jesus.

"A good way to get another blow," Demas had thought. Now, he wondered if it were really such a crazy idea, after all. It appeared the man was practicing what he preached. Demas pushed his own pain into a corner of his mind and listened to the taunts of the people, marveling at the compassion of Jesus that had moved him

to forgive them for what they were doing to him.

"Hah, he saved others, but he couldn't save himself."

"Hey, miracle worker, come down from your cross. Save yourself, and we'll believe you're the Messiah."

The Messiah? Demas wondered about that. If this Jesus were the Messiah, why would he allow himself to be killed? The man was young, thirty-two or three. What could be accomplished by dying now? He decided that Jesus was simply a good man, innocent of whatever charges had been brought against him.

The people were hurling Jesus' own words back at him now.

"You said you were going to tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days. Your time's running out, Jesus. Better work fast."

"Where's your hammer, Carpenter?" one burly fellow shouted, taking up the joke. "You've already got your nails!" He and the others around him laughed raucously.

Jesus didn't seem to hear them. His head rolled against the hard wood as if seeking a soft spot on which to lay his head to alleviate his pain. His eyes were closed, and, as his head rolled to his right facing Demas, his lips moved again. Demas heard a soft moan, the only one thus far to escape his lips.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Strange he was calling to his god as if he expected to be rescued momentarily.

"Delirium," Demas thought. No one, not even the Jewish god, could rescue them now. Then, he saw Jesus open his eyes and look at him. Demas was startled. Where he had expected to find fear, he found a look of assurance. Their glances locked for a fleeting second—this carpenter and this criminal—and Demas felt somehow comforted. Jesus' glance seemed to say, "Courage!"

Demas closed his eyes and bit his lips until blood flowed, trying to stifle a groan. He heard more shouting. This time, the voice sounded familiar. It was Gestas.

The burly Jew had pulled himself up on the timber to which he was nailed until his head rested on the cross piece. He was shouting at Jesus, his lips pulled back in a grotesque sneer.

"If you are really the Messiah, then save yourself. Save yourself and us. Don't let us die. Save us, oh king of the Jews." His bravado disappeared and his voice turned to a whine with his last words. Fear oozed out of the man like his blood and his life. Demas saw Gestas' body slip and fall heavily on the nails, tearing the tortured flesh a little more, starting the bleeding again. He screamed in pain as he hurled invective after invective at the suffering Nazarene on the center cross. Demas could take no more.

"Stop it, Gestas!" Demas shouted. "Have you no sense at all? Don't you see you're dying too? Have you no fear of God?"

Demas' voice silenced Gestas' curses as the Jew turned to stare at his former friend. Demas wasn't sure what had prompted him to speak up in behalf of this man, Jesus, but he was glad he had done

it. He spoke again.

"We deserve what we're getting, Gestas. We have broken the laws, and we must be punished. This man has done nothing wrong."

He turned to look at Jesus and thought, "No, this man has done nothing but to preach of love." Then, he corrected his thoughts. "No, not merely preach of love. He has loved." A third time Demas, in his mind now growing feverish in his pain, corrected himself. "No, that isn't right either." He searched for the right phrase. "He is love."

It seemed that Jesus was reading his thoughts, for he turned toward Demas, and, with a look of infinite understanding, he once more smiled at him.

Demas licked his cracked lips with a swollen tongue. "Master," he began. Thoughts whirled through his mind. There were so many things he felt he wanted to say; so many things he felt he needed to say to this man. But he only said, "Remember me when you come into your kingly power." Demas' eyes told Jesus more than words could have said at this point.

Jesus, his body racked with pain, spoke softly, his voice again caressing and soothing. "When the pain and suffering of this day is done, we shall meet again. For I say to you, you will be with me this day in Paradise." A muscle spasm gripped Jesus, and he closed his eyes.

Suddenly, Demas felt calm; his head was clear; his thoughts were sharply in focus.

"Am I on the brink of death?" he wondered. "Funny, but I believe him. There must be some place, some life beyond this one." He wanted to ask Jesus about this, but noticed the Nazarene was talking to a young man standing near the cross, his arm about a weeping woman.

A cool breeze whipped across his face, and for the first time, Demas noticed the dark clouds in the sky. Suddenly, there was a strange darkness. For some reason, Demas was glad. He was sure something terrible, and yet, something of tremendous importance was taking place. Perhaps God was coming to destroy those who had destroyed his son. His son! The words slipped naturally into Demas' thoughts. The ground at the foot of the cross rocked with each jolt, sending new waves of pain through his body.

At the very moment the storm seemed the worst, Jesus raised himself on his bleeding feet, and, with a loud cry, shouted—almost victoriously, thought Demas—"It is finished!" Jesus looked up into the dark clouds and sighed, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." The Nazarene's head fell forward on his chest, and his body slid down to hang limply on the nails. He was dead, Demas knew.

Tears trickled down his cheeks, but Demas was unashamed of them.

"Never had there been such a man as this," he thought. "Never

will there be such a one again."

As Demas slid into the coma which precedes death by crucifixion, he murmured, "God, forgive us all." The chill spring rain which sprinkled his body reminded him dimly of dew on a morning rose. Suddenly, he was a child again, running to meet his Father with out-stretched arms.

Spring Comes

Sharon Sperry

SAM awoke just before the sunrise and lay quietly watching the slow change which spread against the sky. The heavy blanket of night folded itself against the west horizon and fell unnoticed behind the tree line revealing the pale pink sheet of dawn. The blush of red in the east turned bright and the sun slipped up over the mountains to lie couched in a light blue sky. A snow cloud had passed in the night and left a thin haze of crusty, white sheeting on the ground that crackled when the brown squirrel bounded from tree to tree. Each crackle brought a burst of chatter from the little bird who perched in the lilac bush. Sam pulled himself up to the window and, squinting against the glare, searched the ground for the small buds which would sprout from the flat brown seeds he had planted in the fall. It was too early for them, but he searched anyway, as he had every morning all winter, hoping they would bud out of season. The trees, too, showed only slick, black branches, one trailing a withered, brown leaf which had clung tenaciously throughout the fierce winds of fall and winter. It was a frail, twisted leaf, thin and brown like matted dust, petrified by winter hail and icy frosts. Yet, it seemed to have suckled from the branch the strength to hold its bond. Sam imagined it would be wonderful to see that leaf there when spring came, waving among the new leaves, whispering to them that life could be very long.

He turned over in his bed and waited to hear the rattling noises from the kitchen which would be his mother preparing breakfast. She brought it to him on a shiny silver tray that reflected his face in its bottom. When he began to eat, she sat down by his bed in a straight-backed chair and said, "Good morning." Neither of them talked in the morning. Sometimes he would tell her breakfast was good, but it was not necessary. She knew how to boil the poached eggs so soft that it felt like warm silk on his tongue.

When he had finished, she read aloud and he listened and dreamed. For the past month he had been unable to read. The words were a fuzzy line on creamy paper. His favorite story, the one she read a dozen times over, was of Arthur who pulled the sword and fought to build a glorious kingdom, then passed mysteriously away in a sailing ship surrounded by fair women. Arthur must have sailed a lake larger than Gossmyer's Lake at the top of his father's farm. Of the two tall pines that guarded the stream entrance to the lake,