

JOHN ELDREDGE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

COMING
HOME



AN AMAZING LOOK
AT HEAVEN

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE SACRED ROMANCE*

COMING HOME

The door on which we have been knocking all our lives
will open at last.
C. S. Lewis

My wife, Stasi, reads the end of novels first. Until recently, I (John) never understood why. “I want to know how the story ends, to see if it’s worth reading,” she explained. “A story is only as good as its ending. Even the best stories leave you empty if the last chapter is disappointing.

“But the opposite is also true,” she added. “A really tragic story can be saved by a happy ending.”

“But doesn’t knowing the end take away the drama?” I asked.

“It only takes away the fear and frees you to enjoy the drama. Besides, some things are too important to be left to chance,” she said, and turned back to her book.

A story is only as good as its ending. Without a happy ending that draws us on in eager anticipation, our journey becomes a nightmare of endless struggle. Is this all there is? Is this as good as it gets? On a recent flight I was chatting with one of the attendants about her spiritual beliefs. A follower of a New Age guru, she said with all earnestness, “I don’t believe in heaven. I believe life is a never-ending cycle of birth and death.” What a horror, I thought to myself. This Story had better have a happy ending. St. Paul felt the same. If this is as good as it gets, he said, you may as well stop at a

bar on the way home and tie one on; go to Nordstrom's and max out all your credit cards; bake a cake and eat the whole thing. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32).

Our hearts cannot live without hope. Gabriel Marcel says that "hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism." In the trinity of Christian graces—faith, hope, and love—love may be the greatest but hope plays the deciding role. The apostle Paul tells us that faith and love depend on hope, our anticipation of what lies ahead: "Faith and love . . . spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven" (Col. 1:5). Our courage for the journey so often falters because we've lost our hope of heaven—the consummation of our Love Story. No wonder we live like Robinson Crusoe, trying to cobble together the best life we can from the wreckage of the world; we think we're stuck here forever. Of course, our less-wild lovers seem irresistible—we see them as our only shot at some relief. The reason most men, to quote Thoreau, "live lives of quiet desperation" is that they live without hope.

Several years ago I joined some friends for a weekend of fly-fishing on the Snake River in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It was a last fling of fall, before the long winter set in with my heavy responsibilities at home, work, and in grad school. I had looked forward to the adventure for months, but the weekend hadn't lived up to my expectations. The weather was lousy, the fishing dreadful. As the weekend drew to a close, I found myself tense and irritable, trying desperately to squeeze joy out of diminishing hopes. This is it? I thought to myself. This is as good as it's going to be? Standing together in the river Saturday evening, empty-handed, my friend announced almost as an afterthought that he had arranged a float down a wild section of the river with a famous guide for our last day

together. The weather was predicted to be clear and the fishing was practically guaranteed to be fabulous.

In a moment, everything changed. The evening light took on a rich, golden quality; the fall colors became vivid; I noticed the musical rushing of the waters for the first time and my fishing buddies suddenly seemed to me a truly decent bunch of guys. The pressure I had placed on the vacation was lifted as my heart recovered hope. I was released by the promise of better things to come.

The story may seem silly (particularly for those who do not fly-fish), but it reveals one of the most important truths of the human heart: If for all practical purposes we believe that this life is our best shot at happiness, if this is as good as it gets, we will live as desperate, demanding, and eventually despairing men and women. We will place on this world a burden it was never intended to bear. We will try to find a way to sneak back into the Garden and when that fails, as it always does, our heart fails as well. If truth be told, most of us live as though this life is our only hope, and then we feel guilty for wanting to do exactly what Paul said he would do if that were true.

In his wonderful book *The Eclipse of Heaven*, A. J. Conyers put it quite simply: “We live in a world no longer under heaven.” All the crises of the human soul flow from there. All our addictions and depressions, the rage that simmers just beneath the surface of our Christian facade, and the deadness that characterizes so much of our lives has a common root: We think this is as good as it gets. Take away the hope of arrival and our journey becomes the Bataan death march. The best human life is unspeakably sad. Even if we manage to escape some of the bigger tragedies (and few of us do), life rarely matches our expectations. When we do get a taste of what we really

long for, it never lasts. Every vacation eventually comes to an end. Friends move away. Our careers don't quite pan out. Sadly, we feel guilty about our disappointment, as though we ought to be more grateful.

Of course we're disappointed—we're made for so much more. "He has also set eternity in the hearts," (Eccl. 3:11). Our longing for heaven whispers to us in our disappointments and screams through our agony. "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy," C. S. Lewis wrote, "the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

If faith and love hang on hope, if a life without hope is as Paul says "to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19), then shouldn't we devote ourselves to recovering a vision for the end of our story in as vivid colors as our imagination can conceive?

I knew a man who as a young boy hated the idea of heaven. He would puzzle and embarrass his Sunday school teachers by stating quite boldly, whenever the subject of heaven was brought up, that he didn't want to go there. Finally, one of them had the sense to ask him why. His answer? "I don't like peas." He had heard the familiar Christmas carol "Silent Night," with the lovely refrain "Sleep in heavenly peace" and thought it referred to the vegetable. Like any red-blooded boy he figured there had to be better things to do.

Our images aren't much better. We speak so seldom of heaven and when we do, the images are sickly: fat babies fluttering around with tiny wings, bored saints lazing on shapeless clouds, strumming harps and wondering what's happening back on earth where the real action is.

The crisis of hope that afflicts the church today is a crisis of imagination. Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft writes:

Medieval imagery (which is almost totally biblical imagery) of light, jewels, stars, candles, trumpets, and angels no longer fits our ranchstyle, supermarket world. Pathetic modern substitutes of fluffy clouds, sexless cherubs, harps and metal halos (not halos of light) presided over by a stuffy divine Chairman of the Bored are a joke, not a glory. Even more modern, more up-to-date substitutes—Heaven as a comfortable feeling of peace and kindness, sweetness and light, and God as a vague grandfatherly benevolence, a senile philanthropist—are even more insipid. Our pictures of Heaven simply do not move us; they are not moving pictures. It is this aesthetic failure rather than intellectual or moral failures in our pictures of Heaven and of God that threatens faith most potently today. Our pictures of Heaven are dull, platitudinous and syrupy; therefore, so is our faith, our hope, and our love of Heaven. . . . It doesn't matter whether it's a dull lie or a dull truth. Dullness, not doubt, is the strongest enemy of faith, just as indifference, not hate, is the strongest enemy of love. (Everything You Wanted to Know About Heaven)

If our pictures of heaven are to move us, they must be moving pictures. So go ahead—dream a little. Use your imagination. Picture the best possible ending to your story you can. If that isn't heaven, something better is. When Paul says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9), he simply means we cannot outdream God. What is at the end of our personal journeys? Something beyond our wildest imagination. But if we explore the secrets of our heart in the light of the promises of Scripture, we can discover clues. As we have

said from Chapter 1, there is in the heart of every man, woman, and child an inconsolable longing for intimacy, for beauty, and for adventure. What will heaven offer to our heart of hearts?

INTIMACY

Our longing for intimacy gives us the greatest scent of the joys that lie ahead. Being left out is one of life's most painful experiences. I remember the daily fourth-grade torture of waiting in line while the captains chose their teams for the kickball games. As each captain took turns choosing a player, descending from best to worst, our rank in fourth-grade society was reinforced. Though others fared worse than I—"Don't make us take Smitty, we had him last time"—I was never the first to be chosen. No one ever said, "Wait—we get Eldredge this time!" I didn't feel wanted; at best, I felt tolerated. And then there was junior high cafeteria. After buying lunch, you carried your tray out into the dining room, looking for a place to eat. There was an unspoken hierarchy that determined where you could sit. One day, I dared to test that caste system. With modest courage I walked over to the table filled with the "cool" kids, but before I could sit down, one of them sneered, "Not here, Eldredge, we're saving this for someone else."

These are some of the ways I learned the lesson that I was on the outside. Throughout our lives, each one of us lives with a constant nagging that we never quite fit in, we never truly belong. We've all had enough experiences to teach us that we will never be allowed into the "sacred circle," the place of intimacy. Even those who are chosen to be part of the "in" crowd are never chosen for who they truly are. So we hide parts of ourselves to try and fit in, or kill our desire to be an insider, rather than let our longing lead us toward the true intimacy for which we were designed.

On the other hand, there is the joy of having someone save a place for us. We walk into a crowded room at church or at a dinner party and someone across the way waves us over, pointing to a chair he's held on to especially for us. For a moment we feel a sense of relief, a taste of being on the inside. Now consider Jesus' words in John 14:2—"I am going . . . to prepare a place for you." Christ promises that he is saving a place in heaven especially for each of us. When we walk into the crowded excitement of the wedding feast of the Lamb, with the sound of a thousand conversations, laughter and music, the clinking of glasses, and one more time our heart leaps with the hope that we might be let into the sacred circle, we will not be disappointed. We'll be welcomed to the table by our Lover himself. No one will have to scramble to find another chair, to make room for us at the end of the table, or rustle up a place setting. There will be a seat with our name on it, held open at Jesus' command for us and no other.

Heaven is the beginning of an adventure in intimacy, "a world of love," as Jonathan Edwards wrote, "where God is the fountain." The Holy Spirit, through the human authors of Scripture, chose the imagery of a wedding feast for a reason. It's not just any kind of party; it is a wedding feast. What sets this special feast apart from all others is the unique intimacy of the wedding night. The Spirit uses the most secret and tender experience on earth—the union of husband and wife—to convey the depth of intimacy that we will partake with our Lord in heaven. He is the Bridegroom and the church is his bride. In the consummation of love, we shall know him and be known. There we shall receive our new name, known only to our Lover, which he shall give to us on a white stone (Rev. 2:17).

George MacDonald, a theologian with a poet's heart, has explored the promises of heaven more richly than perhaps any other man. He

explains what the stone implies:

It is the man's own symbol—his soul's picture, in a word—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone. For no one but God sees what the man is. . . . It is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies. . . . Such a name cannot be given until the man is the name . . . that being whom He had in His thought when He began to make the child, and whom He kept in His thought through the long process of creation that went to realize the idea. To tell the name is to seal the success—to say “In thee also I am well pleased.” (Unspoken Sermons)

The stone will free us to enjoy the riches of heaven, for in order to share in this heavenly intimacy, we must have the freedom of heart enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the Fall, who were naked and felt no shame. This is the freedom from sin, or as Kreeft has said, “from what makes us not ourselves. We will be free to be the true selves God designed us to be.” Shame kills intimacy. The soul that still is in some way hiding cannot enjoy the fullness of knowing what characterizes the love between God and the saints in heaven. But then we shall be perfect; our loved ones will be perfect as well. All that has ever stood between us will be swept away and our heart will be released to real loving. The intimacy that begins between God and his people will be enriched and echoed by our communion with each other. The deepest longing of our heart—our longing to be part of the sacred circle, to be inside—reveals to us the greatest of the treasures heaven has in store. For we were made in and for the most sacred circle of all. Lewis says,

The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing

to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory meant good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last. (The Weight of Glory)

BEAUTY

“And they all lived happily ever after.” Where? Doing what? As wonderful as it will be to have our longing for relationship filled to overflowing, it is not enough. Our heart has other longings that heaven draws forth. There is so much more to the human soul and so much more to the riches God has prepared for those who love him. In the same way that life sharpens our yearning to be welcomed into the sacred circle of intimacy, so it awakens another ache from deep within—our longing for beauty.

The Ritz Carlton Laguna Beach is one of the most luxurious hotels in southern California. Nestled on a bluff above its private cove with white sandy beach, the hotel exudes romance. Its mediterranean architecture lifts the Ritz out of space and time, creating a fairy-tale ambiance. Arches and tile walkways lead to fountained courtyards and terraces with breathtaking views of the Pacific. The tropical climate nourishes a lush canopy of purple and red bougainvillea, whimsical flower gardens, rich green lawns, and swaying palms. Staying at the Ritz, one can almost forget, if for a moment, that the Fall ever happened. Stasi and I enjoyed a weekend of escape there thanks to a business conference I was asked to attend.

Late one evening I slipped away from the meeting to wander the grounds alone. I felt restless inside and thought a walk might be calming. Something drew me through the terraces toward the ocean. As I wandered over the beautifully manicured lawns, more luxuriant than any carpet, the sounds of music and laughter from parties inside mingled with the scent of the flower beds in the warm ocean breeze. My restlessness grew. Standing on the edge of the cliff with the

crashing of the waves below and the shining of the stars above, I felt the restlessness swell into an ache. As Simone Weil said, there are only two things that pierce the human heart: beauty and affliction. I was run clean-through by the beauty of it all, overcome by an ache for a home I have never seen.

I have had this experience many times, whether walking along the Napali Coast in Hawaii, flying over the glaciers of Alaska, or noticing the simple rays of sunshine falling on the kitchen table. Yet it always takes me by surprise. We grow so used to living in a world soiled by the Fall that our soul's desire for beauty lies dormant deep within, waiting for something to awaken it. During a visit to Westminster Cathedral in England, a friend of mine got lost and by accident came into that glorious sanctuary by a rather commonplace side door. Stepping around the corner he was totally unprepared for the majesty he suddenly found himself engulfed by: the sweeping architecture, the glory in stone and spire and glass. At that very moment a choir broke into song, their angelic harmonies filling the massive cathedral. "I don't know what happened," he later told me, "but I broke down and began to weep."

"Each and every instance of beauty," writes Mark Helprin, "is a promise and example, in miniature, of life that can end in balance, with symmetry, purpose and hope." We long for beauty and the promise that it speaks. Our revulsion to the ugly is the counterpart to our desire for beauty. I used to hate the part of my daily commute that took me through the worst sections of Washington, D.C.: abandoned buildings, burned-out cars, desolate neighborhoods. It was a symbol of the triumph of evil, chaos, and death. My heart grieved to see such devastation and I breathed a sigh of relief as I passed through the wreckage and drove into the farmlands of Maryland. But we must be

careful here; as Lewis said, one of the mistakes we so often make when captured by an object of beauty, whether it's a place, a person, or a work of art, is to assume the longing in our heart is for the thing before us. The Ritz and Westminster and farm meadows—these are shadows of the realities to come. The beauty of the tabernacle carried by Israel through the desert was a type of the real item in heaven. So it goes with all things on earth: The beauty that so captures our heart and is so fleeting draws us toward the eternal reality.

We long for beauty, and when the biblical writers speak of heaven, they use the most beautiful imagery they can. You can almost hear the agony of the writer trying to get it right while knowing he falls far short of what he sees. In the book of Revelation, St. John uses the word like again and again. “And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. . . . Before the throne there was . . . a sea of glass like crystal” (4:3, 6 NASB). The beauty cannot be captured, only alluded to by the most beautiful things on earth.

I believe the beauty of heaven is why the Bible says we shall be “feasted.” It's not merely that there will be no suffering, though that will be tremendous joy in itself; to have every Arrow we've ever known pulled out and every wound dressed with the leaves from the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). But there is more. We will have glorified bodies with which to partake of all the beauty of heaven. As Edwards wrote, “Every faculty will be an inlet of delight.” We will eat freely the fruit of the tree of life and drink deeply from the river of life that flows through the city. And the food will satisfy not just our body but our soul. As Lewis said,

We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is

bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. (The Weight of Glory)

And so we shall.

ADVENTURE

What will we do in heaven? The Sunday comics picture saints lying about on clouds, strumming harps. It hardly takes your breath away. The fact that most Christians have a gut sense that earth is more exciting than heaven points to the deceptive powers of the enemy and our own failure of imagination. What do we do with the idea of “eternal rest”? That sounds like the slogan of a middle-class cemetery. We know heaven begins with a party, but then what? A long nap after the feast? The typical evangelical response—“We will worship God”—doesn’t help either. The answer is certainly biblical, and perhaps my reaction is merely a reflection on me, but it sounds so one-dimensional. Something in my heart says, That’s all? How many hymns and choruses can we sing?

We will worship God in heaven, meaning all of life will finally be worship, not round after round of “Amazing Grace.” The parable of the minas in Luke 19 and the talents in Matthew 25 foreshadow a day when we shall exercise our real place in God’s economy, the role we have been preparing for on earth. He who has been faithful in the small things will be given even greater adventures in heaven. We long for adventure, to be caught up in something larger than ourselves, a drama of heroic proportions. This isn’t just a need for continual excitement, it’s part of our design. Few of us ever sense that our talents are being used to their fullest; our creative abilities are rarely given wings in this life. When Revelation 3 speaks of us being “pillars in the temple of our God,” it doesn’t mean architecture. Rather, Christ promises that we shall be actively fulfilling our total design in the adventures of the new kingdom.

Act IV—heaven—is the continuation of the Story that was interrupted by the Fall. God made the earth and entrusted it to us, to bring order and increase beauty. We were to be his regents, reigning with his blessing and authority. That arrangement was corrupted by the Fall so that the earth no longer responds to our leadership as it once did. When Christ accomplished our redemption, he didn't do it to place us on the bench for eternity. He restored us to put us back in the game. He even subjected the earth to a time of futility until the day it will be “liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). We will then co-reign with Christ. “St. Peter for a few seconds walked on the water,” Lewis reminds us, “and the day will come when there will be a re-made universe, infinitely obedient to the will of glorified and obedient men, when we can do all things, when we shall be those gods that we are described as being in Scripture.”

Part of the adventure will be to explore the wonders of the new heaven and new earth, the most breathtaking of which will be God himself. We will have all eternity to explore the mysteries of God, and not just explore, but celebrate and share with one another. Here is a remarkable thing to consider: Your soul has a unique shape that fits God. We are not all the same, but unique creations each of us. Therefore, as MacDonald says,

Every one of us is something that the other is not, and therefore knows something—it may be without knowing that he knows it— which no one else knows: and . . . it is everyone's business, as one of the kingdom of light and inheritor in it all, to give his portion to the rest. (Unspoken Sermons)

This may be why the angels Isaiah sees flying around the throne room

of God are crying “holy, holy, holy,” not to God, but “to one another” (6:3, italics mine). They are calling each other to see what they see of the majesty and beauty of God, so that their joy might be increased as they celebrate Him together. Every experience of delight takes on a fuller dimension when we share it. This is why we so often feel in the midst of some wonderful moment, “how I wish my beloved were here.”

The exploration of heaven shall also include our knowing of each other. How could it not? How can love be complete without the freedom to be naked and unashamed? More than unashamed, we shall be celebrated. It is one of the sorrows of our present life: the separation we feel even from those closest to us. Married people can be the loneliest on earth, not for some failure of the marriage, but because they have tasted the best there is of human relationships and know it is not all it was meant to be. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens captures that sense of mystery each human soul is to another.

A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it!

But in heaven that veil shall be removed as well, not to our shame and embarrassment, but to our utter delight. Remember, we will be perfect, meaning we will be the soul that God had in mind all along. And then, as MacDonald says,

We shall have the universe for our own, and be good merry children in the great house of our father. I think then we shall be able to pass into and through each other's very souls as we please, knowing each other's thought and being, along with our own, and so being like God. When we are all just as loving and unselfish as Jesus; when, like him, our one thought of delight is that God is, and is what he is; when the fact that a being is just another person from ourselves is enough to make that being precious. (The Heart of George MacDonald)

And there is, of course, the exploration of our own lives. We know a time will come for us to look back with our Lord over the story of our lives. Every hidden thing shall be made known, every word spoken in secret shall be uttered. My soul shrinks back; how will this not be an utter horror? The whole idea of judgment has been terribly twisted by our enemy. One evangelistic tract conveys the popular idea that at some point shortly upon our arrival in heaven the lights will dim and God will give the signal for the videotape of our entire life to be played before the watching universe: every shameful act, every wicked thought. How can this be so? If there is "now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, italics mine), how is it possible there will be shame later? God himself shall clothe us in white garments (Rev. 3:5). Will our Lover then strip his beloved so that the universe may gawk at her? Never.

However God may choose to evaluate our lives, whatever memory of our past we shall have in heaven, we know this: It will only contribute to our joy. We will read our story by the light of redemption and see how God has used both the good and the bad, the sorrow and the gladness for our welfare and his glory. With the assurance of total forgiveness we will be free to know ourselves fully, walking again through the seasons of life to linger over the cherished moments and

stand in awe at God's grace for the moments we have tried so hard to forget. Our gratitude and awe will swell into worship of a Lover so strong and kind as to make us fully his own.

ARRIVAL

Brent and I have tried to put words to many of the questions we believe every heart is asking. Well into the Christian journey, two new questions began to haunt us: Will I make it to the end? and, Will it be good when I get there?

Several years into our marriage Stasi and I reached one of the lowest moments of our lives. Sitting over the breakfast table one morning, the subject of divorce was raised in a rather casual way, as if it were a question about the raspberry jam. We had drifted apart, I knew that, but until that moment I didn't realize just how far. Over the next few days I made an emergency plan. We would go to the mountains for a holiday in hopes of recovering some of the ground we had lost. We had honeymooned in Yosemite and I thought that might be the place to look again for a lost romance.

We set out the day after Christmas on a warm and sunny morning. But as the hours wore on, a snowstorm was building in the mountains ahead. Evening fell and with it came the snow, softly at first, then heavier and harder. Our car began to slip and spin on the icy road. It was dark when we reached the entrance to the park. Up ahead, I could see the cars before us turning around and heading back down the mountain. Oh Lord, I prayed, please—not now, not when so much is riding on this. The ranger told us that the roads had become treacherous and a blizzard was raging higher in the mountains. Several cars had already slid off the highway. He recommended we turn back but left the choice to us.

“We’re going on,” I said. As the hours dragged on, the snow blanketed

the road and dark woods all around. We were alone. Will we make it? I wondered to myself. Can it possibly be good even if we do? My knuckles were white from clutching the steering wheel. The tension in the car was thick, a palpable reminder of the reason we had come.

Just when I was about to abandon hope, twinkling lights appeared through the trees ahead. As we rounded the bend, the Wawona Hotel came into view—a gorgeous, white Victorian inn with garlands hanging from the balcony and a massive Christmas tree in the window. The snowfall eased and the flakes were now falling softly, gently. We could see a fire roaring in the large stone fireplace, casting a romantic glow over the couples who lingered over dinner. Currier and Ives never printed a more beautiful scene. As I pulled our car into safety, a deer ambled from the woods and across the white meadow before us. The sense of arrival was almost too much to bear. We had made it! The beauty of it all seemed to speak the promise of a life restored. As we walked into our room, we discovered a bottle of champagne on ice—a gift some friends had sent ahead. That weekend we turned a corner in our marriage and began the healing we now enjoy.

For now, our life is a journey of high stakes and frequent danger. But we have turned the corner; the long years in exile are winding down and we are approaching home. There is no longer any question as to whether we will make it and if it will be good when we get there. “I am going there to prepare a place for you,” Jesus promised. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:2–3).

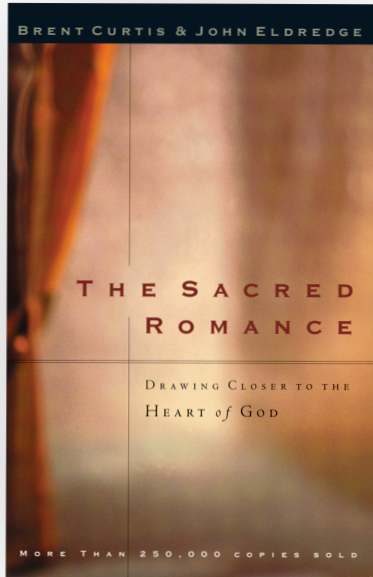
One day soon we will round a bend in the road and our dreams will come true. We really will live happily ever after. The long years in

ARRIVAL

exile will be swept away in the joyful tears of our arrival home. Every day when we rise, we can tell ourselves, My journey today will bring me closer to home; it may be just around the bend. All we long for we shall have; all we long to be, we will be. All that has hurt us so deeply—the dragons and nits, the Arrows and our false lovers, and Satan himself—they will all be swept away.

And then real life begins.

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