Sweet
Fragrance

“My God! Why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus heaved this out as he hung by nails on a wooden cross with blood dripping down his body. And then, he didn’t breathe again.

No, you were my only hope! I itched to run to the cross and shake his body. Instead I sank to my knees.

“Jesus, you can’t leave me. If you’re forsaken by God, I’m more forsaken.”

A soldier threw a spear into Jesus’s side. The son of God did not move. He was dead. They took his body down and carried it to a tomb. Meanwhile, I stayed with Jesus’s followers. Tears pooled in my eyes, and I wondered how he could save me from both my past and future but couldn’t do the same for himself.

Months ago, I had stood in a crowded dining room, clutching my jar of perfume with tears spilling down my face. People in my village only looked at me with disgust. They moved away from me like I had a deathly disease. That jar of perfume was the only good thing left in my life, and I had planned to use it on my own dead body.

In a room full of people, Jesus looked at me and saw me. He saw my past, my present, my future. Every little shame—he knew. And yet, his eyes expressed only love for me.

In that moment, I longed to do something for the only person I could remember who had shown me any care. That's when I noticed his dusty feet.

I walked forward and knelt at Jesus's feet, breaking open the jar of expensive perfume. Tears splashed onto his feet, and I kissed them away while I wiped the dust with my hair. Voices hushed, and I tried to hold in my sobs. But I couldn't. No one had ever looked at me the way Jesus had.

He saw me.

Jesus spoke to Simon, the priest and hypocrite, who hosted the party. "I have something to tell you."

"Two people owed money to a man. One owed him five hundred, and the other fifty. Neither of them could pay him back, so he forgave their debts. Now which will love him more?"

Simon coughed, clearing his throat. "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"Do you see this woman?" Jesus placed his hand on my head, and the gentleness of his touch stilled my sobs. "I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman kissed my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many wrongs have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

I could not breathe. Did his story mean what I thought it did?

Jesus's calloused hand lifted my chin and drew me to my feet. He looked me in the eyes again, and I felt the weight of my sins.

"Your regrets are forgiven."

My face flushed warm as gasps filled the room. Someone whispered, "Who is this who even forgives?"

I longed to hide, but Jesus's gaze held me.

"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

I left my broken jar at Jesus's feet, feeling lighter than I ever had before. I had arrived with shame, guilt, hate, and hopelessness. Everything I had known. Gone. But replaced with hope.

Standing on the street outside of the house, I took a deep breath, sucking in the hope that Jesus offered. And then, I was grabbed in a tight hug, squeezing out my breath, and a woman's voice laughed.

"Isn't Jesus wonderful? He changes lives!"

That's how I came to be sitting among Jesus's followers after his death on the cross. We huddled in a room far away from the busy streets, mourning for the man that offered us new lives. The shame of my old life stung me. But no, I am forgiven.

On the first day of the week, the women prepared the spices and perfumes for Jesus's body. We trudged to the tomb, unhappy with the task of caring for one we did not want to be dead. Although we could not roll the stone door open, the soldiers would. The tomb was already open.

"There's no body." I peered into the tomb.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" My head snapped around to see two men in gleaming white clothes standing by the tombstone. "He is not here. He has risen!"

Jesus is alive! Hope is alive. My wrongs are forgiven.

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