

Sabbath Maker

Seth's late! His meal will spoil. I expect he'll want to see to the goats before he eats.'

Adah's sister-in-law Deborah nodded her agreement.

'He'll not change the habits of a life-time. But I'd better be going.'

She hesitated, not really wanting to leave before her brother came. She had things she was dying to tell him. 'I hope he hasn't been stopped by those Pharisees, especially old Simeon. He'll keep him for ages with his questions. He want to know every detail.'

'You know your brother as well as I do,' said Adah. 'They'll not get much change out of our Seth. Not even Simeon.'

'That won't stop him trying,' Deborah persisted. 'That Simeon's mad about Sabbath keeping at the moment, and he'll be even worse after his sparring match with Jesus this morning. And however much you try to defend him you can't deny our Seth breaks the Sabbath more than most of us.'

'It's not Sabbath breaking. It's Sabbath **making**.' Seth had come in the back way and overheard Deborah's last comment.

'You'd get on all right with the Nazarene.' She turned on him. She was relieved to see him home, but would not say as much. 'He said the same today, and old Simeon's furious.'

'So I heard,' Simeon grunted.

He turned to Adah. 'I'll just get washed. I've done the goats on my way in.'

'Who told you? I thought you'd been out at Eli's all day.' Deborah was rattled that Seth had heard her news before she could tell him.

'I have. Eli may not get out but there's not much happens in town he doesn't hear about. He's got a whole regular stream of informers calling most days.' Seth turned to go out to the back again while Adah set dishes on the rough hewn table. Deborah stood by the half opened door and waited till Seth returned. She had been waiting over an hour to tell him the day's gossip and the fact that he had already heard it was not going to stop her.'

Seth sat down at the table and began his meal while Deborah babbled on. He was not a man of many words, especially at the end of a busy day. The Sabbath was his day to visit his old friend Eli. Eli had been badly maimed in an accident on his farm some years ago and ever since Seth had used his rest day to visit him and do some of the jobs he couldn't manage by himself.

'Apparently it was all over Jesus' men pulling off a few ears of corn to eat.' Deborah said. 'Simeon and his crowd had been out following them. Just looking to find fault I expect. Jesus couldn't have given him a better opportunity. Simeon said they were wrong to work on the Sabbath, but Jesus reminded him how King David ate the priest's bread when he was hungry.'

Simeon got really angry. He didn't take kindly to having the scriptures quoted to him. Jesus went on though, and told him how it was better to do good things on the holy Day than to just go to synagogue and then sit round and feel miserable. Well, I don't think he said it quite like that, but that's what he meant.'

Deborah paused, expecting Seth to comment and when he failed to she said again. 'Old Simeon was furious. He stormed off threatening all sorts of trouble for Jesus.' 'And there will be trouble,' Seth looked up at her. 'They'll find a way to get rid of him, you'll see.'

'Just for arguing with Simeon?' Adah asked.

'And the rest.' Seth looked at his sister and grinned. He was one step ahead of her this time. 'You missed the best bit. It got worse after that. They were in the synagogue. Someone pushed poor Isaac up front and challenged the Nazarene to heal him.'

'And did he?' Deborah's eyes widened.

'That's what they say. Isaac walked out of the synagogue as fit as you or me. I'd say that the Rabbi Jesus has sealed his own fate today. And that's a great shame. I think he's got things right about religion. It's the living of it that counts, not just the words and the rules and the ritual.'

'You watch out,' Adah looked anxiously at him across the table. 'You talk like that and Simeon will start saying you're one of the Nazarene's men. He'll be making things difficult for you.' Seth laughed. 'The worst he can do to me is to not say hypocritical things at my funeral, and that won't be any great loss; Simeon won't stop me going to help Eli on the Sabbath. I was thinking about that on the way home. You know, I reckon the worst Simeon could do to me would be worth it for Eli's smile of welcome when I walk into his house and his 'Thank you' and 'Shalom' when I leave. I think it's like God smiling when Eli smiles. From what I hear, I think the Nazarene would agree with me.'

Deborah stared at her brother. For once she was lost for words.