

## The Smudge Theory

By A. C. Zito

You meet God. God is a pregnant woman with a HUGE pregnant belly. A belly with blues and greens and a white mist swirling all around it. You knew right away what it was. She had earth painted on her belly. But was it painted? Or was it actually *earth*?

She takes out your heart. It was painless. You thought it would hurt, but it felt more like a great weight had been lifted from your shoulders. It looks different then from what you expected it to look like. Instead of the fleshy red organ with veins and arteries hanging loose, a heart with not only red but blues, greens, yellows, oranges, pinks, purples, blacks, whites, grays, and colors you've never even seen before. It was so colorful. God begins pointing to different smudge marks. She tells you that one symbolizes your father, one your mother, one your spouse, one for each of your children, there are smudges for your exes, old lovers, friends, priests, work peers, people you forgot all about and people you wish you could forget you ever met. Some of the smudges are bigger than others. Some are so small you can barely recognize them unless looking extremely closely. You look at your wife's and your family's and their smudges make your heart look so colorful and beautiful! God then points to a smudge, and she says it's her that the smudge symbolizes. It is painted black, and it is so small it makes your heart drop. She then points to the biggest smudge. It's a gold smudge. She says that's the devil. That's your greed. What you made your life all about. The money.

"And this is what became of the inside of your heart." she says; she opens it up. Inside are worms and maggots squirming around, infesting your heart like a cancer. You see mold growing in the corners and broken teeth covered in blood that belonged to coworkers that you fired so you could reach to the top. But worst of all, inside your heart you saw the creature itself. The creature that burrowed its way deep into the crevices of your heart so that it could infest it and mutilate it into a diseased parasite that ate away at all your hopes and dreams. All the love you shared for your fellow human, gone. Nothing is left of what your heart once looked like or once was. And there, in the deepest recesses of your heart, was all that was left of it: the love, the hope and the faith you once shared for your fellow human being now tainted.

God threw your heart on the ground and stomped it into squishy red smithereens. A slime-covered worm made its out from the juicy redness, crawling out free from between a gap two of her toes shared. But the pregnant woman wouldn't even let the poor thing off with a warning. She took one last stomp and its squished remains were all that was left of it.

She put your hands on her belly and whispered:

"I love you," to you.

And the painting of earth on her belly changed.

Now painted in between your two hands as you held tightly to her pregnant belly was a painting of your new heart. No smudge marks were to be found. None but one. You already knew it was hers. It glowed bright like the first sunset you ever set your eyes on. You smiled at the smudge mark.

She said to you:

“I hope you like it,”

She then whispered with anger but with a beautiful passion:

“Don't mess this one up this time.” and she whisked you away. Away from the smashed remains of your former heart.