

Wherever we find love

[Casper, one of the Magi who saw God's incarnation in the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, receives a visit some thirty-three years later]

'Come in. Come in!' Casper rose to greet his young disciple. He beckoned him to sit in the only other chair in that small room, crammed with precious manuscripts and astrological charts. Caspar had moved from his palatial home near the river soon after he returned from his journey to the West. His travelling companions had not understood the visit to the Christ-child in the same way he had. It had not had the same life-changing effect upon them and so they lived out their lives in their accustomed luxury.

Caspar's memory of the first night of their homeward journey from Bethlehem, was a clear now as the star-speckled sky beneath which they had camped. Balthazar had broken the silence, which had lasted long after the servants had retired. 'Do you think we shall ever see him again?'

'Will he survive king Herod?' Melchior added.

'Remember how his mother spoke of suffering - for all of them!'

There had followed a long, long pause, but these men were used to being alone with their thoughts. All the while Caspar felt words filling his mind, his spirit, his mouth, like the rising of a new star. He spoke them. *The child is God's king. He has been born in a stable, possessing nothing but love. We **will** see him again. We will find him wherever we find true love.'*

Through the years he had often repeated those words. Melchior and Balthazar spoke of the child occasionally when they recalled their journey, wondering what had become of him. But for Caspar, there had not been a day when he had not pictured the child in his cradle. When he gave away pieces of his great wealth; when he lost friends and credibility over his stand for justice; when he took the side of the poor, even sharing his home with society's rejects; as he went out of his way to mediate and reconcile conflicts in his community. There was hardly a beggar in the city who did not speak the name 'Casper' without reverence, though esteem was the last thing Caspar wanted for himself.

Caspar, perched on the edge of his seat with excitement, faced his visitor across the room. His servant, the only one he retained all through the years, came in to light lamps.

'Well, Malik,' Caspar could wait no longer. It was now a whole year since his young disciple had set out on his travels to Jerusalem and Judaea. 'Did you hear anything of my Jesus ... Jesus of Bethlehem, or Nazareth?'

'Hear of him!' Malik laughed. 'All the time. Everyone was talking about him. In every tavern, every shop, the markets and the Temple. You couldn't avoid hearing about him.'

'And what did they say? Have they made him their king?'

Malik's face saddened. He waited a moment before replying. 'The only time they called him king, was when they wrote the title over his cross - King of the Jews it said - and the only crown they gave him was made of sharp thorns.'

Caspar peered across the room at his young friend. 'A cross? They crucified him?'

Malik nodded. Caspar slumped back in his chair. All joy and excitement visibly drained from him. Suddenly he sat forward again. 'Was his mother there? Was Mary there?'

Malik looked enquiringly at the old man's eager face. 'Yes. She's still there. She's amazing, the way she quietly holds all his followers together.'

'Followers? Then he has been recognised!'

'And IS still. They say he is alive again; that God raised him from death.'

'As the scriptures said,' Caspar murmured.

The look of wonder grew in his face, life and hope flowing back into it as Malik told of Jesus' resurrection; of his return to his Father in heaven; of the coming of his Spirit. 'I'm not sure I can believe it all,' Malik said. 'But there's no doubt that his work is spreading. Thousands are following his Way already. They talk about his Kingdom being a reign of love. It's as though through his spirit he's now at work through his followers everywhere!'

Malik stopped, waiting for Caspar to respond. The older man raised himself stiffly, and went to stand by the open window. He stared into the heavens as though searching for a special star and repeated again the words which had guided and inspired him for over thirty years - *We will find him again, wherever we find love!*