

Familiar Land, the Untold Story

The little girl sat quietly, her feet tucked under the nightgown she pulled tightly around her. It was dark, only the faintest light inside her little house, and the air was cool and damp. Her tummy rumbled a bit, hungry for a snack. Sleep eluded her that night, as it had many other nights before. And so she retreated into the one place where she always felt safe: her imagination.

Life had not always been so barren for this little girl. Familiar Land was a beautiful land, a land filled with mountains and valleys, cities and farmland, animals and people, work and play. There were people of all shapes and sizes, all colors and languages. Depending upon which group you were born into, the other groups of people could appear quite comical, or perplexing, or even troubling. And while they all had their own ways of relating to one another, they all had one very important thing in common: to survive, *they all needed Love.*

Unlike our world, Dear Reader, Love wasn't just something one felt; it was a living substance, something with which they could nourish one another. You see, Love was created by a recipe that had been passed down through the centuries, a recipe with basic requirements that could not be altered; anything less than those primary ingredients would result in a defective batch of Love, a batch that would be unable to work its life-giving miracle inside the one who consumed it. It could, however, have some other sweet ingredients added in that could improve the loveliness of its appearance, its taste, and its texture.

Love was the most sought-after, most prized, and most essential element in that world. No one could live without at least a meager portion of it being given to them, yet no one could actually create it for themselves. They could create a batch of it for others; but their own creation would never be able to nourish their own body. They were completely dependent upon others to feed them this life-giving and life-altering substance.

Dear Reader, there were other differences in Familiar Land that might seem confusing, but I hope that you will allow the story itself to explain. Familiar Land was laid out in various villages, towns, cities, and communities, similar to what we know. Within each community there were families. Some families were made of blood relatives, aunts and uncles, cousins and grandparents, children and

parents. These could be small or large, depending upon each family's preference. Some families, however, were made up of groups of people, often small families, who desired to live very close to one another, sharing their life space and creating a community of harmony for themselves. In fact, each community created its own sense of harmony, but not all were as happy as others. But I get ahead of myself, Dear Reader; we will learn more about that as we journey together.

Within these smaller communities, there were clusters of houses, like a small neighborhood block. The houses might be closely built to one another or each might have more space around it. The people of Familiar Land *lived*, much as we do, *out in the spaces between the houses, together*— relating to one another, going to school, going to work, marketing, and the like. Unlike our world, Dear Reader, each and every citizen in Familiar Land had their own small house, and *slept in it* at night. This means that a father slept in one house, the mother slept in another, and each child had their own small house to sleep in. Only when a child was very young was it allowed to sleep in the same house with its mother. Once it grew a little bit, that child would sleep in their own house at night. In the daytime, however, the people of Familiar Land *lived together*.

Let us return once again to this matter of the Love they all needed. As we have discussed, Love was a substance that could be consumed, like a batch of sweet bread. Do you enjoy pumpkin bread with walnuts and chocolate chips, with a confectioner's glaze drizzled on its top and sides? Perhaps you prefer a loaf of banana bread, still warm and steaming from the oven, or a loaf of apple bread, fragrant from cinnamon and buttery in its tenderness? Perhaps you prefer a loaf of carrot bread, with pineapple and walnuts in its mix? Or lemony blueberry bread, or moist strawberry bread? Love was created by a recipe set down before the foundation of their world, a recipe that was as unalterable as the vast galaxies and stretches of outer space. Any substitution of its basic ingredients, even one of them, would render the creation powerless to strengthen and nourish those who would partake of it. Those feasting on the Love might not realize its failure, for it might still be very sweet to the taste. But their bodies and lives would soon show the neglect, for without those basic ingredients, life would not

continue to grow in a healthy manner for those who were unfortunate enough to consume it.

A steady supply of genuine Love did even more, however, than strengthen a person's body; it could also clothe them quite mysteriously. This isn't something we can easily explain, because the mysteries of life are just that- mysteries that we try to unravel and understand and explain away. But true mysteries, and the workings of so many things in life, cannot be neatly deduced and broken down. Instead, we look at their results and do the best we can to describe that to one another. We may postulate guesses as to the parts we cannot see, but in the end, a wise person is willing to acknowledge that there are just some things that we will never fully understand. And that is very, very good, for it keeps us moving forward in hope to a life that is greater and more powerful than we are.

So a steady supply of genuine Love clothed a person in more substantial, more attractive clothing. This happened over time. Small changes might appear in the garments they put on each morning. Some days, an entirely new garment would appear and that lucky person felt very special and very secure as they went out into the world on that day. And at very crucial times in life, usually after a very difficult season of struggle and exhaustion in life, there might appear an entirely new outfit for that person. What a relief to awake one day, the tattered clothes worn through that difficult time finally gone, with a new outfit prepared especially for them and for their new season of life.