

Later that night, Daniel was completely worn out from the long day of work in the field, he could not fall asleep. He lay in the semi-darkness on top of his pallet made of straw and rags on the dirt floor in the slave quarters; which housed all of the slaves. He inhaled the stale air in the room that smelled of body sweat, soured straw, and the last cooked meal. He was watching the patterns cast by the moonlight as it found its way into the slave quarters through the spaces between the roughhewn boards that formed the sides and roof of the quarters. He was waiting for Sabra to come back from his errand to the master's house. Daniel heard the door creak; saw it open, and watched as Sabra slowly entered. He thought that Sabra moved slower tonight than he had ever seen him move. Sabra carefully picked his path, over the sleeping slaves, to the far side of the room to his pallet and lay down. Daniel got up quietly and made his way over, careful not to awaken the others. He whispered to Sabra, "Are you alright?"

Sabra answered, "Daniel, my young friend, I am fine, just very tired. Why are you still awake? It is very late". "I could not sleep" Daniel told Sabra. "I was worried about you". Daniel leaned closer to Sabra and noticed a big bloody cut on Sabra's face. "Sabra, what happened to your face?" Daniel asked. Did Mr. Joe do that to you?" Sabra smiled and told Daniel, "That Mister Joe, he needs a whole lot of leave alone." He smiled a second time and told Daniel that the cut was not anything that he should worry himself about. "Try to get some sleep. We will have to begin work again in just a few hours," the old man told Daniel. "But, I can't sleep, Sabra. I am tired of this life. I lie awake and I think of what a dreadful life we are forced to live, no good to ever look towards." "Daniel, as I have told you many times, you are free in your mind and in your dreams. You must draw strength from the knowledge of that freedom. You must let it motivate you to

survive, and consider possibilities that are beyond what you see every day, rather than to make you tired. If you tire and give up, you'll be just like that ox, and the horrors and the bondage that we are forced to live in will win and we must never let them win. We have to win for ourselves and for all enslaved people." Sabra sat up and reached under his pallet. He pulled out the pouch that he had brought with him from Africa and told Daniel, "Bring me a cup of warm water. I want to give you something that will help you." Daniel walked across the room to the fireplace where an old kettle was sitting on the hearth. The fire that was used to cook the evening meal of yams and a few mustard greens had gone out many hours ago, but the hearth was still warm and so was the water in the old kettle sitting on a shelf. Daniel poured some warm water into the cup and took it to Sabra.

Sabra opened his pouch and poured an odd-looking brown seed in the palm of his hand. He dropped the seed into the water and gently shook the cup, being careful not to spill the water. He looked at Daniel, softly smiled and passed the cup to him and said to Daniel "Here drink this". "What is it?" Daniel asked. "The seed that I put in the cup is a dream maker. I brought it with me from my home in Africa. Drink from the cup, my friend," he told Daniel. "This will help you to sleep and to feel better."

Daniel swallowed the warm slightly bitter drink and looked back at Sabra. "Go lie down now Daniel and rest." Sabra whispered lying back on his own pallet. He closed his eyes, and exhaled a long deep breath. Daniel whispered, "You get some rest too, Sabra." Daniel quietly made his way back across the dark room. Daniel was still thinking about the things that had happened that day. *I am glad that Mister Joe will not be back. I wonder what the next overseer will be like. I bet Mister Joe put that cut on Sabra's face.*

Daniel closed his eyes and everything turned black and then misty white. He opened his eyes with a start.

The white mist had disappeared. It had been replaced with bright sunlight that was streaming down from the sky through the tops of a dense group of large trees. Daniel had a feeling that he was somewhere he had never been before. He sat up slowly, stood and looked around. The first thing that he noticed was a bright, yellow bird with a dark blue spot on top of its head and beautiful, long, deep green colored feathers in its tail. The bird was sitting on the lowest limb of the tree closest to Daniel. Vines with bright, orange flowers growing from their leaves covered the thick trunk of the tree. The bird stared curiously at Daniel. After it had watched Daniel for a few minutes more, it left the limb and landed on the tree stump right beside Daniel. "Hello Daniel," the bird chirped in a rich melodic voice. Daniel took a few steps back. A bird that could talk and that knew his name was frightening for him. "Have no fear Daniel, I am Balozi. I know that my ability to speak and the sound of my name must be very surprising. In your language my name means ambassador and it is my job here to keep you safe and to act as your escort. I assure you that no harm will come to you while you are in my care. We have waited a long time for you."

Daniel felt a little more at ease and asked Balozi, "Where am I?" "I cannot tell you that Daniel," Balozi said. "You must come with me now. The others are waiting," the bird told him. Daniel asked, "Where are we going?" "Not to worry my friend, we will be there soon," Balozi said. He flew ahead of Daniel, leading the way through the dense trees, down a rocky hill, across a creek, and down into a deep valley. "We have arrived," Balozi told him. Daniel followed Balozi into a very large, area that housed small

buildings. There was a huge pot on a fire in the center of the clearing. There was a pit with a fire in it with some delicious-smelling meat roasting over it. A few women and men were near the fire tending the meat and stirring the pot. Balози flew over to a tall woman and said to her, "Greetings Iya, our visitor is here". Iya, who was wearing a dress that was made of beautiful multi-colored cloth, looked up from the fire and said to Balози "Hello Balози." While looking in Daniel's direction, she continued to speak to Balози, "Please show our guest to the Hall of Visitors". "Yes, Iya," Balози replied to the bird. Balози returned to Daniel and said, "Daniel my friend, come with me." He flew toward the row of buildings at the farthest end of the clearing. Daniel followed the bird and walked up the steps of the building into a large room. This room was like nothing that Daniel had ever seen. It had a floor that was made of a deep rich dark brown-colored wood that was so shiny that Daniel could see his reflection in it. The floor was covered with beautiful purple and white rugs woven with intricate patterns of strange animals with huge staring eyes sitting in trees. The walls were painted bright colors and filled with all kinds of drawings of people and scenes that were foreign to Daniel.