

Emanuel, Son of David

A Novel of the Life of Jesus Christ

Chapter Thirty-Four: Joanna and Jesus First Renew their Conversations at the Sea of Galilee

It seemed strange to Joanna to arrive back in Tiberias and their fine house beside the Tiberium in the early spring before Passover. Antipas and the Inner and Upper Portions of the Royal House and Household usually went to Jerusalem together for Passover. She gathered that important business with the Sanhedrin had brought the King to Jerusalem early this year. She knew there was some discussion as to whether or not they would go back in a few weeks for Passover. When she arrived at home she had noticed Jesus Bar Joseph at the royal palace for the first time since she had married Chuza. The last two time she had been to Nazareth to visit her mother she had known that he was not there. Two years ago he had returned to his boyhood residence in Egypt she knew for a about seven months in a trip that took him away from Nazareth for more than a year if one counted the wandering between occasional visits before. But since he came back he had prospered and been focused. He and his brother kept up and expanded the Nazareth carpentry shop and Jesus helped in the cultivation of olives, figs, grapes and row crops in his mother's family small farms with servants and younger relatives pitching in and liking to work under the somewhat dashing and exotic bachelor in the family. He made a trip each peak of harvest to Judea to help the tenant bring in the crops there, collect the rent and repair the farmhouse. All of this Joanna knew because in her position she could find out almost anything about almost anyone in Galilee. But she also knew that since the first day back from Egypt he had begun repairing and improving the bats of the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. He worked with boat-wrights and also competed against them for business. When in Nazareth he and his mother lived together and he showed no inclination to marry. He and his mother had an almsgiving route for the very poor, sick and others in dire need, sometimes one or both of them made the trip themselves and sometimes they sent relatives or servants. But aside from this and two synagogues and holidays with the family Jesus had been working the longest possible hours at climbing rates of pay for two years. People in the village who had speculated that he would end up as some kind of drunkard and drifter were made silent and humiliated. The facts showed he had never been such a thing but now few could match his industry.

It seemed that her husband and others in the palace had finally decided that nobody on the sea coast could do without his services forever and had hired him to work on all the twelve boats, barges and rafts in the Palace flotilla before more guest arrived in the coming months. The tall and handsome twenty-four-year-old Jesus had two helpers with him and they labored from sunrise to past sunset, Joanna was told these facts by greatly impressed servants of her household.

Escorted by her maids, two household guards and a eunuch guard Joanna made her way out to the palace docks. She came up into exactly the proper speaking range and addressed Jesus.

“Greetings, Jesus Bar Joseph Son of David – I hear good things of your work on the palace ships my husband answers for and I see the reports are true.”

“I see before me a leading lady of Galilee whose children are much admired, whose cloths are praised for quality everywhere and whose husband is envied.”

Joanna had wondered how this would be. Jesus was really devout. That was not about how much religious activity one engaged in but was something deeper. Jesus loved the Torah, loved God, and loved Israel. He had surely loved her as well. But she knew from the experience of some friends that men otherwise never rude or dismissive who were devout might never look again at the woman they had loved as a girl if she was married.

“Your words are kind Son of David. I am told you are the only man who can fix a boat while a man fishes in it. That is a sort of miracle is it not?” Joanna spoke evenly and well but her mind and heart were crowded with activity.

She could read a language in the face and eyes of her first love. Later she would tell a woman she had not met at that point in her life what those features of Jesus said to her. As we spoke of not much at all it was his face that I felt spoke to me and said, “Yes you are beautiful and fertile and a good mother. I am strong and virile and provident. We loved each other once in the way Adam loved Eve in the first hours together in Paradise as Jacob loved Rachel for so long with and without hope. Now our future is slain in that way and we will not yield to the violations of law and covenant or the disgrace of what we had before. But the truth is never ugly. The truth of who we are can be cherished.”

Jesus’s spoken words, however, were not those of his face language at all. “I must distinguish myself a bit. It is true that I do some work while fishermen fish so they can more quickly earn the money with which to pay me and they seem to like that.”

“Is that a trick learned on the Great Sea, Son of David?”

“It is Lady Joana! You have not been so far away as I thought you were.”

The conversation went on to a farewell and Joanna went home to bathe. Once alone in her heated bathing pool she dismissed her maids for an hour and sobbed uncontrollably and felt her body throbbing. Jesus was a man and a man of that type whose mind and will overwhelm all else. She was a woman whose function was to bring babies into the world, to make life tolerable and comforting in the misery and danger of the Sons of Men. Jesus could perhaps remain unmoved and righteous and she might remain faithful to Chuza partly to honor him – but she was deeply shaken. Before her maids came in she would have taken on a perfect exterior control but her heart would not clam for years she feared. In the meanwhile the words of the Song of Songs poured across her memory not for Chuza she knew but for Jesus.

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

Jesus made her feel beautiful and singular at a distance. There was no presence like his to move her. No voice like his to make her feel like a woman.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Jesus had complimented her more subtly than the Song of Songs did but like Solomon he singled her out and made her feel special for always with a few words. She would remember those words forever.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.

She also had complimented Jesus. She had told the truth about things he could do that others could not. She had the chance to say the truth in however limited a way that there was none like him.

Beyond that the passage did not apply to their love and probably never would apply to it. Duty and Covenant and Law would shape their future and their love would never grow beyond this point. She gave herself to ache she felt for Jesus and at the same time to the wifely duties she would perform to the best of her ability with Chuza. She played with the words and with memories of both men and the lost dreams of a life with Jesus as his wife.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. O My beloved spake, and said unto me:

They had not even touched, there was no brushing of hands or shoulders as in Nazareth a few long years ago. The acts of marriage had never happened for them. Then she remembered how few words they had really said and how great was the capacity of the man for speech. She wondered how Jesus might have given the following speech of the Poem's Bridegroom to her if it had been possible for them:

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

After crying one more time Joanna washed her face and saw in the silver mirror that no trace of the tears and contortions of weeping were on her face. She had herself anointed for Chuza and that night she would make love with him as never before. She would have all the skill and talent he could never really appreciate not understand. In large part she would do this to honor the respect for marriage that the man she truly loved possessed in such a high degree. Husbands died, hard and tough-minded godly young prophets became lonely middle-aged men. Who could know what the future might hold. But for Jesus sake she would avoid any chance of what he would consider shameful. She would control the desires which did not make up the total of the love she and Jesus shared, did not make up the total of

who she was as a woman. In that spirit when recited the rest of the passage in a whisper as her maids finished massaging her, ending just before they anointed her.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

That night Chuza came home and she seduced, charmed and overwhelmed him. Clean, natural marital sexual healing that could not be equaled in any brothel or orgy in the world. He lay almost in a state of exhausted hallucinations cupping her still burning breast in his hand and his lips pressed against her neck as the smell of her made him weaker than he had ever known a man could feel for such reasons. It would not be long before she knew that this exceptional night she had conceived her third child by Chuza. It was not long at all before she discovered that Jesus had finished his work and left before the next midday meal.

They did go up to Passover as a Palace household and she saw Jesus there at the temple. Her servants came to tell her just as she was packing up to leave that he had gone to Golgotha just after Passover dressed as bridegroom and had given alms to the families of the ten men crucified there.

She saw him later that year in Nazareth. He had just turned twenty-five and was as busy as ever. They were cordial and distant and their words said nothing nor did either seek to close the space between them. But she felt the presence of the kind of attraction that the Pagans made into gods like Eros, Cupid, Aphrodite, Venus and even Pan. Before her in this man growing older than normal without sexual contact and love was the force that made such myths, legends and idols. She was sure of that.