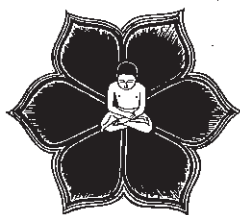


El / Ella

Book of Magic Love



MIGUEL SERRANO

*Translated from the Spanish
by Frank MacShane*

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ONE

The Himalayas

“*M*aster, I have remembered something from the future. I’ve seen myself wearing strange clothes and ornaments. I was preparing to fight in a war I knew nothing about. It was in a place which didn’t belong to our time at all.”

“What will come will come,” the master replied, “and be no better than now.”

“Master, this memory of the future has made me come to you here in the forest of Bundelkhand. I know you’ve lived here for a long time, and I therefore beg you to teach me the doctrine and practice of Tantric Kaula. You are the greatest master of all; you are Matsyendranatha.”

The guru, who was completely naked, his body covered with blue ashes, closed his eyes and remained silent for a long time. His right arm rested on a short wooden brace, and he sat in the lotus position shaded by an old fig tree. At length he opened his eyes, as though he were returning from a trip underground. He gazed steadily at the young man and stared into his eyes. The youth felt as though he was being opened up and examined in a most intimate way, leaving nothing untouched from his childhood to the present day. After a while, finding the experience too much, he lowered his eyes in fear and shyness.

“When you speak of your memory of the future, you’re probably thinking of transmigration or reincarnation. Maybe you

think I can help you fulfill your destiny. But the idea of re-incarnation isn't mentioned anywhere in the old texts. Rather it emerged from the detritus of the Flood and is linked to the primeval serpent and to the dark people of prehistoric times."

He then looked directly at the young man. "What else did you see while you were dreaming?"

"I saw myself getting ready to fight in a war," he answered. "I was carrying a sword."

"The sword represents knowledge. But before I can accept you as a disciple and begin to initiate you into the practice of Kaula, you must bring me a gift. What I require is the milk of a woman, mother's milk. We must begin all over again as if we were children."

Where would he find mother's milk? He would have to go to the entrance of the temple which was guarded by a statue of the god Ganesh, half elephant, half man, the son of Siva and Parvati. He'd have to bow down and ask that elephantine god for his help. The young man was wondering how to do this when he saw a priestess from the temple carrying flowers to place at the feet of the god. She was beautiful and smelled of sweet perfume. Her black hair was gathered under a garland of jasmine flowers.

"Don't go away," he said.

Her eyes were large and deep.

"I must have mother's milk."

"I'm not a mother and am not allowed to be one," she answered. "I'm a virgin. Still, give me your bowl."

The young man handed her the bowl, his eyes lowered.

"No, you must help me," she said. She made him stand up and took one of his hands in her own, and the young man saw there was a small white spot between two of her fingers. Leprosy, he thought. She uncovered her breast. "You must squeeze here," she said. But his hand trembled and he didn't know how. She showed him, and the virgin milk came out.

"Ganesh is giving you this milk," she said.

The young man tried to kneel down before the priestess, but she stopped him. Then she joined her hands together and said, "OM."

The young man was pleased but also a little sad, without knowing quite why.

Crossing the wide terrace enclosed by a gallery, he heard the sounds made by builders and sculptors cutting stone for the temple. The granite and marble shook with their blows and the air was full of dust. Alone under a marble gateway, a blind sculptor sat with a block of stone between his legs. He sensed the young man walking by with the bowl in his hands and, pretending he could see, he turned the blind sockets of his eyes to follow the youth as he walked toward the forest.

The master raised the bowl to his lips and drank, keeping his eyes closed in meditation. "You must also drink," he said, turning to the young man. "What is left is yours."

The young man sipped the milk nervously. It tasted of jasmine, and he could not help thinking about the priestess. Something of herself had become a part of him, and of the master as well, forming a bond among them. Surely he was now ready to be initiated.

"No," said the master, "you're not yet ready. I must first have your yantra."

"Master, who can draw my yantra?"

The master told him to visit Sudhir Ranjau Bhaduri and ask him to perform the task and reveal his inner nature. The young man therefore went to see him, thinking that he had heard the name before. Perhaps it was another memory from the future. He found Sudhir Ranjau Bhaduri seated inside his hut with a young boy who passed him his brushes, rinsing them beforehand in a brass bowl.

"I shouldn't do this," said the old man. "I ought to do your horoscope instead. The yantra is a secret inner portrait upon which your outer appearance is based. In order to describe your yantra, I must discover your inner vibrations and give them

colors. Then I must guess where the centers are that produce these vibrations. They represent your inner power and dictate the design of your yantra. They are like a set of musical instruments, tambourines and zithers which your master calls chakras, or lotus wheels. . . . But there is something absurd in my drawing your yantra, since you are trying to change it. I don't know whether what you are doing is natural or not, but if you succeed, you will be immortal. I will be your witness, if not now, in the future, in three hundred years or so."

The yantra was beautiful, painted in pale and somewhat indistinct colors, as though the old man knew that the music it gave forth would be soft but captivating.

The master also seemed to hear this music, for a strange expression came into his eyes when the young man returned to the forest. He became immediately engrossed in the yantra, reading it with great care and skill.

"No one knows who created the world, not even Brahma. Something must have upset the balance of forces for the world to be born. Perhaps it was the feminine principle, or wife, that did it. Nevertheless, despite our ignorance of the world's origins, we know at least of some beings who in ancient times tried to control the laws of fate by developing a countervailing set of laws. These strange people were called Siddhas, and they developed their secret knowledge in two cities of the Himalayas called Agharti and Champula. Anyone wishing to approach these cities had to walk backward, to signify his return to the point of origin.

"Although not even God knows who created the world, the Siddhas may have discovered the secret that is hidden in the sexual power of the female and may have made use of it."

The master continued his instructions to the young man: "As I sit under this tree I must tell you that what I am trying to say comes from a great distance. It was transmitted by the

serpent who survived the great Flood that destroyed the race of god-men for whom woman was not something outside but within, for whom male and female were one and not alien to each other. But then 'she' did something 'he' didn't know about, and the waters destroyed the land where the king was supreme priest. With horns on his head, sitting beneath a tree and surrounded by four emblematic animals, he meditated and directed the course of the stars. You must follow his example. Unless you reincorporate woman within you and sit by the roots of the tree surrounded by your animals, you will accomplish nothing. You'll only be a leaf blown by the wind."

After he spoke, the master thought it necessary to rise. He did so with the greatest difficulty. Having sat so long underneath the fig tree in the lotus position, his legs and feet had become mingled with the roots of the tree. Few understand the sacrifice a master imposes on himself when he accepts a disciple.

At daybreak the forest came to life, sending vibrations across the silent river to the temple roofs. The master led his disciple to the royal stables of Khajuraho. When they arrived, the stable boys prostrated themselves before them. They then ran away because no one had ever before seen Matsyendranatha in person.

A black mare with a white star on her forehead was standing in the stables. A powerful stallion came in and with great delicacy rubbed his nose against her feet and haunches. He then moved away and uttered a rich neigh as though he were master of the universe. The mare gazed at the stallion and the atmosphere grew tense and heavy, like the sky before the monsoon. The drama went on until, like a crack of thunder, the stallion leaped. And then an extraordinary thing happened: like a prehistoric god, the stallion lay stretched out along the mare's back. He was like a tattered doll with big yellow teeth, while the mare stood powerful and cunning, only slightly lowering her ears.

"Do you understand what has happened?" asked the master. The disciple was too disturbed to answer.

Later, under the fig tree, the master explained. "All that has to be changed. The stallion must be turned into a mare, man into a woman. There is no other way. You remember how full of joy the mare was, anticipating her strength even before anything happened? And then afterward it was she who was triumphant. This is the story of the race. Woman came from man, but once the two sexes became independent, it was inevitable that one would devour the other. That is what the universe is: someone gives and someone receives. There is always a sacrificial victim. Many people believe that the only way to avoid this cycle is asceticism and chastity. But this never works, for in one way or another the individual is devoured. Always the man's role is secondary. The mare devours the stallion who has impregnated her, the bee kills the drones, the primeval mother carries around her neck the primordial Lingam. Every mother, mare, goddess and woman is a devouress, and in one form or other every male is castrated and consumed." He paused. "To change all this we must redirect the tremendous energy that you saw in the stallion. We must restore the original principle of male passivity and female activity. The world was created not by the masculine principle but by the feminine. Love must learn to follow this course. Only those willing to learn how to love women in a different way, murdering them outwardly in order to permit an inner rebirth, will find the immortal city of Agharti.

"The key moment is when the semen is ejaculated. When the stallion ejaculates, he becomes impoverished. The role of the male appears to end while the female's begins. But semen is also soma and should be conserved. It should not spurt outward but inward. Outwardly it can only create children of the flesh, while inwardly it makes sons of the spirit. Outwardly it plays the mother's game; inwardly the male is impregnated and engenders the son of man.

"No sons of the flesh are born in this loveless love. There are only sons of the spirit, escaping cyclical life, who are created when the semen is driven inward, giving them eternal life."

In his doorway the blind sculptor tapped the stone caressingly. After a while he stopped, as though he were trying to listen to an echo within himself. Just then one of the priestesses of the temple placed flowers at the feet of the elephant god, Ganesh.

Meanwhile the master continued his discourse. "Semen is a visible aspect of the great power of which we are all a part. It is OM made into substance. It is the movement of the sun within your blood and of the sea of life within your body. It is also the word you use to communicate with the gods. You must therefore preserve it if you wish to enter Agharti."

The disciple said that he had seen statues of Siva and Parvati making love on the walls of the temple but he did not understand how the semen was to be withheld.

"You must discover this for yourself. You must transform a natural act into a ritual, changing it into something supernatural. Ordinary sexual life does not create magicians or Siddhas; it merely perpetuates the human race. You will therefore have to follow a different road, also in the company of a woman so that you will both be saved. If she is not with you, something will be left unfulfilled and incomplete. You will have attained nothing. Even at the ends of their lives, saints and ascetics continue to yearn for women. The technique you must follow is therefore not something you learn but something you must grow to understand. At the moment of ecstasy Siva remains motionless; he does not ejaculate his semen. She, Parvati, is the active one, for when woman does not receive, she gives. From her skin the woman transmits a substance which enters the man's blood and becomes a part of him. It creates a unity within him. The seed is planted, and he enters the city of Siddhas. Pure sexuality echoes a desire to return to the ancestral home. It is a return to unity: true sex is the nostalgia of the gods.

"You are carried beyond the realm of ordinary existence. The life of a Kaula magician goes against nature: it proceeds in the opposite direction."

The master then spoke of visiting the temple, but did not move from the shade of the fig tree. He explained that the temple was like the body of a man, and that as you go over the face of the earth, visiting sanctuaries from Mount Kailas in the Himalayas to Cape Comorin in the far south, you find that they are all the same. The gods live in all of them, and you can make offerings to them wherever you are. The sacred river flows through the human body, and the true Kailas is found within. Even the sky has the shape of a human body, and the stars reflect the centers of light that exist inside human beings. Those who travel externally to these heavenly bodies will only find empty planets. The real cosmic universe is an interior one. Every man should therefore accept the idea that he is also a temple. He must enter the labyrinth in order to find the central palace and throne of Parvati. It is necessary to go underground to discover this secret world and find the keys to this hidden continent. This is the only way to revive the ancient energy of the previous race of god-men. These submerged giants are thirsting for their resurrection. They control the course of the stars and the impulses of the human body, but no one is in touch with them. It is therefore essential to return to this lost land of the giants. The bridge that links the present with the past offers a clue to a real understanding of existence.

The master then spoke of the lotus flowers and of chakras. These exist even though they cannot be felt. They are invisible flowers symbolizing the possibility of the soul. The soul itself has a body called the Linga-sarira, but it must be created. A person is like a garden in the dark. There must be light in order to see the flowers. The light, called Kundalini, illumines the narrow passages that lead from one flower, one chakra, to another.

All this may seem unreal, but it is more real than what actually exists. Immortality is a flower which no one has ever seen. If it didn't exist, it would have to be invented.

The master then described the different chakras or lotus flowers in the human body, giving them their ancient names. He spoke of their color and the number of petals each one had, starting with the flower of the genitals at the base of the spine, and continuing up through the stomach, the heart, the throat and the space between the eyes until finally reaching the last, which is outside the head, like a halo, representing the place where Siva met Parvati. It is beyond the human body and can be reached only by crossing a diamond-studded lake in a submarine vessel guided by a blind sailor. This voyage is necessary to find the emptiness which may be inside or out. Between the eyebrows there is a flower with two petals like the wings of a dove. When this flower blossoms, the third eye opens and the gates of the city of Agharti come into view.

The master also spoke of other flowers, forbidden ones, which exist in other parts of the body, on the feet and at the knees, that generally don't open. These were other centers of consciousness representing the thoughts of the ancient god-men. A Kaula magician might open them, but without remaining too long in any of them.

Speaking always in a symbolic language and making analogies between what was within and without, the master then described the channels that link the various chakras. He said they were called nadis, and that they were filaments of the soul that carried the terrible energy of the ancient giants. He spoke of the force called Kundalini which sleeps like a serpent at the base of the tree. Kundalini represents a potential power capable of destroying the world of illusion in order to attain a higher level of reality. It has to be waked, created or invented. Together, the male and female are capable of arousing the sleeping Kundalini and letting it express itself. Both powers are necessary, walking hand in hand on the summit. But the final leap must be made alone.

Every part of this journey could be repeated in some other form, but only in appearance. Moreover, the challenge of the leap produces a profound doubt. This trip is not a linear journey

but is circuitous within each flower or chakra. The gardener stops, rests and eventually sleeps at the root of the tree in a dark cavern. Refreshed, he resumes his journey. Many times he falls back, only to rise once more so as to gain a sense of his own being, profiting from an alternation of movements backward and forward. In this process, he invents his own identity; he becomes his own father and son, which means that he is at once father and son.

A child is born. He is so frail and delicate a gust of wind or an evil thought could destroy him. The child of a man impregnated by woman, he is Linga-sarira, an astral body or invisible product of the mind. He becomes sublimated and transfigured when, through the magic alchemy of the Siddhas, a stream of semen penetrates the father's interior.

Some believe the woman is not needed, that this procedure is mental. Others assert it is only symbolic, involving the soul but not the body. But the Kaula practitioners are physical. When the feminine soul of the man marries the masculine soul of the woman, the body becomes the instrument of their union which must be tuned and played upon. This is especially true in this iron age when the physical body seems to control decisions. But the physical and spiritual must go together; each is necessary for the other.

For a long time the disciple obeyed his master's instructions. He practiced the rituals he had been taught and tried to purify the passages through which the magic fluids were to pass. He learned how to swallow a long strip of linen and to eject it from his rectum. He discovered how to take in water through his penis so as to prepare for the reabsorption of semen during the magic ritual. Finally he concentrated on the point between the eyes and learned how to stop thinking and breathing.

One day he returned to the statue of Ganesh at the doorway of the temple and bowed down to touch his forehead to the stone pavement. When he looked up, he saw once again the

priestess standing before him, smelling of fresh flowers and rich perfumes.

"Why do you look so sad?" she asked.

"What else can I be," he answered, "when despite my efforts to get rid of feelings I still have them?"

"Who is your guru?" she inquired.

"Matsyendranatha."

She then asked whether he received lessons on a mystical plane, since no one had ever seen his teacher in person.

The disciple replied that, on the contrary, Matsyendranatha lived in the woods of Bundelkhand and that he sat beneath a fig tree. When the priestess seemed doubtful, he offered to take her to him so that she could see for herself. They walked together through the city and entered the forest. And then gradually the disciple, who had been so confident, began to hesitate. It took him some time to find the road and the fig tree he knew so well. Once they arrived, he had to admit there was no sign of the master.

"You see," said the priestess, "I was right after all. Your Matsyendranatha doesn't exist. It makes me wonder whether you've learned the true doctrine after all. Maybe you've been deceived by your imagination."

The disciple answered that perhaps Matsyendranatha wanted to hide and had therefore made himself invisible or turned himself into a tree.

"It doesn't matter," said the priestess. "I will show you the possibilities of your own body."

The young man was unprepared for this and told her that his master would not approve.

"You mustn't worry," she said. "Your body is a temple."

When they returned, she placed a jasmine wreath at the feet of Ganesh and began to lead the disciple toward the dark, cool interior of the temple. Before entering, however, she paused and decided to show him the outside of the temple. All about were carved the aspects of Maya or illusion. On the lower levels bas-relief figures fought, wounded one another, took pleasure

and loved. Each of the eighty-four positions of love-making were reproduced. But the lovers carved on the walls were not men but gods. The distant look on the faces of the male figures was not human. Moreover, the love-making positions were never spontaneous or natural: each was part of a ritual. The women helping the central couple received no pleasure from the caresses they gave and received. Rather they were like the minor accompanying instruments in a piece of music. They kept the tempo or rhythm but remained in the background. It was a world of barren love which in the harsh sunlight echoed the stone wall of human existence. It was at once Maya and the steep rock face of Mount Kailas, upon which each configuration represented a god making love. It also reproduced the body of a man.

The disciple recognized the temple from his master's earlier description of it. It was built from a single piece of rock, like Siva's mountain. Before they went inside, the priestess asked him to look carefully at the statues already made by the Khajuraho sculptors. She wanted him to see how the sculptors had recorded the mystery of the gods. They represented a mixture of the divine with the demoniacal, and the tension between them carries the message of this extraordinary art. It comes from a mysterious and illicit zone whose effect is reproduced on the faces of the couple. Like stone leaves on a cosmic tree, their bodies are agitated by an alien wind. Ordinary people will never understand their meaning. They will look for pious explanations to shake off the frightening vision these statues represent: but they will not succeed. This vision has its own vitality and comes from another universe. It is indestructible. Siva's face at the moment of ecstatic coitus expresses pleasure and sadness, piety, isolation, tenderness and withdrawal, all at the same time. With one hand he delicately supports his lover, protecting her, while with the other he traces a ritual gesture which passes on his message from one generation to another. The interlaced bodies of these stone figures present a vision that will expire only with the end of the human race. The spirit which built this temple corresponds to a moment of divine decadence. Only gods

enamored of human beings could favor this art. The sculptors who carved these figures must have been mediums, blind vehicles for their message. Perhaps these sculptors were sleepwalkers who carved while they were away from their cells at night.

All of the temples at Khajuraho run from north to south, except the temple of Siva, the Chonsant Jogini, which goes from east to west, suggesting something special. Moreover it is carved from a single block of dark granite, whereas the other temples are built of tan or red stone blocks. The Chonsant Jogini forms a mandala that is difficult to penetrate, and its doorway is guarded by the statue of Ganesh. In most Hindu temples the worshipper is enveloped by the structure and can leave only by the main entrance. At Khajuraho, however, the innermost rooms of the temples have three small passages that lead to the outside. In the temple of Siva these doors open to the west.

She took him by the hand as they entered. "You are now walking inside your own body," she said, "looking for the entrances and exits of the mandala, which is a maze containing all your flowers. We're now in the first room and must walk across it, making a prayer at each step. Say 'OM.' "

They moved in, and the air was heavy with sandalwood smoke. On both sides were lateral cells with double doors. The priestess pointed to one of them: "This is where I sleep," she said. "I also prepare myself here, and offer sacrifices."

Then they entered the sanctum sanctorum known as the gabhagriha. It was like the crater of a volcano. The young man was overcome by a whirlwind of feelings and threw himself onto the floor, repeating mantrams, one after another. From the center of the floor, which represents the yoni or sexual organ of the primordial wife, rose the erect stone Lingam, symbolizing the phallus of Siva. The two were united there, creating the androgynous Siva Ardhanasisvara. The granite column was polished by the priestesses, who washed it with sacred oils and

animal blood representing the menstrual flow of the wife. A brass horn sounded from time to time. The three doors on the rear wall were closed.

Then from somewhere within the temple a door opened and the blind sculptor came out. He approached the Lingam and sat down beside it with his legs crossed. The priestess stepped forward and began a series of ritual movements, avoiding certain positions and searching for others with intense concentration, as though the air around her were a structure whose entrance she was trying to find. When she approached the Lingam she poured scented oil over it and then turned to the disciple and told him to do the same. He stood up as though he were in a dream. She gave him the oil and he poured it over the granite Lingam and yoni. The three then lay down in the same position beside the dark column in the center of the room. She then got up again and gave the blind sculptor a basin of water. "I am the river," she said, "whereas you are both the stone in the middle of the river and the man who carves it. You foretell the future."

The blind sculptor rose and poured the consecrated water over the disciple's head. "You are a fish in the river," he said, "and you must move to the west."

The priestess spoke again. "Even before the first stone was carved," she said, "the temple was already here. It's always been here. All that happened is that it became visible. Within the temple walls the demiurge gazes at herself in the mirror. You'll find her absorbed in herself and admiring her vanishing beauty. You must learn all these things, and many more as well, for soon you will have to pass through those three doors toward something else."

Once again the blind sculptor approached them. He ran his fingers over the faces of the priestess and the disciple. He did so slowly in order to record them in the memory of his hands.

The disciple returned to the forest and sat down under the fig tree. No one was there, and he knew the master would

never return. He stayed there for many years. He subjected himself to the most difficult disciplines intended to purify the body and discovered many new ways to do so. Sometimes he believed the Siddhas were guiding him away from the city of Agharti and he felt that he was caught up in a battle between opposed forces. Then for a time it would seem to him that the earth was feminine. In dreams he would see twisted rocks trying to take on animal forms, attempting to cry out in words their desire for the warmth of animal life. He would call out to them in his dream, urging them to hurry up so that in turn their animal brothers could become men.

Then a god with horns and crooked feet appeared, playing a flute. He began to dance and sing: "The vineyard is blue, the wine is red, the blood of the dancers is hot. Come and join us in the forest of Vrindavan!"

The disciple would then close his eyes and pray that he might be relieved of this burning passion.

Through the years he encountered the whole pantheon of the gods, and he sang and prayed to them all as he prepared himself, almost unconsciously, for the ritual that was to come.

Gradually the disciple became convinced that the priestess of the temple had died. By this time he had discovered the technique of looking and seeing; that is, he had learned the difference between the two, how to really see a flower, a tree, an animal or even a thought. To do this, he had to block all ideas and feelings out of his mind, so that he might see what could be revealed by an impersonal beam of light. His world became transformed as he began to hear the language of animals and rocks and to distinguish between various colors of light. He grew to understand that everything has a soul of its own and an independent exterior vitality.

To reach this stage, he first had to learn about his own body and become acquainted with the instrument which allowed him to see and hear. One day when he awoke from one of his

dreams, he asked himself whether he would see and hear if he had no eyes or ears. To find out, he covered up his exterior body from head to toe. He then began to examine himself from within, looking at his heart, his lungs, his veins. Gradually he moved up the tree of his spinal column until he reached his skull. Then he opened his eyes and saw the world for the first time.

He used the same technique to look inside, to calm his body and look at himself as though he were a stranger. When he reached the top of the tree, he did not open his ordinary eyes but the third eye between the eyebrows. It was an act of unfolding. The petals opened, and the bird resting there spread its wings.

Deeply concentrating on this spot between his eyes, he stopped all thoughts and blocked all images. He sat in the lotus position and breathed rhythmically. At length he felt a slight movement at the base of his spine as though a mouth had opened. The feeling moved up his spine and he felt coolness gradually spread through his body. Rhythmic waves moved upward, seeming to expand and destroy his body at the same time. As the waves of burning ice reached his throat and moved even higher, he felt as though he were about to be pushed into a vacuum that would consume his ego and obliterate his identity. He thought he was going to be torn apart by opposing forces. He was overcome with terror: he was on the threshold of death, standing at the edge of the abyss. He resisted with all his strength, for he felt something trying to push him over. And then he crossed over in a fiery chariot. For a while he knew nothing, but before long he felt himself falling. He went down faster and faster until at last he floated gently through dark clouds, turning around and around like a sacrificial victim being roasted over the flames. He rose again, and crossed over into a region of thin, high air, where he felt himself light and free in the luminous blue heights.

Then all of a sudden he was once again a prisoner within

four walls, already missing the freedom he had begun to enjoy. He looked at his hands and had the feeling that everything had happened in a second. At the same time, he had lived for centuries in remote periods and submerged worlds. He now had the wisdom with which to open the secret chamber where the Bird of Paradise lives.

But it wasn't as easy as he had hoped. Each time the process was different, and he met new difficulties. He was unable to make the leap as he had done before. Even though he took other trips with his alter-ego or astral body, visiting different regions and meeting beings from other worlds, something always happened to him at the edge of the moment and he couldn't go on. His three-dimensional mind or ego retained its identity, and fought to correct what was happening to him in this alien world. Two opposed forces or worlds battled each other. One universe was ancient and submerged; the other floated on the surface of the waves.

Then one day he was overcome by powerful vibrations which rose through him as from the base of a tree. He felt the substance rising rapidly up the trunk and passing into the branches by way of the secret channels, turning the wheels and making the flowers bloom. But upon reaching the top, the fluid was stopped: the ego again asserted itself. The son of life opposed the son of death. The ego wished to direct events and order them in its favor. Once more the disciple found himself caught between the two forces, half-conscious and paralyzed because his conscious mind was only partly functioning. Since the exit seemed to be blocked, the vibrations that had been interrupted by the ego became increasingly violent. He felt he was being destroyed in a whirlwind and he began to see blood spots.

At that moment a basin of water appeared at his side. As though obeying a secret command, he plunged his invisible hands into it and splashed water over his body. The vibrations diminished and he was soon able to move again. Did the water

come from the river that flows down from the head of Siva on the top of Mount Kailas?

Exhausted by these experiences, the Kaula disciple didn't even want to open his eyes again. He felt he was losing all his strength. It was as though he had climbed a mountain and was slipping down the rock face, covered with cold sweat. Then in the shadows he saw a woman coming toward him. She leaned over him and wiped his face with the edge of her sari.

He couldn't tell whether it was an illusion or not. The image was momentarily clear, but soon vanished. Then he heard a voice saying: "I've come to take you away."

Together they lived in a jungle hut and he acted as her servant. He did the chores, preparing the food and bringing water from a nearby fountain. Sometimes she would leave without telling him where she was going. He would wait for her patiently, and when eventually she came back he would be happy. She told him about her perfumes and ornaments; in turn he made her a tiara of flowers and a necklace of turquoises and sapphires. She taught him how to anoint her with perfumes and powders. She would then look at herself in the looking-glass just as the carved goddesses did on the walls of the temple. When she came back from her mysterious trips, he would wash her feet in a basin of water he always had ready for her at the door of the hut.

When night fell, the forest was alive with whispers. They could hear the howling of the hyenas and the wind beating against the trees. In a clear, sweet voice she would sing songs describing divine love. Then they would lie down outside under a sky heavy with stars. She would sleep on one side, placing her head in the palm of her hand. He stretched himself out at her feet.

During this period it seemed as though each of them was living in a dream world or was acting out the events of some

interior life. He felt the woman was becoming a goddess like one of those carved on the stone walls of the temple. The moon would wax and wane and still he slept at her feet. She would tell him about her childhood, about the games she had played with other children.

She also asked him about his childhood and so he told her about it. He spoke of two childhoods, one taking place just then, the other relating to a life in a future country in the southern part of the world. She was not surprised by this, but looked at a distant point in the treetops and spoke of a city known by the name of Ur. It was there, she said, that she had played with the other children.

One night she asked him not to sleep at her feet any longer but to lie down to her left in the bed. The disciple obeyed, crossed his hands on his chest and gazed up at the deep sky. She lay on her right side. The next day she went out at dawn and returned late at night. He was waiting for her, listening for her to come through the jungle. When she arrived, he rose and anointed her feet.

That night she asked him to sleep on her right side, and he felt her perfumed breast next to his cheek. Nevertheless, he kept his gaze fixed upon the night sky. There he thought he made out the body of Krishna dancing in the sky-blue garden of Vrindavan, surrounded by all the milkmaids of the universe but dancing with only one.

Days and months went by. She kept taking her mysterious trips, but each time she came back. Once he asked her where she had been, and she told him she had been visiting her husband. More and more he realized that she was transforming herself into some kind of energy inside him. She gave life to memories he had long carried dormant within him. One night he dreamed about snow-covered mountains. They were not the Himalayas but were in the southern part of the world. There was a woman there with blue eyes and blond hair who looked through him as though he were transparent. He woke up with

his face covered with tears and realized what he was dreaming about wouldn't happen for another thousand years.

She wiped off his tears with her sari and anointed him with the same care with which he had bathed her feet earlier in the evening. "Why are you crying?" she asked.

For the first time he looked at her as if she were a stranger. "Because I know my wheel is going to turn for another day," he answered.

"The wheel of Padmasambhava, who was married on top of the Tree of Life, also continued to turn," she replied. "The secret marriage is a product of pure mental concentration. It comes from the light of a single star. You gaze at the star, and if it sends you words spoken by your love, you are married forever."

"I'm afraid I have already been married in this way in the future," he answered.

That evening she taught him how to kiss. Lying naked on the grass, she called him to her side. She embraced him with her long arms and brought her lips to his. Her kiss was so gentle it was almost unnoticeable in the heavy scent of jasmine.

The following day she left, and he knew she would not return that night. He lay down under the tree and began to concentrate. Suddenly he had a doubt: was he dreaming his own life?

On the fine wood floor a new yantra was drawn in gold and silver, with an outline of colored chalk and powdered sandalwood. It had nine entrances, for although it represented the universe, it also represented a man's body. It was a maze. Between the yantra and the entrance to the temple, a triangle was drawn, and then, one by one, a circle, a hexagon and a square. Meanwhile old women and wise men consulted the stars and the moon for a propitious day. Over the yantra stood a tripod on which a chalice was balanced. Several exquisite dishes and two carafes of wine and water were on the floor.

When night came, the Kaula disciple arrived wearing a white tunic. His hair fell over his shoulders and smelled of powders, ashes and oil. He caught sight of the yantra and began a dance that was supposed to represent the flight of the Bird of Paradise. He danced around the yantra looking for the particular private entrance that related to himself, and when he found it, he stopped.

The doors then opened, and the witnesses came in accompanied by their women. They placed themselves around the circle with ritualistic flourishes, carefully avoiding the center. There was a long wait before the woman appeared, but finally she came in, attended by her assistants and wearing a long cloak. Her eyes were closed and she looked as though she were asleep, but she entered the yantra without hesitation or confusion. Her assistants did so as well.

He and she then sat down together. After a moment a voice was heard ordering that the feast should begin. The food was consecrated with mantrams sung by the servants and witnesses. The water and the wine were then consecrated with elaborate gestures, turning them into ambrosia, which is at once the blood of the sun and the moon, and the sperm which brings about the second creation of the twice-born.

The wine was then poured into the chalice, and the mantram of the sun was recited:

Kang, Bang, Tapinyai, Namah
Kang, Bang, Tapinyai, Namah
Gang, Phang, Ngang, Nang
Chang, Dhang, Jhang, Tang, Nyang
Nang, Thang, Dang, Thang, Dang

After that, the glass was filled three-quarters full with wine, the rest with water. Then came the mantram of the moon:

Ung, Soma, Mandalaya,
Shodasha, Kalatmane, Namah

The wine was now turned into nectar, destroying the curse which had made it poisonous for centuries. It was now a magic potion which allowed those who drank it to cross the threshold. For this reason it was known as the blood of the sun and the moon.

Flowers representing the man and the woman were then thrown into the liquid, and they began to drink from two glasses, passing them back and forth. Another mantram beginning with the letter G in honor of Ganesh was recited. With the first glass of wine, the couple ate cooked meat; with the second, fish; with the third, cereal. The ritual had transformed these forbidden foods into the flesh of a god. As they drank the fifth glass of wine, the witnesses sang and a brass horn was blown. After that, there was no more drinking. An invisible voice described the fragrant forests and flowery meadows of Mount Kailas, where Siva and Parvati danced during their magic wedding.

The Kaula disciple and the woman then rose, letting their clothes fall to the ground. A servant brought a basin of water. As they began to bathe each other, the chorus described the body of the woman: it was a pleasure garden, a temple of the sun and moon. Her stomach was a sacrificial altar; her vulva held the fiery dreams of two worlds. Her hair was sacramental grain, while the soft fuzz on her arms and legs was like summer wheat. Her full breasts were volcanoes which strike fear among those who live in the fields below, and her long legs were roads along which the pilgrim passes. Her eyes were stars, her lips milk and honey.

She then spoke: "I have fire within my lips. Come and drink it with yours. Be quick, my love; do not hesitate."

Then for a moment they seemed to fall into a trance because the water was pure ambrosia.

After leaving the bath they were crowned as king and queen, holding staffs or scepters in their hands. The disciple then sat down with his legs crossed. The woman was lifted up by her

assistants, who held her with her legs apart. They raised her to the level of the disciple's face, and then gradually lowered her along his body, touching all its different centers or flowers, until she finally slipped smoothly over his lingam.

The man felt as though he had penetrated the woman to her deepest interior region. She then began a slow rhythmic movement, while her assistants, who were also naked, reproduced the gestures and actions that are carved on the temple walls of Khajuraho. They were an ensemble, moving together in a rising cadence, while someone sang:

Pure man
only woman remains
when everything else is lost
All the others have died
even the open eyes of the Great One
have closed

The rhythm increased and grew more intense.

The scourge of Smara
plays with fire
and dances on funeral pyres
She wears a crown of human skulls
Bless her, praise her!
She gives control
She guides the vague
She delights the brothers of Kaula
She leads them
weeping with joy
to a lake full of nectar
and to the top of Mount Kailas
Bless her, praise her!

For a moment, she seemed to be losing control and began to cry out. But then her lips found the hero's, and she played rapidly on him with her tongue. The chorus continued:

Horror and beauty
Her body is Durga's forest
Daughter of Matanga
Wife of Brahma
Kumari, Lakshmi
Pure, pure

Concentrating with all his force on the space between his eyebrows, he participated in every detail of the drama, feeling the woman entirely from within, his lips on hers, her legs embracing him and her arms around his neck. While embracing her, he also tried to protect her from herself, by quietly making a sign with his free hand. But the maddening rhythm of the woman nearly undid him, taking him along with her in its frenzy. It was the moment of his greatest trial, and he knew he must discover a way out through some new inspiration. At that moment he thought of the dead priestess, and as he did so, his semen penetrated himself, moving inward toward the base of the tree, where it wakened the fiery serpent. Like liquid flame, it moved up the trunk of the tree, opening the flowers of his garden along the way and releasing cosmic music.

He then opened his eyes and with infinite tenderness held the woman and calmed her.

But the feast was not yet over, since the witnesses had to dine, and their celebration was his own flesh.

TWO

The Pyrenees

*I*t was festival time in the city. People were singing in the streets, and the balconies were covered with flowers. Through one of the narrow cobblestone alleys a knight was pulling his horse along by the bridle. He kept running into people rattling tambourines, blowing trumpets and playing flutes. They all wore bright costumes. In an arcade he met a young girl and asked her what was happening. She told him it was a fiesta in honor of May, and then she added, "It may be the last one we'll have, because Friar Domingo has banned the nightingale." She explained that the nightingale told her whether her lover would visit her when her husband was away. The flowers were supposed to keep evil away from Carcassonne.

"Tell me," said the knight, "do you know where Archdeacon Sans Morlane lives? I want to see him."

She told him that he was a Cathar in hiding from the Inquisition. She also said it would be particularly hard to find him since everyone was in disguise for May Day. Husbands were lovers and lovers husbands. Everything was topsy-turvy.

"That's the way life really is," murmured the knight.

Just then an old man who had overheard the conversation came up to them. "This is the ancient feast of the Queen of the May," he announced. He then took off his mask, turned into a youth and kissed the girl. It became evident that the youth was

really a girl and that the other young girl the knight had questioned was returning her kisses with passion. "I'll never know who you are, but I know I love you," she said. It turned out she was a troubadour.

In the evening the knight finally succeeded in meeting Sans Morlane. He found him in the basilica near the left-hand door, wearing a blue cape and standing on a gravestone. The knight approached and told him he wanted to go to Montsegur.

"Are you a Cathar?" he asked. "Have you received the Consolamentum?"

"No," he replied, "but I've had a dream of love. I've seen her beckoning me on the other side of a drawbridge. She was trying to tell me a secret. I've got to cross that bridge so I can enter one of the five gates of the castle."

"But Montsegur has only two entrances," he answered, "one on the north and one on the south. In fact, there's really only one, since the northern entrance is reserved for those who are known as the Perfect Ones."

"I kept hearing two names in my dream," the knight persisted, "Montabor and Montsegur."

"But are you a Cathar?"

"Of course. How else could I know your name, know about your death and see you standing here on your tombstone?"

"You're right," he said. "Only someone who lives in the future can visit here without endangering us. Very well, you should go to Fanjeaux, where the last Cathar lives. It will take you seven hundred years to find him. His name is Roques Marceau. You should also try to see Esclarmonde de Foix."

The knight then left the flowery city of Carcassonne and rode toward Fanjeaux, passing through patches of mist and hearing sounds of war preparations along the way. Finally, in an isolated place he found the last Cathar, Roques Marceau. He looked into his eyes and there was no need to say anything. The two men recognized each other.

"We've met before," he said. "Haven't you already come to

see me, to have your horoscope read or to have me sketch the colors of your soul? The boy who hands me my brushes isn't here just now."

"No, I've only come to ask the way to Montsegur."

"Always asking about mountains. I told you once before that Montsegur is not outside but inside. Why do you keep searching in the external world?"

"I must. Besides, I also want to see Esclarmonde. Didn't she build Montsegur?"

"Yes," he replied, "she did what her dreams told her to do." Roques Marceau then led the knight to a place in the Rua de Castello where seven hundred years earlier the castle of Fanjeaux had stood.

"But there's nothing here but ruins," said the knight; "hardly one stone on another."

"You've come back too late," he replied. "It's been centuries since the castle of Montsegur was captured and destroyed."

The knight paused for a while, looking at the ruins and wondering whether he was dreaming of the past or the future.

His meditations were soon interrupted by the last Cathar. "Since you're here," he said, "I'll tell you a secret. It's really your own destiny. At the bottom of Montsegur a beautiful girl lies asleep. No one has ever wakened her. She is being kept asleep there by the Perfect Ones, who are waiting for a savior to come from far away. When she wakes, Montsegur will be destroyed and the Perfect Ones will die in the flames."

"But I've come to save Montsegur, not to destroy it. I certainly won't wake her up."

"The Perfect Ones know what they're doing; they don't make mistakes. They act according to their destiny and are guided by someone else who thinks and dreams their existence. Perhaps they are guided by this girl. For them the destruction of Montsegur would be a triumph. Therefore you must go to this girl and make her your mistress. That's the only way to save Montsegur now."

Deeply troubled, the knight left the last Cathar. He was hungry and tired, and went to an inn, where he asked for wine and bread. A troubadour sat at a nearby table. "Long ago," he said, "we carved temples, but now we make them in our verses."

"You believe in reincarnation? Don't you know it's forbidden?"

"The Perfect Ones believe in it," he replied, "and that's enough for me. Just now we're not allowed to mention it in our songs, but if Montsegur survives, you'll see the idea widely accepted, even though the Perfect Ones doubt whether it should be extended to everyone. Only those who have received the Consolamentum really understand it."

"Have you received it?"

"I'm blind," said the troubadour.

"Why don't you sing us a song, then?"

And so the troubadour began:

I shall build a castle
as carefully as I can
with trees and flowers
and gardens full of birds
In the tall towers
of the castle up above
the knight will find his lady
and symbols of his love.

The first door is open
but the second's always closed
That's to let her test
the devotion of the knight
to see if he is worthy
to awaken her delight.

The open doors and windows
let the cool air in,
for the walls are dark and heavy
like love without an end
Even the open fire seems cold
compared to the flame of love.

Whoever gains this palace
finds peace at the last
No foe will succeed
in breaking down its walls
This is the sacred message
I bring from afar away.

The troubadour stopped. Opposite him the knight had fallen asleep with his head on his arms, hunched over the wooden table. He was dreaming of the drawbridge. A girl dressed in white appeared on the other side. She was calling to him: "Hurry, cross the bridge. You and I are one."

Afterward the knight wandered alone in the mountains, where he eventually came upon a cave. There he stayed for days and months. The troubadour would come and bring him food, and after a while he became a continual though unobtrusive companion. One day he told the knight he had done well to stay in a cave. He said that the Perfect Ones carved signs on the walls of their caves centuries ago. They made pictures of human faces, fish and doves.

Little by little the knight began to perceive a face on the rock wall. It was a woman's, and strangely familiar. The man was alarmed, not knowing who had carved it, or who it represented, but something made him adore it.

In the distance a stream ran by, and in the evening the knight would listen to it. He thought he heard voices coming from a faraway time and place. Meanwhile, in the dark air of his cave hung a message he could not understand.

Once again the troubadour began to sing:

In the words of Percival
when he was still alive
"Be strong and brave. Don't
ask whom you serve
else you'll soon lose
the lance and the Grail."

When I see you, Lady,
I forget all else
I only want to speak, to beg
But this I cannot do.
I live all day in dreams.

Encouraged by the thin air of the cave, the knight also began to live in dreams. Little by little he became obsessed by the face he saw on the cavern wall. He would repeatedly ask it questions. Then finally the shadowy face began to loosen itself from the wall. As this went on, the image of a woman's body began to take shape at the entrance of the cave. It didn't have a face but approached him and went up to the stone face, which it lifted up and placed on its own body.

"Now I can finally speak," it said. "I will speak in the name of all the others because I am the master of their masters. I control the Perfect Ones in all their being. I come from a great distance. With the help of the Cathars and the troubadours I shall take possession of this whole region. I am the Mother, and I alone know the secret."

The knight believed he had heard these words in some other place and grew anxious to meet the Perfect Ones and ask them directly. Then he remembered that the troubadour had told him to hurry, since what he was dealing with might easily disappear. Moreover, the Cathars were not likely to reveal their secrets to strangers. He then went out to the edge of the cave and shouted for the troubadour, but all he heard was the echo of his own voice. Finally he fell asleep on the grass.

At dawn the troubadour brought him goat's milk. The knight asked him where he'd been and told him how he'd called out for him. He then asked how much longer he would have to remain in the cave: he was anxious to go to Montsegur. There was little time left, for the castle was under siege. He was desperate to be on his way.

The troubadour replied that it took at least twenty years of training to be ready. "How long have you been here?" he asked.

"A few centuries," answered the knight. "Let me see, we are

now in the year 1244, and I came here from Asia in 900. Yet in a sense I feel I've been here only a few minutes."

Spring and summer passed by with the help of the troubadour. The power of art over nature was enough to sing the time away and jumble the seasons. Here is one of his songs:

When the days grow long in May
I listen to the nightingale
and when I walk at dusk
I consider my love, so far away.
I'm so sad and bent with desire
that neither song nor flower
cheers my wintry heart.

Snow began to fall, and icicles formed at the entrance of the cave. Nevertheless the knight did not feel cold. He wasn't really there any more. His body felt like an icicle, but his mind traveled, and moved with the swiftness of a living bird.

His first flight took him to the foot of a mountain where he began to climb a narrow path. Far above he could see a stone house. After a while he entered a small courtyard containing a pair of gates that guarded a tunnel leading into the mountain. He left his horse outside and opened the gates. Inside, the passageway was lit by a light that seemed to have no source. At the end of the tunnel there was a round room. A small door opened, and the knight entered. Inside, the room was brightly lit with mirrors that rose tier on tier to the top of the mountain. The knight realized he was not involved in personal or historical time. He was climbing a mountain of the mind on the other side of an event, passing through centuries, in the light's shadow. He stared up through the long passage that led to the top of the mountain, and there he saw someone looking at him from one of the windows of the stone house. This person said, "Traveler, go back; return to your own time."

Below, at the foot of the mountain, stretched a lake of deep green water.

Yet even if there were no relationship to the time or place of Montsegur, the knight's adventures must have had something to do with it, otherwise he could not have continued as he did. Once again he undertook his quest for Montsegur, and he found it in a special sense, even though he made a mistake in time. What he saw at the top of the mountain were the ruins of the castle of Montsegur. All that remained were a few stone walls. He climbed up from the foot of the mountain to look at them. It was a brilliant blue day, and the light made the snow luminous. After a while he passed by a stone inscribed with a date and a few words. He continued on, climbing up the steep hillside. It became increasingly difficult as he pushed through the snow and ice, and in the end he decided he had to go back down. He returned in a dismal mood. From time to time he would stop to look back at the stone ruins at the top of the mountain.

When he reached the place where he had first glimpsed the ruins, he paused to look at them for the last time. He realized he had not seen a single person or animal all day, only the old stone walls of Montsegur. Then he thought he saw something reaching out from those ruins toward the blue sky. It looked as though a pair of arms were praying or imploring someone for help. As he watched he felt he was receiving a message from another world, a region of extraordinarily pure light sending him a sign of love. The sight of these stone arms, whether they existed or not, silhouetted against the snow of the mountain peaks, moved him deeply, and he accepted the signal, not daring to interrupt the vision with a gesture of any kind. It was true he had not reached the summit. He had come at the wrong time. But the experience made him realize that his effort had been recognized. They would not let him reach the top, but they expected him to try. With this understanding, the knight understood that he was not yet prepared for the ultimate test. He would have to go back to the cave and contemplate the Mother's face.

When he returned, he discovered that the face had disappeared. He looked everywhere for it, following the fissures and scraping aside the snow and ice with his bare hands. Then he began to doubt whether a woman had ever come into the cave and put the head on her own body, like a mask. But in the midst of his doubts a new figure appeared. She came into the cave with bare feet, wearing a long white gown which nearly reached the ground. Without touching the stalactites, she made her way into the interior of the cave and walked over to the place where the woman's face had been. As she walked, her eyes were open and her arms hung down by her sides.

"I've come down from the mountain even though I am asleep. I've been sleeping for ages and have been waiting for you to wake me up. Unless you do that here in your cave, Montsegur will never be destroyed."

"But I've come to defend Montsegur," exclaimed the knight.

"You won't be saved until it's destroyed," she replied. With her arms extended she moved toward the knight. As she approached, she seemed to emanate a perfume of flowers from another world, a distillation from ancient tombs. The knight trembled and tears ran down his cheeks. When he looked at her hand in the half-light of the cave he saw a little white spot between her fingers.

Leprosy, he thought. I've seen it in another world.

With that he knelt down before the woman. "I'll do what you want," he said. "I'll obey your wishes and follow you about. Then one day I'll awaken you and Montsegur will be destroyed. I don't want any help from God unless it comes through you."

She had slept for more than three centuries at the base of the mountain on which the castle of Montsegur was built. The Perfect Ones had found her sleeping there and had left her alone because they knew that once she was disturbed, their

castle would be destroyed. They were aware this would eventually happen and were serene about it. At times they almost wished for it.

Few knew of the room where she lay, or the secret passage that led to it at the foot of the mountain. It was a dark, bare room and she was stretched out on a stone platform and covered with a transparent veil, like a bride. Her arms were crossed on her breast, her hair hung down on either side and her feet were bare. She looked alive enough to make people realize she was only asleep.

Sometimes in the middle of the night she would open her eyes and unfold her hands. She would gather up her hair and move about the room. She even walked up the passageway that led to the top of the mountain. The Perfect Ones who guarded the castle knew immediately when she had risen from her bed, or tomb, at the foot of the hill. They did nothing. They would merely watch with ecstasy and wonder, overcome by the mystery of her existence. More than one knight guarding the castle sighed as he watched her walk along the battlements or pause at a sentry fire as though she were warming herself. Then with her open blind eyes she would stare out over the valley and river below in hope of finding the knight who would come at last.

After their first encounter she went away for a long time. The troubadour then came with his lute, sat down next to a tree outside the cave and began to speak: "You're now the suppliant. What you are going through was revealed to me by the first troubadour. He received the message from a falcon perched on a golden branch of one of the oldest trees in Eden." He then repeated the message he had heard: "Only he who is prepared will reach Montsegur." And with that he left.

Finally she came. Standing asleep in the snow outside the cave, she started to speak to the knight. "Let's sit and talk," she said. "You can do what you want with me. I won't defend myself."

The knight responded quietly. "It's I who am at your feet, hoping to be a mirror for your beautiful image. I hope somehow that my words will get through to your dreams. Your beautiful whiteness and purity justify my long pilgrimage. Moreover, I can see bloodstains and wounds on your delicate feet. They're also covered with sand from the deserts you've been crossing for centuries. Your long legs are like the columns of a temple or like the long paths I walk along. Your stomach is the valley of the moon where ancient tribes celebrate their ritual. Your breast is the summit of the mountain where you sleep, your forehead is like the crest of the moon seen from the northern gate of Montsegur. Your eyes are a bridge I've not yet crossed but which brought a message that reached me during the darkest night. Your pale hands and fingers are scratched by the rough tombs you've struggled to open for centuries." He then fell silent and she approached him with a shudder. She opened her arms and stretched out her hands in search of his face. Her eyes were open, but they looked beyond him into the night.

"O my lover," she said, "if ever you become mine . . . if ever a night comes when I may lie down by your side and clasp you in my naked arms. I give you all my love, my eyes, my life." Her hands found his face. She pulled him toward her very gently, and her lips touched his like a momentary feather of snow.

Then she left, passing over the surface of the ice as though walking along a ray of moonlight.

The troubadour continued to bring him food. He told him the castle of love had five entrances and that three remained to be discovered. He also added that he would sing no more because there was nothing more to add to what the woman had already said.

The knight now entered a new stage of delight. He was filled with ecstasy, and his days and nights were marked by a delicate awareness. He walked through the white forest and

whenever he was brushed by a snowflake or saw a bird take flight, he thought of the kiss he had received from his lady. More and more he began to live in her. Her solitude became his, and he felt himself enveloped by her sleeping essence.

The troubadour then came to say that she would come that night. He told the troubadour to wait for her at the entrance of the cave.

He imagined her getting ready to leave the castle. Still asleep, she removed her hands from her breast and rose from the stone bed at the foot of the mountain. She moved silently through the dark passages, and the cold emanating from her dimmed the fires as she passed by them. He knew she had entered the forest where his cave was because he felt himself getting so chilled that his flesh burned with the cold. When she arrived, she looked deep into his eyes, without seeing anything. Then she let her gown fall slowly from her shoulders, first revealing her breasts, and then the rest of her body. She stood before him naked, trembling and vibrating, but with a triumphant smile on her face. In it he recognized the look of the Mother on the wall of the cave.

Without moving, and paralyzed by his fearful ecstasy, the knight gazed at the girl's body, murmuring a single word over and over again. Her body exuded an intangible substance that penetrated him. He realized she possessed a magic power, and his feelings went beyond those of love or desire. He was confronting a vision that emerged from the depths of time, and her silent presence contributed to his understanding.

When will this pale winter end? When will the snow melt, and the ice? Will the nightingale ever sing again?

Without hesitation she had come back to the knight's bed which was made of branches and skins. She was naked and leaned over him to undress him. Then she lay down by his side, crossed her arms over her breasts and gazed at the ceiling of the cave without seeing him. Caught in her own dreams,

staring at her private sky, she began to speak.

"My knight," she said, "I've not come to you but you have come to me at the foot of the mountain. You've entered the circular stone tomb where I lie dead or asleep. And now you must wake me up according to the directions I give you. Touch me with your lips and hands. I need your caresses. Start with my hair, then take hold of my breasts, linger there for a while, letting your fingers encircle them. They are the fruit of a golden tree with two small suns that shine when touched by the tip of your fingers. Press your lips softly on them and then move down to my stomach, which is the deep night sky. Put your head there and listen to my shadowy heart. Then move your gentle hands down to my legs. I'll give you refuge in my knees."

The girl trembled so much it seemed as though she might wake from her dream. Embracing the knight, she returned all the warmth she had taken from him before. Her hands caressed him, touching centers that were dormant within him. Whole worlds were aroused in his flesh. She had turned the key and was reviving the latent power of his flesh.

The knight kept his mind as empty as possible. He knew he had to let her play the active role. One mistake or indiscretion would ruin everything. She would never again wake up. Montsegur would therefore be neither destroyed nor saved. He wondered how many knights must have failed this ultimate test called Asag.

"My love," he said with the greatest delicacy, "put your head here on my breast. You are ready to wake up from your long sleep. We must therefore both begin to live in this new dimension, in this new condition of waking sleep."

Once again the Mother's face appeared on the wall of the cave. Insinuatingly it detached itself and approached the knight. "Come, take me," it said. "Take me like a warrior, a real knight. I'll give you my heart to devour and afterward we can exchange blood."

"It's too late now," he replied. "I'm attached to another. Love has only one purpose, and that is the fusion of hearts."

The woman's face faded from the wall. Once again the girl returned and pressed herself upon him, kissing him with open lips. She sighed toward him and gave him her heart.

"Now you have two hearts," she said. "You must now give me yours so that I can live."

The knight then kissed her in the same way she had kissed him. He sighed toward her interior and gave her his heart.

Later, sitting at the entrance of the cave, the knight thought about what had happened. His heart was now in one piece with her, and his spirit had its own identity. The heart is a mirror where the lover sees his beloved.

The knight now entered Montsegur. He went into her heart, although he did not stop living in the cave. He was in both places at the same time. He knew everything that happened to her and experienced her feelings. She also lived within him. Having made the heart the center of their being, they changed their mode of consciousness. The knight dreamed her dreams and shared her vision. He knew her sorrows and ecstasies, and she knew his. He now had a woman's heart and she a man's. This fusion meant that each had a greater life: each had a heart with wings. They could move through space and visit the castle, the cave, the base of the mountain where the enemy was camped, and no one could stop them. A substance as delicate as a breath of air moved from her to him, and acquired its tangible life within him, so that the two were always mingled together.

Finally the snows vanished. The knight came out of his cave and rode toward Montsegur. Since his heart was already there, he knew the way. After a while the troubadour joined him, and the knight greeted him, saying, "Let's go to the battle and destroy everything that's perishable within us. You'd better sing us a song to help us get through the enemy lines."

The troubadour took up his lute and began to sing:

In hot summer have I great rejoicing
When the tempests kill the earth's foul peace,
And the lightnings from black heav'n flash crimson,
And the fierce thunders roar me their music
And the winds shriek through the clouds mad, opposing,
And through all the riven skies God's swords clash.

And I love to see the sun rise blood-crimson.
And I watch his spears through the dark clash
And it fills all my heart with rejoicing
And pries wide my mouth with fast music
When I see him so scorn and defy peace,
His lone might 'gainst all darkness opposing.

And let the music of the swords make them crimson!*

They climbed the mountain path to the top, where they found the entrance to the castle of Montsegur. The drawbridge was lowered. She stood on the other side and said, "We are one."

He was then able to cross the bridge.

The troubadour came in like his shadow. But his story ends here, for as he said to the knight before leaving, "Your story is not a tale of love like ours: it is more secret and ancient. Yours is the solar story of loveless love that was lost in the Flood. I've only a glimmering of it. Our stories tell of love affairs between common men and queens, whereas yours are always of exalted people, kings and queens. In the same way, your sleeping beauty is a queen and her lover a king."

Meanwhile the knight continued on, guided by his lady. He was greeted in a large square room by the knights of the castle. They sat at a round table and each had at his side a companion. His lady crossed the circle and stood beside him as he waited for what was to come next. She then spoke.

"Dear love," she said, "what has happened to my heart?"

"It's here in my breast making two beats at a time, repeating

* Ezra Pound.

your name and mine. It's a looking-glass and also a sand-clock that tells me how much time I still have."

The knights seated around the table nodded their approval, and so he was allowed to enter the circle and sit with her beside him as a defender of Montsegur.

Later she showed him the rooms of the castle, how it was defended and where its secret passages went. She also led him to the hidden chamber at the base of the mountain where she had lain asleep for so long. High in the towers the view extended over the Pyrenees. As they stood there in the late-afternoon light, she began to speak. She told him that for centuries these mountains had been a refuge for holy men. When the great Flood drowned the continent of the god-men, and when the third moon fell on the earth, the keys of their knowledge were saved and kept in the mountains. They were all that survived from one world to another. The Grail was really a piece of Lucifer's stone crown that fell onto our planet. At his defeat, his crown was broken into a thousand fragments and spread throughout the firmament. Only when they were all gathered together would Lucifer be vindicated and return to the throne. He is the morning star and the guardian of love. She explained that the stone that fell on earth was an essential part of the broken crown. It shone brighter than the sun and was like frozen fire with its green and white light. It was able to unite what is dispersed and to return everything to its source. Only those who walk backward can find it. It is a talisman that links the individual with the morning star. For centuries this talisman has gone from hand to hand. Originally it came from the Orient, but it was taken from there and has finally come to this place. When Montsegur falls, it will be sent to some distant land, perhaps to a place that is still unknown. "In the meantime," she said, "Montsegur will always be special, for its story will pass down through the ages, transforming the lives of all who know it."

She raised her hand to protect herself from the evening sun,

and once again he noticed the white mark between her fingers. Pointing toward the Pyrenees, she told him about the fortified caves of Ornalac and of Black Mountain, where those in search of the great secret were trained. She said that the whole valley was more or less a temple and that the center of the world was wherever the talisman was kept. "We must move on," she concluded, "and carry the treasure from one place to another until it reaches its last refuge, Venus or the morning star. There we shall reconstruct a crown as beautiful as it was before it was destroyed."

He explored the castle so as to find out as much as he could about its subterranean passages. He felt at home there, but also somewhat constricted. He therefore asked her to lead him to the northern gate, so that he might visit the Perfect Ones who lived outside it and prepare for the great battle that was to come.

She looked at him fixedly for a moment. Then she took him by the hand and led him into an empty corridor. He soon passed through the northern gate of Montsegur, leaving her behind.

Outside there was complete silence, and the air was still and clear. An open terrace led to the edge of a cliff, while beyond stood the glistening white mountains. Near the edge was a small group of cabins surrounded by bushes and low trees. Everything was imbued with a faint lavender light.

He walked toward one of the cabins on the precipice. It had no windows, but the door was open and he entered. In the middle of the room, sitting cross-legged, was the Perfect One. His eyes were fixed and open, and he had a vague smile on his face. He seemed to be in a trance, for when he spoke his lips did not move, and the sound came from the roof of the room.

"Diaus vos benesiga. Come in."

For a long time nothing was said. Then, whether he spoke the words or not, the man asked where he was.

"Don't you realize," came the reply, "that you're visiting

the ruins of a castle destroyed seven hundred years ago? All you're seeing is the ghostly shadow of something that hasn't existed on earth for centuries. It exists only in the light of a distant star. You are coming here from the future. You've been able to cross intersecting planes of light. Perhaps you're in a parallel time in which Montsegur both exists and is destroyed. But the fall of Montsegur is always taking place, each time with a different luminosity. Even though these parallel times and planes cross one another, they do not touch. They are like bells sounding in closed universes. What happens here on earth has already had a prior existence somewhere else through some other concentration of light and continuum of time. You and I are taking part in the distant drama of Montsegur and at the same time are engaged in a personal drama within ourselves."

The Perfect One sat motionless and a faint light played on his face. It seemed as though he then spoke again: "We were opposed to marriage and to physical copulation because they gave birth to new bodies that could only be corrupted by nothingness and death. Instead we wanted a copulation of the mind, a mental wedding of the sort performed in the secret ceremony inside the castle. That was the real initiation, the true secret and treasure of Montsegur."

They say that just before the castle fell, four knights succeeded in escaping by means of a silver rope. They took the treasure of Montsegur with them. Three of their names are known. But the fourth is not.

THREE

The Andes

The midday sun filtered through the thick leaves and ferns of the forest, making the air luminous and green. Red copihue flowers were scattered among the pine trees, and the atmosphere was suffused by the penetrating odor of the dark forest.

The man rode along on a horse with a white star on its forehead. As he passed under the great trees, he thought how open and benign the woods were, and how pleasant the murmur of waterfalls and streams. The only danger came from the light. It created a sense of longing, a dream of invisible beings who had once inhabited the place and who might still be found there. From time to time the horse stopped, widened its nostrils and neighed, as though it sensed their presence.

They continued on until they emerged from the forest into an open valley. Ahead of them rose the massive snow-covered range of the Andes. At the end of a long day the man dismounted and tied his horse to a tree. He then walked toward an opening that looked like a cave. A figure came out of it and walked toward him with arms extended. He had a long beard and was dressed in a poncho that flapped in the breeze. He stared straight ahead, but when he came near the man he stretched out his arms and placed them on his shoulders. Then he ran his fingers over his face, and the man felt he had experienced this once before, as though the fingers had modeled his face in another age.

Later they sat down by the fire. He saw that the old man was blind but that his dead eyes were blue. "I'm not surprised that you're blind," he said, "but I didn't expect you to have blue eyes and white skin. I thought you'd be a wild man with dark hair and Mongol features."

"We'll talk of that later," replied the old man, "but first you must tell me why you came here."

"I was told that a wise man lived in these parts who knew all about herbs. I'm looking for an herb that will cure a friend. There's some sort of medicinal root in this part of the world, some kind of moss or resin that's strong enough to save her."

"There's no herb that can cure her. Her illness is in her blood." The old man then spoke of the way in which vegetables and minerals imitate the organs of the body. The lungwort, for example, is fibrous and very much like the lung itself. The copihue is a bell flower full of blood, while the rose is coagulated blood. "There's a dead man," he said, "hidden in these mountains with a rose in his breast."

"But I've come for medicine."

The hermit was not to be silenced. "The loica bird also has a red breast," he continued, "and she helps me find the cure. But don't worry: you don't have to take the medicine directly to her. All you have to do is touch it with your hand and then touch her breast. This illness concerns her invisible body, not her visible one. Illness is a disequilibrium between these two bodies and the breath or current that unites them. The stars are also important, for they have an influence on human bodies. What's your friend's birthstone?"

"Topaz."

The hermit went on as though he had heard nothing. "The South Pole sends out an orange-colored emanation," he said, "and represents the earth's sexual organs. The left side of the body also emits an orange light."

"I still don't understand why you are white. I thought you'd be an Indian."

"Quetzalcoatl was also white. Don't you know that America

was once called Albania? It was a white continent for white gods. They preserved an immaterial substance here, a kind of gold that you can drink. Perhaps that's what you want for your friend. It will be easier for you to give it to her when she's dead."

He then explained that there were two roads that could be followed. The first was dry and relatively short. The second, and longer, was known for being wet or moist. It was that way because it was a road of tears.

The old hermit fell silent, and the man with him remembered that somewhere he had eaten gold and silver leaves. But he couldn't recall where.

"The road I've been speaking about has been abandoned for a long time," he said. "There are only a few traces left of it in the highest mountains." The flickering of the fire cast shadows on the old man's face. At last he spoke: "Take her this dried flower which has been created by the fire."

The man walked slowly through the city. By the time he reached her house, the evening light was falling over the nearby hills. She opened the door and led him by the hand into the dark corridor. They had become friends because they were both interested in finding the myth of their lives. They both belonged to an order, but he didn't know whether hers resembled his own. It was nevertheless clear they had some common point of origin and that their destinies were linked.

"You must rest," he said. "It's getting late, and you shouldn't tire yourself."

She bowed her head, and he took her into the bedroom, where he laid her on the bed. He covered her with a shawl and placed cushions under her head. She had taken off her red robe and wore only a white gown. Her blond hair was held in place by a silver headband. She raised her hands to straighten her hair and the sleeves of her gown slipped down, leaving her arms uncovered. They were thin, with delicate blue veins. Her long nervous fingers disappeared for a moment into her golden hair. She paused as though meditating and then smiled. He recog-

nized this special look which sometimes moved over her face.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"I found a hermit in the south," he answered, "who gave me this dried flower for you. He said it was made of fire and doesn't lose its petals."

"What else did he say?"

"He said that America was once called Albania, the land of the white gods, of Quetzalcoatl, Kontiki and Viracocha. Do you know anything about that?"

"Yes," she answered.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, and she began to speak, holding one of his hands in her own. She told him that the book of Enoch, a work that was written before the Flood, speaks of a race of beings whose hair was like wool and who had transparent skin. This race apparently came from some other world and did not originate here. In the book, the prophet Enoch is taken away from this world in a chariot of fire. Other ancient writings also mention giants who are supposed to have built the great stone monuments at Tiahuanaco, Easter Island, Brittany, Stonehenge and many other places. They made Cape Horn and Nan Matal in the Pacific near the Caroline Islands, where there are nearly fifty artificial islands. These giants were hermaphroditic and had the essence of woman within their hearts. Their right sides emitted a blue light, their left an orange.

Then something happened. No one knows whether a moon fell onto the earth or what other disaster took place, but the giants were forced to disappear or hide in the mountains. To this day they wait there for the return of the old sun that warmed the world they knew.

Another explanation for this catastrophe is that the giants fell in love with the daughters of men and ceased being hermaphroditic. According to this theory, the expulsion of their female powers created dual beings who were partly physical, partly spiritual. There were now two races on earth, one half-hu-

man, half-divine, descended from the giants who consorted with the daughters of men, the other the children only of human beings. The first race was still linked to extraterrestrial powers by a power called Vril. They had originally developed their civilization in the north, on a great polar island whose capital was Thule. It was surrounded by snow-capped mountains, but the center was a warm green oasis. The men had white skin and their hair was like wool. The women had long golden hair that floated in the wind.

These arctic creatures were clairvoyant. They wore moonstones as a sign of their power and emeralds in honor of Venus. They also introduced the practice of magic love, whose purpose was to reunite opposites and join extremes together. Their work symbolized a return to the world of giants; it was the pilgrimage of the prodigal son to his lost home, a movement to a point of origin beyond time. But this high civilization came to an end. Thule vanished and the poles became uninhabitable. The green oasis of the Hyperboreans disappeared.

"Was that where the mythical garden of golden apples was, the one inhabited by smiling animals?" he asked.

"Animals also had their places in the heart of man," she answered, "while man was still complete. But not all of the Hyperboreans died when Thule disappeared. Some went to the mountains and established a civilization that flourished until it was destroyed by another catastrophe. Finding that disasters came in cyclical fashion, they built two underground cities in the interior of the Himalayas. These were called Agharti and Champula. There the survivors retained their link with extraterrestrial forces through Vril and continued to teach the ritual of magic love. They also kept an emerald on whose surface was inscribed the unearthly wisdom of the Hyperboreans. Only a few of the masters understood these characters. In Champula they taught the magic that had made possible the construction of Cape Horn and the Pacific islands and other rocky promontories over the face of the earth. They tried to recreate the

energies that had brought these things into being and hoped to produce a mutation of the species that would enable the giants to return to their original forms before they were corrupted by the children of men.

"These events are of course symbolic and represent an internal development. The transparent white skins, the woolen hair of the men and golden tresses of the priestesses do not belong to this world. They are not physical characteristics; they refer to invisible bodies. If this myth is treated in a literal way as a return to a lost home, it will become diminished and lose its force."

She was tired and her breathing became more difficult. Nevertheless, her presence dominated the room.

"Here in the southern part of the world, this magic city of the giants has different names. It has been called the City of the Caesars, Trapalanda, Paitete, Elelin and Gran Quivira. Some Spanish conquistadors knew of its existence and came in search of it rather than to discover material gold."

She then fell silent. He smoothed her hair and she looked up to smile at him once more. "You must promise me you'll look for that city and take me there. Only a few ever enter. It's always like that. When someone falls or loses his way, another takes his place and continues on surreptitiously, taking on the mantle of the elect."

Even though it was late, the man decided to call on his master. Somehow he believed that the master knew of his conversations with the hermit and the woman and so was expecting him to call. Nevertheless, when he arrived he hesitated at the threshold. Then the door opened and the master stood before him. He stepped aside to let him enter.

Once inside the master's study, he saw the book of the Order. Inside were inscribed all the names of the members of the Andean branch. His was there, written in the master's hand. Because of the master's intensity, it was hard to look at him.

His eyes were very bright and his features mobile and expressive. He was of ordinary height and weight, but seemed exceptionally virile and sensitive.

"Master," he began, "I want to consult you about my experiences. It's been a long time since I've been here, and I'm anxious to talk to you about them."

The master assented, and so the man began by telling him about the hermit. He also spoke of what his friend had told him about the Hyperboreans. He described her illness and asked the master how he could help. For a long time the master remained silent: he was beyond the state of pity for the human condition.

"Woman diminishes the sacred purpose of our Order. By now you should have overcome these human affections. Man is dual. He carries a woman inside him. Man's soul is feminine and woman's is masculine. An initiate of either sex should not need the other; each should be capable of fulfilling himself. Perhaps you've forgotten what the magic wedding means. The only wedding that counts is with oneself. All the warriors of our Order function on an exalted level. We are not concerned with doctrines or legends. Our warfare is on a plane beyond human feeling; it is a struggle with oneself in order to attain the totality of being a man-magician, which is quite different from being a saint. We are not mystics but warriors, and I've already given you the sign and the sword. They help bring about change and are universal, functioning on both visible and invisible planes. You must therefore go into battle; that is all.

"The sign links the universes, joining parallel times; your personal vibration makes a pact between them. If you'll trace on your body the last sign I gave you, and concentrate on the space between your eyebrows, stopping all thought so as to open the third eye, you'll leave your physical body and be projected into an outer plane. You'll be taken to the Siddhas of Agharti and to the City of the Caesars. You must take your sword with you, however, so as to fight enemy forces that come across your

path. You must go into battle so as to put off the approaching catastrophe. The right number of the elect must pass through the three open doors that face the west."

He was unable to sleep. He rolled back and forth in his bed until the light of dawn began to filter through the window. Then for a while he fell into a light sleep. A young man carrying a flower appeared before him. He was handsome and had a wide forehead. Approaching the edge of the bed, the young man placed the flower on the man's breast and leaned over to kiss him on the cheek. The room was suffused with childhood smells, and the man said, "Who are you? I can't remember your name." The youth smiled and said, "I was your childhood friend. I have grown physically, but I am still a child in spirit." Then he disappeared.

After a while, he began to dream of his childhood. He was climbing over some rocks with a young girl of his own age when suddenly she slipped and began to fall. He grabbed her hand and held on to her as long as he could. But gradually her hand slipped out of his own. As she began to go she gazed fixedly at him. Just before their hands parted he saw the intensity of her terror, which seemed to encompass the whole world. Her scream hung in the air.

He woke up holding on to the pillow as though it were a rock. After that he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep and woke up late in the afternoon.

He dressed swiftly and went out into the street. There he began to think about his dreams of childhood. Far away in the country he had once kissed a playmate on the cheek with the same kiss that had just been returned to him. By now the boy was probably dead, but he had never forgotten that kiss. As to the girl who fell, he often dreamed of her even though nothing of the kind had ever happened. He wondered whether he was experiencing an event from some simultaneous or parallel existence. He had the feeling that his life on earth was less real

than something taking place somewhere else, even though it had a certain relationship to his daily existence. He felt that someone else was directing these events. Still, he thought he recognized the girl in the dream. She was a childhood friend with whom he had run races and climbed over the hills near the city. She was an alter-ego, always with him, protecting him and trying to win his admiration. Her pale face was framed by thick black hair and her eyes were like water at night. When she let go of the rock, her hair floated for a long while over the abyss.

As he walked along, he realized how his ideas of love and death were always mixed together. He'd never been able to forget that girl and wondered what had become of her. Was she really at the bottom of the chasm? He often thought of her as his first love, but wondered whether she had really died before he was born. He often thought that he was under the influence of some pre-existent love which made him feel isolated from his master. The dream of love passed on to him by his ancestors came from somewhere he could neither identify nor renounce. Yet it oppressed him all his life. It was like an idea struggling to be expressed or an order that had to be obeyed, like a religion. He wanted to discover the phantoms that controlled his being, since they alone could help him.

Once again he was in front of his friend's house. The door was half open and he had a premonition. He went in quickly and found her lying on her bed with her nightgown soaked in blood. She said nothing, and all he could think of was the girl who had fallen over the cliff. He was still trapped in his dream.

He leaned over her, touching her hair softly as if to dispel what was happening. He kissed her bloodstained lips and swallowed some of her blood, tasting its bitter sweetness.

Then he fetched a towel and a bowl of water and washed her face and arms. Afterward he changed her gown. At last she spoke. "I'm afraid last night exhausted me. But I'm not sorry, because what is happening would have to come about anyhow. We are now brother and sister. Our agreement has been ful-

filled and you have drunk my blood. Now you must give me some of yours. Long before men loved women, they loved one another and became blood brothers. Feelings can't last without that exchange." After a pause she resumed: "It's strange how we seem to be like two sleepwalkers going down a road." She then told him that she felt her chest was full of blood again and asked him to give her a bath, since she couldn't do it herself.

He picked her up in his arms. She rested her head on his shoulder and her hair fell over his chest. He stood her in front of a looking-glass and took off her gown. She looked at herself naked and said, "I can't love with this body any more, but from now on I'll need it less and less. Our love will be fulfilled through other bodies."

She stood erect with her shoulders squared. Her neck was long and her arms hung by her sides. She had long, thin legs, and the only signs of blood left in her were blotches on her hands and feet, as though she had been crucified. He picked her up again in his arms and placed her in the bathtub.

He began to wash her and when he came to her feet he knelt down. She looked down at him with her faraway eyes and pointed to her side, just below her breast. A white spot appeared, like a lance wound.

She touched his head with her hand and said, "Take off your clothes and get into the bath with me." He did so and lay down beside her, holding her hand.

"When I die you will carry me within you. I will be one with you and live there. A part of you will also die with me and rot with me in the tomb. Your soul will become me and will have no face or body except what I give it. In this way it will become a person. It will have identity because I'll give you my eternity. This will be our wedding."

They lay together as though sealed into oblivion.

"Tonight as our destiny is being fulfilled, you must speak to me of love," she said. "The flower of love seems to be disappearing. Young people don't seem to care about it, which means

that love as a spiritual experience will vanish. But we have exchanged blood and become brother and sister. My essence is already moving through your blood, and I'll love you even more when I'm dead. On earth this happens once and never again."

"I think I loved in this way once before," he replied. "There was a priestess in a temple, or perhaps a woman in a mountain cave. I wonder if that was you. Did I dream it or is this reincarnation? I wonder if we'll ever meet again outside of time and memory. . . ."

"I've never existed before," she answered, "and will never exist again. It's a matter of once only. We're now at the definitive center of things. When I'm gone, someone who exists in your blood, some ancestor, will teach you about reincarnation and what you can obtain from it. What holds the stories together is the narrator. All that matters is the angel of love. We live and die for him. We help him understand designs which he can perceive only as we reveal them to him."

Dawn was approaching, the morning star just appearing. "We should pray," she said. "I'll tell you what to say so that you can always repeat it when I'm no longer here. When you say it devotedly I'll appear, like the light of this star."

Later on he received a letter: "It's very late, but I can't sleep. I'm sliding away, falling into space. Don't let go of me, don't let me fall. I put all my faith in you, knowing you'll help me and not allow me to die completely. You must save me and let me fall into you instead of the void. You can't change our destiny: I must die so that you can live.

"What would happen if I lived? I'd be simply one more love destroyed as the days go by, transformed into indifference. But with me it will be different. I'll never turn into the devouring mother. The lover's highest destiny is to renounce eternity and give it to the person he loves. I therefore give you my eternity. I shall fall into your soul and give it identity. I shall remain eternally young. And when you die you'll fall into me, join

me within. If you fail, everything will have been in vain, and the angel of love will turn his back on you.

"But now I'm so tired. Come again tomorrow. We have one more ritual to fulfill."

Wearing a long white nightgown, barefoot, and with a silver band in her hair, she stood in the center of the room. Beside her was a carved wooden figure of a man with wings folded at his sides. On the couch lay a carved heart, also with wings, made from the same red wood.

"Lie down on my bed," she said, "and let my vibrations penetrate you. This winged heart is ours. It represents man and woman together. It knows how to fly to the heavens and how to return. We shall go with it and become united in it."

Lying down with his eyes closed, he felt her hand on his forehead. Gradually he became drowsy but could still hear what she was saying. "Love does not relate to two but to four. One, two, three . . . First you love with your physical body: the man you are loving the woman I am. Then the woman inside you, your soul, loves my soul, the man within me. This love may be externally sterile, but it gives birth to an eternal son, a being with wings. And so we have four within, and the fifth is our son, the winged man who is also the son of death."

As she counted, each time more elaborately, she seemed to grow in size and become translucent. Her light filled the room. And then he saw that she was leaning over the bed with a dagger in her hand. She plunged it into his heart and put the winged one in its place.

More and more her eyes reflected the light of another universe. One night she called out. "Do you know," she whispered, "that when a metal is put into the fire it loses an essential part of its power? That's why the fire has to be cold, as frozen as death."

Later on he heard a noise in the room as though someone were opening a door and walking barefoot. She was sitting up

in bed with her arms stretched out, her eyes open unnaturally wide and staring at a corner of the room.

She had fallen from the rocks.

They lowered the corpse into the grave and he then walked down the road. Suddenly he thought he heard a voice saying, "Don't go away. Don't leave me alone." He went back and stood by the edge of the grave under the midday sun. He felt a current rising from the ground and slowly entering his body. It was like a vibration coming upward in waves. For a long time he stood there without moving or thinking, allowing himself to be taken by that force, until it gradually diminished. Perhaps she was giving him the spirit of her blood, her last energy. Then he understood that this was the secret wedding ceremony.

The man spent many years exploring the south, searching for the enchanted city. Inexorably he was carried farther and farther south by a current that led to the Pole. He was looking for the "white island in the sky" which the Jon people speak of and which is also mentioned by the Selcnam magicians of Tierra del Fuego. These strange people believed that this city could be entered only by an invisible body which they called huaiyuhuen. Only Jon magicians can develop this body. When he reached the Antarctic, he searched for the oasis of warm water that he was told existed in the midst of all the ice. This was the Tierra Verde, or Greenland, of the south. He was also in search of the White Sun, the cold flame that once existed at the North Pole but was now at the South.

Then one day he came back. Riding his horse with the white star on its forehead, he proceeded slowly along the road. He imagined that his love was with him; she was telling him not to be discouraged, saying that the city would appear around the next corner, that he would soon have news of it. Perhaps the hermit would help.

He was startled: why hadn't he thought of the hermit? He quickly returned to the forest and went to the cave where the

old man had been. There were three or four drawings and paintings on the wall of the cave. He lit a candle and moved his hands over the surface, looking for a face. He had a strong feeling there had been one there before. Then as he was about to leave the cave he tripped over a pile of bones. It was the skeleton of the Milodon.

Outside, an Araucanian shaman was waiting for him. His tongue was split and so it was difficult for him to talk. The man asked about the hermit. "What hermit?" answered the shaman. "I've seen you here before, but you were alone, and now you're here with that woman on the horse. Who is she? At first I thought you might be Witranalwe. You know, he has a horse that gets bigger and bigger every time he rides."

But the man insisted: "Surely you remember. There was a hermit. He was a white man and blind."

"There's never been a hermit living here," he answered. "Perhaps you were talking to yourself or were talking to the ghost of the Milodon. Or maybe a dwarfish anchimallen has entered your body. Or possibly you're the Imbunche, since I notice that you walk backward with your feet pointed in reverse."

He left the Indian and once again found himself in the middle of the forest. Enough light came through the tangled foliage to nourish the ferns and open the petals of the bell-shaped copihue flowers. Around him mañio, raulí and wild eucalyptus trees filled the air with smells strong enough to make him feel drunk. He got off his horse and sat down on the ground. In the distance a woodpecker was drilling into a tree. Before him a fallen tree lay across the river. He looked at it, and after a while he saw a girl coming toward him. She was no more than eight years old and wore a blue polka dot apron. Her blond hair stirred in the breeze.

She walked across the old treetrunk and came up to him. She looked at him in a way which he recognized. "I've come to meet you from the other side," she said. "You must go in the opposite direction. Keep looking."

By mid-afternoon the man reached a lake which was enclosed by steep rocks. A waterfall ran down into it, making a soft rippling noise. He took off his clothes and entered the water. The dead woman who was always with him swam at his side. They approached the waterfall, which was half in the shade. The water moved in soft green circles, and he felt himself being moved around until he reached the mouth of a cave worn into the rock. The current directed him inside, where he found stalactites hanging down from above. He grabbed one of them, and then, on a wall nearby, he saw a red copihue. He thought of it as a sign and didn't dare touch it. He looked back over his shoulder for the dead woman, but she wasn't there. She had probably gone into the dark part of the cave, he thought, or been carried by the current to the other side. He swam out and went toward the waterfall in search of her. He began to fear that she had drowned in a whirlpool.

He climbed onto the shore and dressed. He was still troubled by doubt, wondering what would have happened if he had allowed himself to be carried into the inner cave by the movement of the water, asking himself whether at the end of all that darkness he might not have found a new light—even, perhaps, the City.

Then one day he came to his old family house. It had once been the center of enormous landholdings and was centuries old. There were many underground galleries held up by half-rotten pillars and containing chains and the bones of prisoners. Some people believed these tunnels reached to the central square of the city; they may also have extended to the mountains.

He crossed the old porch and entered the house, which was made up of a series of patios linked together by corridors. Some of the old servants were sitting in broken-down chairs sunning themselves. They were allowed to stay on because they belonged to the tradition of the house, like the furniture and the paintings in the rooms.

The man announced that he wanted to stay and so he was given a room on the upper level overlooking one of the old patios. There was a table with candelabra and an old leather-bound book with moldy clasps. There was also a big wardrobe, a high-backed chair and a narrow bed with a canopy. On the wall hung a portrait of one of his ancestors.

The man threw himself on the bed and remained there without moving for several days. He stared at the moth-eaten velvet of the canopy. Sometimes he dozed off. No one came to see him or brought him food. Sometimes he would dream of himself lying on a rock, trying to save a girl who was throwing herself over the edge. He would try to keep calm and look into the girl's face in order to discover who she was and how she felt. After a while he realized that she wasn't suffering, but that her face was marked by a smile of complicity. The smile widened and then changed into a grimace of helpless fury. Then the face broke into pieces, receded into the distance and vanished.

He got up from the bed, sword in hand, and sat down in the high-backed chair in front of the portrait of his ancestor. He tried to remove all thoughts from his mind. Waves seemed to rise from the floor and fill the room. Before his eyes a cylindrical tube took form and began to rotate. There was an orange light at one end of the tube, and a tiny figure seemed to be coming up from inside it. He stopped, the light went out and the cylinder disappeared. Then suddenly his ancestor stood before him, dressed in the robes of a priest. He felt a strange physical sensation through the closeness of his relative. He recognized himself in the figure's hands and veins and was overcome by a feeling of kinship. At the same time he noticed other traits that came from a foreign country.

The ancestor looked at him carefully and then began to speak: "Yes, this is the road of tears, which is the more difficult one. I know it well. God bless you and help you!"

The man then replied, "How is it that I can see someone

else in you, or even two or three others? Is this proof of reincarnation? I have the feeling that what is happening now has taken place before in another land and another time. Characters seem to repeat themselves eternally, and with increasing intensity."

"Perhaps we should wait till later to talk of what you call reincarnation. You know it's not a proper subject for me."

"But let me tell you how I came to know about reincarnation," the man persisted. "When I was about four years old I began to have a sense of my own identity, or ego. I looked at other people and I said to myself, I wonder whether they feel their identities or egos in the same way I do? I've been puzzled by this problem ever since, knowing that I must die. I've come to the conclusion that when I die some other person will take my identity or ego. This person will represent me. No other explanation seems possible. If my identity were to perish entirely, no one would ever feel as I do today. I cannot accept this idea. On the contrary, I believe that feelings and thoughts have often been repeated and will continue to be so. That is what I mean by reincarnation. The identity of the past will continue into the future. The same I who existed in the past will come again. I realize I've not explained this very well, but it is nearly impossible to express this concept."

"But why can't individual identity be ended forever?" asked the ancestor. "To appear once and never again? No one is going to think and feel exactly as you do. That ego is over and done with. Each generation brings different beings. But it doesn't matter, since the only important thing is blood relationship. Insofar as you are able to plunge into the river of blood and perceive its rhythm and melody, you may enjoy a happiness beyond transitory life. You will survive by living within a family archetype beyond time and space. Awareness of this blood relationship depends largely on the sensitivity of succeeding generations. This is what reincarnation means. I become reincarnated or survive in you because we are both able

to hear this secret melody. Not everyone can do this, and that is why reincarnation is rare."

"Do you mean that the dream of eternal love is just a family melody that we are destined to go on interpreting?"

"Our family, which is centuries old, came here in search of a secret element. We received our inheritance from a part of humanity that doesn't belong to the earth. You are the last to come to this house, but who knows whether your branch will flourish or not? Still, through you we all live again, loving and suffering. You are powerful enough to open the tomb and bring us out into the daylight. But you're not the only one to have done so. My father, my grandfather and I have all been caught by the same obsession: we all renounce physical love for an eternal love realized beyond death. The argument of our blood has always stressed the possibility of this individual initiation. Our family's mission is to revive this possibility, which in recent years has lost its attraction, before the end comes and reduces this old house to dust."

The ancestor disappeared, and all that remained was the portrait on the wall, which only partly resembled the man.

He suddenly felt hungry. The door opened and a shadow came into the room. It was one of the old servants bringing a tray of food. "I've been ordered to serve you. In the old days we had seven-course meals, but now everything is different. Nobody pays me real gold escudos any more. But I stay on because I've always been here and there's nowhere else to go."

"That's not true," answered the man. "You know very well that we've met in other places. And I don't want your food. I'm not physically hungry, but I want you to take me, as you've done before, my faithful friend, right up to the doors of the City."

"Come, then," replied the old man.

They passed through some long corridors until they reached a patio with flowers on its walls. The afternoon sun shone on the iron grilles and on the sagging wooden lintels. The old

man stopped and clapped his hands. Just then a number of women wearing black dresses and dull-colored mantles came out of the rooms. They began to laugh and clap their hands. "He's come back again," they cried out. "He's come back to play with us as he used to do."

"They're yewulfes," explained the old man. "Don't you remember them? I'm also one."

"What's a yewulfe?"

"A helper, someone who plays games. Surely you remember."

They shouted and jumped up and down in the late-afternoon light. "Let's play," one of them cried out. "Let's bind his eyes."

They grabbed him and wrapped a cloth around his head. Then they turned him around in circles, laughing all the time.

He begged them to take the bandage off, but they insisted he tell them what he was looking for.

"Where is she? Where have you hidden her?"

Then they took the bandage off and made him enter one of the rooms where another group of women sat next to a fire. They had wooden masks on their faces and were weaving small rugs.

"We're weaving a wedding dress for your bride," said one of them. "But what we're really weaving is your soul. The soul doesn't exist by itself, but must be woven, in the form of a small rug. How would you like yours made? Choose the colors."

Another woman showed him a huge pair of scissors. "These are to cut the cord of life. I have cut hers." She laughed behind her mask.

Just then he impulsively snatched away her mask. The face revealed was that of the girl falling into the void. It broke into pieces and left behind a faceless body, a black hulk.

The ancestor then returned. "You were wrong to visit the rest of the house without my permission. Don't you know what this house is? It's your own body, and now you're living here." He reached out his gnarled finger and touched the younger man's stomach.

"You should go down to the cellar before you visit the towers, although in a sense there is neither an upstairs nor a downstairs. You can come and go from either. But whatever we do, we must first visit the Original Ancestor and receive his blessing."

"No," answered the man, "I'm only interested in her. Tell me where I can find her. Somehow I've lost her ghost."

"She's now undergoing a second death, called the interim mori. As she dies a second time, her astral body begins to disintegrate. You wouldn't recognize her if you saw her now. That's why she carries a mask: she doesn't want to frighten you."

"This is like the Tibetan Book of the Dead," said the man. "You go from one state of decomposition to another."

"Don't talk to me about books," answered the ancestor. "I've also written some." He indicated one lying on the table. It was called *Natural Right*. The ancestor picked it up and began to flick through its pages and to read. "True love never survives the act of fulfillment; rather it is a secret agreement that takes place on another plane. True union occurs only in dreams."

He paused to explain that his book dealt with an inspired science. "Love," he continued reading, "has nothing to do with sexuality; it comes before it. Love even existed before species were divided into two sexes. There are primary organisms and hermaphroditic ones which reproduce themselves by parthenogenesis. But they look for another hermaphrodite to love, making a parody of partition before it actually happens. Love produces the partition of the hermaphrodite and the differentiation of the sexes. Love creates sex, not the other way around. The hermaphrodite was divided so that he would have a motivation for existence, searching through the world for a reunion, or for transformation into a new androgynous being. This is a being quite different from a primeval hermaphrodite. The new being is neither a natural son nor a supernatural angel, but has some of the qualities of each."

The ancestor stopped reading and spoke directly to the man. "When you find your lover and join her forever, when you really marry her, you'll know what I mean. Books can't explain it." He leafed through the last pages without reading any. Leaving the book open, he put it down on the table and walked out of the room.

Stiffly, as though he were leaving his own body, the man got up from the chair and went over to the table. He lit a candle and looked down at the open pages. Written there in an archaic handwriting was the title *Sutras—Aphorisms*. He began to read:

O Goddess, you are the real me. There's no difference between you and me.

The wind which blows from the garden where my lover sits brings her essence to me.

You should think of the soul as a castle made of diamonds or of very clear crystal, with many rooms and dwelling places, some above and some below, and others on the sides. In the center is the most important one where the most secret dialogue takes place between the lover and the soul.

This castle is planted in the living waters of life.

Now we must learn how to enter it. Perhaps you think I'm talking nonsense since I've already said that the castle is the soul. But there are great distances between states of being. There are many souls on the outskirts of the castle, some wanting to come in and others wishing to remain outside. Many don't even know such a beautiful place exists.

*You don't have to go back and forth
if you're looking for me.
Just look inside yourself:
I live there now.*

*I gave myself to him
and then I changed.
Now I am my beloved,
and my beloved is me.*

. . . they are like omens and messengers of the approaching dark night of the soul, even though they are transient, like this waiting night. . . . But Doubt is what the soul calls the Dark Night . . . this Dark Knight of loving fire: as it becomes a purge, so the soul is set on fire. . . .

Bitter wind,
stay away.
Don't touch the wall
where my wife is sleeping.

There were other sections of the book, many with titles and subtitles:

UNDER THE LAST RULE OF THINGS DEATH

The warrior must give his lover's face to death. In this way death becomes feminized.

THE KISS

The kiss was a new ritual established to replace the knife cut and the sucking of blood. It also involves the mixing of breaths. But just as the white god Quetzalcoatl failed when he tried to replace the bloody sacrifices of the Aztecs by floral offerings, so the kiss never achieved what was intended of it. It became a mere sensual act. The true kiss is the first step on a road leading to the lost home and the City of Eternal Life.

THE LOOK

Ecstasy expresses the union of virility and femininity within man. The look transmits this ecstasy to the heart.

He turned additional pages of the book until he came to this:

FAMILY WINE

In the Fifth Book of Weindenfeld, which we alone know, the creation of the spirit of wine is explained. It has never been described in another book. It is spiritus mercurii universalis—

the menstruation of the grape, the ultimate dissolving of liquid. Our family believes that liquid gold cannot be created unless the spirit of wine is first obtained. The formula for this is to take equal portions of red and white wine and heat them at a steady temperature. The wine should boil until a thin layer of oil appears. This is putrefaction or vegetal menstruation. During the time it takes for this oil to rise to the surface, those in attendance must pray. Then when the bowl is uncovered, the participants inhale the aroma. If it is subtly penetrating, it means that the spirit of wine has appeared. The spirit must be drunk fast before it condenses. Once this is done, the vas hermeticum is closed and kept boiling until the remaining oil is transformed into metal, into the liquid gold that represents the quintessential fifth element. This material is not found in nature and has to be artificially manufactured.

Two roads may be followed, one leading quickly to its destination because it does not require the distillation of the spirit of wine nor the help of a woman, a soror mistica, in the laboratory. It has been called the dry road. Whether its results are the same as those of the other, who can say? But our family has always chosen the road that makes use of wine. It is called the liquid road and requires a woman's company. She produces the spirit of wine and gives it to us. Nevertheless, this is no companionable journey, for the rest of the voyage is terribly lonely. You will be more alone than the man on the dry road and will face many dangers. That is why we think this road the most noble and complete. We're not allowed to write down the name of the first of us who chose it, but in our family we always raise a glass to him.

Then followed several illegible rhymes and others that had been crossed out with ink. It was impossible to decipher them. The man then turned to the last page but one, and this is what he read:

I tell you my heart was opened up as though by a knife, and you entered it. Then it closed and was sealed. You will therefore have no other companion until the day of resurrection and

last judgment: you will share my life and my death as well. When I die, you will remain in my heart in the gloomy depths of the grave.

Once again the ancestor appeared. He was carrying a candelabrum and was dressed in an elaborate robe. "Come with me," he said. "I want to show you our vineyards and wine cellars where we've made wine for seven hundred years. This has always been our family business."

They left the empty house and went out to the fields, where the workers were gathering bunches of grapes in hampers and pressing them with their bare feet. They sang old songs as the new wine was made. In a tent the members of the family had gathered to take part in the harvest festival. Old and young sat in total silence and concentration. When the ancestor arrived, they stood up and bowed, one by one. They looked at the man with surprise, not recognizing him.

"Don't worry," said the ancestor, "most of them don't know what this is all about." He turned away and said, "Now let's go to the wine cellars."

Once again they were alone. The ancestor went on ahead, showing him the barrels, each with a name inscribed on it. Toward the back the barrels became smaller. "The best wine is kept for the family," he said. "Here we also keep the spirit of wine. You've probably read how it's made, in the book I left in your room. The Fifth Book of Weindenfeld is our family property and no one besides us knows that he wrote it."

They were near the end of the upper level and the ancestor paused at an unmarked barrel. "This one doesn't have a name yet, but I'll put yours on it when I know what your real name is."

By now they had reached the entrance to the underground vault, but before going down, the ancestor changed his clothes and picked up a sword. "You must take a sword too," he said. "You'll need it."

The ancient wooden pillars were held together with leather straps. The floor was uneven, the air moist and heavy. From time to time in the glow of the candle they could see a few rusty links of broken chain. "We're now going to visit the Great Ancestor," he said.

For a long time they walked on in darkness, and the man asked his ancestor how he found his way. "I don't know where we are," he answered. "I simply keep walking. No one has ever been through all of these passages."

Just then they heard a moan followed by something like a roar. The man felt a sudden chill, but his ancestor calmed him by taking his arm. "I felt the same thing when I first came down here," he said. "Just hold on tight to your sword."

Shortly afterward they stopped: it appeared that they had reached the end. In front of them was a stone column. At its base they saw in the candlelight a deformed human being tied with chains and straps. His face was marked by humiliation and suffering, but these scourges also revealed the sanctity of mankind. The face represented the features of creatures everywhere, whether animal, fish, vegetable or mineral.

"Here is the Great Ancestor, the great-grandfather of all grandfathers. Ask him for his blessing and forgiveness. Kneel down before him and kiss his sores."

"Never," the man replied. "But I will free him. That's why I came here."

With a simple blow of his sword he cut the chains and straps that had bound the Great Ancestor, the king who had ruled over all the slaves of Atlantis.

He came into the room. He still bore the marks of the tortures and chains and had a peculiar smell. "I've come to thank you," he said. "And I'll express my gratitude to you in the same way, by cutting your chains and freeing you from the links that have held you to a dream. Here's the genealogical tree of the family. One of your great-grandfathers was named Sunday. An-

other Saturday. Your name is Friday, since Friday is the day of your star. A new branch is slowly growing at the top of the tree. It will be the last because it is sterile."

The man began to thank the Great Ancestor, but was quickly interrupted. "Don't thank me," he said. "This family is cursed by a limitless pride which seeks shelter in illusion. Your ancestor in the portrait and your other great-grandfathers were all incapable of loving people of flesh and blood. They all devoted themselves to something that did not exist, hoping thereby to save their pride. You're the same. You're unable to love a real woman and so love a dead one instead. You know she doesn't exist because she's gone forever. Like the rest of your ancestors, you love no one except yourself."

He felt a lance enter his side. Unable to move or answer, he closed his eyes. Then with great difficulty he moved his stone lips: "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

"I loved her with all my being and strength. It's true I loved her in a different way, but it was more than ordinary love. I've taken her through the world, giving her my eyes so she might see, my senses so she might feel. If I can't love anyone else, it's because she has made me burn and left me cold, because she and I are one."

He then began to pray to the morning star. In a few minutes he heard a voice: "No, not yet. I am still in the grave."

After a while the ancestor spoke. "This is Nigredo, the Dark Night of the Soul. The corruption of one is the purification of another. *Corruptio unius generatio est alterium.*"

After Nigredo comes Albedo. This is Albania, the white land, the ascent to miraculous heights and a final meeting in the oasis surrounded by ice. Perhaps she will also appear, to help guide him along the difficult path, until at last they reach the gate of the City, which she does not enter.

The man went over to the mirror and looked at himself. He discovered that his eyes were hers. He was looking at himself from within her.

"You and I are one," he exclaimed.

This cry of triumph brought about the earthquake. As the mountains trembled along the southern coast, the land of the androgynous Elella emerged from beneath the ocean.