

## TANZANITE

“Hey ... good morning Marilyn, how’s Mike?”

The bell over the shop's door tinkles as Marilyn Rust closes it behind her.

“Good, Joey. He's sleeping. It’s Monday and it's raining so the lunch crowd should be small at the club ... thought I’d let him catch up on his rest. He’s been pushing himself lately ... a lot of extra hours. How about you?”

“Ah ... holding my own. Things are slow, what with the economy and all, but still, I’m fairly busy.

“Have you finished my bracelet?”

“Got it right here.”

Reaching into the box of completed repairs, Joey retrieves a gold medic alert bracelet and hands it to Marilyn.

“Ah, just like new. What do I owe you?”

“Nothing. I just adjusted the tension in the clasp and gave it a quick buff; it was all it needed.”

“You’re sure?”

“No, it was simple, Marilyn ... only took a couple minutes.

“Thanks Joey, that's nice of you. By the way, what are you working on?”

“A tanzanite pendant; a custom job for Christmas.”

“Tanzanite, what’s that?”

A wry smile crosses Joey’s face.

“A whisper ... from heaven.”

**Hi, I’m Tony Baggz. It’s morning here in Joey’s jewelry shop. Marilyn Rust just walked in ... first customer of the day. Christmas is a couple months away and Joey’s working on this year’s offerings. Business is a little slow, but it’ll get busier as the days pass. Joey’s work is known throughout the city and everyone who appreciates fine jewelry stops by to see what the master has come up with for the holiday season. Heck, even people who never buy jewelry can’t resist a peek ... and for the proprietor’s unique perspective on the things he sells. You see, Joey has a knack for finding the meaning behind the glitter.**

**Walking around behind his desk he picks up a small folded paper. Setting it on the counter, he opens it and produces a magnificent royal blue stone with a noticeable purple hue. About the size of a quarter, it’s teardrop shaped. Marilyn’s eyes light up. I think it has definitely caught her fancy. And from the question in her eyes, I can see she wants to know more.**

***... What do you say we listen in ...?***

“So that’s tanzanite. I’ve seen it in the mall but never paid it much attention. What they call tanzanite, there, is light lilac or a pale blue color, nothing special. But this is impressive.”

“Well, there are different grades and it does come in the paler shades

like the ones you saw. But this,” Joey says, gesturing toward the gem, “this is as good as it gets.”

“It’s beautiful. Why haven't I seen it before?”

“Well, first, in shades this deep it's quite expensive and probably out of the reach of much of the buying public. This stone’s over five thousand dollars. Second, it’s a 'soft' gemstone. For a long time, it was primarily a collector’s stone. And, it only comes from one place in Africa so it's relatively rare. Given the lack of demand for it in jewelry, there just wasn't a compelling reason to go looking for it.”

"Makes sense," Marilyn says, nodding in agreement.

"For centuries sapphire was the only deep blue gem that the public was aware of. It took Tiffany’s in New York to popularize it back in the 70’s so it’s only been around for about fifty years or so.”

“Why? If things like amethyst and ruby and sapphire and the others have been around for centuries, how come something this beautiful hasn't been around that long too?”

“Well, probably the main reason is that when it comes out of the ground, it’s a rather unappealing brown color. Kind of like smoky quartz; something only worth a few bucks a carat.”

Marilyn rotates the gem in the morning light. By the look in her eyes she’s captivated.

"So why did they finally decide to promote it?"

“Well, obviously because it’s beautiful. And, as fine sapphires increased in price the jewelry trade looked for an alternative. A sapphire this size and color would fetch tens of thousands of dollars. And, when it was first brought to the public's attention, those who bought and sold it

understood that it was to be worn gently, because, again, it's a 'soft' gemstone. Even now, I generally only put it in earrings and pendants. It doesn't wear all that well in a ring. Unless you treat it very very gently."

"So how does it get to be this color if it's naturally brown?"

"It has to be heated for a sustained period of time for the color to change to the beautiful deep blue you see."

"So, the 'whisper', where does that come from?"

"Ah, you know me too well, Marilyn," Joey says, a playful smile crossing his face. Stepping beside her, he gestures to the gem in her hand. "Think of it; how is this gemstone all that much different from people themselves?"

"You tell me ..."

"Well, most gemstones when they come from the ground aren't all that impressive. They don't look anything like what you see in here. Especially a gem like tanzanite. So, they're kinda like people."

"And that's the whisper from heaven?"

"Precisely. A gem like this is a silent witness to an eternal truth."

A confused look ambles across Marilyn's face. "And that truth is ...?"

"That God rarely, if ever, produces a finished product."

"How do you mean?" Marilyn asks, intrigue replacing confusion in her eyes.

"Well, in their natural state, gemstones sometimes come in nicely formed crystals, but more often they're just fragments or pebbles needing

to be treated in some manner for their beauty to be brought out. To be completed ... finished you might say."

"And you're saying just like the change in this stone from a common brown to a beautiful blue can't happen without effort, neither can we become what we are intended to be without effort on our part."

"Right. And how many people fail to live up to the possibilities and the beauty within themselves because they are afraid of the heat and fire, the challenges of life?"

Again, Marilyn pauses to admire the gem as Joey continues his thought.

"And not only ourselves, but other's too."

"Others, how so?"

"Well, take children. Left to their own devices most kids would just be content to put in a minimum of effort, right?"

"Right," Marilyn says, rolling her eyes. "... like Bobby. It was like pulling teeth to get him to do his school work. Or his chores."

Chuckling, Joey shakes his head. Bobby is Marilyn's oldest boy and Joey's known him since he was little.

"Exactly. Holding people accountable and inspiring them push themselves to be the best they can, that's what I'm talking about. Too many people today don't recognize that. They shirk their responsibility in the name of 'giving others their space,' 'minding their own business,' 'letting them find their own way' ... or some such nonsense."

Looking again at the gemstone in her hand, Marilyn smiles. "You make a pretty persuasive point, Joey. Then again, you always do."

Joey laughs softly to himself.

“And one other thought. How disappointed would the Creator be if man didn’t complete the beauty of this gem; didn’t finish what He Himself started and just settled for leaving it an uninspiring brown stone?”

An impish smile lights up Marilyn’s eyes. “... and you’re saying the Creator is just as disappointed if we do the same thing?” she says, finishing Joey’s thought.

“Exactly. And that’s something God had in mind from the beginning of time.”

Handing the gem back to Joey, Marilyn laughs softly, a sparkle in her eye.

“You know Joey; I was wondering what to put in my letter to Santa this year. Now, I think I know.”

Joey smiles and a chuckle escapes his lips.

“Won’t Mike be surprised?”

**Our God loves matter. He created it, and uses it to speak to us in all of His creation. Jesus certainly did. He used water, wine, bread, fish, mud, stone, sand, grain, fruit, and finally the wood of a cross to accomplish all He came to do.**

**Our God speaks softly, telling us that, like all of nature, we have tremendous beauty within. Why, because each of us is made in His image and likeness. Like a fine gemstone, man is designed to be finished, completed. Yet**

**how many of us fail to do so; content to remain unfinished, unwilling to expose ourselves to the pressure and heat of life that refines us and brings out our inner beauty? A beauty God intended from the beginning of time.**

**“If you are lukewarm, I will vomit you out of my mouth.” Do these words speak, not so much to a halfhearted resignation to live an indifferent existence ...**

**but rather an unwillingness to become the jewel God intended us to be?**

**Thinkaboutit ... I’m Tony Baggz.**

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