

Today is a day like any other day. The sun will come up; the sun will go down. All the people go about their business in those ritual patterns of movement and interaction. The vendors in the marketplace vie for supremacy in the never-ending, always-stirring shouting match that lulls the sea of patrons in and out of the infinite line of booths and stands. Indeed it is a sea; a vast, teeming amalgamation of fabric, mostly of earthen tones, though splotted with a diffusion of dark blacks and grays, and occasionally a bright spot of color that stands out from the rest. A churning sea of fabric, and baskets, and the occasional mule, into which the people who create it gracefully fade.

At least from up here, that is. From so far above, the hectic hustle and bustle fades into this ocean once a week. I like to watch the plaza from the rooftops on market days. Since it's quite hot outside, the shade of my little alcove is relaxing, as is the soft murmur of spices and jewelry being sold below. Of all the ledges surrounding the plaza, roofed by decorative archways that block the sun from my perch, this spot is my favorite. It's as if watching down on the world from a cloud, comfortable and safe, as alone as I choose to be.

I've been coming to market since I was a boy, although only like this for the last several years. My father took me along as a child when he went into the market to trade wicker creations for whatever was needed around the house. We would ride into the plaza in the center of town from our little house by the wide, featureless end of the lake, opposite the docks and lakeside shops that could be seen in the distance. Though the neighborhood has changed since then, the market always seems the same. People flock in, unload their wagon, perform the dances of buying and selling for an uninspired audience, and flock out again, wagons full of things of no greater value than those with which they came. Nothing is changed; nothing is solved. Yet, every week they repeat their tribute to civilization, returning home in preparation to do it again.

From my rooftop castle I can see out into the rolling hills. The people beneath me pay no heed to anything beyond the plaza walls. From up here the world is different. Each little piece of cloth is insignificant. It is but a small piece of a larger group, a single place in an entire world. What I see in the green hills and beyond is of more interest to me than the activities below, despite the fact that the market brings me here. I always dream of what may lie beyond the hills, what marvels and maybes sit out of sight. So

many roads lead away from here, yet I know none of them, save the long dusty stretch of rutted tan that winds around the lake, making its long and somber trip back to where it started, much as the comers and goers of the market.