

2021

The Kneeling Savior

Victoria Berrios

Follow this and additional works at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Permanent URL:

Recommended Citation

Berrios, Victoria (2021) "The Kneeling Savior," *The Peregrine Review*: Vol. 34, Article 37.
Available at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview/vol34/iss1/37>

Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.

The Kneeling Savior

Victoria Berrios

My story is one that is still questioned, still situated in the divisive crosshairs of mostly malereligious leaders and translators. I am unnamed, yet my fate is still being decided; the memory of my story is an unclaimed echo in time. Its validity in the canon of scripture is still disputed. The faith to which we all belong is still caught in that ancient warfare between Grace and Law. May I offer, since it is my story, that this adds to the validation of its message, its eternal truth? I want to tell the story from my perspective, if you will permit me.

I was warm in the heat of embrace.

This was not the first time... I vaguely considered with each encounter if it would be the last. But again, I'd find myself in his arms, passion swirling us together once more. He was not mine. But he was with me when I ached, and that felt more complete than anything I had known in my husband's clutch. This was an escape I didn't know how to ask for deliverance from, so my body drew its own conclusions. I felt free when I was with this man, but I was grasping at intimacy, desperate to be known.

I was warm in the heat of embrace.

And then cold hands drew me up out of those arms, the tangle of limbs and breath that had been our love moments before. I barely had time to pull the cloth over my body before they forced me to go. I was dragged into the court of the temple, asunder in my bewilderment. I shivered not just from the air grazing my exposed skin, or the hazing of their eyes across me, but from the evil that they who took me from where I lay did not have the decency to pull my lover along with me. I was not the only one under the Law of Moses. I know, for I had rehearsed it over and again in my mind prior to each visit. According to our law, both the man and the woman caught in adultery must be brought forth and stoned. And the scribes and Pharisees who stripped me from my bed would know this too; how could they not, when they study the Law as their occupation? Yet here I was, helplessly subject to the communal shaming that was to precede my death- the only allowable answer to a woman like me. Fear and internalized disgust swirled in my belly, corroding in an instant what was left of love.

I lowered my sight to the dust of the temple court, and thought how I must be less holy than even this dirt. I listened through clouded ears when these men crooned of my sin. I heard them stating the law, and I awaited the pronouncement of my indictment. But, with my gaze lowered, I hadn't registered that they were addressing someone. They asked him what my fate should be. I dared to look up. And I saw a man not above me, but beneath me, kneeling a few feet away in the same dust. He did not answer with his voice the question that purred from the lips of the religious men,

hanging pregnant in the air between us. Instead, I watched this man drag a finger in the dust, writing. My eyes widened and swelled as I read the things he wrote. I could hear the men continue to pelt their questions, but down there, I registered none of them. The man stood up, and I kept my gaze paralyzed on the imprints in the dust. Then I heard his words cut through me, sharper than the shame: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he sank to the dust once more. I looked up. And one at a time, the men left. They said no more. They simply abandoned the courtyard, disappearing while the weight of his words remained.

There I stood, still paralyzed. And when the last of them had left, he stood up. I saw his eyes for the first time. But it was not his eyes that unraveled the shame in my gut, nor even his arms-which in comparison to the ones that had held me minutes before, I expected to be the last thing I saw, raised with stone in hand, flung at my sinful form. No, what I noticed before I met his eyes were his knees, how they were stained with the dust that I deemed unworthy even of me. Here his chosen response was to kneel for me. A teacher, they called him. I've never known a teacher to kneel.

Then he said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

And I answered, awestruck by the truth interrupting my denial, "No one, Lord."

He told me that he did not condemn me, and to go without sinning again. His words were empowerment and tenderness. They filled the ache in my soul and dissolved the betrayal I had chosen and felt in my body. This savior revealed a love to me on his knees, made himself low and honored the brokenness in me with healing and dignity. He stained his knees and his hands for me, the sinful one, and I couldn't have known that everything he restored to me was only a fraction of the stains he was yet to bear. But that didn't matter. I was seen as whole for the first time.