

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Nathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss

Issue 52

December 2013

The end of one year and the beginning of a new one. Things to celebrate and new plans to make for the coming year. Next month I'll have some exciting news to share about Unremembered Loss. I just took a big step towards getting it published and I can wait to share the continuing journey with you.

Be sure to get next month's newsletter by getting on the mail list at douglasclarke.com/lists

The Camel Driver's Story

or the story that didn't want to be written.

I sat in front of my computer - just sitting. No story flowing out. No words on the page. It had been that way for several weeks and my deadline was fast approaching. It was noon on December 23rd and the story was my yearly Christmas story. I had started back in October, had thought of an idea, had even made an outline, but every time I sat down to start writing the actual story - nothing.

So many other things vying for my attention - work, family, lists of things to do, bills to pay, deals to make. Every time I found a chance to write I just felt too tired, like a fog was between me and the story. On the 22nd I finally got something written - 440 words. A wise man hired the story's protagonist for a journey west. They had traveled the first day and it was now night. The wise men were studying the sky and the camel driver noticed they had been standing out in the cold for several hours and wanted to take them something hot to drink.

That's where the writing derailed. At first I wrote coffee - the Arabs drink lots of coffee, right? A quick check on the internet to verify the facts - nope, looks like coffee wasn't discovered until around 1300 AD. Okay then, tea. Nope, came from china in the 200 or 300 AD as medicine. More searching, more dead ends. Looks like its beer or pomegranate juice, or maybe watered down wine. Great, nothing to take to the wise men so they can start up a conversation.

Then again, its already 440 words and nothing has happened in the story at all. I had it all planed out. Travel west from Ur, end up in Jerusalem. God is leading them, but wait. If they are headed west from Ur where else could they go. There's not much else in-between Ur and Jerusalem. I guess that they didn't know if they were going even farther west than Jerusalem.

But where's the conflict? What's the point? The camel driver takes a chance and lets the wise men hire him to go west. He watches the wise men study the sky, he's a little confused. They reach Jerusalem. While the wise men are talking to king Herod the camel driver talks to people in the market - where he's trying to sell the stuff he brought from Ur. He hears people talking about this boy who was born last year. How the prophets say he's the king, but how his parents gave a beggar's sacrifice when he was presented at the Temple.

Then they go and find Jesus, now a child. The wise men give him gifts and the camel driver decides to give him a gift, too. A tunic made from camel hair. But why? Because the wise men are wise and the camel driver gets caught up in it? Because there is something about this one-year-old that touches him? What's the point?

Then the wise men have a dream; they don't go back to Jerusalem. Great, the only way to go east is back through Jerusalem. So the camel train has to go cross-country

to Jericho. Fine, they're paying the camel driver to go where they say. Once in Jericho they hear that Herod is having all the boys under two years of age killed. Do they feel guilt? If they hadn't stopped by Herod's and told him when Jesus had been born, maybe the boys wouldn't have been killed. But wait, is this a story about how the wise men and the camel driver wish they hadn't visited Jesus.

It's suppose to be a story of my savior's birth. How he was born to a lowly family, a man and his wife-to-be. A family too embarrassed or poor or something to go back home and are hanging out in Bethlehem. Then they had to escape to Egypt when Herod went crazy. How a boy born in humble surroundings could be the son of God. How even as a child he should have been worshiped, but how even when he grew up and showed the glory of God people didn't worship him.

Or is it really a story of a writer who was so focused on trying to write the next story in a series that he forgot to let the story that needed to be written just write itself? Is it a story of how I was so caught up in day-to-day life that I didn't stop long enough to listen.

Well, while I'm still struggling with how this story should really go, I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and that you do a better job at stopping and listening and really hearing the story that is the reason we celebrate Christmas and why we have hope.