

How the Place of the Fallen Star Was Forgotten, by Anonymous

Grandfather spoke softly: “They say that the gods used to dwell here, but that they left us long ago. Granddaughter, I tell you this is not the case. You know about the city in the desert where people journey for days to visit, to see the stone they carried, to walk in the footsteps of their prophets, to petition for healing, for wealth, for wisdom, and you know the mountain the people arduously climb for days – a journey so perilous many of them never return home – just so they can come to the veranda of the gods, and see the world through their eyes. We think these are the two places left us, the two places where we might be touched with a celestial wisdom. Certainly, it is worth the trip to those places, but there are others. Indeed, there are others.”

“But where?” asked Granddaughter. “Where are these other places?”

“One of them is here,” said Grandfather.

“Here? I don’t see it. All I see is this city, full of people and cold buildings!”

“Of course you don’t see it my sweetheart. You can’t. You know how you can never see a sunset from up close, or a rainbow from below, or the other side of the moon?”

“Yes...”

“It is like this with all things from heaven. Long before there was a city here, long before there were all these people here, long before you and I were here there was a great plain that stretched from the river all the way beyond the horizon. It was beautiful and quiet, and one night a great light sparked up in the middle of the sky and disappeared, and then a great rumble was heard and then the ground shook like an earthquake. It was a star. A star had come to the end of its life and burned out and landed right here. Then another landed, and another until they were scattered all around – burned out embers of extinguished stars. And you know what happens when you drop an ember from a fire into a piece of cloth?”

“It makes a hole?”

“Indeed. It made a hole in the sky, a hole through which prayers could go up to heaven and heaven could press its ear to the earth and hear what people were saying. The people of that time heard the noise, and they visited and saw the stars and saw that they could send their prayers up to heaven and were joyful. They were so joyful they came often, and word spread across the land. Soon, visitors were coming from all over to see the place of the fallen stars and to send their prayers up to heaven. Some stayed, and built homes by the river. Then more came and stayed and a village grew up. Those who stayed finished their prayers and, like all people, began to go about their lives. They had families and sold wares and made a little world. Soon they stopped thinking about the fallen stars and began to find all the visitors a nuisance.

Because their prayers had been heard, they prospered, and the village grew into a city, and the buildings grew taller until they blocked the view from the place of the fallen stars to the vast field. A strange thing happened then – visitors became fewer and fewer, and many of those who came stayed to live a prosperous life in the new city. People spoke of the new city not as a place for prayer but as a place in which to prosper, and instead of walking the long road to the city they came on fast boats down the river and on horses alongside it. And you know what this means? It means they could not see the place of the fallen stars any longer, for you can only see it if you make the long journey as it is meant to be made. Soon, the place of the fallen stars was almost forgotten.”

“Almost? Can you see it, grandfather?”

“I can. It is right here.”

“How come you can see it, grandfather?”

“Because, my child, I am at the end of a very long journey, myself. Someday you too will make the journey and you will understand.”



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