

On the Road to Egypt

by Keith West

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Raguel finished sharpening his sword and placed it in his sheath. The couple would be coming over the hill within the next minute. They would see an elderly man leaning on a staff and resting from the midday sun in the shade of a rock outcropping beside the road. They would be tempted to rest with him, but he couldn't allow that. As refreshing as the shade would be, for them to stop would be fatal.

The man and the woman crested the hill and proceeded towards him. The man was leading a donkey upon which was seated a woman holding a small child, no more than two years old. They had been traveling fast, having fled at night. Raguel knew they were exhausted, hungry, and thirsty. He also knew they were pursued, something the couple didn't know.

The border of Egypt was less than a day's journey from where he sat. They had to keep going until they crossed it. Only then would they be safe.

The man greeted Raguel as they approached.

"Shalom," he said. "How are you, sir?"

Raguel returned his greeting.

"I am well, I'm just resting my old bones here in the shade."

"Do you have any water you could spare us?" the man asked.

"I'm afraid I don't," Raguel said. "But there is an oasis a dozen stadia in the direction you are heading. There are date palms for shade, and the water is cool and clear. I drank my fill there not long ago."

“I didn’t realize there was an oasis on this part of the road.”

“It’s a small one, but I found it quite refreshing.” Raguel knew there hadn’t been an oasis until he had called it up. It would be gone as soon as the family continued their journey and left it behind them.

The man looked like he would stop rather than keep going forward.

“Joseph,” said the woman. “Let’s go on. We can rest there.”

“Are you sure?” Joseph asked.

“I am.”

Joseph turned to Raguel. “Thank you for telling us about the oasis. Good journey to you.”

“And to you as well,” said Raguel.

They started moving again. As the donkey passed him, the child, a boy, opened his eyes and smiled at Raguel. Raguel bowed his head in reverence until they had passed.

Within minutes of the family passing out of sight, two soldiers rode over the hill. They were pursuing the family. Raguel was ready for them.

As they drew near, Raguel stepped out of the shade into the middle of the road.

“Out of the way, old man,” said the one in front.

Raguel didn’t move.

The soldier drew his sword.

“Move, or I’ll cut you down!”

Raguel, Archangel of Justice, dropped his disguise and let his full majesty be seen.

The horses reared in panic, throwing their riders. Drawing his sword, Raguel fell upon Herod’s soldiers, while behind him Mary, Joseph, and Jesus safely continued on to Egypt.