

THE STORY BEGINS

As Valentine heard the familiar footsteps, he slowly rose to his feet. The stiffness in his back and legs reminded him of the small space he'd been in for such a long time. A prison. A flame flickering from the adjacent wall cast moving shadows of long lines against the damp stone partition. Finally, something to break the silence other than a tiny plink as the puddle in the corner gradually expanded. His friend, the prison guard, had finally arrived. It wasn't often that you would hear those two words in the same sentence: friend and prison guard. But in Valentine's case, the man was one and the same.



LEGEND #3 (LESSON 1)

"Magnus, thank you." Valentine reached both hands out to receive the chipped plate with food. A torn piece of tough bread and a meager stew with unidentifiable contents were upon it.

"Valentine, are you well?" Magnus looked through the bars at the man he had come to consider a friend, observing Valentine's gaunt face that seemed to grow thinner by the day.

"Oh yes, yes... I am of no cause of concern for you. How is your daughter?" Valentine had retreated to a nearby corner to partake in his meal, which was over too soon. He shifted his weight on the uneven stone, feeling his bones dig in through the thin layer of cloth offering little comfort from the constant chill he felt.

Magnus' armor clanged against the bars, and he slipped his thumbs behind his belt with a sigh. "My daughter has not improved. I fear she never will."

"I asked God to heal her on the hour. Surely, he will deliver her from this," Valentine offered.

Moments later, the prisoner, Valentine, gradually rose to return his dishes through the rectangular opening at his waist.

"If your God is listening, what is taking him so long?! This kind of talk is what led you here, Valentine. Even trying to change the beliefs of the emperor to believe in a Christ Man..." Magnus' clenched fist impacted the crumbling wall, sediment cascading onto his stiff leather sandals.

In a low but softened tone Magnus continued, "I apologize, Valentine. The nights are just growing unbearable as I worry for my daughter's future. Who will choose a bride that cannot have eyes that see? Her blindness remains, Valentine!"

"Magnus, I have come to know you as 'friend,' and I implore you... pray to the one true God. He is not just my God. He loves us all. He has created Junia and loves her as He loves you and me.

LEGEND #3 CONTINUED (LESSON 1)

...Cry out to Him and He will hear you.” Valentine wrapped his bony fingers around the rusting bars, eagerly looking the guard in his eyes.

At the sound of more approaching steps, Magnus quickly regained his composure, nodded sorrowfully, and retreated with the empty dishes in hand. As another guard passed with the brief blaze of a torch, Valentine retired to the driest corner of the cell to settle in for a time of prayer. God, I pray his heart will turn to you and his precious Junia will be healed!

THE PRAYER

Back in the prison, another visitor arrived... for the third time this week. *It was her!* Valentine could tell.

As Junia pulled back the draped cloth that hid her identity, she turned her face toward Valentine’s voice, though her eyes looked right past him.

“Valentine! My father tells me of your prayers to your God. I thank you for your continued kindness.” She extended her hand, finding the bars with her long, delicate fingers then reaching beyond them.

Taking her hand in his, Valentine offered an affectionate kiss on smooth, flawless skin. His heart swelled with love for the delicate young lady before him whose disability kept her from seeing the tender way he looked at her. “My dear Junia. Please, believe as I do, and if God wills it, He will heal you. He is able to show you all of the beauty that awaits your eyes. Please, pray with me...”

LEGEND #3 CONTINUED (LESSON 1)

Junia settled onto the hard ground, ready to accept this God that Valentine had spoken so fondly of during their brief encounters. Her brown hair fell forward as her pale blue eyes pointed towards her knees unknowingly.

With her other hand she reached in the direction of her father who had been watching from a distance, desperate for his daughter to be well. She pulled on the sheath that held his sword to encourage his participation.

Magnus shifted uncomfortably, peering around the corner to be sure they were alone. Visibly conflicted, he knelt beside his daughter after a moment and closed his eyes, ready to see what this God of Valentine's could do...

THE ANSWER

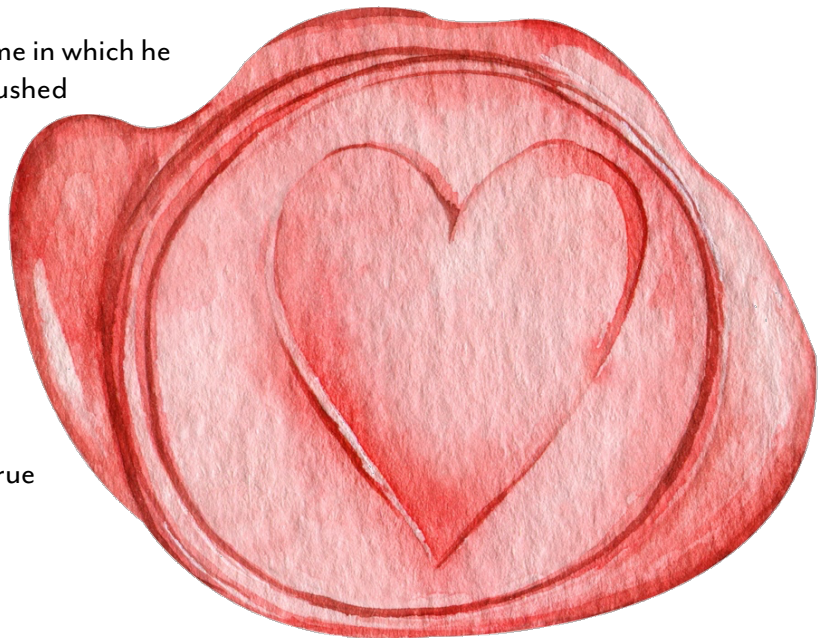
Not a day later, footsteps once came around the corner before Valentine could bring himself to a full upright position. Fearing what kind of news may be coming so quickly, he ignored the pain in his joints and grabbed the bars anxiously.

As his eyes adjusted to the sudden increase in light, he saw a beaming Magnus looking back at him. "Valentine! God has delivered Junia from her sorrow! She sees!"

Stopping to look back as he realized the volume in which he spoke, Magnus continued in an excited, yet hushed tone, "She spoke of the things before her. Her sight has found her! Please, tell me more about this God. I want to believe as you do. No other god has answered in such a way!"

Beaming, Valentine spoke of God and Magnus accepted the truth he spoke. In the days to follow, Magnus brought news that his whole family was eager to believe in the one true God.

Another miracle has come!



LEGEND #3 CONTINUED (LESSON 1)

THE LURKER

During one such meeting between Magnus and Valentine, another man lurked in the shadows. After a brief time, he retreated hastily in the direction of the palace...

THE CONSEQUENCE

Magnus approached in the shadow of two unknown guards Valentine had never seen. Valentine met Magnus' gaze briefly, catching a glint of the tears brimming on the pained face.

Large, firm hands gripped Valentine's frail arms, joining them in heavy chains as he was thrust ahead into the dimly lit hall for the last time.

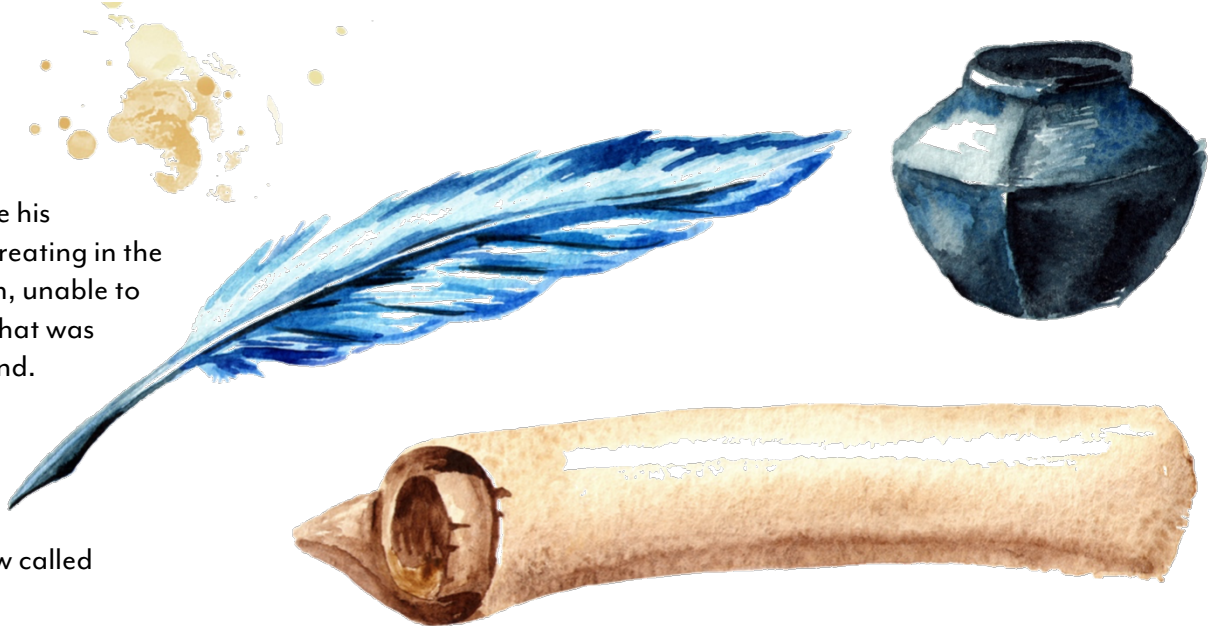
As Magnus lingered, he could no longer hold back the tears. He recalled all that this man had done for him. His beautiful Junia had come to life in the days that followed her miraculous healing. She became so vibrant and joyful! Having connected with others who believed as Valentine does, Magnus felt his own eyes were opened for the first time after being blind himself after all these years. Blind, spiritually, that is. This man—Valentine—imprisoned for his faith, had risked everything.

And now... now, he was being carried away to his ultimate sentence.

A small white piece of paper caught Magnus' eye. Pulling it from behind the stone, Magnus saw it was addressed to Junia and signed... *From Your Valentine.*

He tucked it inside his cassius before retreating in the opposite direction, unable to bear witness to what was coming to his friend.

Valentine was sentenced to death on February 14th, now called Valentine's Day.



WHO HE WAS:

This St. Valentine is said to have been persecuted for his faith under Emperor Claudius II.

Claudius II was emperor in 268-270, and tried to convert St. Valentine to a pagan religion, but St. Valentine tried to introduce him to the One True God.

It is stated that Emperor Claudius II imprisoned St. Valentine for his beliefs. The guard became fond of Valentine and had a blind daughter in need of healing. Many of the legends are not biblical and indicate Valentine healed the girl himself (as if a supernatural being). Some of the beliefs revolve around self-preservation and health. This story says he fell in love with the jailer's daughter. Eventually, he wrote her a letter of love and signed it, "Your Valentine."

But wait... What are the arguments against this theory?



GO BACK TO LESSON #1 AND PICK UP WHERE YOU LEFT OFF!