

The Blank Piece of Paper

(Adapted by Pat Osgood from an account in "The Blessed Beauty"

Illustrated by Malcolm Lee)



On a day when the bitter east wind blew with a force that was like a living thing, a pilgrim set out on his journey to meet the object of his deepest love and devotion, Bahá'u'lláh. With a sigh he turned his face away from his home town of Yazd, familiar and loved, to begin his long trek.

As he moved across the desert, he walked with slow steps in the amber heat of the day, and at night he could not even have the comfort of a fire for fear the wandering nomads would attack him. So, at the end of a long day he would find a safe place to rest and

drift off to sleep thinking of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh. His old cloak was his only cover and many nights he fervently hoped sleep would come quickly.

As usual, the daffodil light of the new day would stain the land, awakening him to begin again the long walk to Glory. He was a simple man, a poor man from Yazd. He was somewhat abashed at the thought that he was not only leaving his home, but travelling all those miles through lands he had never seen before and over mountains that seemed to pierce heaven. The thought of it would make him hesitate for a moment. Sometimes his courage failed and he would be tempted to turn back to the life he knew. It was at these times that a Voice, sounding like a breeze blowing through a spider's web, seemed to speak to his heart: a Voice filled with love and hope. So on he trudged, making himself be brave in these new lands, and hoping the people he met along the way would not be cruel.





Finally, on a day when the sun beat upon him with a heavy gold weight and the desert winds whispered hot and wild, in the distance his tired eyes saw a vision. Seeming to float above the desert was a snow white city. Could this be the snow white city of Akká, and beyond that white lovely vision, the shimmering blue green of the sea? He stood there for a long, long time. Now that his goal was so close at hand, did he have the courage to face Bahá'u'lláh, his Beloved?

Bahá'u'lláh was sitting on a white divan among the believers. They had been talking among themselves while drinking fragrant black tea. How fine it is, they thought, to be here with Bahá'u'lláh, to look upon that Face and hear the beautiful Voice that pulled at the heart and made the senses reel.

Suddenly a black shadow filled the doorway, and they heard a loud, hard voice: "Which one of you is Bahá'u'lláh?"

They turned as one body to see who had dared to ask such a question! At the door, dirty, hot and travel-stained, stood the pilgrim. Then they turned again, as one body, to see what Bahá'u'lláh would do.

With a quick step Bahá'u'lláh crossed the room, opened His arms and embraced the old pilgrim. Each soul in that room could feel the stream of love that flowed between the two, and in the old man's eyes were silver tears of love and wonder.

During his pilgrimage days, the pilgrim stood where he could watch Bahá'u'lláh. His eyes drank in the majesty and the might. He felt the power and the Life Force, wondered yet again if he were dreaming and would wake in his small house alone.



Eventually the time came for him to leave. Ahead of him stretched the desert, the mountains, the rivers, towns

Time passed, day followed day, brilliant sunsets came and went. On a quiet afternoon when you could hear the sea sigh, Bahá'u'lláh's secretary brought mail which had just arrived. Bahá'u'lláh was quiet for a moment and then asked him to first open the envelope from the Yazdi friend. The secretary looked for it among the many envelopes, found and opened it, and said, "But Master, it contains just a blank piece of paper!" The smile that appeared on the face of the Manifestation of God was timeless, and almost in a whisper He replied that the language of the heart has no need of writing.

The secretary, looking at the blank sheet of paper, blinked. Were there faint gold letters on that snow white paper? Was there the fragrance of faithfulness wafting on the air? There seemed to be movement in the room and out of the corner of his eye, did he see the pilgrim and the Prophet once again embracing?

Outside, the air was in motion and the curtains moved gently, gently. Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the mere whisper of words, sounds only the inner ear could hear, began. The secretary turned. Bahá'u'lláh stood in the centre of the room, His lips moving almost soundlessly. Revelation had begun, a Tablet was being revealed which was showering blessings upon that Yazdi man.

Miles away in his small house in Yazd, the Pilgrim, eyes filled with wonder, smiled and touched his hand to his heart. His letter had been received and answered.

