



The
**Bronze
Bow**

Elizabeth George Speare

After witnessing his father's crucifixion by Roman soldiers, Daniel bar Jamin is fired by a single passion: to avenge his father's death by driving the Roman legions from the land of Israel. Consumed by hatred, Daniel joins the brutal raids of an outlaw band living in the hills outside his village. Though his grandmother's death slows his plans by forcing him to move home to care for his sister, he continues his dangerous life by leading a group of boy guerrillas in spying and plotting, impatiently waiting to take revenge.

In nearby Capernaum, a rabbi is teaching a different lesson. Time and again Daniel is drawn to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, only to turn away, disappointed and confused by Jesus's lack of action in opposing the Romans. Devoid of tenderness and forgiveness, headstrong Daniel is also heedless of the loyalty of his friend Joel; the love of Joel's sister, Malthace; and the needs of his own disturbed sister, Leah, dragging them down his destructive path toward disaster.

Elizabeth George Speare won the 1962 Newbery Medal for this magnificent novel of Daniel's tormented journey from a blind, confining hatred to his acceptance and understanding of love. *Booklist* called it "a dramatic, deeply felt narrative whose characters and message will be long remembered."

T H E
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Elizabeth George Speare

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A BOY STOOD on the path of the mountain overlooking the sea. He was a tall boy, with little trace of youth in his lean, hard body. At eighteen Daniel bar Jamin was unmistakably a Galilean, with the bold features of his countrymen, the sun-browned skin, and the brilliant dark eyes that could light with fierce patriotism and blacken with swift anger. A proud race, the Galileans, violent and restless, unreconciled that Palestine was a conquered nation, refusing to acknowledge as their lord the Emperor Tiberius in far-off Rome.

Looking down into the valley, the boy could see the silver-gray terraces of olive trees splashed with burgeoning thickets of oleander. He remembered that in the brown, mud-roofed town every clump of earth, every cranny in a stone wall, would have burst into springtime flower. Remembering, he scowled up against the hot noonday sun.

He was waiting for two figures to reappear among the boulders that tumbled on either side of the path just above him. He was puzzled and uneasy, at odds with himself. Who were these two who had been so foolhardy as to climb the mountain? He was resentful that they had reminded him of the village, fearful that they might look back and discover him, yet unwilling to let them out of his sight. Why was he so bent on following them, when

all he had wanted for five years was to forget that other world in the valley?

He glimpsed the boy again, some distance up, then the girl. Some memory nagged at him. Brother and sister, that was evident. They moved alike, with a sort of free, swinging ease. They had the same high cheekbones and dark ruddy complexions. Their voices were sharp in the clean air. Daniel could see the girl clearly. She had stopped to snatch a cluster of pink flax blossoms and she stood now, poised on a rock, her face lifted, her yellow head covering slipped back off her dark hair.

"Look, Joel!" she cried, her voice coming down to him distinctly. "How blue the lake is! You can see the tetrarch's palace in Tiberias."

Daniel's black brows drew together fiercely. Now he recognized the boy. He was Joel bar Hezron, the red-checked boy who used to come to the synagogue school, the scribe's son, the one the rabbi held up for an example, the one they used to tease because his twin sister always waited outside to walk home with him. She had an odd name—Malthace. Five years ago that was, and Daniel could still feel the hurt of seeing her waiting there outside the school, while his own sister—

"We're almost there!" the boy's voice rang out. The girl sprang down from the rock. The two flicked out of sight, sending a quick hail of pebbles bounding down the path. Daniel moved forward with the caution of an animal stalking its prey.

He reached the top just as the girl, flushed and out of breath, flung herself down on the patch of grass where Joel waited. She snatched the head covering clear off, letting the wind pull at her hair. Daniel could see them pointing out to each other the landmarks below.

From where he crouched he could not see the valley, but he knew the sight of it well enough. How many times had he sat where those two sat now, looking down on the village of Ketzah that had been his home? Not so often these last years, but at first, before he had got used to life in the cave. Sometimes he had climbed up and sat here till dark, straining his eyes to catch the specks of light, picturing Leah and his grandmother at their evening meal, wondering if he would ever see them again. He never had, and he had stopped remembering and wondering—until today.

Now that Joel and his sister were no longer shouting, the wind hid their voices. He stared at them, disappointed and baffled. He had to hear them. More than that, he was fighting back a longing to speak to them. His own people—after five years! He looked down at his bare calloused feet, at the goatskin tunic bound with a thong around his waist. What would they think of him, those two in their clean robes and leather sandals? Suppose he should risk his freedom for nothing? But he could not help himself. Like an animal lured out of hiding, he edged slowly from behind the rock.

Instantly the boy was on his feet, the girl swiftly up beside him. He might have known they would be off at the sight of him. To his astonishment, they stood still. He saw Joel's hands clench; the boy was no coward. Daniel stood on the trail, his heart pounding. If they ran from him now he could not bear it. He fumbled for the remembered greeting.

"Peace be with you," he said.

Joel did not relax his guard. "Peace," he said shortly; then, "What do you want?"

"No harm, Joel bar Hezron," said Daniel.

"How do you know me?"

"I heard your sister call you. I am Daniel bar Jamin."

Joel stared, remembrance suddenly livening his face. "The apprentice who ran away from the blacksmith?"

Daniel scowled.

"No one blamed you," said Joel quickly. "Everyone knows how Amalek treats his boys."

"I care nothing for Amalek," Daniel said. "Can you tell me about my grandmother and my sister?"

Joel frowned and shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't. Do you know them, Thace?"

The girl had been frightened, and her breath was still uneven, but she spoke with a frankness like Joel's.

"There is an old woman who comes to the well in the morning," she said. "She lives in a house behind the Street of the Cheesemakers."

"Yes," Daniel said hungrily.

The girl hesitated. "They say she has a little girl who never goes out of the house."

Still? He had thought perhaps in all this time—"That is my sister Leah," he said. He wished he had not asked. It had been better not knowing.

"No one has ever seen her," the girl went on. "But I know that she's there. I'm sorry. I wish I could tell you more."

Daniel hesitated, embarrassed, but unwilling to give up.

"There was a boy named Simon," he said. "Six or seven years older. He was bound to Amalek too."

"You must mean Simon the Zealot," said Joel.

"You know him?"

"I've heard of him. He has his own shop now. They say he gets more business than Amalek."

"He used to help me," said Daniel.

"He has a reputation for being a good man—and a good patriot."

"Would you give him a message for me? Would you tell him I'm up here? I'd like him to know."

Joel looked surprised. "You mean you live up here?"

"Yes."

"Alone? Is it safe? I mean—they say the mountain is full of robbers."

Daniel said nothing.

"Aren't you lonely?"

"I don't live alone," said Daniel.

"Oh." Joel was baffled. "Don't you ever come back to the village?"

"I'd just get dragged back to Amalek's shop."

"I suppose so. Yes, I'll tell Simon, of course. How long since you ran away?"

"Five years, about. Simon will remember me, though."

The girl spoke, in a straightforward voice that matched the look in her eyes. "Five years! Do you mean your grandmother hasn't known where you were in all this time?"

Daniel looked at the ground, his lips tightening.

"Tomorrow, when she comes to the well, can I tell her I've seen you?"

Daniel looked back at her with resentment. He had long since managed to quiet his conscience, and he did not like having it stirred up again. "If you like," he said. He felt angry at himself now, and disappointed. Why had he given himself away after all these years? What had he expected? There was nothing more to stay for.

"You'd better go back," he said, turning away. "You shouldn't have come up here."

"Why not?" asked Joel, looking not at all alarmed.

"I'm warning you. After this, stay in the village." He walked away from them.

"Wait," called Joel. He looked at his sister with a swift question, and she nodded. "We—we brought our lunch. Will you eat it with us?"

The blood rushed up into Daniel's face. He had not asked for their charity.

"It's not much," Joel said. "But we'd like to talk to you some more."

Was it possible this boy had made the offer in friendship? Slowly, like a wary animal, Daniel took a few steps back and let himself down on the grass. From the pocket of the wide striped girdle that bound her waist, the girl pulled a neatly wrapped bundle. Joel produced a small flask which he handed to his sister, then sat down and solemnly held out his hands. With astonishment Daniel watched the girl pour a little stream of water over her brother's hands. Hand-washing before a meal—he hadn't given a thought to it for five years. He wouldn't have imagined that even a scribe's son would carry water all the way up the mountain just to observe the law. Then the girl turned toward him. He saw the question in her eyes and the slight shrinking, and a stubborn pride stiffened him. He was a Jew, wasn't he? He held out his hands, and watched the drops trickle over his blackened knuckles, embarrassed, thinking how the men in the cave would hoot if they could see him.

The girl unwrapped the bundle and made three small piles, equal piles, he noticed, not skimping herself the way his mother used to do. Then Joel spoke a blessing and they handed Daniel his share, a few olives, a flat little loaf of wheat bread, and a small honey cake whose taste his tongue suddenly remembered from childhood. For the

first time Daniel felt his tight muscles begin to relax. His eyes met Joel's, and the two boys studied each other without hostility.

"Why did you come up here?" Joel asked, wiping the last crumbs of cake off his chin.

In some way the food had made it easier to speak. "I knew there were caves up here," Daniel answered. "All I wanted was a place to hide where Amalek couldn't catch me. But I couldn't find any caves, and I wandered around for three days, and then—a man found me."

He thought of how Rosh had found him lying flat on his face, starving, half frozen, his back still raw from the last flogging. How could he tell this boy what that night had been like? He remembered the terrible moment when he had seen the man bending over him, and how Rosh had reached out a hand, not to strike him but to help him to his feet, and then, when he had flopped over, how Rosh had picked him up and carried him like a baby all the way to the cave.

"A robber?" Joel questioned.

"A good man," said Daniel fiercely. "He took me to live with him."

"What's it like up here? What do you do all the time?"

"Hunt. Wolves and jackals, even panthers. Sometimes we hunt as far north as Merom. I work at my trade too. I made a forge to work on."

Joel looked impressed. Even the girl was listening with dark eyes as lively as her brother's. Daniel looked at the other boy with curiosity. He had been trying to find a distinguishing mark about Joel. "What is your trade?" he asked.

"I'm still at school," said Joel. "I'm going to go on to be a rabbi, probably. But I studied sandal-making too. I

could earn my living at it, but I'm sorry for the man who has to wear my sandals."

Daniel nodded. Of course Joel would be a rabbi. He had always been the smartest boy in the school. But even a rabbi must learn a trade, like any other man.

"Why did you come today?" he asked. "No one comes up here from the village."

The girl laughed. "We'll be skinned alive if anyone finds out we've come," she said.

"We always planned to," Joel explained. "Ever since we were children. We weren't allowed to because it's supposed to be dangerous. Today's a holiday, and we just decided to come without telling anyone. It was our last chance. We're leaving the village and going to live in Capernaum."

His sister frowned at him. "I don't see why you always have to sound so dismal about it," she protested. "I think Capernaum is going to be wonderful."

Joel's face looked suddenly closed. His fingers snapped the tops off the red blossoms, one after another. It was plain to Daniel that this was an old argument between them.

"What more do you want?" she demanded, forgetting Daniel in her insistence. "A big house to live in, shops, and people, and a school with the best teachers in Galilee!"

Joel went on snipping the blossoms savagely. "Father doesn't want to go," he said. "He's only going to please Mother."

"Well," she answered, "Mother left it all to please him once. It hasn't been easy for her, living in Ketzah. Why shouldn't she go back, now that Grandfather's left his house to her? It doesn't really matter to Father where he is, so long as he has his books."

Daniel listened, shut out again from the clean, safe world that they shared. But all at once his attention was diverted. Far down the mountain, on the narrow ribbon of road, he spotted a moving line that threw off reddish flashes of metal in the sunlight. Legionaries. At the sight, black hatred churned up in him. Out of habit he spat violently. The shocked attention of the two jerked back to him, and they followed his savage gaze, leaning to peer at the moving line.

"Romans!" snorted Joel. Daniel liked the way he said the word. He spat again for good measure.

"You hate them too," said Joel, his voice low.

Daniel closed his teeth on a familiar oath. "I curse the air they breathe," he muttered.

"I envy you," said Joel. "Up here you're free."

"No one is free," said Daniel. "So long as the land is cursed by the Romans."

"No. But at least you don't have to look at them. There's a fortress at Capernaum. I'll have to watch them all the time, strutting around the streets."

"Oh, Joel!" the girl protested. "Do they have to bother us?"

"Bother us? Bother—!" The boy's voice broke. "I should think even a girl could see—"

"Of course I see!" She was stung almost to tears by her brother's contempt. "But what use is it to be always making yourself miserable? The Romans won't be here forever. We know that deliverance will come."

"You're talking like Father!"

"But he's right! The Jews have been worse off before. There have always been conquerors—and there was always deliverance, Joel."

Joel was not listening. He had caught Daniel's eye,

and the two boys were studying each other, each asking a silent question.

Malthace sprang to her feet, recognizing well enough that this time it was she who was shut out. "I'm not going to have my holiday spoiled by those soldiers," she said, with the trace of a childish pout. "We've climbed all the way up here and you've scarcely looked at the things we came to see."

Joel turned back to her good-naturedly. "We've seen something we didn't expect," he said. "Daniel."

She tossed her head. "What about the places we used to talk about? The plain where Joshua marched out against the heathen kings?"

Joel shaded his eyes, taking his bearings. Just below them the village clung to the rocky slope, the dark block of the synagogue showing clearly among the clustering flat-roofed houses. Around it circled the gray-green olive orchards and the fresh, clear green fields of grain, banded by purple iris and shining yellow daffodils. To the south lay the lake, intensely blue. To the north, beyond the line of hills, through the shimmering, misty green of the valley, the silver thread of the Jordan wound up to the shining little jewel that was the Lake of Merom. Suddenly bold, Daniel got to his feet.

"There," he pointed out. "On that plain. Horses and chariots drawn up against him, and a great host of men like the sands of the shore. And Joshua fell on them and drove them as far as the Great Sea."

He saw surprise on their faces. They thought he was an ignorant savage. The girl did, anyway. This was something he knew. Five years ago, that first morning, when he was warm and fed and slept out, Rosh had brought him up here, and stood with an arm across his

shoulders, and pointed to the plain in the distance, and told him how a few brave men had dared to go out against a great army, and how they had won a great victory for Israel. Up here, in the clean sunlight, Daniel bar Jamin, orphan, runaway slave, had found something to live for.

"All the mighty ones," he said, remembering Rosh's very words. "Joshua, Gideon, David, all of them fought on the soil of Galilee. No one could stand against them. It will be so again."

"Yes," breathed Joel. "It will be so again. God will send us another David." His eyes glistened, as though he too could see the shadow of a vast army moving on the distant plain.

"You mean the Messiah!" Malthace cried. "Oh Joel, do you remember? We always thought that up here we'd see him."

"I was sure," said Joel. "I knew that if we could only climb up here, that would be the day he would come. I believed it so hard, it seemed to me I could *make* it happen."

"So did I. And we would be the ones to rush down the mountain and tell them. And all the people in the village would drop their work and follow him. Do all children have such wild imaginations?"

Joel was instantly sober. "The Messiah is not imagination. It's the truth. It is promised."

"But straining our eyes at every cloud in the distance, and thinking we would be the first ones—"

"I still want to be!" cried Joel, so passionately that the other two were startled. "Call it childish if you like. That's why I don't want to go to Capernaum."

"But it may be years!"

"No. It must be soon. Not the way we imagined it,

Thacia. I used to think he would come with a great host of angels. Now I know it must be men, real men, trained and armed and ready—" He checked himself.

"There are such men," said Daniel, keeping his eyes on the distant hills. Without looking, he felt the other boy's muscles tighten.

"I know," Joel answered. Excitement leaped from one boy to the other. The question had been answered.

Malthace looked at her brother, puzzled by something she could not understand. "We should start back now," she said. "We must be home for supper."

"I'll walk a way with you," Daniel offered. He was thinking that he would like to see them safely onto the main road.

They started down the steep slope of the mountain. Once they left the summit behind, the breeze died down, the golden sun hung close above them, and not a leaf moved beside the path. They did not talk now. Daniel could see that Joel was still seething with hidden thoughts. He suspected that for the girl this holiday had not turned out as she had hoped. As for himself, he was already beginning to wish that they had never come. He had been satisfied up here, not thinking too much, shutting out the things he didn't want to remember—working for Rosh, and waiting, nursing his hatred, for the hour that would come. He had never had a friend of his own, and he had never thought about wanting one. Why hadn't he let well enough alone?

Malthace was impatient now. Probably her conscience was beginning to trouble her. But Joel lingered, trying deliberately to fall behind. When his sister was distracted by a clump of myrrh blossoms just ahead, he spoke half under his breath.

"There was something else I hoped for when I came up here," he said. "I've heard that Rosh the outlaw lives on the mountain. I hoped I might be lucky enough to see him."

"Why?"

"He's a hero to every boy at school. But no one has ever seen him. Have you?"

Daniel hesitated. "Yes," he said.

Joel stopped in the pathway, forgetting his caution. "What I'd give—! Are the things they say about him true?"

"What do they say?"

"That he fought beside the great leader Judas when they rebelled against the Romans at Sepphoris, and that when the others were crucified, he escaped and hid in the hills. Some men say he's nothing but a bandit who robs even his fellow Jews. But others say he takes the money from the rich and gives it to the poor. Do you know him? What is he really like?"

No caution in the world could hide the fierce pride that rushed over Daniel. "He's the bravest man in the world! Let them say what they like. Some day every man in Israel will know his name!"

"Then it's true!" cried Joel. "He's raising an army to fight against Rome! That's what you meant up there, isn't it? And you—you are one of them. I knew it!"

"Rosh is the man I told you about, the one who found me. I've been with him ever since."

"I envy you! I've dreamed of joining Rosh."

"Then come. No one could find you up here."

Malthace had stopped and turned back, waiting. Joel looked down at her and made a small helpless gesture. "It's not so simple as all that," he said. "My father—"

“Oh Joel, why are you so slow? What are you talking about?” The girl stood in the pathway, her arms full of crimson blossoms, her dark hair, still uncovered, falling about her shoulders, her cheeks flushed with the sun.

If he were Joel would he run away? Daniel wondered suddenly. Suppose his father and mother waited, with the lamps lighted and a good supper laid out? Suppose he had a sister who could run to the top of the mountain with him and be scarcely winded?

Then abruptly he stopped wondering. Just below Malthace he caught sight of another figure. In the middle of the trail, blocking their way, stood one of Rosh's sentries, Ebol, waiting for them to come down.



WAIT HERE," Daniel said to Joel. He strode down the path past Malthace. "Go up and wait with your brother," he ordered, scarcely giving her a glance.

"Where have you been all day?" Ebol greeted him. "Rosh needs you."

"Rosh? Where?"

The man jerked his head toward the rocky hillside. "Seven of us. There's a job to do."

Even to Daniel's practiced eye there was not a sign of life on the barren slope. "Right now?"

"Now. There's a pack train coming from Damascus with a string of slaves. They've almost reached the pass. Easy. No guard to speak of. All we're to take is one slave."

"No money?"

"Not a thing but the slave. A black fellow, big as an ox. Rosh spotted him yesterday when they stopped at Merom. Too good to waste on the galleys, Rosh says. Who are those two up there?"

"A boy I used to know in the village and his sister."

"What are they doing on the mountain?"

"They climbed up here—for a holiday."

The man snorted. "Get rid of them. There's no time to waste."

Daniel climbed back to where the two stood waiting.

"I can't go on with you," he said, ignoring the curiosity in both their faces. "You'll be safe from here on—if you hurry."

Joel didn't move. "Is that one of Rosh's men?" he demanded.

Daniel did not answer.

"I know it is," said Joel. "And there's something going on." His eager look scanned the hillside. "Rosh is somewhere near here. I'm sure of it, and I want to see him. Please, Daniel. I may never have another chance."

With the certainty that Rosh's eyes were on them even at this moment, Daniel dared not delay. "No!" he almost shouted. "Forget Rosh and get down the road as fast as you can."

He was astonished at the anger that flashed in Joel's eyes. "Who are you to order me around?"

"Do what I tell you!" Daniel insisted. "There's going to be trouble. Any minute now!"

Excitement flared into Joel's face. "Romans?"

"No, you fool. Not Romans."

The boy's jaw had a stubborn set. "You don't own this mountain. And neither does Rosh. I'll go where I please!"

Two pairs of eyes stared hotly at each other.

"What about your sister?" Daniel asked, and watched the defiance blank out of the boy's face. Too bad, he thought briefly. He's the kind we need.

There was a sound of running feet. A boy about twelve, thin as a scarecrow, came racing up the road, face crimson, eyes bugging. "C-coming!" he stammered. "They've passed the dead oak tree." He scrambled up the steep bank of rock and vanished like a lizard into one of the jagged crevices.

Distinctly now Daniel heard the first sounds of an approaching caravan, the groaning protest of the camels, the bump of heavy loads against the rocky sides of the pass, an occasional muttered order. "Too late!" he warned. "Get up that bank, both of you, and out of sight."

Joel whirled on his sister in sudden fear. "Thace—you heard him! Get up there—quick—as far as you can!"

The girl lingered maddeningly. "Joel—what—?"

"*Hurry*, Thace! I'll explain later!" Then, with a snort of despair, Joel grasped her hand, jerked her toward the bank and gave her a push. "Up there!" he repeated. "Lie flat and keep your head down. And don't make a sound, no matter what happens."

Daniel watched with approval. Once he had caught on, the boy had acted fast. The girl too. She had gone up those rocks like a mountain goat. Then he saw that Joel had turned and was coming back.

"I'm staying with you," the boy said.

There was no time to argue. Daniel grasped him by the arm and dragged him up the opposite bank. As they crouched behind a boulder Ebol loomed beside them.

"He's all right," Daniel spoke quickly. "I vouch for him."

"One sound from him—" The man made one swift gesture.

"He won't," said Daniel.

"See to it, then. Now mark this. Wait for the signal. The one in the yellow and purple is yours. No sport about it, Rosh says. No killing." He was gone, as though he had melted into the rocky bank.

In the still air Joel's breathing was loud. The boy's eyes, fixed on Daniel's face, were feverish. Daniel felt

his own heart begin to pound. This was Rosh for you, he wanted to say. You could never be sure what would happen next. Days on end with no excitement, and then, all of a sudden, Rosh would see something he needed or wanted, and like a hawk he would pounce. Daniel began to feel the crawling in his stomach, half fear and half pleasure. Only recently had he been allowed a part. He wasn't used to it yet, especially the waiting.

Joel nudged him. "What do we do?" he whispered.

"I do it," Daniel answered. "You stay here."

Joel's eyes sparkled. His young face was taut, his hands clenched so that the knuckles knobbed out. Daniel saw that he had no intention of staying there, and an elation he had never felt before leaped up in him. Suddenly he grinned back at Joel, and in that instant they heard a sound just below them. Close together they edged their foreheads around the rock.

The first of the train came in view, a burly guard armed with a heavy staff, and behind that a second guard with a sword at his side, both walking silently, glancing uneasily at the rocky banks. They knew they were approaching a bad spot on the trade route, lonely, narrow, and treacherous. Above them the boys waited, holding their breaths, as the rest of the caravan wound slowly into sight. It was not much to brag about. Four mangy camels, lurching grudgingly up the steep path, their burdens swaying. A string of underfed mules. One litter with dingy curtains. Four ordinary tradesmen. With disgust Daniel marked the one in the purple and yellow headdress. The man was fat and out of breath, and looked scared to death already. How long would it be before Rosh would give him a full-sized job to do?

Behind the tradesmen plodded the slaves, first the men

and then a drab cluster of women, herded close together, urged on by the flicking whips of two more guards in the rear. No question of which one Rosh wanted. Over the whole party towered one murderous-looking slave, with lash-ridged shoulders and an ugly scar. What would Rosh want with such a brute? Daniel wondered. Still, it ought to be easy. Only eight men to account for. He caught Joel's eye and grinned again, and then both of them jumped to the shrill whistle.

Instantly the hillside erupted. Out of the corner of his eye, even as he moved, Daniel saw Rosh, always one jump ahead, hurl himself at the first guard. Accurate as hawks, other figures dropped to their chosen targets.

It was too easy. The man in the striped headdress was fumbling for his dagger when Daniel caught his arm, twisted it back, and, seizing the weapon from the fat unresisting fingers, poked it against the roll of fat that covered the man's ribs. He stared down into the pudgy face, at the moist eyes blinking with terror, the cheeks gray with sweat, the fat lips trembling, and he felt cheated. There was no sport in a match like this. But he had his orders, and he held the knife steady. Around him there was a brief efficient struggle, a few blows, some wailing shouts, the scream of a camel, all muffled in a spurt of choking dust. Then silence, and the familiar hoarse bark of Rosh giving orders. The skirmish was over. He drew back his dagger, let go of the man's arm, and stood back.

Slowly the caravan pulled itself together and moved on. Grateful to escape with the loss of one slave, the traders knew better than to argue. When they had straggled out of sight, Daniel took quick stock. One of Rosh's men lay on the path, his legs thrashing, another mopped blood from his arm. No one else appeared to be even winded.

Joel stood rubbing his shoulder.

"Is that all there is to it?" he demanded.

Daniel strode across the path and pulled the cloak down from Joel's shoulder, revealing a bruise already darkening and swelling. "Who gave you that?" he demanded.

Joel reddened. "I meant to get the other arm of your man," he said. "But his plagued mule—"

Daniel choked back a roar of laughter.

"At any rate, we got the slave," Joel added, looking ridiculously pleased with himself.

The cause of the fracas stood motionless in the middle of the path, a giant of a man, naked except for a filthy loincloth, his black skin mottled with purplish bruises and patches of mud. Daniel, with an ironsmith's eye, noted that the bands binding wrists and ankles were of double weight. The slave stood like a beast of stone, unaware that they had gone to this trouble to free him, indifferent that he had exchanged one master for another. Once again Daniel doubted Rosh's choice. There was power there, all right. Those huge arms could crack the ribs of a man as easily as a child could snap a twig. But the broad face with the livid scar showed no sign of intelligence, only an animal wariness that would mark the time to strike.

Then Daniel saw Rosh coming toward them. Rosh had a squat, thick body, with a short muscular neck, and a grizzled head which seemed to thrust forward directly from the powerful shoulders. Now, under the bristling eyebrows, his small black eyes glittered at Joel, not with surprise, because Rosh never allowed himself to be surprised, but with a hostility that made Daniel step forward and speak first.

"We've got a new recruit, Rosh," he said.

Heavy legs braced, Rosh measured the newcomer.

"Speak up, boy," he barked. "Who are you?"

Rosh was used to seeing men cringe. Joel did not cringe, and though he was speechless, the pure hero-worship that shone from his eyes must have melted even Rosh's suspicion.

"Joel bar Hezron, sir," he managed finally.

"Your father know you're here?"

"N-no, sir."

"In trouble in the town, are you?"

"Oh, no."

"Then what do you want with me?"

Joel stood his ground. "I wanted to see you," he said, "because they say that someday you will drive the Romans out of Israel. When you do, I want to be with you."

Rosh's teeth flashed from the midst of his matted black beard. As his gnarled hand came down on the injured shoulder Daniel saw the tears start into Joel's eyes, but the boy did not flinch.

"Well said!" Rosh thundered. "Any man who hates the Romans is welcome here."

"I didn't come to stay," Joel explained unhappily. "I'd like to, but I can't, not now. I just came up here for a holiday, and my sister is with me. And in a few days we're moving to Capernaum."

Rosh's approval twisted to anger. "Not after what you've just seen," he said, his voice ugly. "Now you stay here."

Daniel knew that Rosh was bluffing. Rosh had had a price on his head for too long to care now what news reached the village. But Joel could not know that, and Daniel felt a surge of pride at the steadiness in the boy's eyes.

"I'm taking my sister home," Joel answered. "But if

you mean I'd talk, you're wrong. If keeping silent is all I can do for now, then you can count on that."

Rosh studied the boy. "You're certain you want to work for me?"

"I'm certain."

"You think you know how to keep your eyes open and your mouth shut?"

"Yes."

"Then go along to Capernaum. There's time enough. When your turn comes, you'll hear from me."

Rosh turned away, the matter settled. Suddenly, without warning, Daniel was shaken by a flood of jealousy. Not a word, not a look at him. Who had captured the merchant and held him while they took the slave? What had Joel done, besides getting in the way of a mule's hind leg? He wished again that he had never laid eyes on the boy.

"What do you think of him?" Rosh was shouting to his men, waving a hand at the black slave. "Worth a little trouble, eh?"

"By the look of him," one man muttered, "we're all like to wake up dead some morning."

"That's no joke," said another. "He could crack two of our heads together like a pair of walnuts."

Rosh only grinned. He walked up to the slave and clapped a hand on the trunklike forearm. His own powerful body was dwarfed beside that of his prisoner. "Don't look so glum, man," he roared. "Don't you know when you're in luck?"

The slave stared down at him, uncomprehending.

"Do you understand me?" Rosh questioned, impatiently. "Do you have a name?"

Not a flicker livened the stony features. There was

some laughter. "Samson," someone suggested. "Goliath."

"Deaf, maybe," one man guessed.

"Dumb too, I wager. Lots of those black ones are mutes."

Rosh shrugged. "We'll see. We took him for his muscles, not his tongue. He'll prove his worth soon enough."

"If he ever learns which side he's fighting on," someone muttered.

Rosh's good humor vanished. The joke had gone too far. "I'll do the choosing!" he roared. "I don't ask for a vote by a pack of lily-livered jackals. Bring him along."

He stamped scornfully up the trail without a backward look. The men eyed each other, each waiting for someone else to make a move. Then, without knowing what prompted him, Daniel stepped into the path. "I'll take him," he said, reaching for the short length of chain that dangled from the iron wristbands. Five of the men tripped over each other to follow their leader. Even the man who had lain writhing on the trail got hastily to his feet. Two reluctantly stood by, willing to reinforce Daniel from a distance.

Daniel looked back at Joel. With the slave's chain in his hand he felt he had regained his former advantage. There was nothing to say now. The affair was over. Joel's eyes met his in a brief salute, and between the two boys something flashed, a wordless exchange that was both a farewell and a beginning.

Though the slave plodded forward without urging, Daniel was forced to check his own pace when he realized how narrow a stride the iron shackles allowed. At the first turn in the trail he looked back. Joel still stood in the path looking after them. Then he saw Malthace, coming

down the rocky bank in one sure fluid course, her dark hair falling about her shoulders. He remembered with sudden clearness what he had not even been aware of seeing up there on the mountain, the way that hair had sprung, clean and alive and shining, like a bird's wing, back from the smooth forehead. He watched till the girl joined her brother, and then he set his face toward the mountain with his prisoner. He left the trail and struck off toward the right to follow a steep-pitched course among the boulders. Once again, prompted by the sure grace of the girl, the thought of his own sister stirred in him like an old wound.

Daniel already regretted the impulse that had prompted him to lead the slave. He knew well enough why he had done it. It had been nothing but a boast, an urge to make up for the fact that Joel had found favor with Rosh. He had plenty of chance now to curse his own childishness as he inched his way up the rocky course beside the chained ox. The two men who had stayed behind chafed at the slow pace, their crude jests about the prisoner soon changing to oaths at his lumbering progress. Once the sun dropped below the horizon, the dark came on swiftly, making their way even more difficult. It was like a release from a nightmare to smell at last the fragrance of roasting meat, to hear the sound of voices, and to emerge at the familiar clearing. A roaring fire near the mouth of the cave lit up the circle of men sprawled on the hard dirt. The meal was almost over, and Daniel's two companions lost no time in flinging themselves down for their share. No one paid the slightest attention to the slave for whom they had a few hours earlier risked their necks. Daniel stood uncertainly, the chain in his hand.

Rosh waved a greasy mutton bone in his direction.

"See that Samson gets his big belly full," he shouted. "After tonight he works for it like the rest of us." A roar of laughter applauded him, but no one moved to carry out his command. Daniel perceived that in his absence the matter had been settled. Samson they had christened the slave, and Samson he would remain, no matter what his proper name might be. And Daniel had only himself to thank that he had been promoted to Samson's keeper.

He went to the chill depths of the cave where the goat-skin water bags were kept, and after he had taken a long deliberate draught for himself he carried a gourd of water to the slave. The gourd contained only enough for two tremendous gulps, and he went back to fill it twice more. Then he brought a huge slab of mutton. The black man snatched it from his hands, and sank his teeth into it with a ferocity that turned the boy's stomach. He tore off two chunks of barley bread and laid them down within the slave's reach. Then he went to the other side of the fire and sat down apart from the others. He had lost interest in his own supper.

Rosh did not let him rest for long. "What are you waiting for?" the leader prodded him. "Get your file to those chains."

"Tonight?" Daniel was startled.

Around the fire the sprawling figures reared up in protest.

"Leave the shackles on him!"

"He won't know the difference."

"He'll know, right enough, and so will we when we get our heads smashed in!"

"Shut your mouths!" roared Rosh. "What kind of patriots are you? We'll have no slaves on this mountain. He's one of us—get that through your heads. I'll double

the watch so you pigeonhearted can sleep. But the man sleeps free."

With a sigh Daniel got to his feet. This job would have fallen to him anyway, since he was trained to the trade of blacksmith. It was not the first time he had removed manacles. Two of the men who now sat near the fire had made their escape from the Roman mines. He went now to get the chisel and mallet and a heavy file.

The slave crouched in a sort of stupor after his meal. When Daniel signed to him to stretch out his arms, he blinked stupidly. Gradually he seemed to comprehend what was required of him. He shifted his heavy frame and allowed Daniel to stretch the manacled wrists across a flat surface of rock. Then Daniel bent himself to the task that he knew would take half the night.

Rosh stumbled to the pile of skins in the cave. Most of the men stretched out where they lay, pulling their cloaks over their heads and falling at once into slumber. The man who had first watch, planning to wake reinforcements before the slave was freed, settled down to observe Daniel's labor. From time to time he renewed the fire so that Daniel could see to work, but beyond that he had no intention of helping.

Daniel's shoulders began to ache. The steady rasp of the file, which seemed to make little headway on the double thickness of metal, wore his nerves thin instead. After an interminable time a narrow channel sank almost through the first band. The slave did not move. The guard, bored, prowled about the fire, poking in the ashes for scraps from the meal. To keep himself awake, Daniel began to talk, expecting and getting no response.

"I know this is hard on you," he said. "But it's no joke for me either. Rosh was right about the chains, but if he'd

had to do the job himself I wager it could have waited till morning. Still, what Rosh says goes, and you might as well learn that tonight."

The black eyes, in the half-darkness, looked like bits of polished basalt.

"You don't know what's happened, do you?" Daniel asked. "You've got Rosh to thank that you're not on the way to the galleys. You don't know what the galleys are either, I suppose. But you do know the taste of a whip, that's plain. Well, that is over. It's not easy here in the cave, but there are no chains, and no whips. You're safe now."

The slave gave no sign that he either heard or understood, but Daniel went on, thinking out loud, shutting out the grating of the file with the sound of his own voice.

"Rosh is the finest leader you could ask for. He pretends to be careless, but actually he leaves nothing to chance, not the slightest trifle. He has eyes in the back of his head. That's why he's been successful, and his band is growing, while other bands break apart or get captured. And he is afraid of nothing on earth, nothing. He laughs at the Romans.

"There are more coming to join us every day. Someday there'll be enough. Rosh asks of them all just one thing. They must hate the Romans, and be willing to go on fighting till the last cursed one of them is driven from the land and Israel is free. We live only for that. And so will you. Rosh knows he's not taking much of a chance with you. Any man who has worn these things on his wrists will die before he'll have them on again. Do you know what I'm saying, Samson? I can see you don't. But soon I'll show you something you can understand."

The fire had died down to a flicker and the night was far

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