

The Cry of Freedom

by Kevin Myrick

The desert was an awful place to be lost. He wasn't so much lost as he wandered in the madness of the heat, but it amounted to the same thing. He hoped beyond all hope at night some nameless foe would come and finish the job his brother had not had the guts to do himself. Nothing ever came.

"I will let you go, but you can never return here," his brother said.

He'd given him a mouthful of bread and a half-skin full of water before they rode away. He felt the horses hooves vibrate on the ground and watched them disappear beyond the horizon back toward the city. He turned his eyes to the north and for miles and miles he saw nothing but desolation. Rocks and sand and the hot noon sun looked down. That had been seven days past, and somehow he was still alive when he woke on the eighth morning.

He was slowly dying as he crossed the burning sands with nothing more than a staff and a blanket to cover his skin that day. He felt his life leaving him, and there were voices buzzing in his ears. Men and women both cried and cried as they toiled in the mud and the hot sun. The river offered some of the nectar of life for those who were unlucky enough to survive childhood, but the river offered no escape. Beasts of all kind would easily kill those who fled from bondage as easily as their masters would. And if man and beast did not catch up to those who survived the crossing of the great river, the desert would do the job.

Time and distance were against him, but he struggled on in his madness.

"Please, come and save us," the voices said. "Please, free us from this bondage, from these people."

Available online at <http://fictionaut.com/stories/kevin-myrick/the-cry-of-freedom>

Copyright © 2010 Kevin Myrick. All rights reserved.

"Only the gods in heaven can do such things," he shouted back, his voice hoarse and parched from no water for two days. "Wouldn't your God have saved you by now if he had the power?"

The clap of thunder sounded in the distance over the horizon, but no rain came after he waited for an hour. Nature provided nothing but false hope for him as he sat in the sun, finally too tired to walk any further for the day. He covered himself in the blanket and laid on the ground and hoped something would do him in - whether it be the gods who take him, a sand storm or maybe a scorpion if he were lucky. But none came that day, or the next as he wandered aimlessly toward the north, each step an painful ordeal. The voices returned with their pleas for a savior, any savior, who would stand up and shout back at the masters "NO MORE SHALL THESE PEOPLE BE YOUR SLAVES!"

He didn't believe it was him, even when he found a well surrounded by a lone grove of trees. His ordeal had finally ended.

