

On the third day of sun, after a period of rain, in the fifth month of the fifth year during the second millennium, the windows were shattered, and in the shards of colored glass, I saw the visions of the LORD. It was there, in the place of the mermaid, by the river of coffee, that the hand of the LORD was upon me.

In those broken pieces, I saw a woman, old and feeble. She walked slowly down a street lined with people who thrust their fists into the air, shouting obscenities at her. She never made contact with the eyes of the ones in the crowd. She walked, twisting her upper body back and forth, side-to-side, to face each side of the road. Then, I saw that she had no eyes. Where there should have been eyes, there were diamonds that shown like the brightness of a spotlight in the eyes of one blinded by darkness. With each twist of her body, the flash of light from her eyes left many blind. At this, the crowd began to cry out for mercy.

The sky was black above her, and nuggets of gold fell out of the heavens into a bag she wore on her back. With every piece that fell, the weight of that bag became heavier. Still, she took step after step down the long, straight road. Many of the ones in the crowd tried to grasp for the gold, but could not reach it. It fell like a funnel, into the old woman's bag. As I looked into the glass, I saw the bodies of the people in the crowd. There were people of all sorts. It was a collection of the nations. I saw a child, dressed in something like a dirty pillowcase, fall to his knees, begging the woman to stop for him. On the other side of the road, there were two women, bathed in cuts and bruises, calling out to the old woman for her attention; still, she walked on. All along the boulevard this was the scene. How peculiar it was to see so many people focused on the one old woman.

I stepped around the broken glass to look down upon it from the opposite side. Immediately, I could see why the woman had evoked such a response. Though I had not noticed this before, I could now see that the old woman was entirely naked, except for a cross that hung from her thin neck and the bag that was collecting the gold. All the ones who were shouting obscenities were also reaching for the gold. The ones who looked to the woman for aid were reaching for the cross that hung from her neck. Still, the woman stopped for no one, and I began to wonder where she was headed with such unyielding determination.

Just then, a city emerged on the horizon, at the end of the road. At the appearance of this city, the diamonds

glowed more brightly, and the gold fell with such fury that I doubted if the bag could contain it. More people were blinded by the diamond's brightened glow. Even with this, the old woman walked at the same slow pace towards the city, and it was clear that this was her destination.

The cries of the people grew louder as she approached the city, and I could tell that the crowd grew more dense as she moved closer to the outer walls. Now, there were many more nations represented in the crowd. I saw young and old, rich and poor, reaching for the woman and calling out to her. They called to her in many languages, but I understood them all. Everything around her grew more intense as she approached the city. The sky was now so black that the only light around came from the diamonds, which continued to blind people in the crowd. Only a short distance from the city gate, about 30 yards, the old woman stopped. The upper half of her body continued to twist like the lamp of a lighthouse on top of its fixed base. All around, there was commotion. People were falling to their knees, blind from the light. Those who were spared the light were now weeping and pleading for the woman's care. All the rest were shouting obscenities at the old woman, threatening her life with every lash of their tongues. I could not understand all the complaints made against the old woman, nor could I determine the need of all those reaching for her cross.

I had to wonder if the old woman was now going to speak. She took the bag off her shoulder and let it fall to the asphalt. Out of the bag, she drew a great book, which was plated with the gold that was falling from the sky and glittered with jewels of every kind, including some I had not seen before. She opened the book and began to read from it. The sound that came from her mouth was not a voice like any person, rather it was a shrill siren-like sound that pierced the drums of my ears and left me deaf. When she read, her body rotated as before, now leaving those in the crowd blind and deaf. I could see that the words of this text were lost on the crowd because of the sound of the woman's voice. After some time, she put the open book on the asphalt, so that a great light burst out of the book straight into the sky. Then, she took the cross from around her neck and held it out towards the crowd. Still, her words were lost on the crowd, which was now mostly deaf. Those who had once reached for the cross, begging for the woman's care, now hid their faces from the woman, for fear that they too might be blinded by the diamonds. After

holding the cross to the crowd, she placed it down on the open pages of the book, and the light that came out of the book intensified. Finally, the old woman began to point to people in the crowd, calling them towards her. With fear and trembling, each one approached the old woman. As they came before her, the old woman showed them the words on the pages of the book, but the people could not see because the diamonds had blinded them. She placed the cross in the palms of their hands and spoke to them about it, but they could not hear because her voice had made them deaf. With each one, she grew angrier that the people did not respond to the book or the cross. When all the people had been shown the book and held the cross, and none had responded, she turned the book towards them, and with great violence, the light from the book destroyed them all.

Just as this happened, I saw the gates of the city close before the woman. At once, her attention was on the gates, and as they closed together, she gave a horrible shriek that even my deaf ears could hear. I saw the crowds of people huddle together, on each side of the road, protecting themselves from the sound. As she ran out of breath, the old woman's cry faded and the cross fell from her hand to the ground. Beside the cross, the woman's body fell to the road. Like her final shriek, her body faded from existence, until all that remained was the cross, the book and the bag of gold. As gradually as the old woman died, the people rose from their huddle and looked out on the old woman's remnants. I expected the people to cheer or show some sign of relief, but they were sad and I saw them all began to walk away from the scene. In no time, the streets were empty, except for the bag, book and cross. Then, they too passed into the ground, like the woman.

I thought of cleaning up the glass because it seemed that the vision had passed. In the glass, I could still see the road, and the city, and I could not bring myself to clear it away. Then, like a sign, I saw the bud of a beautiful plant creep up through a crack in the pavement where the woman had died. I stood for three days, watching the glass, waiting for the plant to grow. Then, on the fourth day a flower blossomed from the center of the bud. Coming from the bud, I could smell sweet scents that were unlike any other. I stood for hours, studying the beauty of this blossom. Then, I saw a child walking down the center of the street towards the stalk. She was dressed in bright colors and her skin was a rich caramel color. She bowed to the blossoming bud, with folded hands, and sat down next to it. Just then, a

group of men came out of a building and walked towards the girl. I was afraid for the little girl, but no fear shown in her face, and she stood to greet the men as they approached her. I saw the five of them sit down together around the stalk. With each one that approached, another pedal sprouted from the flower. The pedals were each different colors and no color was ever repeated.

I watched for several hours, as persons of many kinds approached the flower. By the end of the fifth day of the vision of the LORD, there were thousands of people gathered around the flower. The sky that was shrouded in heavy clouds was clear now, and the scene was lit by a light even greater than the diamonds or the book. There was no longer anything falling from the sky, rather I could see life of every sort growing up from the ground, all around the people. As I looked at the faces of the people gathered there, I recognized some of them from before. Still, this was a different group; these were different people. The stalk of the flower was small, and I was sure that the people only a few rows back could not see the flower itself. Still, all the people spoke of the flower's vibrant colors and sang songs about its richness. Just then, I realized that my hearing had been restored, and as I watched people approach the crowd, I saw sight restored to the blind as they sat down with the crowd.

In an instant, the light above the crowd grew even brighter and the gates of the city burst open. I saw people I recognized walk out of the gates to meet the crowd and welcome them. The voices of the ones from the city were like music, and I heard the ones from the city calling to each other in song. In moments, there was music all around, and I saw people gathered around the flower, farther than any eye can measure. I saw many people enter the gates of the city, then return to the crowd to welcome new arrivals. People passed, back and forth, through the gates of the city and the gates remained open. Then I realized that the gates would remain open so long as the city was not threatened. The city was open to everyone who posed no threat to her.

As I began to wonder what sorts might cause the gates to close, the shard of glass, on which I saw the gates, shattered before me, and like a small explosion, all the pieces were crushed to dust by the hand of the LORD.