

Hope Deferred Breathes Anew

by Johannah Highhouse

THE AIR WAS CHILL WITH AN INESCAPABLE SENSE OF DOOM.

Something terrible was underway - Nathan could feel it in his bones. The very presence of evil enshrouded the land like a thick, wet blanket. How could God let this happen? Why did He silently stand by and allow wickedness to triumph? Perhaps his companions had been right - maybe it was just another visionary who failed in his attempt to bring change to this mixed-up world. But no, it could not be. Nathan's very soul had resonated with the words this man had spoken, words of forgiveness, honour, and hope! Yet, as he stood quietly amongst the crowd, all former thoughts of hope were crushed.

His mind could not wrap itself around what his eyes were seeing. The one who had promised so much was now in the hands of cruel men who sought no less than to silence him forever...and they were doing just that. Were it merely another case of injustice against one wrongfully accused, it would have been disheartening. But the way in which this man's accusers presented themselves made Nathan's blood boil. He watched them prancing before the condemned as hyenas before their prey. Their arrogance and self-righteousness wafted around them like the stench of rotting flesh. Everyone knew these men were simply jealous of his success. He loved the common people, and they loved him - or so it had appeared.

As Nathan mused on these thoughts, the sky suddenly grew eerily dark and foreboding. Nature herself seemed to recoil at the atrocity being committed. The minutes ticked by like hours. He could not bear to keep watching the scene before him, yet he was unable to tear his eyes away. His mind unwillingly flitted back to recent events. Had it not been just last week when the entire community was praising this man as a great hero and yearning for him to be the leader of their nation? How could they willfully turn against him so soon? Was there no one left in the world with courage enough to stand up against this injustice?

His eyes drifted to his fellow onlookers. Many were silent, lost in their own thoughts. A few had tears in their eyes but no voice or power to do anything to stop what was happening. Most, however, seemed content as though somehow the death of this innocent was a long-awaited justice for themselves. Their fickle, disloyal sentiments made Nathan's gut wrench. After all this man had done for them, could they do no better than to give their assent to his demise? Perhaps they simply wanted to save their own skin. He understood that feeling. Anyone who dared to support this man would surely suffer the

same fate. The military stood stoically by, ready to follow orders no matter where it led them. To speak out would certainly mean swift retribution.

Suddenly, without warning, the ground on which they stood shook violently, rending the rocks in pieces. And then, it was all over.

It had been 3 days since that dreadful event. Nathan had never experienced such inner devastation in all his life. His heart was broken into more pieces than he had thought possible. As he walked down the rocky road, anxious to clear his mind of these depressing thoughts, he could not help but revisit the scenes of the previous few years. He had believed in this man! He had seen the good works that were done and the passionate love displayed for GOD and the people. But if what this man had said were really true, then how could he be dead?

Caught up in his inner turmoil, he did not notice the quickly approaching young man until the breathless visitor was almost upon him.

"Asher, what is wrong?" he asked his panting friend.

"Wrong? Nothing is wrong! It is wonderful!" exclaimed his companion with jubilation shining from his eyes.

"Slow down! You are not making any sense. What good news could possibly be so important?"

"Nathan," he cried, grabbing his friend by the shoulders and looking him straight in the eye, "he is no longer dead! Our Messiah is alive!"