

If only.

At the end of her life, she thinks back many years ago and remembers the day. It all seems so vivid in her memory and so much clearer now that all these years have passed. The wedding ceremony was amazing.

She remembers how he looked as he waited there for her. His eyes glistened as they had each and every time he looked at her before. How could he love her in this way? He knew about her past. He knew she had been with many lovers before him. He knew the hurt and pain that had come to her—the scars she bore. Each of the others promised to care for her and each had used her.

And yet—this man had pursued her. He said he had chosen her to be the one he would love. He told her she was his treasured possession and that all he wanted was to care for her and to rescue her from the hurts of the false lovers she had known. It seemed too good to be true.

They had agreed to write their own vows. He went first. His vow to her was unbelievable—a love song that put words to the deepest longings of her heart. That was the only way she could describe it. It was a promise to love her for better or worse, but it included so much detail. He said that he had set his affection on her and that nothing would ever cause him to turn away from his promise. He spoke of the things that would characterize their home. It would be a place of safety and purity. They would settle for nothing less. He expressed the beauty of that purity in ways that made her realize just how far from purity she had fallen before and how she longed for that type of purity in her life.

She believed him when he said that he would love her to the place where she could once again find that purity for herself. He told her that while his vow meant he would never reject her; there would be consequences that would come into their relationship if purity was not maintained. He told her he would be unable to rescue her unless she chose to be rescued, because good love never forces itself upon the object of its affection.

When his beautiful vow was complete, all she could offer in return was, “I will love you and will live in purity with you.”

Then, the marriage began. He was so amazing; so kind and loving and good, and what freedom it was to live in purity with him. Soon after they wed, he needed to go away on business. She was ready to set up a home worthy of his love for her. But just two days after he left, she ran into one of her previous lovers. Tears flow from her eyes as she remembers that night and how she gave herself yet again to this lover. She still feels the pain as she remembers being with him each night while her husband was away.

The night her husband returned, she saw him and was immediately filled with sorrow and shame. He looked at her and knew. He wept bitter tears. But they were not tears for him—they were tears for her. He held her and reminded her of his vows. He

reminded her of the purity that was possible and the freedom from the pain she could possess. He forgave her, simple as that. She had never felt this depth of forgiveness and love before.

She sobs as she remembers that moment. It had somehow been forgotten during the years of torment. If only she could have lived as he had wanted. If only she could have chosen purity. Instead, she had chosen filth. She rejected his forgiveness and love, spent her whole life running back to former lovers and taking on new ones. She had lived life for the moment, thinking she was choosing adventure, but now as the days of her life ebbed, she realized she had chosen that which would leave her alone. She had been running away. She was running away from his love and forgiveness. Eventually, she moved away from him completely. She was no longer able to endure his presence. Shame would not allow it. Callousness kept her from seeing his love. Her rejection of him caused those around her to mock him. In fact, she mocked him herself. She mocked his grace-filled love for her. He sent several of those who knew him well to tell her how much he longed for her to come home but she refused to listen. There were times when she longed to return, but the old life was too compelling.

As she lay in the hospital bed, she couldn't help but wonder what her life would have been like if only... if only she had believed what he had promised. If only she had fulfilled her vow. If only she had trusted the depth of his love.

She heard a noise in the room and turned to look. There he was. This time she was unable to run.

After all these years and all the pain she had caused him, his eyes still glistened when he looked at her. He looked at her with such love. She looked away, tears flowing down her weathered cheeks. How could he still love her? She was an adulteress of the worst kind. Just as the shame threatened to surmount her heart again, he took her in his arms and held her quietly. Moments that seemed like hours passed, and she whispered through the tears, “I'm so sorry.”

“You are my treasured possession,” he said. “I have never stopped pursuing you. I meant every word of the vow I spoke to you.”

“But I have broken my vow,” she murmured. “More times than you can know.”

“I do know,” was his reply. He had never stopped reaching out to her—and he never would.

He restated his vow in its entirety and renewed it with her. In repentance, she renewed hers with him.

As she rested in his arms and closed her eyes for the last time, she realized she had never truly understood what could have been hers. She could have spent her whole life in the presence of this type of love. She rested in his forgiveness one last time.

If only.

KINGS AND PROPHETS

