



## **On Judgement Day**

I found myself among a vast crowd of people, flooding the landscape as far as my eyes could see. Some in rags, some wearing crowns. Wise white hairs of age haloing radiant smiles, met the wide-eyed wonder of little children. Young and old joined hands in families mingling in one enormous multitude; each one looking forwards to the light.

A powerful music collated the enduring sound of a vast, vast crowd – the sound of singing – not words, but heart songs all accompanied by a million, million sonic images of waves and running streams, of thunder claps and gentle rain, bird song accompanied by the murmur of the wind; rustling leaves, a crunching snail, a baby's cry, a lover's whisper, a mother's lullaby ..... and so many more – compacting eager, longing praise from all the world and of all time.

The darkened, almost black sky behind us accentuated the eye-blistering , furnace white light to which we were all being drawn, though the ivory cloud was still dominated by a huge double rainbow in which every colour shone dominant – every band full of hopeful promise.

The crowd and I moved slowly, relentless as an eternal tide. Out of the brightness my slowly accustomed eyes began to make out a throne. Though the light obscured its occupant, I knew who it would be. I trembled – a shiver of excitement, wonder, fear ... rippled through every part of me.

Now I was close to the throne: the light gave way to sight – and to a face. A face I recognised, but on which I could not gaze for more than a fleeting moment – the face I had seen in a thousand people encounters – a human face yet with the eyes of God. I looked away as a curtain of remorseful shame veiled me. Venturing to look again, my eyes rose only to his hands – powerful gripping, craftsman's hands - those slender fingers which had sketched the finest patterns of creation. Powerful hands I knew had once grasped a drowning man; tender-touching hands which had channelled the flow of God's healing love; beckoned a welcome; pointed the way; raised the fallen. Those maker's hands were covered with many scars where wood and nails had resisted his touch, and with those deep bold scars which I knew so well; scars eternally screaming of human agony and the sorrow flowing from the heart of God.

In a moment those same hands – God's hands - were taking hold of those of an elderly man, kneeling in front of him – a man whose stooping shoulders spoke of grief and pain while yet his raised head told of love and hope. The divine hands, reaching from the throne, had taken his and raised him to his feet. I still could not lift my eyes, but I knew there were smiles above me.

Straining to listen over the timeless, myriad chorus all about me, I overheard the whisper of the voice of God – *rise ..... forgiven ..... welcome*. The whispered words were drowned as the chorus rose to a crescendo of praise – a powerful song of his glory – a heart-song for which there are no words.

For a moment the crowd stopped pressing me forward. I was standing alone. The words I had overheard were spoken to another. Now it was my turn to kneel in the white light of his glory, trembling like an autumn leaf about to fall. Would he say the same words to me?

I was aware of my whole history laid bare before me – and before him – a flood of forgotten memories. Could he say the same words to me?

I felt the momentary hush – a billion voices stilled – no sound – no music – only an expectant silence - the whole cosmos holding its breath - from the blackness to the glory. Then, I heard him call my name. My heart pounding, I sense his scarred hands extended – even to me .. and I had nothing to give ..... nothing, except my certain hope of an incredible love.