

The Woman Taken in Adultery

My encounter with Jesus was completely unexpected. I had a lover. I know it was not right. It began with a question about the law. You see, my husband beat me and I wanted to know if a woman could divorce her husband. I sent a message by way of a messenger, the brother of my husband. He had hated his brother since childhood, felt sorry for me and wanted to help me.

The lawyer told my brother-in-law that it was a difficult question and would take some study. He would have to gather information from me and would have to do that secretly. At first it was such a relief to be treated with kindness by a man. But after the third meeting, I sensed something else happening.

He began telling me of his struggles with a sharp and critical wife who berated him for their lack of children. I knew it was wrong for him to be telling me such things. Then he said that I was the kind of wife he should have married. I felt valued for the first time in years and realized that he was the kind of man I desired. I don't know when the line was crossed but it was.

Our meetings were discrete but there was no way to justify them. Even my brother-in-law began to question and then criticize me. Eventually my husband found out. He stormed over to the religious officials who were very interested in the case. It seems that they had been scheming to trap the unorthodox rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. This could possibly be used to demonstrate that he was a breaker of the Law of Moses, or else, cause him to lose popularity with the people.

They agreed to surprise us at our place of meeting and when they appeared, my lover suddenly turned against me, claiming that I was immorally enticing him. We were immediately taken to the place where Jesus was teaching the people. My husband and my lover were in the crowd of accusers. I was stunned, ashamed and angry, at myself as well as the man who abused me and the hypocrite who had claimed to love me. I got the distinct feeling from looking at their humiliated expressions that both of them would change their behavior.

They shoved me in front of Jesus, then all stepped back and said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" Jesus acted almost as if he had not heard and, crouching down, casually wrote something on the ground. The accusers kept on, each time louder and shriller. As this was happening, I noticed that the teacher was now looking up at me.

I know the way a man looks with lust and the way a man looks with anger but this was different. It brought back a flash of memory of the days before my beloved father died, when he would take me on his knee and tell me I was beautiful. My father wanted nothing but the best for me. But he died and when I reached the age of marriage, he was not there to take care of me. I was given to a cruel man and now my life was over.

Jesus stood up and said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he crouched down again and wrote something on the ground. While he did this, the accusers slowly filed away. They did not have the arrogance to claim innocence in front of this righteous man.

When they were gone, Jesus straightened up and asked me, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," I said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

John 8:1-11