

## THE JOURNEY

BY

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A Young man walked a long road, his mind clear as to the journey ahead. It was a journey that would take him many years, but he was not daunted, because he knew the way.

When he first set out, his mind was at peace, for he saw a loving mother with babe in arms, and children playing by the roadside. His heart filled with joy, because he knew that the perfect image of God was reflected in the hearts of new-borns and children happily at play. He was so moved by their laughter that he stayed a while, telling them stories, and teaching them fun games.

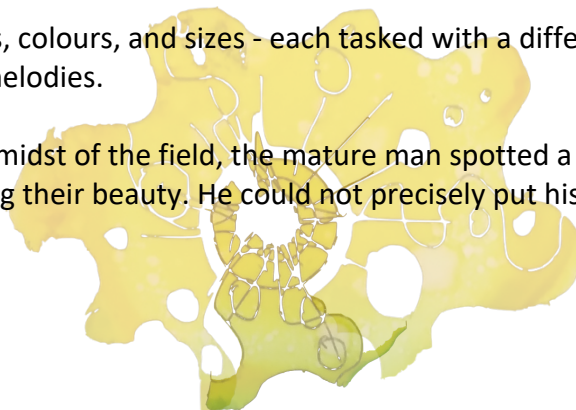
In the blink of an eye a few years went by before the young man resumed his journey. Quite a ways further up the road, he encountered a crowd of rowdy teens, one was relentlessly pulling a cat's tail, another plucked the petals off of flowers - whiling away the hours with loves me, loves me not games. So much time had passed, and their characters had so changed, that the now mature man did not recognise the teens as those children whom he had admired at an earlier age. Under his breath he chastised them, considering them beyond help, and not even worth the effort to try to change.

Despondent and slightly discouraged, the mature man rested under the shade of a tree, reflecting on the failings of humanity, the ignorance of youth, and the wastefulness of living life in a daze. When he had rested, and cleared his head of his negative musings, he dusted off his hat, shook the wrinkles out of his pants, adjusted the strap of his bag, and once again set out on his way. Twenty years had already passed since he set off on his path. His bag which was light in the early days, had started to become heavier at some point along the way. Was it that he had become older and tired? Or was it that he'd collected too many burdensome memories – that he held onto – just in case?

Whatever the reason, he continued on his way, spirits buoyed by the realisation that he was actually more than halfway through his journey. He picked up his steps with renewed vigour, ahead of him lay an endless field of flowers;

flowers of all shapes, colours, and sizes - each tasked with a different duty, sang their joyful and distinct melodies.

Quite unexpectedly, in the midst of the field, the mature man spotted a mature woman, sitting amidst the flowers, admiring their beauty. He could not precisely put his finger on it, but



something about the woman tantalised him. They talked about the flowers, and he could see that like him, she also carried a bag with belongings. He noted that hers did not seem as heavy as his, but still, out of politeness, he offered to help her carry it.

He knew the way, and so could lead her to their destination, since to him, it seemed they were going to the same place.

The woman smiled and acquiesced out of equal politeness, for in truth, she had not in all of her days encountered anyone who seemed to know exactly where she was going. The man walked ahead, eager to get going. The woman followed a few paces behind, and sometimes walked alongside. Occasionally, she pointed out a unique flower that caught her attention. She was intrigued by it all – colour – shape – size of petals – fragrances that attracted creatures and insects of varying objectives. Strangely, the more she wanted to take her time to contemplate, the more her companion critiqued her for dawdling, and increased his pace.

Had he not seen?  
Did he not care?

Was the destination going to disappear, if they got there a little late?

There were Roses, and Daisies, and Lilies by the lake. There were Tulips and Daffodils, amongst the Nightshades. Hydrangeas, Begonias, and Birds of Paradise all blushed and bloomed together, eager to be discovered. Each one had a story to tell, and it was imperative that she hear. For at the end of her journey, the woman had a message to convey.

She played a delicate balancing game: - pause, listen, express gratitude, run to catch up with her companion. Should she take back her bag and let them go their separate ways? While she pondered the next course of action, the hair at her companion's temples had started to turn grey.

"There is not much time," he said. "Let's continue on our way. What are they but flowers. Their purpose is nothing compared to ours. How does someone your age have time for children's play?"

Wasn't that the point? The old woman wondered.  
What else was there to life, but to play it like a game? If I can laugh as children, play as children, love as children – have I not won the game?

The tired old man put their bags down and sat under a large tree which marked the end of their journey. The sun receded behind clouds, and refreshing showers took its place. They quenched their thirst, and smiled to see themselves received by ALL those who had journeyed before them.

When asked what she'd seen along the way, the old woman had many lovely stories to share. The old man held his head. "I was intent on getting us here."

"But," said the old woman, "it is strange that you never once asked me if I knew the way."

ALL the voices of ALL the others who had journeyed and arrived before them rose up with a chorus of a single refrain:

"But all the roads lead to this place!"

'So your only task is to stop and smell the flowers along the way.'

