



CHICO  
XAVIER

DICTATED BY THE SPIRIT  
**ANDRÉ LUIZ**

LIFE IN THE  
SPIRIT WORLD

BETWEEN  
HEAVEN AND  
EARTH





# Between Heaven and Earth



Francisco Candido Xavier

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Dictated by the Spirit  
Andre Luiz

*Translated by Darrel Kimble and Marcia Saiz*



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# Between Heaven and Earth

This account by Andre Luis emphasizes both the respect we owe our physical body and our need for unceasing toil on behalf of the good so that we may reap the best benefits possible from our earthly journey as part of our eternal life.

In this book, we are not faced with any sort of spectacular situation. There are no heroes possessing unattainable virtues. No unapproachable angels.

In each chapter we find ourselves facing our old problems of love and hatred, affection and animosity due to our hardened minds in certain phases of our life journey, either in the dusk of our blurry dreams or in the darkness of our passions, which at times pull us down into deep abysses.

On nearly every page, we see the daily lives of souls who aspire to victory over themselves and who rely on the treasures of time to acquire enlightenment.

The basic pictures of the narrative are intimately familiar to us:

The afflicted heart in prayer;

The mind paralyzed in illusion and suffering;

The home inundated with trials;

The pathway beset with struggles;

The madness of jealousy;

The delusion of ownership;

Clashes of thought;

Conflicts of emotion.

And hovering over the contexture of the pure and simple facts is the central theme: the need to use the resources that the world offers us for the

restructuring of our destiny.

On many occasions we are compelled to behold the celestial vastness so that we may gather enough strength to deal victoriously with the future; however, at times we are forced to examine the earthly journey so that we may understand the past in which our present originates.

In this book, we are led to look within ourselves at the ground of our experiences and possibilities so that we may not lack the balance we need on the redemptive journey toward our future.

An unspoken voice from the Divine Plane appears, exhorting us without words:

“The Law is alive and Justice never fails! Let go of evil forever and sow the good each and every day! ... Help those around you, thereby helping yourself! Time does not stop and if now you find your ‘yesterday’, do not forget that your ‘today’ will be the light or the darkness of your ‘tomorrow’!”

EMMANUEL

Pedro Leopoldo (MG), Brazil, January 23, 1954.

# 1

## Regarding Prayer

We were all gathered in the Temple of Assistance<sup>1</sup>, listening closely to Minister Clarenco as he commented on the sublimity of prayer.

“Every desire,” he stated convincingly, “is a fountainhead of power. The plant that grows tall, converting its own energy into life-nourishing fruit, is a being that longs to reproduce...”

“But every petition has to have someone who can hear it,” broke in one of the fellow spirits. “Who could possibly respond to a plant’s wordless request?”

Our esteemed instructor responded calmly:

“As a representation of our Heavenly Father, the Law manifests to everything and everyone through the many agents that serve it. In this particular case, it is the sun that nourishes the plant, conferring what it needs to reach its objectives.”

And imprinting his voice with a significant intonation, he continued:

“On God’s behalf, creatures meet the needs of other creatures as much as possible. Just as electricity has transformers for the appropriate use of its power, every realm of the universe has transformers of blessing, help and enlightenment ... The main currents of life originate with the Almighty and flow downward, transubstantiated in infinite ways. From brightest light to complete darkness and vice-versa, the Creator’s breath flows in and out through countless beings of all tones of instinct, intelligence, reason, humanity and angelhood. These beings modify the divine energy according to their environment’s degree of evolution. Every sphere of life is filled to the brim with millions of creatures ... The pathway of spiritual ascent is that wondrous ladder in Jacob’s vision, which went from the earth to be lost in the heavens ... In whatever form it may take, prayer is an action that causes a

corresponding reaction. Depending on its nature, it either hovers in the area in which it was emitted, or it ascends to a certain height to receive an immediate or delayed response, depending on its intended purpose. Worldly desires are fulfilled close to the sphere where they originate. Impulses of somewhat more noble expression are aided by souls who have become ennobled. But ideas and petitions of profound meaning for eternity mount the heights.”

Our magnanimous mentor paused briefly as if to give us time to reflect, and then continued:

“Every prayer, just like any other emission of power, is characterized by a certain power frequency, and we are all surrounded by Intelligences that are capable of tuning in to our appeal like receiving stations. We know that, in the infinite worlds of the cosmic grandeur, Universal Humanity is comprised of God’s creatures of various ages and in various situations ... In the spirit realm, we too must be mindful of the principles of heredity. To the degree that it perfects and sanctifies itself, each conscience acquires more and more of the Heavenly Father’s qualities and gradually comes into harmony with the Law. The higher the percentage of such qualities in a spirit, the greater its ability to cooperate in carrying out the Divine Plan by responding to the requests of life on behalf of God, who has created all of us for Infinite Love and Infinite Wisdom.”

Breaking the silence, during which we pondered what was being said, brother Hilario asked:

“But how are we to interpret this information when we are confronted with evil purposes? Could a person bent on committing a crime also be using a type of prayer?”

“Let’s refrain from using the word ‘prayer’ when dealing with imbalance,” stated Clarencio kindly. “Let’s use ‘invocation’ instead. Whenever anyone nourishes the desire to commit a wrong, he or she is invoking powers of a low order and is mobilizing resources for which he or she will be held accountable. By means of the unfortunate impulses of our soul, we often lower ourselves to the frenetic vibrations of anger or immorality, and in such a state it is easy to fall into the foul well of crime, in whose den we are instantly connected to certain minds stagnated in ignorance, which become instruments for our low idealizations or for which we become deplorable playthings in the darkness. All our aspirations set energies in motion either for good or evil, and for that very reason we are responsible for

their direction. We must carefully analyze the choice we make in dealing with any problem or situation on the pathway set out before us because our thought will sail before us to attract and shape our intended purpose. In every area of existence, life gives us what we really ask for, and we become its debtors according to what we have received.”

The Minister smiled benevolently and remarked:

“We can be certain, however, that evil is always a circle closed in on itself, temporarily holding those who have created it. It’s like a cyst of short or long duration, which finally dissolves into the infinite good as Minds in tune with it start reforming themselves. The Lord puts up with disharmony so that through it the moral readjustment of the spirits who sustain it may take place, since evil reacts on those who practice it, helping them to grasp the excellence and immortality of the good, which is the unshakable foundation of the Law. We are all masters of our own creations, but at the same time, their unfortunate slaves or happy wards. Let us ask and receive, but let us bear in mind that we must pay for everything we get. Responsibility is the divine principle that no one can escape.”

Just then a young, composed-looking woman entered and addressed our instructor in a somewhat troubled manner:

“Brother Clarencio, one of our pupils from the staff involved with reincarnations under your direction is insisting on your help.”

“Is it an urgent personal request?” asked the Minister, concerned.

“It is a disturbing matter, the subject of a diverted<sup>2</sup> prayer.”

The esteemed instructor invited us to come with him and we followed attentively.

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<sup>1</sup> An institution in the author’s spirit city, Nosso Lar – Auth.

<sup>2</sup> Fully explained in the next chapter. – Tr.

## 2

# On the Earthly Stage

In a spacious room where several spirits were hard at work, a young woman handed Clarencio a small chart. He began examining it carefully and then remarked:

“We’ve just been talking about responsibility. Here is something to illustrate that idea.”

He showed us the chart and explained:

“This is a soul-stirring prayer that managed to go beyond the ordinary vibratory levels of dense matter. It is from a devoted worker who left our spirit city exactly fifteen years ago to fulfill certain reincarnation tasks. She didn’t leave without our assistance, though, because she is still under our guidance. From the physical point of view, birth and rebirth in the world are subject to biological laws whose execution belongs to specialized Minds; but from the moral point of view, they are subordinate to certain influences from the spirit.”

The Minister examined the small, complex chart for a few minutes, but as if he wanted to encourage the continuity of the lesson, my co-worker added:

“But of course reincarnation entails a work plan that is supposed to be carried out.

“Yes, of course,” agreed the instructor, “and the broader the resources of the spirit returning to the flesh, the more complex its so-called work map is. Almost all of us have a significant amount of past debt to pay and all of us are challenged by acquisitions we need to attain. This work map entails a type of relative fatalism regarding what we are to experience; on the other hand, we are always responsible for our conduct, a fact that can generate either good or bad circumstances for us. Thus, we can see that freewill, which is also

relative, is an irrefutable reality on every evolutionary level of consciousness. We mustn't forget, however, that we evolve interdependently in each realm. In the physical experience, children need their parents up to a certain point; the sick need physicians, and young people need advice from their elders. Here, in the spirit realm, competence depends on instructors, effective support requires someone who can actually provide it, and a switch from just staying at home to getting involved in ennobling work, when doing so involves a spirit that lacks inarguable merit, requires the endorsement of the appropriate authorities."

"What is a diverted prayer?" asked my co-worker, dying with curiosity.

Hilario had also been a doctor in the physical realm, and like me, he remained involved with medical tasks under Clarencio's responsibility, thus acquiring specialized knowledge.

"A diverted prayer is one where the direction of the luminous impulse has been diverted, thus reaching another target."

We were eager to ask more questions, but our instructor calmed us down:

"Just wait a bit. You'll soon see that we're all connected to one another."

Then, he said to the young woman waiting respectfully:

"Please, call sister Eulalia."

A few moments later Eulalia appeared, beaming with kindness and warmth.

"Sister," said Clarencio, "this chart displays a heartfelt appeal from Evelina, whose return to the physical learning experience was approved by our organization. It looks like the poor woman is in dire straits."

"Yes, she really is," agreed Eulalia "Despite her frail new body, she has been enduring a great mental struggle. Her father, Amaro, is burdened with inner issues and has put his health at risk. And her stepmother has been suffering obstinate persecution at the hands of our unfortunate Odila."

"Evelina's mother?"

"That's right. She hasn't yet accepted the fact that she is no longer the woman in Evelina's home. For two years now I've used my energy and goodwill to deter her, but she's tangled up in the dark threads of jealousy and won't listen. Overflowing selfishness has made her forget about her

commitments. Zulmira, Amaro's second wife, has been severely depressed ever since little Julio's death. As you know, the boy drowned because of past moral debts. His stepmother Zulmira went so far as to actually desire his death because she didn't love him, and now she feels guilty due to the influence of her husband's first wife, Odila. Evelina, in turn, after losing her little brother under such tragic circumstances, is all out of sorts, caught between her grieving father and her despondent second mother ... I saw her just yesterday. She was weeping all distraught in front of her discarnate mother's picture, begging for protection. But since Odila is entangled in the web of her own mental creations, she cannot respond favorably to Evelina's trust and tenderness. The girl has so vehemently asked for spiritual help that her petitions changed directions and have arrived here in this form."

We were eyeing the little chart in silence.

Breaking the long pause, the Minister asked Hilario:

"Do you understand now what a diverted prayer is? Evelina calls out to her mother's spirit, who is in no position to listen to her; even so, her petition isn't lost. Uttered at such high frequency, our little sister's pleas break through lower circles and go in search of unfailing support."

Gazing at us with his lucid eyes, he concluded:

"Would you like to help us out with this?"

Of course we would. We were enthralled by the case.

Our instructor recommended we wait a few days, however. He himself wanted to find out more about all that had happened so that he could give us more accurate information when we were with him.

Our trip was set, and when the time came we were ready.

A short time later, Clarencio, Eulalia, Hilario and I were at the door of a modest, yet comfortable residence in one of the districts of Rio de Janeiro. The street clock read 9:00 p.m. sharp.

We went in.

In a small room that looked like a study or library, a visibly-worried man of about thirty-five was reading a mechanic's manual.

On his plain desk were various publications that he had been studying.



More properly assuming the role of mentor for our group, Clarencio explained:

“This is Amaro, the head of the family. He has complicated debts from the distant past. On several occasions, he made use of guns and knives to do evil. Today, he holds an important post at a railway station.”

Then, we went into a charming bedroom.

A sweet fourteen year-old girl was embroidering initials on a linen handkerchief.

Looking thin and sad, her big, serene eyes showed that she was concentrating. She did not notice our presence, but when the Minister’s unseen hands touched her, she displayed indefinable inner joy.

She instinctively looked away from the white linen cloth and gazed at a woman’s picture hanging on the wall. She smiled in rapture as if she were conversing with the person in the picture. Clarencio explained:

“This is Evelina, whose incarnation we oversaw a few years ago. The picture is that of her discarnate mother. Evelina has been bound to her parents by the threads of deep love for many centuries. She has come to meet other persons and situations she needs in order to ascend spiritually, but she has also brought with her the task of assisting her parents. At the moment, she believes her mother is the one doing the assisting, but because of her spiritual merit, she is actually the one that is assisting her still-struggling mother.”

I embraced the enraptured girl, who was surrounded by a luminous aura of peace, and for a few seconds I meditated on the greatness of love and the sublimity of prayer.

# 3

## Obsession

We then went into the largest bedroom in the place, where a young woman was having trouble sleeping.

She looked to be about twenty-five. Her tormented face displayed a harmonious beauty. It seemed almost picture-perfect, but its comely lines were contrasted by troubled, fearful dark eyes and disheveled hair.

Beside her lay a discarnate woman.

Her head was on a large pillow as if she was watching over the obviously infirm younger woman; however, the emptiness of her gaze and her dark aura left no doubt that she was inwardly imbalanced. She held her right hand over the younger woman's medulla oblongata, as if wanting to control her nervous impressions, and grayish threads flowed from her head like an octopus's tentacles to envelop the other's heart center, annulling her force centers.

Both were unaware of our presence, so we were able to observe them closely and see that they were tormenter and victim.

In answer to our silent questions, Clarencio explained:

"The young woman is Zulmira, Amaro's second wife. The discarnate sister who is vampirizing her body is Odila, Amaro's first wife and Evelina's mother. Odila has been dolorously transfigured by jealousy. Intent on fighting against the one she considers her enemy, she is magnetized to the cerebral area of Zulmira's perispirit, controlling the complex network of nerve stimuli and influencing the metabolic centers, thereby profoundly altering the organic landscape."

"Why doesn't Zulmira fight back?" I asked.

“Because she has lapsed into the same vibratory pattern. She too has devoted herself to her husband with disparaging selfishness. Amaro has always been a very loving father. His first marriage left him two children, but little Julio, a handsome boy of eight years, drowned in the sea. Zulmira had a dreadful time trying to bear Amaro’s love toward his kids. She constantly whined and complained about the least displays of fatherly tenderness, thereby entwining herself in the frantic energies of Amaro’s unaccepting first wife. Due to her sickly preoccupations, Zulmira wound up actually wanting one of the children to die. She meant to possess her husband’s heart absolutely and exclusively. And because Amaro focused his attention more particularly on the boy, she would silently emit the desire to see him drown at the beach when he went into the water for a swim. One morning as she was watching over the children, she separated Evelina from her brother and let him go too far out into the water. She got what she wanted. A large wave caught the boy off guard and pushed him to the bottom. Julio couldn’t regain his balance and his body floated to the surface. The family’s grief was enormous. The railroad worker felt psychically distant from Zulmira and thought she had been lax and cruel to the children. Zulmira in turn was extremely sorry about what had happened and felt indirectly responsible for the disaster. She came under the pernicious influence of her rival, who began obsessing her from the invisible plane.”

Clarencio paused a moment and then continued:

“The feeling of guilt is always a collapse of the conscience, and dark forces make their appearance through it ... Because of her destructive remorse, Zulmira fell to Odila’s emotional level and both became locked in a deadly feud unseen by ordinary human eyes. It is a case where earthly medicine is completely ineffective.”

The Minister finished his explanation.

As if she registered our presence intuitively, Odila latched on to the poor woman more forcefully and shouted:

“No one shall free her! I’m a wretched mother who’s been robbed of her home ... I have taken justice into my own hands!”

And staring at Zulmira with a dreadful look, she added:

“Murderer! Murderer! ... You killed my child! You too shall die!”

Zulmira opened her eyes wide.

Her face was extremely pale.

She had not heard what her invisible enemy said, but enlaced in her magnetic wave, she felt like she was about to die.

Clarencio stroked her forehead and said quietly:

“Poor girl!”

Hilario and I instinctively rushed Odila to pull her away, but the benevolent instructor stopped us with a gesture, warning:

“Force won’t do any good. The two are completely interconnected. Separating them forcefully could cause harm of unforeseeable consequences. The discarnate woman’s exasperation would weigh too heavily on Zulmira’s cerebral centers, and lipothymy could lead to paralysis or even death.”

“Then how can this wrongful union be undone?” cried Hilario. “How can it be brought to an end? Wouldn’t it be right to remove obsessor from victim?”

Clarencio smiled and replied:

“This situation is different. On the physical plane, the body is a priceless isolator of the unbalanced energies of our mind; however, on our plane, and with this type of problem, such energies can overflow menacingly onto the unfortunate woman, whose body is like a weak lamp, which, if it were to receive too strong of an electric current, would be rendered completely inoperable.”

“Can’t we do anything at all?” asked Hilario, disheartened.

“We need to exert our influence on Zulmira’s thoughts because she’s the one who initiated the persecution in the first place. It’s crucial to set her will on a different course, shifting her mental center and providing her with other interests and aspirations.”

“So can’t we get started?”

The Minister calmly replied:

“Not right now; we couldn’t or wouldn’t know how. Preparation is indispensable.”

“Surely a good scolding wouldn’t hurt,” replied Hilario.

“Yes, a pure and simple bit of counseling might be appropriate, but we mustn’t forget that the victim’s cerebral organization is taking a serious beating. Our intervention in Odila’s spiritual field has to be safe and secure in order to avoid shocks and counter-shocks, because they would reverberate disastrously on each other. Being too gentle would be harmful; being too forceful would be bruising.”

Clarencio looked compassionately at the two women and continued:

“This is a very delicate situation. We need to find someone who has amassed enough love and understanding in his or her soul to converse with the two using the creative power of renewal.”

He thought for a few instants and concluded:

“I think we can count on sister Clara. Let’s ask her to help us. She’ll be able to change Odila with her light-crowned words and incline her to work on her conversion. For now, all you and I can do is provide a little relief – nothing more.”

He asked Eulalia to provide Evelina with some much-needed mental relief and then applied a lengthy series of calming magnetic passes to Zulmira.

As if gently anesthetized, Zulmira went from being troubled to feeling at peace. Her husband came into the room, and thinking she was asleep, settled her more comfortably on the pillow.

## 4

# A Pathway of Trials

Zulmira had left her body, but she was not really enjoying the peace portrayed on her face.

Enlaced by Odila, to whose controlling gaze she submitted, she did not register our presence.

With obvious signs of dread, she heard her rival's rebuke accusing her:

"What did you do to my son? Murderer! Murderer! You shall pay dearly for intruding into the home that is mine and only mine! ... I'm going to wreck your life. You're not going to rob me of Amaro's love ... I will arm Evelina's heart against you!"

"No, no!" responded her victim. "I didn't murder him! I didn't!"

"Liar! I read your thoughts, your desires, your vows."

Zulmira unexpectedly escaped Odila's grasp and ran out. Odila ran after her.

Clarencio remarked:

"Whenever the poor thing does manage to calm her body down, she falls into this troubling nightmare. Let's follow them. They're headed for the beach, where the boy drowned. Hard pressed by our imbalanced sister's assault, Zulmira hasn't been able to free herself from her afflictive memories."

We too headed for the sea.

On the way, we engaged in lively conversation.

"I can't see why Zulmira claims she's innocent," said Hilario.

“Why such a trial if she isn’t the one who committed the crime?” I asked in turn.

The Minister explained:

“According to sister Eulalia’s records, Zulmira didn’t actually commit the crime, but because she was insanely jealous toward her husband, she ardently longed for the boy’s death and even encouraged it. Not to repeat myself, I’ll briefly explain the couple’s troubled past in as much detail as possible.”

After a slight pause, he proceeded:

“Amaro loved his son immensely. Whenever Julio became ill, Amaro would stand at his bedside showing unlimited tenderness. Realizing that Zulmira didn’t really love his kids, he began sleeping beside the boy, surrounding him with attention. When he came home from work each day, he would have long talks with the boy, would read him stories or would listen attentively to his childish tales. They were like two old buddies who were quite enough for each other. Consequently, Zulmira chafed with spite and began to see the boy as an enemy of her domestic happiness. Evelina’s devotion to her father didn’t bother her as much. She was sweeter and more reserved. She showed restraint in her displays of love toward her father and she divided her kindnesses to include her stepmother. So, Zulmira didn’t hold anything against Evelina; Julio, on the other hand, enraged her. In his extreme attachment to Amaro, he would get into mischief but Amaro would always forgive him with a benevolent smile. Bit by bit, Zulmira allowed hate to occupy her heart and she let her jealousy blind her to the point of longing for the happy little boy’s death. She intentionally unconcerned herself with offering him the help she should have, and she abandoned him to the extravagances that were characteristic of his age, as she fed the secret desire to see him meet his end. She even encouraged him to play in the street, hoping that some vehicle would do what she didn’t have the guts to do with her own hands ... Such was her attitude when she went with the family for their morning swim on that clear, Sunday morning. Involved with the contentment of the outing, Amaro and the girl went out a little ways in a small boat while Zulmira watched the boy. That is when dark musings arose in her mind. Mightn’t this be a good time to carry out her purposes? What if she were to just leave the boy to himself? Of course, because of his infantile curiosity, Julio wouldn’t resist going out into the water ... No one could blame her. She put her plan in action and left the boy alone. Seeing that he

was by himself, Julio became highly interested in the colorful shells in the sand and wound up looking for them in the water until a huge wave smashed into his frail body and forced him down. He came up and cried for her help ... Zulmira could have gone back the short distance to save him, but overcome by the sinister thoughts dominating her mind, she waited for the sea to finish the dreadful deed that she had not had the courage to do. When she saw that the boy had disappeared, she began crying out for help. Her soul was suddenly gripped by remorse, but it was too late ... Amaro came running and with the help of friends he pulled the lifeless body out of the water. Grief-stricken, he wept bitterly at the loss of the boy and blamed Zulmira. That was when, overcome with repentance and tormented by guilt, she descended in spirit to the vibratory level of Odila, who, repulsed, had silently been watching her. If she had been able to maintain peace of conscience, she could have defended herself against the unseen onslaught as if she were living in a fortified castle, but because she condemned herself, she slid into deplorable perturbation, like someone who had deserted a well-lit home and had gotten lost in a forest of darkness.”

Clarencio paused briefly to rest and then continued:

“From that day onward, the poor woman lost both her domestic bliss and her own peace of mind. She and her husband may live under the same roof, but it is as though they are complete strangers.”

“But isn’t Zulmira actually guilty before the Law?” I asked.

The wise mentor smiled meaningfully and replied:

“No, not in the real sense of the Law.”

However, looking at us more expressively than usual, he continued:

“Even so, who among us is not responsible for our thoughts? Our intentions either attenuate or aggravate our wrongs. Our desires are congealed mental energies that materialize our actions, which, basically, constitute the true arena in which we live our lives. The fruits speak for the trees that produce them. Within the living realm of our conscience, our deeds shout loudly about who we are. The shape of our thoughts gives shape to our destiny.”

Hilario and I listened in rapture, unable to even blink.

Waiting for a clear intuition about what to do right now, Clarencio, not to get lost in philosophical digressions, retook the central thread of the matter:



“Julio’s trials included an early death. He was a reincarnated suicide ... Amaro’s second wife, however, suffers the result of the unfortunate choices she harbored within her mind. She also suffers from the poisonous vibrations that she shot at Julio. Because of her jealousy, she surrounded herself with a pestilential environment, in which her maligned thoughts prospered, just as a piece of rotten fruit nourishes the worms that devour it.

“Believing herself to be responsible for the child’s death – she had, after all, fostered the criminal plan – Zulmira gave in to her own evil and also linked herself magnetically to her adversary’s, thus becoming sick and demented.”

“What about the boy in all this?” I asked.

“Julio was taken to a suitable place.”

“But can’t Odila go to him and find out the whole truth?”

“Unfortunately, the poor thing’s genetic center is completely out of control and that prevents her from seeing things more clearly. She wants nothing but her husband due to her maddening attachment to the ties of sex, which her passion only perverts. Odila does possess admirable moral qualities, but they are eclipsed for the time being ... She discarnated in the prime of her femininity bereft of a religious faith that could reeducate her impulses; hence her super-excitation. However, such a state is only temporary and we hope she will willingly submit to the treatment of her upcoming readjustment. When her situation improves, I think the problem will have an immediate and constructive solution.”

I was going to ask another question, but we had reached the beach and Clarencio said that we should observe.

# 5

## An Invaluable Lesson

We reached the seashore in the middle of the night.

The spiritual activity was very intense.

Discarnates of various origins were meeting with friends who were still incarnate but temporarily disengaged from their sleeping bodies. There was also a large number of infirm spirits among them.

There were elderly persons, women and children of all sorts being upheld by the numerous spirits assisting them.

We heard spiritually constructive conversations and dolorous laments.

Urgent magnetic passes were being applied here and there ... And the air we were breathing in that part of the city was highly diverse.

A refreshing breeze was blowing in from afar bearing regenerative principles and filling us with a wonderful feeling of well-being.

“The ocean is a miraculous reservoir of energies,” Clarencio explained expressively. “A lot of fellow spirits from our plane bring ailing still-incarnate brothers and sisters here for healing and rest. Discarnate nurses and friends take great care in helping their wards recover their energies. Similar to what happens on a tree-covered mountain, the ocean-side atmosphere is impregnated with infinite, vitalizing resources found in nature. Untainted oxygen, combined with emanations from the planet, are converted into valuable nourishment for our spiritual make-up, especially if we are still directly or indirectly connected to the fluids of dense matter.”

We came to an area where an extremely troubled woman was lying on her back close to the water, receiving magnetic passes from a benefactor devoted to service and prayer.

Clarencio left us for a few moments to speak with a friend a short

distance away and then returned to inform us:

“That is a sister from our personal circle. She has cancer. She has been taken from her physical vehicle by means of hypnosis in order to receive the proper assistance.”

“But can that type of treatment halt the imbalance in the organic cells?” I asked. “Can the patient actually be healed?”

The Minister smiled and explained:

“Actually, when spirit friends provide assistance that affects the subtle tissues of the soul, it is possible to accomplish wonders when the person is partially disengaged from the body. By acting on the perispiritual centers, we can sometimes cause profound changes in patients’ health, changes that gradually show up in the somatic body. Consequently, serious illnesses can be cured and striking renewals can be accomplished. Especially when we find the workings of prayer in the mind enriched by transforming faith, thereby facilitating our intervention by constructive passivity in the area where we must do our work, the job of assistance can accomplish veritable miracles. The physical body is maintained by the spirit body and adjusts itself to its form. In this way, our influence on the spirit body is crucial for the physical body, which the mind uses to express itself.”

The Minister shook his head and added:

“However, what we do is subject to the law that governs us. Regarding this sister’s problem, help from our plane can only provide her a little comfort. Because of the trials she must endure, the disease has spread too far.”

“So, does that mean she can only resign herself to a peaceful death?” asked Hilario.

“Exactly. After receiving this assistance, she will awaken more serene and comforted in her failing body. By coming here night after night, her greater understanding will enable her to get used to the idea of death. In turn, she will help her family members be resigned and courageous about it. She will be able to mitigate their grief by slowly building her inner humility ... bit by bit. By increasing the inner light of her conscience, she will disengage herself from her diseased body and beloved environment like one who finds physical death to be a wonderful deliverance for a more ennobling form of

work. Thus, in just a few weeks she will be admirably prepared for her new pathway.”

Clarencio became silent.

The matter would require further study.

“In that case ...” I began hesitantly.

The Minister smiled and cut in:

“I already know what you’ve concluded. You’re right. A long illness is a blessing in disguise because it prepares the soul for the great liberation. Unless the disease is long-lasting, a quick success in the endeavor of death is very difficult.”

Just then, Zulmira and Odila arrived not far from us.

Clarencio asked us to pay attention.

We quickly surrounded them as if they were patients under our watch-care.

Neither one of them could tell we were there. They also seemed little interested in the activity around them.

Amaro’s first wife was focused on her prey while her victim had an expression of unspeakable terror on her face, as if she were on the verge of extreme disequilibrium.

Zulmira looked like she was going to make a run for home, but held by Odila, she displayed affliction and fear.

Repeating the accusations that we had already heard, Odila was hammering at the other’s brain, mercilessly reiterating:

“Remember your crime, you wretch! Remember that awful morning when you became a murderer! Why did you drown an innocent child?”

“No, no!” cried the demented woman. “It wasn’t me! I swear it wasn’t me! Julio was dragged down by the waves!”

“Why weren’t you watching the child that my husband thoughtlessly entrusted into your faithless hands? Doesn’t your conscience accuse you? Where are you feelings as a woman? You shall pay me dearly for your carelessness ... I won’t let Amaro love you. I’ll feed his antipathy toward

you. I'll torment the people that want to help you. I'll destroy the very house you stole from me! ... Impostor! Impostor!"

"Alright, alright," agreed Zulmira, terrified. I didn't kill him but I didn't do what I could have done to save him either! Forgive me! Please, forgive me! I promise to do my utmost to restore everyone's peace of mind ... I'll be a slave to your husband and I'll restore him to your arms. I'll become your daughter's servant and guide her steps toward the good. But for God's sake, let me live! Let go of me! Have mercy on me!"

"Never! Never!" roared Odila coldly. Your wrong is unforgivable. You committed murder! You must go to the police and confess! ... I'll make you bow your head! You'll go to jail and join other criminals of your ilk!

"No! No!" begged Zulmira.

"If you didn't murder my son," screamed the other cruelly, "then return him to my arms! Give him back! Give him back!"

Just then, both found themselves on a certain spot on the beach.

Zulmira's eyes displayed a strange fire.

"It was here! This is where you carried out your wicked plan to wreck our happiness!" screamed her persecutor.

As if touched by unseen impulses, Zulmira freed herself from Odila's grip, went into the water and cried:

"Julio! Julio!"

Completely out of her mind, Odila went in after her.

Sensing her approach, Zulmira turned and ran for home.

We followed the two in their race without letting them out of our sight.

Dashing for home as if her body was a powerful magnet, Zulmira woke up bathed in sweat, her physical brain retaining the impression of having wandered around in a dreadful nightmare.

She tried to scream but couldn't.

She was completely prostrate. She was smitten by dyspnea and her coronary arteries were all swollen.

Clarencio gave her wholesome, relaxing fluids.

Her heart slowly calmed down and her circulation returned to normal.  
The poor woman was finally able to cry for help.

## 6

# In a Christian Home

Hilario and I wanted to follow Zulmira's case not only to help her get better, but also to receive Clarencio's instruction and wise thoughts where possible.

"Yes," he said, "to help out in cases like this, we have to press forward with them; but to understand what we must do in order to advance securely, we have to return to the rearguard and arm ourselves with lessons that truly inform us."

We had no idea what he was talking about; however, he came to our rescue, explaining after a slight pause:

"For us to grasp the situation in its entirety, we need to contact other characters involved in the drama. Thus, I think a visit to little Julio in his present spirit home might be helpful."

"Oh! What a pleasure that would be!" I exclaimed.

"Could we go there right now?" asked Hilario, delighted.

The Minister thought for a few seconds and replied:

"Regarding the responsibilities we have assumed in the matter, it would not be advisable to investigate merely for the sake of investigating. We must keep our objective and its usefulness in mind and work for everyone's good. We are not on vacation but on active duty."

He thought and thought ... and continued:

"I know that tomorrow night Eulalia has to accompany two of our incarnate sisters as they visit their children, who preceded them on the grand journey of death. They are living in the same place as Julio. We could stand in for Eulalia and do her job for her. We can assist our sisters and examine Julio's situation at the same time."

Realizing the valuable lesson this endeavor would offer, we eagerly looked forward to the following night.

At the appointed time, we descended to the physical realm to meet up with the two sisters who would be going with us.

The Minister left us in a plain little house in a remote suburban area after telling us:

“Our sister Antonina lives here with three of the four children that the Lord has entrusted to her. Her husband was unable to overcome the temptations of his nature and left her four years ago for criminal adventures. Antonina didn’t get discouraged, however. She works hard in a textile factory and is educating her kids with a true love for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. She has been able to pay off the debts she brought over from her past life. A few months ago she lost her little eight-year-old Marcos to pneumonia. She is going to see him tonight after her prayers with her other children. I’ll go and get the other woman who is going with us. The two of you stay here and assist Antonina with her prayers and studies until I get back so that we can all go together.”

Hilario and I went into a plain, cramped room.

A young but extremely troubled woman was on her feet with three lovely children – two boys, eleven and twelve years old, and a little blond girl, obviously the youngest, who was looking up at her mother with her beautiful blue eyes.

In one corner of the humble room was a downcast, discarnate elderly man who seemed to be listening in.

Dona Antonina placed two glasses of pure water on a snow-white towel, and picking up a New Testament, she sat down.

Then, she spoke lovingly:

“If I’m not mistaken, this evening’s prayer is to be offered by Lisbela.”

The girl folded her little hands in front of her face, with her elbows graciously supported on the table. She closed her eyes and recited:

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Do not let us fall



into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. So be it.”

Lisbela opened her eyes and looked at her mother for approval.

Antonina smiled, satisfied, and said:

“You prayed really well, my child.”

She turned her attention to the two boys and handed the New Testament to one of them:

“Open it, Henrique. Let’s see what Christian message we shall study this evening.”

The boy chose the text at random and handed the book back to his mother.

Touched, Antonina read Matthew 18:21, 22:

“Then Peter approached him and said, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Seven?’ Jesus answered, ‘No, not just seven, but seventy times seven.’”

When she had finished reading, she waited for the young learners to show their curiosity.

Little Henrique started the conversation by asking simply:

“Momma, why did Jesus recommend so much forgiveness?”

Displaying her vast evangelical training, the woman answered:

“We are led to believe that, in teaching us to forgive all our neighbor’s wrongs against us, the Divine Master showed us the best way to live in peace with one another. Whoever cannot disentangle himself from life’s troubles cannot keep himself from evil. A person who is stuck in unpleasant memories is always in a bad mood. Take school, for instance. If you can’t overlook the little annoyances of your studies, you won’t learn anything from your lessons. Today an unfriendly classmate plays a joke on you; tomorrow an edgy security guard over-reacts because of some misunderstanding. If you display impatience or rebelliousness, you make matters worse, cause problems for your teacher, demoralize the whole school and harm your own name and health. Someone who can’t forgive is always lonely. No one likes to be around someone who is always complaining or criticizing.”

Antonina asked the eldest:

“Haroldo, when you’re thirsty, would you like a drink from a pitcher of murky water?”

“Ick! No way! I would want pure, clear water”

“Well, the same applies as far as our spiritual needs are concerned. The soul that can’t forgive is filled with evil, just like a pitcher of murky, icky water. It’s not a soul that can offer any comfort to our own. It’s not one that can help us overcome life’s problems. If we try to share our problems with someone like that, they always just get worse. That’s why Jesus says we should always forgive so that the love in our spirit may be like the sun shining on a clean house.”

Everyone was quiet for a bit.

Haroldo had a troubled look on his face and finally asked:

“But Mom, do you really think we should forgive every time?”

“Why shouldn’t we?”

“Even if the offense is the worst ever?”

“Even then.”

Troubled, Dona Antonina looked at him and asked:

“Why do you ask?”

“I was thinking about Dad,” replied the boy, somewhat sad. “He left us when we needed him most. Is it right to forget how much he hurt us?”

“Oh, my son! Let go of that. Why harbor bad feelings against the man who gave you life? How can we condemn him if we don’t know everything that happened to him? It would really be better for our well-being if he was still here, but since we have to make do without him, we should send him our best thoughts. With heaven’s permission, my son, your father gave you the body in which you are learning to serve God. That’s why he is a creditor of the most love you can give him. There are acts of service that we can repay only with love. Our debt to our parents is one of them.”

Perhaps remembering that her family was on a course of Christian growth, she added:

“A long time ago, when the great prophet Moses went up on the mountain to receive the divine revelation, one of the most important laws given to him by the Eternal Goodness was, ‘Honor your father and your

mother.’ That particular law does not say that we are to analyze what kind of parents we have, but that we are to honor them with our loving respect no matter what they are.”

The little group accepted this explanation with bright, happy eyes.

Haroldo showed that he agreed, but went on to say:

“I know what you mean, Mom. But if Dad had still been here, maybe Marcos wouldn’t have died. We would have had enough money to get him treated.”

Antonina hurriedly wiped away the tears that began to fall at the mention of the child’s name, and continued:

“It would be wrong to lose our trust in the Heavenly Father. Marcos went to meet Jesus because Jesus called him. He didn’t lack anything. I’m asking that none of you get any sad ideas regarding the memory of the angel who has gone on before us. Our thoughts follow those whom we love when they go into the Beyond.”

Just then, Lisbela asked sweetly:

“Mommy, can Marcos see us?”

“Of course he can,” she said movingly. “He helps us in spirit by asking Jesus to give us his strength and blessings. In return, we should help him with our prayers and best memories.”

Antonina, however, seemed choked up with longing. While the boys were commenting on that evening’s lesson, she was absorbed in the mental image of little Marcos.

When the clock marked the end of the study, she asked Henrique to say the closing prayer.

The boy repeated the Lord’s Prayer and asked the Lord to bless his mother. The study ended.

Antonina and the children shared the two glasses of water, which Hilario and I had magnetized. Then, pensive and nostalgic, she retired with them to their common bedroom.

## 7

# An Imbalanced Conscience

In compliance with our orders, we waited for Antonina in the small room where the family Gospel meeting had been held.

We were now able to examine the elderly discarnate man more closely. Downcast and shaky, he looked just as he did when alive; he seemed troubled, demented ...

We tried to approach him but it was useless.

He couldn't see us.

I reminded Hilario that we could make ourselves solidier by concentrating our wills, which we did.

Looking as if we had just arrived, he was immediately interested.

The man hurried over to us, exclaiming:

“Are you officers or soldiers? Are you pro or con?”

The haggard look in his eyes confirmed that he was insane.

Hilario and I exchanged looks of curiosity and surprise.

Before we could say anything, the man began weeping convulsively, asking:

“Who brought up the idea of forgiveness? How am I to regard that issue? Should I forgive or should I be forgiven? I don't see the point of a weak woman and three kids discussing such a matter ... Such discussions should be reserved for troubled people like me, who have a volcano in the middle of their head.”

After he said that, his face changed.

He seemed even further out of touch with reality, even more out of his mind.

Almost shouting, he continued:

“Everything would have been different if they had let me meet the new General ... He would have understood my situation. It was the Marshall’s plan to order me into his exclusive service, but because of my wretched persecutor, I was transferred unfairly.”

Our unexpected friend scanned the corners of the room as if he was afraid someone might be listening, and continued:

“Listen to me! My persecutor not only planned to keep me from the favors of the sick Marshall, but he also planned to keep me from that woman ... Lola Ibarruri! How could I possibly have not wanted her with such passion? Why would I have to go to Fecho dos Morros? Their intent to do me harm was obvious. Of course, I was forced to leave, but I went no farther than Tacuaral. General Polidoro wouldn’t abandon me ... I needed to go back to Luque, so I did ... That bastard Esteves, however, never gave up ... Besides violating my rights as a medic at general headquarters, he stole Lola’s love from me ... The lovely Ibarruri was mine no more. She had surrendered to my disloyal friend ... Our garden and little orange orchard were forgotten ... Who would dare say that I had not sacrificed myself to provide a nice home for that perfidious woman? For one long and awful month, I longed to return to her love ... When I finally did, on that starry night in May, I found her in the arms of that traitor ... She tried to make excuses but I had caught them red-handed ... I felt like getting my revenge as soon as I could by stabbing him with my dagger, but the troops were to leave town in three days, and my enemy, who had kept himself hidden in the darkness so that I couldn’t get to him, ran off to join them when they left for Itaugua ... Hatred began dominating and blinding me ... I would find him somehow. I would embrace him with the same pretended cordiality that he had embraced me with the first time and I would take his life ... And I did ... I pretended to have forgotten what had happened and I approached him with a smile ... And as I smiled, I poisoned him ... But believe me, I dared commit such an act because he was impudent, libertine, cruel ... He would have murdered me if I had not taken the opportunity to get him first.”

He paused briefly, knelt in front of us and began to clamor again:

“Oh! ... I know I did what was right but that man has never left me alone since! ... I have fought so hard! ... I got married and had a big family! ... I devoted myself to religion; I partook of the benefits of the holy sacraments and I thought everything had been taken care of. But after I died from old age and infirmity, instead of heaven – which now seems even farther away – I’ve realized that that man is still persecuting me! ... I may have said goodbye to my worn-out bones years ago, but I’m walking around afflicted and wretched, carrying hell around inside myself! ... At first I looked for my grave in the hopes of raising my remains and hiding myself in them to forget ... to forget ... But I could see that that was impossible so I fled forever the place that housed my remains. Now, I devour streets and squares in search of someone with authority to help me.”

He passed his hands over his face to wipe away the tears and continued:

“Kind sirs that you must be! ... Even if my wrong was so dreadful, I’ve spent such a long time with this merciless monster staring at me; wouldn’t that be enough expiation for my redemption? If I confessed a crime and thus spent less time in prison, wouldn’t I be redeemed before the courts?”

Perceiving that we should say something to console him, I put my hand on his white hair and said, trying to be kindly:

“Compose yourself, brother! Who of us hasn’t stumbled on the pathway of life? Your pain is not unique ... Our spirits are also cluttered with troubling memories. Tears of despair do the soul no good.”

From what he had told us, I perceived that the old man was remembering the time of the war with Paraguay. In an effort to piece things together so as to form a connection between past and present, I asked:

“What new General do you mean?”

“Ah! You don’t know?”

And like someone completely stuck in the details of the past, he stated:

“I can remember it exactly ... Yes, his proclamation was made on April 16 ... Prince D. Gastao de Orleans may have been the new supreme commander, but the Marshall’s departure weighed heavily on me.”

“What Marshall?” I asked, stoking his memory.

“Marshall Guilherme Xavier de Souza. He was my friend, my protector ... Sick and worn out, he needed me ... but they took him from

me ... Esteves, that faithless dog ...”

His voice faded. His eyes bugged out, and as if he were being inwardly attacked by dreadful forces imperceptible to us, he began to complain in despair:

“Ah! I can’t go on! ... He’s getting larger again within me! He’s looking at me in disgust and I can still hear his last words in the throes of death ... “No! No!” he cried in obvious anguish, “I shall free myself! I shall free myself! I have faith!”

Deeply moved, I replied:

“Yes, my friend, faith is the miraculous lifesaver for all who have fallen overboard. Have you tried prayer? Have you asked Jesus to support and assist you?”

“Yes, yes ...”

“Haven’t you gotten any sign of heavenly help yet?”

The wretch focused his troubled eyes on me and said:

“A few days ago, I went to the Church of the Rosary, recalling as always my having gone there the day before I left for the war. I prayed so hard that I received the blessing of seeing the Marshall, who suddenly appeared to me ... He was much younger and incredibly remade ... I begged him for his protection and he told me that my case would be evaluated; that I should rest, because as great as our wrongs might be, even greater is the compassion of God, who never leaves us helpless.”

With a gesture of profound trouble, he added:

“But so far, I haven’t gotten the smallest sign of renewal on my path.”

I caressed his snow-white hair and remarked:

“Even so, you have to believe that Jesus’ goodness will not forsake us.”

“Promise you’ll help me! Have mercy on me!”

My heart deeply touched by such an appeal, I promised to help him find peace and support.

Just as the poor man was about to embrace me, Clarencio entered with the female ward that would be accompanying us on the trip.

Kind and humble, after greeting us she kept her distance. In an instant, Clarencio grasped what was happening. He concentrated for a few moments, making himself denser in order to help more readily.

Greeted by the old man, he stroked his brow and informed us:

“He’s deranged. His mind is stuck in obsessive memories.”

More experienced than us, Clarencio held him in his arms with fatherly care, thereby winning his trust. He asked:

“What are you searching for, my brother?”

“I have come to beg Antonina, my granddaughter, to help me. She is the only one who remembers me with love ... Of all the members of my family, she alone holds a place for me in her heart.”

When he began his complaining all over again, the Minister put his hand on the man’s head as if to make a detailed inspection about what was going on inside him, and then informed us:

“This is our brother Leonardo Pires, who disincarnated nearly twenty years ago ... When he was younger, he was employed by Marshall Guilherme Xavier de Souza but now his mind is stuck on a crime of poisoning that he was involved with when he was a member of the Brazilian army encamped in Piraju, Paraguay. We can see all the details of the crime on the screen of the memories that torment him ... It is a festival Sunday during the campaign ... July 11, 1869 ... Mass is being celebrated out in the field by a Capuchin monk ... Count d’Eu and the pompous officers from army headquarters are there ... Our still-young friend is among the infantrymen. However, he isn’t interested in the grave warnings of the priest during the rite, nor the ardent, patriotic appeal by the General, who delivers a brilliant and inspired speech to the soldiers ... Instead, he is gazing impertinently at a recently-arrived soldier from Itaugua, a special services medic ... Jose Esteves, a restless thirty-year-old Brazilian with dark, intelligent eyes, and stately bearing ... He shares with our friend the affections of a beautiful woman, who has left her husband and son for the pleasure of adventure ... Pires disapproves of the beloved creature’s favors toward the patrician. He hates him, but pretends to be unaware of the situation, appearing well-mannered and gentle ... When mass is over, he invites Esteves for a friendly meal ... They talk enthusiastically about nights out in Rio, eager to return to their excitement ... Esteves shares Leonardo’s feelings. He trusts him as they chat until, in an improvised tavern, his vengeful colleague offers him a glass of wine laced with deadly poison ...



He drinks it, feels dizzy and dies cursing Pires ... The incident causes quite a stir ... An Argentine medic is called to the scene and verifies the poisoning, but the authorities deem silence as the best approach under the circumstances ... The troops are en route to Paraguari and the case is closed without further investigation ... Leonardo Pires accompanies the army to the frontlines and tries to forget what happened ... He keeps his relationship with the woman of his desires for a while longer, but upon returning to Brazil, he loses interest in her and gets married, leaving several descendants ... He discarnates in ill health; however, on his deathbed he realizes that the memory of his crime is whipping him on the inside ... He ignores nearly all the other episodes of his life to concentrate solely on this one ... Jose Esteves has already reincarnated, but Leonardo Pires lives with the image of the murder, which comes back to life every day in his memory at the influx of suggestions from his own, guilty conscience ... As we can see, it is the natural fulfillment of the law of cause and effect.”

Just then, Antonina, in her subtle body, came to meet us at the door to the room where her body was asleep.

## 8

# A Delightful Trip

The discarnate elderly man showed complete indifference during Clarencio's narrative, but as if Antonina's presence had reawakened his interest, he looked at her with a sudden glow in his eyes and cried:

“Antonina! Antonina! ... Help me. I'm scared! So scared!”

Antonina, who appeared much more delicate and beautiful outside her dense body, gazed at him sadly and asked with a sorrowful look:

“Grandpa, what are you doing here?”

The old man knelt down and implored:

“Please, help me! Except for you, my whole family has forgotten me. Please don't forsake me! ... My sworn enemy is torturing me inside. He's like a demon living in my conscience.”

He tried to embrace her but Clarencio stopped him:

“Listen, my friend! Our brothers have promised to help you, and of course, they will. But for now, Antonina has to go with us for a few hours.”

Embracing him paternally, he suggested:

“You can help her too. Watch over her home while the kids are asleep. In return, tomorrow you will receive the help you need.”

The old mad smiled in compliance and settled down.

We left him alone in the small room and went out into the night.

Joining hands and keeping our sisters within the closed circuit of our energies, we started out on our lovely trip.

Who on earth could ever imagine the delightful sensations of being a free soul?

Traveling at the speed of thought, we advanced into the night's darkness, leaving behind the glow of a colorful and enchanting dawn.

When we reached a lovely, softly-lit area containing an impressive and welcoming park, I noticed the ecstatic, happy look on our female companions' faces.

Dona Antonina, supported on Clarencio's arm as if she were his daughter, asked in wonder:

"Why don't we make this trip a definitive transference? The body becomes so heavy, like an unbearable cross of flesh, the moment we sense the earth from afar."

"You're right," agreed the other sister. "Why can't we just stay and forget about the heartaches and disappointments of the world?"

"We know what you mean," replied the Minister. We know how much trouble afflicts the reincarnated spirit, especially when it awakens to the beauty of the spirit world. However, we must praise the opportunity to serve and never scorn it. We are still a long ways from full redemption, and all of us, with longer or shorter alternatives, must embrace the struggle of the flesh in order to pay off our old debts in a worthy manner. We are travelers across unending millennia. Yesterday we were helped; today it is our turn to help."

As we continued on, waves of fragrance increased all around us, restoring our energies and inducing us to take deep breaths.

Delicate flowers hung abundantly from wholesome trees, scenting the light breezes that whispered enchanting melodies ...

As if his chest were bursting with light, Clarencio smiled benevolently.

He couldn't even speak.

We all felt magnetized and touched by the beauty of the magnificent landscape.

Antonina, beaming with insatiable curiosity mixed with joy, exclaimed:

"Ah! If only we *could* die right now! ... If only the flesh no longer weighed on us!"

The minister replied with a grave tone of voice, but without losing his customary kindness:

“If you were to abandon your vehicle of dense matter right now, how do you know you would be happy? Which of us could enjoy supreme bliss without perfect personal sublimation?”

And looking at Antonina with kindness mixed with compassion, he went on:

“You are about to visit blessed little children whom death has temporarily snatched from earthly life. You feel like you are in a golden palace in the midst of a paradise of love, but what about the children you have left behind? Could there really be heaven without the presence of those we love? Could we have peace without the joy of those who live in our hearts? Let’s say that the shackles of the physical prison were removed right now ... The tormented human home would increase in importance in the nostalgia that would overwhelm you. The memory of the children still imprisoned on the planet would enchain you to the physical realm like a strong root holding the tree to the dark ground. The cries and groans, the struggles and trials of your unhappy children would speak to your spirits more loudly than the songs of blessedness by happy children, and you would naturally go down from heaven to earth, preferring to be unseen anguished servants who have traded the resplendent glory of freedom for the dolorous torments of prison; for the greatest blessedness of one who loves lies in giving of oneself on behalf of one’s beloved children.”

The two women listened to these wise words in silence.

After a short pause the instructor continued:

“We are all one another’s debtors! ... A thousand ties bind our hearts to each other. For now, there is no perfect paradise for anyone who returns from earth, just as there is no complete purgatory for anyone who returns to the human maelstrom! Love is a divine force that nourishes us in every area of life, and our best asset is our mutual help for one another.”

In the light-bathed area, I felt a greater veneration for nature, which in every sphere is a book revealing the Eternal Wisdom.

Smitten by inexpressible joy, our sisters looked like lovely, sleeping Madonnas, suddenly come to life right there in front of us.

“It is by means of toil,” continued Clarencio, “that we gradually rid ourselves of our imperfections. In its old physical expression, earth is nothing but energy that has been condensed since time immemorial, shaken and

transformed by incessant labor; and as God's creatures on the most varied levels of the evolutionary ladder, we perfect our faculties and grow in knowledge and sublimation through service ... As it crawls along, the worm toils on behalf of both the soil and itself; breathing and bearing fruit, the plant aids both the atmosphere and itself. The animal, continuously struggling, is useful to the soil on which it grows, acquiring experiences that are valuable to it. And our own souls, on their ongoing journeys through varied forms, acquire qualities that are indispensable for the sublime ascent ... We are children of eternity, acting for the glory of the true life; and only by toiling in accordance with the Divine Law will we ever reach the final objective of our forward march!"

Antonina, who seemed more awake than her companion for the contemplation of the exquisite picture around us, asked in amazement:

"Why don't we have a living memory of our previous lifetimes? Wouldn't it be blessed happiness to consciously meet again those whom we love the most?!"

"Yes, yes," confirmed Clarencio as we continued on our delightful journey, "but in our present spiritual condition, we don't know how to orient our desires toward what is best. Our love is still an insignificant fragment of light buried in the darkness of our egoism, like gold hidden in the earth in infinitesimal portions in a huge amount of ore. Just as the fibers of the brain are the last to be consolidated within the physical vehicle in which we incarnate, a complete memory of our past lifetimes is the last altar we set up in the temple of our soul, which on this planet is still in its early phases of development. That is why our memories are fragmentary ... Yet, from lifetime to lifetime, from ascent to ascent, our memory gradually changes into an imperishable vision on behalf of our immortal spirit."

"But if we could recognize our former loved ones, and if we could see the faces of former friends again, and recognize them ..." ventured Antonina respectfully.

"Contacting the best ones again would entail contacting the worst ones too," interrupted Clarencio, "and inarguably, we haven't yet acquired balanced and pure love, which is devoted to the higher designs without passion. We still cannot desire without disdain, assist without harming. For now, our ability to love suffers deplorable inclinations. Without the temporary forgetfulness of our former lives, we couldn't receive yesterday's enemy into

our heart to regenerate both ourselves and him. The Law is wise. Whatever the case may be, however, let's not forget that our spirit makes note of all the steps of its journey, archiving in itself all the events of life to form a map of its destiny in accordance with the principles of cause and effect that govern our pathway. But only much later, when love and wisdom have sublimated the chemistry of our thoughts, will we acquire supreme serenity capable of encompassing the past in every aspect."

The Minister paused briefly, smiled paternally at us and continued:

"The Law is invariably the Law. Wherever we may be, we live with the results of our actions, just as the tree, on any spot of land, produces according to its own species."

The firmament seemed to respond to the remarkable lecture.

Flocks of gentle birds were roosting in the bushes that shone not far away.

The sun began to send out perceptible rays, which caused indefinable combinations of color and light unknown, as yet, to ordinary earthly measurements.

Like a blessed, colorful hive of love, a harmonious house appeared before us.

Hundreds of laughing children were playing among the springs and flowers in its marvelous garden.

## 9

# Lar da Benção<sup>3</sup>

Clarencio pointed to the sublime scene unfolding before our eyes.

A soft melody, accompanied by a large group of children singing a delicate hymn of exaltation to motherly love, filled the air.

Here and there, under tufts of light green vegetation, several women were holding lovely children in their arms.

“This is Lar da Benção,” said the pleased instructor. “A number of sisters from earth are here visiting their discarnate children. It is an important educational colony, a combination of a school for mothers and a home for little ones that have returned from the physical realm.”

The Minister stopped talking suddenly.

The two women with us seemed gripped by jubilant affliction.

As if attracted by irresistible forces, they rushed toward the little angels who were singing joyfully. While the one less-known to us hugged a little blond boy with tears of infinite joy, Antonina embraced a handsome one, crying happily:

“Marcos! Marcos!”

“Momma! Momma!” responded the child, as he ran into her arms.

Clarencio signaled to the sisters responsible for the entertainment in the park as if asking them to watch over the two women. Then, he informed us:

“Little Julio isn’t here. He is still suffering abnormalities that keep him from living with these happy children. He is at the home of sister Blandina. Let’s go there.”

A few minutes later, we arrived at a small, snow-white castle braced by blue arches and crowned with flowering creepers.

We crossed a large, fragrant garden.

Opaline roses, unknown on earth, along with other flowers, bloomed profusely.

Sister Blandina greeted us with a smile and introduced us to a kindly woman, Mariana, who had been her grandmother.

Mariana greeted us likewise.

Clarencio went straight to the point.

We would like to see little Julio, the one who discarnated by drowning.

Blandina, who despite the fullness of her youth had eyes characteristic of sublime spiritual maturity, responded kindly:

“Ah! It would be my pleasure!”

She led us to an illuminated area decorated with roses, where a boy was lying on a very white bed, then explained matter-of-factly:

“Julio hasn’t fully recovered yet. He still screams because of troubling nightmares as if he was still drowning. He calls for his father constantly in spite of seeming more receptive to our care. Every day, he insists on going home.”

We approached a large crib-like bed.

The boy looked at us in tormented distrust, but restrained by Blandina’s kindness, he remained mute and impassive.

“He’s still in no shape to take part in the studies with the other kids?” asked the Minister.

“No, he’s not,” replied Blandina. “Also, our benefactors, Augusto and Cornelio, who frequently help us out, don’t think he’ll really improve very much before his next reincarnation. His mind is disorganized because it has lacked discipline for so long.”

In good humor, she added:

“He has been a difficult patient. Fortunately, we have the cooperation of our devoted Mariana, who adopted him as her spiritual son until he returns to the earthly home. We had to isolate him in this room because he screams so loudly at times.”

“But hasn’t he been receiving the prescribed magnetic treatments?”



“Every day. I myself am his nurse. He receives all the passes and medicine he needs.”

“And you know about all the details of his case?”

“All of them. Eulalia has been coming here. It’s too bad that our little patient’s mother isn’t in any shape to help him. I think she could infuse him with new strength. Moreover, except for his sister, who remembers him in her prayers, none of his family helps him.”

“Momma! Momma!” shouted the pale and troubled boy hoarsely, sitting up and hugging Blandina.

“What’s the matter, my child?”

“My throat hurts.”

Blandina hugged him, stroked his hair and suggested:

“Now don’t worry. How can a brave boy like you cry over nothing? Just imagine! We have three doctors here. The pain doesn’t stand a chance.”

Then, she sat him in a chair and asked Clarencio to help her.

The Minister asked him to open his mouth and we were surprised to see that the glottis, especially in the area of the arytenoid cartilages, displayed a large sore.

Clarencio applied special magnetic passes and in just a few moments Julio quieted down.

“Well?” said Blandina, helping him lovingly, “How’s your sore throat now?”

Visibly satisfied, she added:

“What do you say, my child?”

The boy hesitantly kissed the Minister’s hand with respectful care and muttered:

“Thank you very much.”

Blandina was about to say something else, but Julio ran to her lap, whining:

“Momma, I’m sleepy.”

The selfless young woman gently led him back to bed.

Clarencio told us that he had given the patient anesthetizing energies. He had noticed that he was fatigued and thus had decided to induce him to sleep.

And perhaps because he could see that our minds were ablaze with questions about the boy's throat, which had become sore after the death of the body, the Minister explained:

“It's a shame. Julio has serious debts to pay. He had a quarrel with some family members during the past century and in an act of rebelliousness, he ruined the physical vessel that had been given to him as a priceless blessing. Yielding to his passions, he swallowed a large amount of corrosives. He survived the poisoning but lost his voice due to damage to the glottis. Even then, he didn't conform himself to the help of the friends who had gotten him out of danger, and he nourished the idea of suicide. Consequently, in spite of being ill, he escaped their watchfulness, threw himself into the river and drowned. He suffered greatly in the spirit world, bearing the sores that he had inflicted on his own throat and suffering nightmares of asphyxiation until he reincarnated alongside the other souls he's associated with for the regeneration of the past. Unfortunately, he has encountered natural roadblocks to a full recovery. He will have to struggle a lot before reincarnating again.”

We listened to this explanation with dolorous wonder. A sick child is always a touching sight.

We were unable to voice our thoughts, however, because our kindly friend perceived our questions and continued:

“A little while ago, we commented on the sublimity of the Law. No one can betray its principles. The Divine Goodness assists us in countless ways to help us with our readjustment, but wherever we are, we are bound to the consequences of our own actions since we are heirs to our own deeds.”

The subject was an invaluable suggestion for interesting studies, but before asking any questions, I took deep breaths of the breeze that brought a pleasant fragrance to the room.

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3 Literally, “Home of Blessing.” – Tr.

## 10

# An Invaluable Conversation

Blandina seemed well-versed in matters of childhood, and joining in Clarencio's conversation, she stated:

“Actually, the Law is invariable; however, discarnate children are often a troubling problem. They almost always have loved ones who closely follow them to help them along their pathway, although I have seen thousands of children who, due to the nature of their trials, suffer tremendously in hopes of favorable opportunities to acquire the qualities they still need.”

And smiling kindly, she added:

“I don't think Julio's case is one of the really bad ones. I have visited departments of readjustment in which our brothers and sisters have remained just as they were when they were snatched from the flesh like unripe fruit from a tree. They suffer from sick mental processes that only blessed regenerative periods in the physical body can heal.”

“Could you cite a few objective examples?” asked Hilario.

“Ah! A lot! The absurdities of intellectual megalomania, for one. There are incarnates who are heedless of the aberrations of the intelligence and they make guile and vanity the climate in which they live. They insist on the inertia of the heart; they loathe lofty sentiments, which they regard as foolishly sentimental and they turn their head into a laboratory of perversion of the values of life. They care for nothing but their own interests; they love only themselves. However, they don't realize that they are drying out inwardly and they never imagine the cruel results of a mind geared toward evil. Quite often in the daily struggle they loom as powerful dominators with an incredible ability to influence both friends and enemies, known and unknown. But such success is illusory. They fall under the iron glove of death to the great relief of their contemporaries, and they begin to receive their

vibrations of revulsion. Such creatures, of course, are victims of themselves and they suffer highly complex mental imbalances. After longer or shorter periods of purgation after the transition of death, they return to the flesh in need of silence and solitude to disconnect themselves from the inferior envelopes in which they have enclosed themselves, just as the seed needs isolation within the dark earth to dissolve the heavy elements that constrain it, so that it can sprout and grow.”

She smiled intelligently and continued:

“Let’s imagine that the soil refused to aid the seeds that hope to grow. The soil would expel them, and instead of being seeds liberated for the victory of the harvest, they would become only dry kernels lying in troubled inquietude and getting in the way of the planting. It’s true that most mothers comprise a sublime phalanx of souls involved in the most beautiful experiences of love and sacrifice, care and selflessness, ready to suffer and die for the sake of the children that Divine Providence has entrusted into their loving and devoted hands; on the other hand, there are women whose hearts are still full of darkness. More like plain females instead of mothers, they become obsessed with pleasure and ownership, and rather than being concerned about their children, they wish them dead. Unconscious and indirect infanticide is widespread. And since debt demands repayment, deferment in the solution of commitments involves enormous suffering for women who must submit to the biological shocks of reincarnation and then see their hopes of getting right with the Law harmed.”

She paused and I took the opportunity to ask:

“But doesn’t the Law entail immovable principles? Do you mean to say that a child can discarnate before the day appointed for its liberation?”

“Yes, of course,” interrupted the Minister. “There is a structured plan in the spirit world for our human tasks; nonetheless, how we carry them out is up to us. As a general rule, multitudes of individuals leave their bodies early following services of assistance and sublimation, but in many circumstances the negligence and thoughtlessness of the parents are responsible for the failure of their children.”

“Here,” explained Blandina, “we receive a lot of requests for assistance for at-risk children. There are sisters who, by nourishing unhappy thoughts, poison their breast milk, thereby harming the organic stability of their newborns. We see couples who, by means of incessant fighting, send deadly

magnetic waves toward their young children, thus ruining their health, and we see careless women who entrust their home to still-animalized persons, who, in search of sick pleasures, are not at all ashamed of administering strong sedatives to frail babes, who really need loving care ... On certain occasions, we can reestablish harmony and recovery, but we are often constrained to witness the failure of our best purposes ...”

“In such cases ...” I interrupted.

But Blandina anticipated my question:

“In such cases, now and always, the Law is unwavering. Trials and duties can be put off for a while, but they will finally be fulfilled. Those that aren’t completed in one century will be in another. Our good will and our applying ourselves to the Divine Designs can shorten any type of endeavor. Those who persevere on the path toward the good will achieve victory more quickly.”

And with a lovely smile on her youthful face, she added:

“It’s no use running from our responsibilities, because time is unyielding and because our own particular endeavor cannot be passed off on someone else.”

Hilario, who had been following the conversation with extreme interest, considered:

“According to the old, classical theology, newborns remained in limbo after death, without the glory of heaven or the torment of hell, whereas of late, with the new concepts of spiritualism, such discarnates have been thought to immediately resume their adult personage.”

“A lot of times that is what actually happens,” explained Blandina. “When the spirit has reached an elevated evolutionary level and has assumed mental command of itself, it acquires the ability to easily disengage itself from the impositions of the physical form, overcoming the difficulties of pre-adult discarnation. We know of great souls who were reborn for a very short time, simply with the objective of awakening beloved hearts to the acquisition of moral values. Then, right afterwards, they recover their former appearance. However, the same does not apply for most children that discarnate. Souls that are still prisoners of unconscious automatism are relatively a long ways from self-governance. They rest and are led by nature, like babes in their mothers’ laps. They are unable to undo the ties that bind them to the rigid

principles that guide the world of forms; thus, they need time in order to be renewed. That is why we cannot do without the recovery time needed for someone who has left the physical vehicle in infancy, because after the biological struggle of reincarnation or discarnation for those who are in the early stages of acquiring mental power, time has to function as an indispensable element for restoration. The length of that time depends on how the learner applies him or herself to acquire inner light through his or her own moral growth.”

We were thrilled by this clear and simple exposition. Blandina had touched the serious issues of life with so much joy.

By means of her simple, accessible formulas, we were able to grasp troubling enigmas of pediatrics.

Blandina was able to combine understanding and grace to instruct us with discernment.

Touched by the remarks that defined her invaluable educational position, I stated:

“From what you have said, we can more surely understand the dolorous processes of congenital infirmities and the insidious diseases that assail childhood. I have always been possessed by a troubling astonishment when faced with Down syndrome, epilepsy, lethargic encephalitis, leprosy and cancer in children ...”

“Not to mention irremediable disasters,” considered Hilario emotionally, “disasters that strike the adorable flowers of the home, leaving inconsolable fathers and mothers behind. A lot of times I have looked for answers to the terrible questions that torment us regarding dilacerated little bodies in hospitals, but I have been unable to get out of that dark maze.”

“Yes,” she explained, “reparation really afflicts us, but without it we would never finalize our readjustment.”

“All of us who are reborn,” stated the Minister, “express in dense matter the heritage of the assets or ills we have incorporated in the subtle tissues of the soul. In fact, pathogenesis should entail study that is rooted in the spirit body so that it does not arrive at wrongful and completely unreal conclusions. When we return to the earth, we attract agreeable or disagreeable events, depending on our moral acquisitions or our needs for redemption.

“In a certain way and in many circumstances, the flesh is not only a divine vessel for the growth of our potentialities, but it is also a sort of miraculous clay that absorbs the toxins and dark residues from our spirit body.”

I looked more closely at the gentle figure of Blandina. Why had she dedicated herself like this to such a complicated endeavor? Wouldn't it be more appropriate to hear such things from the lips of the kindly Mariana, who was there with us as a respectable mother? I voiced my thoughts, discreetly asking Blandina the reason for her having taken on such a grave task.

The light of the smile that had adorned her face vanished, like an open flower that suddenly closes.

A heavy silence hovered in the room.

But benevolent and humble, her face softened and she replied gravely:

“I was married in my last existence and it has been only three years since I returned to spirit life. I was unable to have children to fulfill my dream as a woman, but now I know that I need to reeducate myself in motherly love according to debts I contracted in the past. Actually, I feel much love toward children; however, I also have enormous moral debts toward them.”

The subject was a private matter, which we would have to hold as sacred.

Consequently, Clarencio sent me an unspoken signal and the conversation took a different turn.

# 11

## More Lessons

With the change in subject in mind, Hilario asked Blandina if she was the supervisor of the park, to which she responded humbly:

“No, I can’t be attributed such credit. I have various jobs here and elsewhere, but I’m just a servant. Our school has more than two thousand children, but only twelve are directly under my care. This is a large community of homes, in which many female souls are undergoing readjustment for the venerable mission of motherhood. Also lots and lots of children live here in order to grow in areas where they need it. Nearly all of them are to return to the earth for a new learning experience.”

“What about the main office?” asked my colleague, trying to get to the bottom of things.

“It’s not located here. The park is just one of several structures that make up one enormous establishment of assistance and education, of which we are wards. Basically, our home is a large school that has been blessed with all the resources it needs, in addition to the best spiritual preparation processes possible to help those who are going to be reborn in the physical realm or those who will be going to the Higher Spheres later on.”

“But doesn’t the school also offer basic literacy courses?”

“Of course, it does. We need to employ every measure possible for awakening the spirit. Education may not be a basic condition for our happiness, but it is crucial for our soul’s evolution. Those who don’t know how to read cannot see as they ought.”

And smiling, she added:

“Evolution, competence, personal growth and sublimation are the result of constant toil. The more knowledge we possess, the more active we are.



Idleness keeps our mental energies focused on the lowest planes of life. Toil is a blessing.”

With such sublime references to the work going on, we turned instinctively to the devoted Mariana, who had remained silent.

Did her duties also involve watching over the children?

Hilario asked about this with fraternal delicacy, and she responded politely:

“I help my granddaughter with her responsibilities here; however, my personal, more important work takes place at a Catholic church that I was heavily involved with during my last incarnation.”

This aroused our curiosity. The allusion to a Catholic church denoted sectarian filiation.

Mariana stopped talking for a moment, whereas Blandina entrusted herself to the invaluable overflow of her lofty emotions. Were the two spiritually divorced from each other here?

Mariana, who displayed the kindly aura of admirable women when they reach maturity, smiled benevolently and stated:

“Don’t be surprised. I share with Blandina the study of the divine laws for the renewal of my spirit for the great future, but my continued love for old companions in the human struggle has constrained me to tarry for a long time, serving in my former place of worship.”

“Furthermore,” stated the Minister, “divine assistance is like the sun, which radiates its light to all. All institutions and souls that turn toward the Heavenly Father receive the resources they need according to their ability to receive them.”

Interested in such an increasingly valuable lesson, Hilario asked:

“What is the basis for assistance work in churches? Because direct communication with us is forbidden, how can we work on behalf of our Roman Catholic brethren?”

“It’s really quite easy,” explained Mariana. “Prayer is the surest means for our influence. A mind in prayer establishes a thread of natural communication with us.”

“But not in a patent manner.”

“No, by means of thought. Intuition is always at work, and the higher the level of a person’s loftier qualities, the wider his or her lucid zone for registering spiritual assistance. Of course, public worship, as it is conducted nowadays, does not look kindly on the contact of higher powers with people’s minds. The inferior interests taken to church are a real barrier to heavenly assistance. And priests’ frequent preoccupation with wealth and pomp nullifies our best efforts, because as long as the soul’s attention is set on exteriorities, forces contrary to the good and the light find an easy opening for the worship of fanaticism and discord. Even so, when such obstacles are overcome, it is always possible to do something for one’s neighbor.”

“During mass, for example,” continued Hilario, “is your work of cooperation viable?”

Mariana’s face brightened with good humor and she replied:

“We make up large phalanxes of students of fraternity in action. No matter how unpleasant the area of struggle, our job is to be of service.”

After a brief pause, she continued:

“When the mass follows mere social convention, functioning as a show of vanity or power, our collaboration is invariably nullified.”

And smiling:

“What are we to do with a flattering deed in which the devotees of material fortune or perversity encourage the disorderly conduct of unscrupulous persons? There are solemn masses dedicated to crafty politicians and wealthy magnates. Such masses are real sacrileges in Christ’s name. Moreover, there are masses for souls that are a mockery to the suffering of those who have died, such as masses that are celebrated for ambitious family members, who at times are actually happy about a death because they are eager to get their hands on the dispositions of the will. Such masses polluted by money are as cold for the dead as the graves that house their rotting flesh. On the other hand, if the religious act is simple, shared by sincere hearts and minds, geared toward evangelical charity and focused on the light of prayer with the best sentiments possible, it is of great worth because of the vibrations of peace and love that go out to the one for whom it is meant. Frequently, humble masses said at the first canticles of the morning are the most favorable for our assistance. We can more surely articulate the possibilities within our reach and supply them to those who hope for our help.”

Taking advantage of a break in the conversation, Hilario thought for a few moments and then said:

“And then there is the matter of patronage. Let’s say that a church was built in memory of Gerardo Majella<sup>4</sup>, for instance. Would that entail some sort of obligation for the great European mystic?”

“It certainly wouldn’t entail a slave-like obligation, but one that would honor his name, one that would merit from him a certain acknowledgement combined with responsibility. However, we must acknowledge that work for the good, wherever it occurs, always has to do with Jesus. Nevertheless, if some servant of the Lord is connected to the work to be done, he or she will do everything possible to enrich its blessings.”

“But ... what if a church is built and dedicated to a supposed hero of virtue? Let’s say that someone is set up on the altar based on human authority, but with very little merit before the Lord ... Incarnate believers would attribute a power to the person that he or she doesn’t actually have ... What would be the status of the church that was dedicated to him or her?”

Mariana politely listened to the question and explained:

“In a case like that, messengers of Jesus would take over responsibility for the church and distribute blessings that were appropriate for the merits and needs of each member.”

“And the type of assistance? Would it entail spiritual renewal or mere help for incarnate believers?”

“Ah!” exclaimed Mariana. “The work would be complex and would have to be divided up into several departments. It wouldn’t be limited to the realm of the physical experience. There are countless souls, who, disconnected from the body, resort to altars, begging for enlightenment ... Others yield to imbalanced emotions, invoking the protection of sanctified spirits ... It is necessary to correct here and assist there ... Now, we have to inject a reconstructive thought into this or that misguided mind; later, we have to harmonize circumstances for this or that needy person ... Most people believe in religion but they don’t worry about actually practicing it; hence the awful increase in afflictions and enigmas.”

We were enthralled by Mariana’s logic.

Hilario couldn’t let the matter rest, however.

“But in light of the truth that separation from the physical vehicle imposes on us, do you believe that the Catholic Church is capable of leading the modern world?”

She smiled sadly and replied:

“My friend, there is a telling difference between cooperating and approving. Society helps children without becoming child-like itself. The Christian churches are headed for a major renewal – progress demands it. The notions of heaven and hell, along with excesses of a political nature within the church hierarchy, are greatly troubling to the ordinary soul. Still, we must regard aging religions as over-ripe fruits: altered by time, they must be set aside; however, their seeds are indispensable for future production. Let us assist the old churches instead of criticizing them. We are all children of the Heavenly Father, and wherever there is the smallest seed of Christianity, resources will appear for the healing of humankind for Christ our Lord.”

The conversation was fascinating and the questions seemed to still burn in the eyes of Hilario, who was as amazed as I was by what we had been told. But we had run out of time.

A signal from Clarenco informed us that we had to head back.

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<sup>4</sup> Patron saint of expectant mothers ([www.catholic.org/saints](http://www.catholic.org/saints)) – Tr.

# 12

## Continuing to Study

After saying goodbye, we rejoined the rest of our group and a little while later we were once again on our way down to the earth's surface.

We went from the light of the sun to being immersed in nocturnal darkness, but the spectacle of the sky was no less beautiful than before because the first colors of dawn were tinting the distant horizon.

Clarence took Antonina's companion back home after a loving farewell. And without further ado, we headed for our friend's home.

Antonina was quiet, downcast ...

It seemed that she wanted to remain forever with the little one that had preceded her on the long journey of death. Nevertheless, when we entered her small home, she rushed to the bedroom, her heart once again attracted to her other children.

Like a father, the Minister had her lie down and he applied magnetic passes to her cortical centers.

Marcos's mother experienced a light, gentle vertigo.

Hilario and I watched what Clarencio was doing, and we noticed that the Antonina of our marvelous journey retook her dense body as if sucked in by it, like a beautiful woman of subtle and semi-lucid form suddenly swallowed up by a sheath of darkness. Upon becoming juxtaposed on her physical brain, she lost the mental acuity that had characterized her when she was with us on the trip. With a calm, happy look on her face, she awakened in the heavy vessel.

She could no longer see us.

She was merely a human woman, lying between the covers, used to the darkness in the room.

Yes, she did remember the trip to Lar da Benção, but only in jumbled, fleeting impressions.

Only the image of her son – the central theme of her love – lingered clear and active in her memory.

Our presence and all the other details of the sublime flight came to her memory as ghost-like incidents to become lost in the dark folds of her imagination.

Like someone selecting precious gems, the comforted mother anxiously searched the archives of her mind for everything her blessed son had said to her, trying to retain it in the coffer of her heart. Consequently, in just a few minutes Clarencio's invaluable remarks no longer remained in the memory of her soul.

Antonina got up and turned on the light; we heard her think to herself, "Oh, God! What joy! I saw him perfectly! I want to keep the memory of that divine dream! ... Marcos, Marcos, how I miss you, my son!"

The Minister approached her, caressed her brow, as if enveloping it in calming fluids, and the sweet woman turned the light back off.

Enfolding the child lying beside her, she went back to sleep.

"Our friend cannot hold on to the memory of what occurred," stated Clarencio.

"Why not?" asked Hilario.

"Very few spirits are capable of living on earth with the visions of life eternal. They need the environment of inner twilight. A full memory of what occurred would result in a fatal longing."

"That's really too bad!"

But the Minister patiently explained:

"Each stage in life is characterized by special purposes. Honey may be tasty nectar for the child, but it mustn't be given indiscriminately – too much and it becomes a laxative. While we are in the earthly envelope, we cannot stay in contact with the spirit realm too long or our soul will lose interest in struggling worthily till the end of the body. Antonina will recall our trip but only vaguely, like someone who brings a beautiful but blurry picture to the living arena of the soul. But she will remember her son more vividly, enough

for her to feel reassured and convinced that Marcos is waiting for her in the Greater Life. Such certainty will be sweet nourishment for her heart.”

Silence reigned within the room once again, but Clarencio broke it almost immediately by asking us to assist the elderly man.

He was asleep in an old chair.

“He’s asleep?” asked Hilario, who was newer than I to life in the Beyond.

“Yes,” confirmed the instructor, benevolently. “In this phase of his life, Leonardo is subject to all the phenomena of common life. Thus, he cannot do without rest to recoup himself.”

We examined him more closely.

It was obvious that the old man had a spirit envelope like ours, according to the organogenetic principles that govern the make-up of the spirit body. However, it was very heavy and dense, as if it still wore the tunic of the flesh.

I left Hilario to the itching of his curiosity, which at other times I found rather annoying.

After studying the old man’s unpleasant appearance, my colleague asked about the cause of such obscurity.

The Minister explained solicitously:

“According to the Spiritist definition, the *psychosoma*<sup>5</sup> or perispirit<sup>6</sup> is not exactly the same in all of us, just as there are no two physical bodies that are exactly the same. Each person lives within a different cellular vehicle, in spite of similar parts imposed by the law of forms. Within the sphere of dense matter, the incarnate soul experiences the effects of what it has inherited from its parents; nevertheless, in essence the law of inheritance functions invariably for the individual with regard to him or herself. We retain only what is exclusively ours or that which we seek. We are reborn amongst those that are attuned to our way of being. Alcoholics do not get their habit from their parents. As usual, they themselves handed themselves over to the vice of alcohol before reincarnating. And there are discarnate alcoholics that link themselves to incarnate alcoholics, whom they use as instruments for feeding their vice.”

Imprinting a grave tone on his voice, he added:

“Hereditry is guided by spiritual principles. If children find the parents they need, parents, in turn, receive what they are looking for in their children.”

I suddenly recalled some of the great geniuses of humanity, who produced monstrous or mediocre children. Reading my thoughts, Clarenco remarked:

“Regarding the arena of the great virtues, parents sometimes use reconstructive compassion for endeavors of sacrifice. There are admirable men and women, who, bearing superior qualities in their souls, willingly seek out friendships from the distant past in order to make heroic attempts at assistance and readjustment.”

And smiling, he added:

“Within the blood-related or human family, we get what we look for. Those who have already settled their accounts with justice can entrust themselves to the sublime deeds of love.”

Clarenco contemplated the elderly man and continued the lesson, more particularly for Hilario:

“Our spirit body lives in conformance with the life of our mind. Our friend here has yielded too much to the inner creations of boredom, hatred, disenchantment and affliction, and has thus condensed such energies within himself, coagulating them in his vehicle of manifestation. Hence his dark, pasty appearance. Our deeds stay with us. We are heirs of ourselves.”

“But ... what if our brother here were to find some kind of work to do? What if, after death, he tried to conjugate the verb ‘to serve’?” asked my colleague, concerned.

“Ah! Of course, work renews any mental state. By generating new motives for growth and new means of assistance, work builds other roads that really do act as a means for liberation. Consequently, the Lord’s constant call to action and fraternity is daily extended to us a thousand different ways ... However, if we do not devote ourselves to work while in our earthly garb, it is harder for us to overcome mental obstacles, because the indolence we bring from the world is a crystalizing toxin for ideas, sometimes fixating them for an indefinite length of time. If we want to possess a subtilized *psychosoma* that is capable of retaining the light of our highest ideals, it is crucial to de-condense it through the incessant sublimation of our mind, which will thus



have to remain focused on its untiring effort for the good. It is toward that end that the Heavenly Father grants us suffering, struggle, trials and pain, the only reparative elements capable of producing the necessary readjustment when we get out of line with the Law.”

Outside, the morning birds announced a new day.

The tenuous light of the morning entered the room.

Clarencio said that, in order to assist the deranged man, we could not do so without analyzing his mind, and because it would perhaps require the cooperation of incarnate spirits, who should not be bothered during the day, the Minister invited us to leave.

The work of assistance was set for that night.

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<sup>5</sup> From the Greek – psikhé – soul, spirit, and soma – body. – Publisher’s note.

<sup>6</sup> From the Greek – péri, around. The semi-material envelope of the spirit ... the fluidic body. *The Mediums Book*, Pt. 2, Chap. XXXII (International Spiritist Council) – Tr.

# 13

## A Mental Analysis

The clock on the wall showed that it was 12:45 a.m. when we entered Antonina's humble home.

Everyone was asleep, everything peaceful.

Old Leonardo was huddled in a corner, thinking ... thinking ...

We made ourselves visible to him. When he saw us he stood up and shouted:

“Please, help me for God's sake! I'm a prisoner here! A prisoner!”

Clarencio kindly invited him to make himself comfortable in a chair and asked him to join him in prayer.

Leonardo said that he had forgotten the old formulated prayers, thinking that only such prayers would be of any use. However, with the obvious intent of settling him down, Clarencio said a moving prayer to Divine Providence, asking for protection and security for the one who was so lost and unhappy.

Touched by that petition, which also renewed our own inner dispositions, we saw that Antonina's grandfather had calmed down and seemed more resigned.

After the prayer, Clarencio began applying magnetic energies to his cerebral area.

The patient seemed to become even more despondent.

His head hung down on his chest, limp and drowsy.

Giving us a meaningful look, the Minister said:

“The appropriately dynamized energy current of these magnetic passes will draw him out of the anesthetizing shadow land of amnesia. Then, we will

be able to more safely probe what's going on inside of him. With our help, his memory will go back in time and will inform us about the cause that is binding him to his granddaughter. It will also bring to light any possible connections that might give us the key to what will help him.”

“But can such a retrocession happen spontaneously?” asked Hilario, perplexed.

“Yes, of course. The memory may be compared to a sensitive plate, which, when struck by light, stores forever the images collected by the spirit during the course of its innumerable learning experiences. Each one of our soul's particular lifetimes is an added experience that is preserved in the prodigious archive of images, which, even though superposed on one another, never become jumbled up. During endeavors of assistance like this one, we need to search the mental archives in order to produce certain types of vibrations, not only to attract the presence of spirits that are connected to this suffering brother but also to unveil the hidden fibers of his mind that keep him bound to his afflictions and unseen wounds.”

“So, that means ...”

The Minister cut in to complete Hilario's thought:

“ ...The mind, just like any other part of the body, can and must endure interventions in order to become rebalanced. Someday, human science will develop *psychic surgery*, just as today it is developing its surgical techniques with the needs of the physical body in mind. In the grand future, doctors will unravel a *mental labyrinth* with the same ease with which they can now remove an inflamed appendix.”

Hilario's eyes opened wide in happy amazement, and he exclaimed, almost shouting:

“Ah! Freud, you saw the truth! ... You were right!”

Clarencio gave him a fatherly look and stated:

“Freud glimpsed the truth, but any truth without love is like a barren, cold light. Knowing and interpreting isn't enough. Sublimating and serving is crucial. The great scientist observed aspects of our spiritual struggle on the evolutionary pathway and categorized the problems of the soul that is still incarcerated in the webs of the lower circles of life. He pointed out the presence of people's dolorous wounds, but he did not offer them an effective curative balm. He did a lot, but not enough. In order to cleanse the

disharmonies of the mind, physicians in the future will have to use the health-giving remedy of understanding and love found in their own hearts. Without the hand that helps, the erudite word dies in the air.”

The Minister said no more, giving us to understand that the moment was not appropriate for philosophical digressions.

He caressed the old man’s head for a few instants, and then gently called to him:

“Leonardo, remember! Go back to Paraguay, where you acquired the remorse that afflicts your heart today! Pain is almost always buried guilt ... Let’s go back to the starting point of your suffering! ... Remember! Remember!”

Before our indescribable amazement, the old man woke up with a confused look in his eyes.

He lifted his head, but his face had changed considerably.

It still retained its fundamental traits, but had become younger.

Noticing the surprising transfiguration, Hilario asked:

“Wow! What sort of magical power is this?”

Clarencio looked at him calmly and explained:

“Let’s not forget that this is the spirit body, which is exceedingly vibratory. The soul’s body can change itself profoundly, according to the type of emotion that flows from deep within it. This is nothing new, however. The physical body’s face can change due to joy or suffering, affinity or aversion. On our plane, such transformations are quicker, and they exteriorize inner aspects of the person easily and surely because the molecules of the perispirit vibrate at a higher speed and more intensely than the molecules of the physical body. As the animic center, the conscience thus expresses itself in subtle matter with more-advanced plastic capabilities.”

Clarencio glanced around the room and added:

“But let’s not neglect what we are supposed to be doing.”

In the meantime, Leonardo had cheered up.

He seemed animated by a strange energy.

Although his body was still dark and pasty, it was more erect.

Suddenly more vigorous and mobile, he exclaimed:

“Lola! Lola! Are you here? I can feel you nearby ... Where are you hiding? Listen to me! Listen!”

We couldn't believe it when we saw Antonina leave her room in the spirit body that we had seen the day before.

Extremely surprised, she came to us and saw her transfigured grandfather. It was as if she had been touched by some mysterious influence. Her face had suddenly changed and had also become younger. She was truly more beautiful, but less serene and less spiritualized.

For our maximum benefit, the Minister said in a low voice:

“Our sister will need only light magnetic assistance in order to remember. The abnormal emotions of the reunion will be enough for her to fall into the vibratory situation of the past, because she has not yet fully settled her accounts with the Law.”

In awe, Antonina got down on her knees in front of the old man who had become young again due to Clarencio's passes, and cried:

“Leonardo! ... Leonardo!”

However, radiating unspeakable hate and affliction in his look, he shouted:

“Finally! ... Finally!”

And he broke into convulsive weeping.

We were stunned. Clarencio explained:

“See? Antonina is Lola Ibaruri reincarnate. Leonardo is connected to her by ties of immense love. Both are involved in enormous struggles on the infinite canvass of time. The irresponsible woman of yesterday is the loving and worthy mother of today as she seeks her own regeneration. After having deserted her husband in the past, she was induced to marry an animalized man, whom she was also connected to by ties from the past, and who, not realizing who she was in this lifetime, deserted her in turn. Nonetheless, she received former partners-in-destiny as her children, whom she is leading to the good. In contraposition to her criminal acts in the past, today she is going through afflictive problems in order to live.”

Irrepressible sympathy inclined us toward that woman enduring such harsh trials.

The lesson that life was offering us was truly sublime.

Clarencio's voice was clear and firm:

“Let's get to work. The time is right.”

# 14

## An Understanding

A changed Antonina rubbed her eyes as if she didn't want to believe what she was seeing; but resigning herself to the evidence, she continued:

“Have mercy on me! Have mercy!”

“Lola, where did you come from?” asked Leonardo.

“Please, don't make me remember!”

“Don't make you remember? Condemned to the torment of expiation, who could possibly forget? Guilt is a fire that consumes us from the inside out.”

“Don't drag me back to the past!”

“To me, it's as if time was the same. Hell doesn't keep different hours ... Pain paralyzes life within us.”

“We have to forget ...”

“Never! Remorse is an unseen monster that feeds the fires of guilt ... Our conscience never sleeps.”

“Don't break my heart!”

“But isn't mine broken?”

Their dialog continued and Antonina, on her knees, exploding in an anguishing fit of tears, begged even more forcefully:

“Please, don't re-open my badly-healed wounds! Don't rob the debtor of her chance to pay!”

“For you,” shouted Leonardo, “I got entangled in crime ... I loved you and lost myself. Your eyes were filled with disguised betrayal ... Oh Lola, why? Why?”

Smitten with this dolorous question, the poor woman begged:

“Leonardo, forgive me! ... I suffered like crazy ... Yes, you went mad! But the grief that assailed me was even more woeful, even more bitter! Do you know what happens to a degraded woman amidst repentance and affliction? Have you ever thought about the suffering of a woman’s heart that has been relegated to poverty and abandonment? Have you ever thought about the disillusionment and hunger of a scorned and sick prostitute? Do you understand the suffering of someone waiting for death, buried beneath sarcasm and amidst thirst and sweat? Well, I experienced all of that!”

“I killed for you,” stammered the wretch, filled with compassion.”

“But I did worse than that. I killed my own soul ... I was a wife who traded the altar of the home for the deceitful stage of easy pleasure; I was a mother who defiled the mandate that God had given me, withering all the flowers of my happiness!”

“But you were able to get back on your feet, whereas I wasn’t. ... In short, you were happy. ”

“Happy? cried Antonina, half desperate. “You accuse me of being unfaithful, when, like all the others, you got tired of me and went looking for other adventures! ... I was all alone, sick, as good as dead ... In vain did I try to drown in pleasure the dreadful sensation of the abyss into which I had fallen, because when disenchantment and sickness took me to the edge of life, I was awakened by my conscience, accusing me mercilessly ... Death found me in the ditch of misery, like a garbage truck cleaning trash out of the gutter ... Can you grasp the full extent of my suffering?! ... For many years I wandered around in affliction like a bird without a nest, finding refuge in the thornbush of pain that had grown within me ... I begged for protection among those who had been my friends when I was younger ... But no one remembered me ... I could not reap favors where I had sown none ... Until one day ...”

Antonina wiped her pale forehead as if she were evoking old memories strongly entrenched in her unconscious mind. Her look had taken on the nervous expression of feverish patients that have gone mad.

A few moments later, her face displayed the surprise of someone bathed in a flash of light.



Seeming to have found the image she had anxiously been looking for, she continued:

“ ... until one day, I felt like you were calling to me with thoughts of love and peace ... You were recalling a few commendable traits of our life together, the parties we sponsored for wounded combatants ... Pulling rare happy memories from our past, your divagations fell over me like a refreshing balm ... Relieved, I cried myself to sleep in your home next to the family that you had the fortune of building ...”

Antonina stopped, as if she couldn't remember any more; it was clear she had run up against insurmountable inner barriers.

She seemed tormented by the mnemonic incapacity that had suddenly assailed her; however, Clarencio caressed her head, magnetically helping her recover her energies.

“I don't know how,” cried Leonardo, “I don't know how! Ever since my mind has been filled by 'him', I haven't been able to coordinate my thoughts ... Yes, of course I'm guilty ... You're right ... You could have received my help ... I shouldn't have thought of you as being just a woman ...”

Calmer now, Antonina begged sadly:

“Now that you know what I went through, forgive me! ... I have no other desire than to be renewed! I have suffered so much; I've had to learn the hard way! ... I ask for the protection of Divine Goodness for all those who have not understood me, and I sincerely want to forget others' offenses against me, just as I hope others will forget my offenses against them! ... Don't drag me back into the past! ... Have mercy on me!”

We were startled to see that Leonardo and Antonina, under Clarencio's paternal control, were held in the vibratory position into which they had suddenly fallen.

Why didn't they remember they were related by family bonds? Perceiving our question, Clarencio explained:

“Both are stuck in a certain moment of the past, in an encounter elicited by magnetic influence. When such resources are utilized by our plane in the health-giving treatment of the diseases of the soul, certain memory centers are reactivated while others are numbed. The sensations of the present give way to the sensations of the past for the effect of readjustment in the future. The

phenomenon is only temporary, however. Shortly, they will return to normal consciousness, made better for the good struggle.”

His explanation could not have been more satisfactory or simpler.

The Minister continued assisting Antonina, controlling how far back she could go.

As if his initial impetus of desperation had cooled, Leonardo answered her appeals.

Now, he was looking at her almost piteously, but rather than harboring any positive sentiments of a higher order, he sent forth a new wave of anger from within, turning his face red.

Clenching his fists, he shouted insanely:

“Oh yes, I understand you ... You really were unhappy ... But why do I carry ‘his’ ghost around with me? Has he turned himself into some sort of intangible demon to destroy my life? Are we hooked to each other in hell without realizing it? Am I living inside of him while he is living inside of me? Why aren’t I allowed true repose? If I try to sleep, he wakes me up; if I try to forget about him, he grows even larger in my thoughts!”

Crazed, Pires raised his clenched fists, took a few steps and shouted:

“Esteves, man or devil, wherever you are, inside or outside of me, show yourself! ... I’m ready for you! Let’s settle our differences! ...Victim or tormenter, show yourself! May my thoughts find you and bring you here! ... May the forces of our destiny finally bring us together, face to face!”

A few moments passed, when we were startled by the entrance of a new character into the room.

It was a man about 35 years old, also outside his physical vessel.

He cast a haggard look around the room, giving us the impression that he couldn’t see us. Out of breath and perturbed as if he had come there against his will, he was stunned and troubled as he recognized Leonardo and Antonina.

Clarencio informed us:

“Because of Leonardo’s invocation, Esteves, partially liberated by sleep, has answered the challenge. Nighttime repose favors such encounters because the magnetic attraction is stronger when the physical body needs to recover.”

We noticed that the three protagonists were suddenly hypnotized by dark, desperate vibrations.

Leonardo, however, jumped back and shouted:

“Now! Yes, now! ... You’ve come! I can see you outside my head; I can see you as you really are! ... Let’s settle our score ... Tear me away from among the living or I’ll do it to you!”

“Mercy! Mercy!” begged Antonina.

Pires, however, didn’t seem to hear her as Esteves eyed him with obvious disgust.

Half terrified and on his guard, assailed by his own memories, Esteves answered aggressively:

“I know who you are and I hate you! ... Murderer! Murderer!”

There is no doubt they would have gone at each other like animals if Clarenco hadn’t interfered to quickly immobilize them.

At his touch, Esteves saw us. Startled, he settled down.

Clarenco entrusted him to our care. Then, he addressed Leonardo in a firm voice:

“My friend, wipe out the crime from your mind. You are tired, sick. You’re about to receive the treatment you need.”

In a flash, he left and returned with two friends from our plane. They took the semi-conscious Leonardo to a sanctuary of readjustment, where he would receive our assistance later on.

Next, Clarenco settled Esteves into a chair and told him to wait right there.

Frightened, our new friend obeyed automatically.

Then, we escorted Antonina back to her bedroom.

We thought that if the poor woman had been so delighted the night before, tonight she looked downhearted, like a ragged cloak of suffering.

We had a hard time recomposing her mind and reconnecting her to her almost inert body.

She was immensely distraught.

She received our special attention for more than two hours. Only after considerable effort by Clarencio did she manage to recover. She woke up exhausted and disoriented.

Somewhat relieved, she felt free of a strange nightmare. Even so, unable to explain why, she continued weeping, tormented and apprehensive ...

# 15

## More than a Just a Dream

Turning to Esteves, Clarencio offered him a friendly embrace, but the young man burst out in supplication:

“Don’t touch me! Let go! I’m the victim here!”

The Minister abstained from continuing his show of sympathy.

With the plodding step of someone carrying around a burden of troubles, Leonardo’s enemy left, went back out on the street and headed for home.

We followed him at a short distance.

Day had arrived.

People were busy walking to work.

Streetcars creaked along sleepily, and here and there, cars had begun traveling the streets.

Esteves stopped in front of a large apartment building.

A large clock nearby showed that it was 5:30 a.m.

Without saying a word, he gave us a glance and disappeared inside.

We too went in.

We found him trying to re-enter his physical body.

Without troubling him, the Minister helped him recover his natural calmness little by little.

He was still a bit drowsy when the alarm clock went off at 5:45 a.m.

Esteves rubbed his eyes, grimacing as if he had had a bad dream.

He quickly got dressed. We noticed that a small business card had fallen out of his pocket and we could read a name: “Mario Silva, Health Care

Professional”.

Clarencio affirmed:

“In the past, our friend was Esteves, but now he is Mario Silva. He is following his former vocation as a health care professional. Let’s listen to what he has to say.”

The young man washed up and then was received into a small room in the apartment by a kindly old woman, in whose look we divined the love of a mother.

After saying good morning, the woman asked in good humor:

“Well, what kind of night did you have? You look awful.”

“I had a horrible dream, Mom.”

With expressive gestures between gulps of coffee, he explained:

“I dreamed someone was calling me in a loud voice from far away. I thought some patient might be in a lot of pain, so I rushed to help. But instead of winding up in a hospital room, I found myself in a badly lit, humid cell.”

And trying hard to recall the details, he continued:

“I was surprised to suddenly find myself in a prison cell with a nasty looking criminal and a wretched woman who was crying ... I took a liking to her but felt an aversion for the other. I had the clear impression that we all knew one another. I regarded them with a mixture of hatred and suffering, especially the man, who seemed to have a spiteful look in his eyes ... I asked myself why I didn’t flee from such a detestable place, but whereas I felt repulsion toward the man, I felt the greatest tenderness toward the woman ... As strange as it may seem, I wanted to assault him and embrace her at the same time. I didn’t know what was going to happen, when the criminal advanced toward me with the obvious intent to do me in, but the woman was prepared to defend me. I was speechless, not knowing if the criminal meant to murder me right then and there, so I decided I would fight back! Blinded by incomprehensible rancor, I was just about to come to blows with him, when all of a sudden a policeman and two guards showed up and separated us. With just one blow, the policeman contained my aggressor and made him sit down, winning so much of my respect that, in spite of wanting to listen to what the weeping woman on her knees had to say, I didn’t budge. Then, the policeman called out orders and other helpers showed up and dragged my enemy out of

the cell ... After sitting me in an old chair, he took the woman farther inside the prison.”

It seemed that Mario could not recall any more, and after hesitating briefly, he finished:

“After that ... I can’t remember ... I only know that I ran out and headed for home because the policemen seemed about ready to take me away. Fearing being thrown in jail, I woke up bewildered and depressed.”

The old woman, who had been listening attentively, said calmly:

“A real nightmare.”

“It sure was,” agreed Mario, worried.

His mother contemplated him kindly and added:

“Does your dream have anything to do with Zulmira? Mightn’t the woman in your dream be our old friend, and the man, who inspired so much repugnance, her husband?”

Mario became slightly pale, more taciturn, and replied sadly:

“Who knows?”

“You’ve never received any more news about her?”

“No. Only that she’s living here and that her husband is some sort of important railroader.”

“I never could understand her attitude. So many years together; so many plans for happiness! But she traded all that for a widower with two kids!”

Mario looked downcast and remarked:

“Well anyway, let’s avoid pointless memories. I shouldn’t think about Zulmira anymore and that Amaro she married is just a black spot on my heart. I think my best sentiment for the two of them is the hatred I harbor toward them in my memories. I don’t want to see them again, and frankly, if I knew they were living around here, I would insist on our moving somewhere else.

“My dream was just a plain old nightmare. Some imprecise concern or some sort of food poisoning.”

The woman smiled, disappointed, and said:

“As for me, I’m convinced that, at night, we meet people we either love or detest. During sleep, our spirit seeks out our loved ones or enemies in order

to settle our accounts with them. No doubt about it.”

Her son, obviously unimpressed, stood up, hugged his mother, kissed her white hair and concluded:

“Time to go. The dream’s over and reality’s waiting for me. I have to help out with surgery on a couple of kids at 8:00 sharp and I can’t be late. The hospital doesn’t care about nightmares.”

He displayed a forced smile and said goodbye.

His mother went with him to the door and got back to her housework in a pensive mood.

As we prepared to leave, my mind was castigated by obsessive questions.

Had we discovered a new twist in the story of Evelina’s prayer?

Could the Amaro and Zulmira mentioned by Mario be the same two characters we visited earlier?

I was about to ask Clarencio about it, when his eyes met mine. Seeing that I was puzzled, he said:

“I know what you want to ask. Our new friend was indeed the fiancé of the obsessed Zulmira. He had planned to marry her but she rejected him for Amaro, who owes her assistance and love. The past speaks in the present. They are entwined in a web of debts that are clamoring to be paid.

“Will they meet again to continue their redemptive struggles?” asked Hilario.

“No doubt about it,” replied the instructor firmly.

Mario’s devoted and sensitive mother meditated on her son’s dream while automatically sweeping the floor, and asked Jesus to bless him.

We made note of the thoughts in her worried mind. She knew what it had cost her son to give up the woman he had chosen. She knew his enigmatic temperament and dreaded seeing him tormented and defeated.

Her silent prayer rose from her head like a fine jet of light.

Clarencio approached and transmitted calming energies that soothed her heart.

Then, he introduced her:



“Sister Minervina here is an old acquaintance. She has been blessed with six children, whom she has raised admirably. A selfless heart, a soul rich in faith.”

He embraced her warmly and we left.

On the way back, seeing that we would like to follow Mario Silva to get more information for our fascinating study, Clarencio suggested:

“It wouldn’t be right to inconvenience our friends during their daily routine, provoking clarifications that would be unpleasant and inappropriate. We’ll wait till tonight, because while the physical body is recuperating, the soul invariably seeks the place or object that attracts the heart.”

We agreed. We would wait for nightfall, when we would continue our experience.

# 16

## More Experiences

In the middle of the night, we went back to Mario Silva's home, followed by Clarencio who, as usual, worked alongside us as our diligent and kindly mentor.

The healthcare worker was in bed but had not been able to get to sleep.

The dream from the night before was tormenting his mind.

Mulling over the impressions of the day, he asked himself: Could that really be Amaro, my rival, who had resurfaced in the form of a criminal? And that weeping and overwhelmed woman: could she really be Zulmira, my childhood friend, still troubling my memories? What could be the reason for us all meeting again? He was trying to completely avoid the memories of his youth ... which is why he did not believe the cause of the strange nightmare lay within himself ... He was convinced that someone had clearly called to him with words that he had to listen to ... Could it be Zulmira in trouble? If so, could it be that she had remembered him? If his conjectures were correct, would he have the right to approach her again? He did not think that was possible ... The scourge of wounded pride was still bleeding in his heart. It wouldn't be right to rush to her aid, even under the pretext of wanting to help her. He had only gotten a glimpse of her husband, but that was enough to detest him with all the stores of hatred possible. Even though she used to be dear to him, if she did ask for his assistance, he would have to turn a deaf ear.

Disturbing hypotheses and unanswerable questions assailed his apprehensive, rancor-filled mind.

His former aversion toward his rival prevailed, controlling him.

But what if he could reenter the previous night's dream in order to find a solution?

The figure of Amaro grew large in his mental field.

He continued with his thoughts: If souls really could meet one another again outside the body, I actually could see my enemy and get revenge ... If I really had been invoked in a dream, then I myself ought to be able to do the same ... I could summon Zulmira's dastardly husband to come and explain himself. I could concentrate my power of thought on him. I could find out where he is.

Clarencio contemplated him with pity.

Taking advantage of the time to teach us something useful, he remarked:

“Passion is always blinding. Our mental life is our true life; thus, when passion has its hold on us, we see nothing and feel nothing but our own troubles.”

He began applying soothing passes to Mario as he tossed and turned in bed.

As if he had taken a sedative, Mario's nerves relaxed and his body went to sleep; but reappearing on our plane, he began to gush forth the sentiments that controlled his soul.

He did not register our presence as we observed his slightest movements.

Nervous and tentative, he wandered around the room in his extremely heavy perispirit.

Little by little, his eyes took on a haggard look, giving us the idea of someone possessed of terrible inner afflictions.

The instructor noticed our silent amazement and explained:

“As was the case with our friend Leonardo, Mario is suffering from an anguishing fixation complex. Even though his particular case has been somewhat softened by the struggles of the flesh – which are sometimes a blessed diversion – he has not managed to dilute the obsessing memory of his old enemy. Bitterness is his troubling mental wound. As long as he is distracted by his day-to-day business, he is somewhat shielded from the hidden torment he bears within himself, but now that he finds himself all alone in spirit, he has yielded to the hatred that has coagulated in his heart for so long. Let's watch him!”

Mario went out on the street like a madman. As he inhaled the refreshing air of the night, he seemed suddenly reinvigorated and began shouting in a

shrill voice:

“Amaro, you thief! Amaro, you usurper! Show yourself! If you have any dignity at all, face my vengeance! ... I’m not afraid of you! ... What have you done with the woman I love?! Answer me! Answer me!”

Mario Silva walked aimlessly as if half-drunk, spouting off vehemently.

We had followed him several blocks, when someone appeared unexpectedly before him right there on the street.

Responding to his impulse like iron attracted to a magnet, Amaro, in his subtle body, had answered the strange call of his enemy, partially disengaged from his own body.

They confronted each other haughtily at first, but then, with the manners of a gentleman, Amaro took a few steps back, showing that he wanted to avoid any conflict or trouble.

Mario, however, shouted disconcertingly:

“Don’t be a coward, you thief! Stay right where you are! ... We have accounts to settle!”

But Amaro immediately turned and left.

Without losing his impetus, his adversary followed him unrelentingly, holding to his dark purpose of aggression.

We accompanied them block after block until we reached Amaro’s home, where the railroader decided on a peaceful confrontation.

Showing that he wanted to defend the peace of his home, Amaro was waiting at the door for Mario.

“So,” shouted Silva in exasperation, “this is the serpents’ nest!”

Shaking his fists at his humble rival, he continued:

“You shall pay dearly for your intrusion! You wretch, what have you done with the woman that was my happiness and my life? You shattered my dreams; you destroyed my ideals! ... Look at what you’ve done to me! I’m just a work machine with no faith, no hope!”

“I didn’t know; I didn’t know!” alleged Amaro in distress. “I never meant to hurt you!”

“Liar! How can you pretend you don’t know what I’m talking about? Where’s Zulmira? Do I have to kill you to set her free?”

Faced by the other’s composure, he asked:

“Don’t you recognize me?”

“Of course, I do. You’re Mario Silva, a person to whom I owe consideration and respect.”

“Consideration and respect? What impudent pretense! How can you say that, after stealing my bride by deceiving her with lying promises?”

“I only found out about your old love for her after I was already married. But if I had known about the two of you, I would have given her up for you. I’d really like to be of service to you, but, now ...”

“Liar! I don’t believe you. You’re just a wolf in sheep’s clothing. You stole my only possibility for happiness. My only happiness!”

Amaro looked at him sadly and asked:

“Do you think I’m happy? Do you think marriage is just for satisfying the lower passions? Do you think a married man should regard his wife as a mere slave? I love Zulmira as a companion and sister whom I must protect. Neither of us is in a marriage that could be called a bed of roses, where contented desire is like a flower that dies after one day ... We have suffered a lot, Mario. You know that this is my second marriage. For that reason alone, Zulmira couldn’t find in me the perfect happiness that she had the right to hope for. Our relationship began with a series of maladjustments that culminated with the death of my younger child in a terrible disaster ... Ever since then, our home has been a thornbush of suffering ... My wife has fallen seriously ill and I myself have been troubled and failing ... Can you grasp the misfortune of a father, who, mortally wounded, weeps without tears? If I owe a debt to Divine Providence, you can rest assured that I have suffered much to pay it off ... For me, death would be a liberating blessing. As you can see, I’m in no shape to accept your challenge! I’m torn; more than just torn; I’m beaten ...”

With a heartrending inflection of supplication, he exclaimed:

“If you still love the woman I married, help us with your understanding! ... If I’ve unknowingly done you wrong in any way, forgive

me! Forgive me, because the anguish of my life has condemned me to dreadful moral trials!”

To our amazement, Mario Silva replied with a scandalous burst of laughter.

“Forgive you? Never! From the tone of what you’ve just told me, I can see that justice has begun to be served; even so, I shall hasten it with my own two hands ... My vengeance is sure; my hatred is unquenchable!”

Amaro didn’t respond.

He bowed his head in fervent prayer. Gentle radiations of emerald-green light came from his brow. His unspoken plea for help reached our spirits like warm, harmonious waves of humility and trust.

Silva could not sense any of it and continued shouting:

“Why don’t you say something, you coward? Speak! Speak! Explain yourself! ... Do something! ... You’ve managed to control Zulmira, but you won’t budge me one inch! ... Criminals like you don’t deserve pity!”

At this point, Clarencio said:

“Let’s answer Amaro’s prayer with fraternal assistance.”

Gripped by sympathy and emotion, we did not hesitate to agree.

# 17

## Going back in Time

After our effort of self-condensation for the necessary vibratory adjustment, Clarencio approached the two friends with his characteristic loving power. Upon recognizing us, Mario connected our presence to his nightmare from the night before and began to complain:

“This isn’t a case for the police! ... We don’t need any law enforcement here!”

“Compose yourself, my friend!” the Minister responded kindly, “We’re not here to judge you. We’re here to help you remember ... It is essential that you remember.”

He placed his hand on Mario’s forehead and he immediately quieted down.

His face underwent a strange metamorphosis.

He looked younger, more elegant.

He opened his eyes wide and exclaimed, half-terrified:

“Ah! Now! ... Now, I remember! ... My assailant of last night was Leonardo Pires ... How could I have so innocently forgotten him? How could I not remember? We fought over the same woman ... We were in Luque, where I met that wonderful singer and dancer ... Lola Ibaruri! Who but her could offer me the balm of forgetfulness?! I did all I could to come between them ... He wasn’t the kind of man who could make her happy! Lola was young, beautiful and artistic, and I was carrying the briar of dead dreams around in my soul ... She gave me the rest my soul needed ... She restored me. But ... what a terrible Sunday it was on that flag-covered square in Piraju! ... The troops were en route towards the enemy. ... I was trying to figure out the best way to meet the beloved woman again, and on that

dreadful morning, before mass, I won the sympathy of Father Fidelis ... The charitable Capuchin would help me out, would argue my cause ... Lola wouldn't have to go anywhere, because I could leave the frontlines! ... The officers were my friends! ... So, I could win the Prince's favor ... I was making plans when I ran into Leonardo ... I didn't know he was aware of the fact that Lola had left him for me. I wanted to please him so I accepted his company ... Our tasty meal called for wine to go with it and Pires laced mine with poison! ... Ah! That thief! That thief!"

Mario raised his hands to his throat, as if in great pain, and fell screaming helplessly to the floor.

The Minister patiently administered soothing magnetic passes and he stood up, bewildered.

Amaro, who also looked bewildered, had been watching the scene with obvious affliction.

Clarencio helped Mario up and asked, trying to get him to remember:

"Why were you so crazed in your love for the singer? Why didn't you heed the warnings of your conscience? It was surely asking you not to incite the hatred of someone who could kill your physical body."

Looking like a madman, Mario let out an unsettling laugh and shouted:

"Why did I love Lola Ibaruri? Why didn't I have any scruples about wresting her from her companion's arms?"

Clarencio stroked Mario's head with the obvious intention of reviving his memory.

"Ah! Yes!" continued Mario, alarmed. "I was irredeemably disillusioned when I left Asuncion."

With a vacant look as if surprised by the distant past in the recesses of the night, he continued:

"I had built my house on the outskirts of the lovely Paraguayan capital and I was happy! ... Lina was the treasure of my heart ... My friend and wife, my hope and reason for being ... She was the descendant of one of the families of Mato Grosso<sup>7</sup> that had been imprisoned by the enemy during the invasion of December of 1864. When I met her, she didn't have any family of her own anymore, but had been adopted by a respectable family as their beloved daughter! ... Ah! When I looked into those bright, sweet eyes, I felt



transported into heaven ... She was everything that my youthful heart idealized ... In her I found divine newness every day, and in spite of the vicissitudes of the war, we were immersed in the rosy current of the most beautiful of dreams ... The Marquis of Caxias himself met her and encouraged us to get married ... Thus, in January of 1869, during a truce, a priest consecrated our marriage ... Councilor Paranhos promised to help us as soon as we returned to Brazil so that our marriage could be duly celebrated ... We were living in peace like two birds together in the same nest, when I had the misfortune of bringing home two colleagues from work ... Armando and Julio ... But were they friends or foes? I only knew that they and Lina soon became close ... Using the excuse that they needed relief from the hardships of the campaign, the two began spending all their free time with us. My soul was at peace in sincere trust, until one day ...”

The expression on his face changed suddenly with a grimace of bitterness.

His voice took on a doleful tone as he continued:

“Until one day I found Lina and Julio in each other’s arms as if the marriage thalamus belonged to them.”

He shot us a dreadful, burning look and added:

“Do you have any idea of the pain of a man who finds himself irreparably deceived by the woman who is his life saver? Can you grasp the fire that burns in the flagellated mind of someone who, in one minute, sees the hopes of an entire life dashed to pieces? ... All is darkness for someone who bears the burning cinders of dead dreams! I couldn’t believe my eyes, so I confronted her ... But Lina met me with a look of the coldest scorn ... She said she could never love me except as a sister who is compassionate toward a friend in need, whom she had married merely to avoid the insecurity she felt in a foreign land. She told me to get out ... Shamefaced, I invoked the protection of my higher ranking friends and fled Asuncion ... But I was now a different man ... The sureness of character that I had cultivated with so much determination had been shaken to the core ... I got addicted to drinking and gambling ... From a responsible soldier, I descended to the condition of a wretched ne’er-do-well ... That was when I met Lola and Leonardo, and I didn’t hesitate to ruin their happiness ... It isn’t easy to show respect to others when others do not respect us.”

Making use of a spontaneous pause, Clarencio asked:

“Didn’t you ever receive any news about your wife?”

“Mario Silva, led back to the personality of Esteves by means of magnetic influence, smiled sarcastically and replied:

“Lina, whom I had begun to hate, was exceedingly cruel. Three months passed and I was filled with awful grief. I wasn’t far from Asuncion, when I found out that Julio had also been dumped by her. He came home one day and found her in the arms of Armando, the other friend who had seemed worthy of our fraternal esteem. Less strong than I was, Julio forgot what he had done to me weeks before, and blinded by all-consuming love, swallowed a large dose of poison ... Because he received help just in time in the barracks, he managed to survive, but unable to endure the damage done to his body by the poison, he got drunk a few days later and threw himself into the Paraguay River, finally doing himself in ... I didn’t hear anything else after that. Death was waiting for me in Piraju ... Fate had mercilessly set me in its sights.”

Mario grimaced unpleasantly and added:

“I am a fount of bile. I can’t change ... Can there be peace without justice, or justice without vengeance?”

Clarencio replied in a calming voice:

“We have to let go of evil, my friend. Without the forgiveness urged by Christ, we are travelers lost in the dark entanglement of ourselves. Without love in our heart, we have no eyes for the light.”

Silva was about to respond, but Amaro made a slight movement and appeared to have been remarkably renewed. His spirit body seemed to have gone back in time. It was lighter and more agile, and his face looked younger.

He tried to approach Mario in a natural gesture of cordiality, but when Mario saw his metamorphosed face, he shouted amid hatred and anguish:

“Armando! Armando! ... So it’s you? The Amaro that I detest today is the Armando of yesterday? Where am I? Have I gone crazy?!”

Clarencio quickly and cautiously explained to us:

“It didn’t take much effort for me to enable Amaro’s memory to return to the past. Reparative suffering has conferred new resources on his mind and sensibility. All I had to do was touch him lightly for him to take advantage of Mario’s account in order to recoup the memories of the time we are concerned with.”

Zulmira's husband held out his hand as a friend to his enemy, who stared at him in astonishment; but stepping back suddenly like a wounded animal, Mario shouted in despair:

“No, no! Don't touch me! Don't provoke me! Don't provoke me!”

The Minister got between them and said:

“Now, let's just calm down! Let's show some respect toward each other!”

And addressing Mario in particular, he stated flatly:

“It's our friend's turn now. You've had your say about the past. It's imperative for Amaro to talk now. In any situation, justice must evaluate all the parties-in-interest.”

Restrained by the moral strength of the warning, Mario remained quiet, and we turned to listen to the railroad worker, who had made himself more agreeable by the look of calm on his face.

# 18

## Confession

Amaro's face displayed signs of renewal as he began his emotion-filled story:

“Yes, I remember it all perfectly well ... Dawn on New Year's Day, 1869 was to become etched in our memory forever ... In anguished expectation, we were to head for Asuncion from Santo Antonio ... Our curiosity overcame our exhaustion ... I remember that before setting off, Esteves came looking for us and asked for our brotherly help in solving a problem that was highly important for his future ... The three of us were inseparable friends in the barracks ... He, Julio and myself ... In case he were to die in combat, he asked us to notify the young Lina Flores, whom he had met a few days earlier in Villeta ... He enthusiastically told us about their love for each other and their plans for the future ... We were worried about his concerns about dying and tried to comfort him with words of understanding and hope. We also doubled our efforts at trying to keep him safe ... The Paraguayan capital, however, proved to be exhausted and worn out ... I never forgot our shouts of triumph when we secured our prey, creating big problems for the authorities ... I can still see Esteves's smile at realizing that he had survived unscathed ... Soon thereafter, he told us about his upcoming marriage. No one could openly get married while on the campaign, so it was done in secret with the blessing of a priest and the tolerance of the leaders of the occupation because the bride was a poor Brazilian girl that had been held captive for a long time ...”

Amaro paused briefly to recoup his strength, and then continued:

“I recall that Julio and I visited Esteves in his home for the first time in February of that same year; however, when we met Lina, we both felt a mysterious attraction to the pretty yet humble girl ... I kept still about my own surprise at this, but the impulsive and restless Julio poured out his heart

to me ... Esteves's wife suddenly filled all his thoughts ... If only he had met her before Esteves had – he exclaimed, enamored – he wouldn't have given her up ... He felt as though Lina had come to him in his dreams ... He confided this to me on several occasions, touching my innermost fibers. Noticing the state of Julio's soul and acknowledging Esteves's rights regarding his wife ... I quashed my own feelings and tried to forget about her ... Julio's passion was too strong for him to accept the situation, however. He would make advances on the young bride and cover her with kindnesses, and maybe – who knows? Due to the uncertainties of war and her immature sense of responsibility regarding her marriage, Lina yielded to Julio's attention ... I remember the day when the disconsolate Esteves came looking for me and told me about the blow he had just received ... He wept inconsolably on my shoulder. He wanted to die, to do himself in ... I convinced him that any violence would be inopportune, however ... Since he was a well-regarded medic who was a ward of Councilor Silva Paranhos, our ambassador to the Republics of Prata, it wouldn't be hard for him to leave Asuncion ... And that's what he did. He first headed downstream toward Villeta, where he had met his wife. Some ailing comrades had remained behind there and he could be of assistance to them ... I heard nothing more about him except that he had died mysteriously in Piraju ...”

Displaying enormous mental suffering as a result of such memories, Silva trembled. Taking advantage of another pause, he shouted in agony:

“And your part in my misfortune? Who could ever convince me that you yourself weren't in cahoots with Julio to destroy my happiness? Cowards!”

Clarencio kindly quieted the enraged healthcare worker, telling him to hear the story to its end.

Amaro had not lost his composure.

He acknowledged his adversary's vehement rebuke, smiled sadly and continued:

“Yes, my confession must be precise and complete ... Knowing that Lina and Julio had settled down together, I tried to keep my distance ... I was afraid for myself. But Lina had perceived my unexpressed inclinations ... She shot me looks that awakened in me both joy and pain at the same time. I wanted to approach her and run from her ... At first I simply tried to avoid her; but the Marquis of Caxias's departure left the troops with a lot of free time on their hands ... Perhaps at Lina's urging, Julio encouraged me to

frequent their home. Fun-filled gambling and flavorful tea brought the three of us together night after night ... I dreaded the feelings the girl was awakening in my heart, not only because I shouldn't upset their domestic harmony, but also because I myself had a fiancé in Brazil; thus, I tried to isolate myself again ... Due to Lina's advances, I decided to hide myself more intensely in my work and I managed to get appointed to serve in the night watch at Resquin Palace, where the occupation was handling all the matters and documents of interest to our Country ... But she wouldn't give up. One night she came looking for me disguised as one of the townspeople ... When we were alone, she confessed ... She said she was tormented, afflicted ... She had felt loved by Esteves and found herself now ardently desired by Julio, but she hadn't been able to be happy with either one of them and wound up hating both ...”

Amaro paused at length and then continued:

“Who can explain the enigmas of the human heart? Who has enough vision to surmise the ways of the soul? Unable to control myself, I committed the wrong of assuming a spiritual debt that I shouldn't have assumed ... Lina grabbed ahold of my affection with the strength of ivy on a defenseless building ... And so it was that, on a certain morning in May, my friend found the two of us together ... Heartbroken, Julio swallowed a large amount of poison but was saved in time ... His medical treatments in the barracks didn't work. He began to suffer from pain in his throat and esophagus, and unable to endure such a physical and moral trial, he threw himself into the Paraguay River, thinking he could find peace in death ... I felt deeply regretful, lost the affection that had kept me bound to the woman who had both attracted us and had made us wretched, and fled from her. I joined the troops that were fighting the remaining soldiers of Solano Lopez in Cordillera ... I promised her I would return, but when the fighting ended, I went back to Brazil via other roads and resolved never to see her again.”

Even more emotional, Amaro wiped his forehead and continued after a brief pause:

“Ten years went quickly by ... I was back in Rio; I was married and happy ... One night it was raining hard. My wife and I were returning from the theater, when our out-of-control coach ran over a poor drunken woman in the street ... the driver managed to stop the horses and I got down to help her ... While my wife continued on her way home, I took the woman to a hospital for immediate help ... Some guards and other people helped, but as

she lay in bed with a ruptured stomach, bleeding profusely, I was shocked to see that it was Lina Flores ... She fought against death for two days ... The wretch recognized me and told me about the misfortunes she had undergone alone in Paraguay. She said she had come to Rio looking for me and touched me with her story of the anguishing drama in which she lived as she sought to recover the happiness she had lost forever ... She died in rebelliousness and suffering, cursing the world and everything in it.”

Amaro had finished.

Stupefied, Mario Silva stared at him amid despair and loathing.

It was clear that Amaro was struggling in vain to recall more.

Clarencio, however, caressed his forehead, enveloping him in renewing magnetic energies, and asked:

“Where did you finally meet up with her again?”

Amaro smiled and replied:

“Ah, yes! ... I found her again in the spirit world. She was with Julio and both were in a heartrending situation of purifying suffering ... I grasped the extent of my debt and promised to redeem it ... I would assist them ... I would help them along the earthly pathway ... We would struggle side-by-side to win the crown of redemption ... Yes, destiny! ... We have to pay the debts of the past in order to win the future!”

Zulmira’s husband stopped, visibly exhausted, but Mario, in spite of being restrained by Clarencio’s paternal strength, began to call to Julio, emitting awful cries.

# 19

## Pain and Surprise

“Julio! Julio! Show yourself, you coward!” screamed Mario Silva as if possessed.

Perhaps sensing the sympathy that Amaro had won from us due to the calmness with which he was handling the situation, Silva continued calling rebelliously:

“Show yourself and unmask this rascal who’s trying to win us over! I really do hate you, Julio! But you have to show yourself and accuse your heartless murderer!”

Clarencio tried to restrain him gently, but like a wild colt, Silva spun around aimlessly and continued yelling:

“Julio! ... Julio!”

No, Julio did not answer the call; nonetheless, to our surprise, someone else did.

As if she had been called by name, sister Blandina appeared in person and stood beside us.

She enveloped us in gentle light and we settled down, perplexed, except for Clarencio, who had kept his calm, as if he had been expecting her visit.

After greeting us, Blandina stated humbly:

“Brothers, for Jesus’ sake, listen to me! ... Julio is under our watch-care. He is sick, afflicted ... Your individual appeals have affected him ... He could come to you mentally, but he is going through the difficult trial of readjustment at the moment ... I have come to plead for your charity! ... Take pity on someone who is making an effort to forget what he was yesterday so that he may be effectively regenerated tomorrow!”



There was so much concern and tenderness in that appeal that the vibrations of the surroundings changed suddenly.

I began to more clearly grasp the dark plot of this living novel. Julio, the sickly boy, was the spirit who had reincarnated as the son of the friend with whom he quarreled in the past.

I couldn't dwell on this fact for long, because Silva, probably rebelling against the emotions that had overcome our souls, began complaining again:

“Angel or woman, I won't try to fight this sorcery! I won't fight it! But I have to throw this thief into the abyss because of his preposterous lies! ... Julio can stay in heaven or hell in the custody of archangels or demons, but I demand that the whole truth come out! ... I call on Lina as my witness! May Lina show herself! Let her take the stand! If we have been called here by the fate that binds us to each other, let that perfidious woman be heard as well.”

Assuming spiritual leadership of the group, our instructor invited everyone:

“Lina is nearby. Let's go.”

We all obeyed.

Within the penumbra of the familiar bedroom, Amaro's second wife was still subjugated to the first.

While Odila seemed even more rancorous and hardened than before, Zulmira seemed more disheartened.

Clarencio embraced Mario like a kindly father, and nodding toward the sick woman, he explained:

“Compose yourself, my friend! Lina Flores is suffering in the forge of struggle and sacrifice in order to be healed. Quench the fire of hatred that burns in your heart! Allow new understanding to benefit your ulcerated soul! ... We mustn't stand in the way of someone who is seeking the regeneration she needs!”

In light of Mario's nervous, agonized look, the Minister considered:

“Lina, today, is having immense difficulties trying to maintain a worthy marriage, and in overcoming huge obstacles, she is laying the foundation for her upcoming motherhood ... Let's help her with our vibrations of understanding and care. When we love rightly, the happiness of the one we love comes first, before anything else.”

Our group went a little farther.

Blandina continued praying.

Clarencio approached Zulmira with respectful attention and showed her gaunt, sad face to Mario, who shouted in dread upon seeing her:

“Zulmira! So, Zulmira is Lina reincarnated?”

The Minister caressed her head and replied:

“That’s right. She has returned with Armando to make painful reparations. Their marriage has not been a bed of roses but an association of spiritual interests for the regenerative endeavor. Armando accepted the commitment of leading her back to her dignity as a woman by assisting her in her silent suffering.”

Stupefied, Silva exclaimed:

“Does that mean Zulmira has betrayed me twice?”

“Don’t call it betrayal,” clarified Clarencio, calmly. “You need to understand! Before, Armando heeded inferior appeals that were incompatible with the responsibilities entrusted to him. Now, he is compelled to respond, although constrained, to the requirements of edifying nature, which he cannot rightly avoid. Lina Flores needs someone to remand her to renewing service so that, she, in turn, can aid Julio appropriately. We are all one another’s debtors. Souls perfect themselves from group to group, like tiny constellations orbiting around the Great Son, Jesus Christ! ... Like a planet that is far from the center of its solar system, you have left the orbit of old companions of evolution, and because of vibrations of love and hate, you have fallen into the center of energies in which Leonardo Pires and Lola Ibaruri await your cooperation so that they may be liberated before the Law. In the past, Amaro came between Zulmira and Julio, thus planting dilacerating thorns between them ... Now, he must bring them back together as a loving family so that as mother and son they can readjust themselves in sanctifying love ... In the past, you isolated Leonardo from Lola’s loving assistance, thereby hindering your own evolution ... Prepare yourself in faith to bring them together again in the domestic temple as son and mother so that they may be redeemed for the blessing of true love ... Our actions are weighed in the balance of Divine Justice ... We cannot fool the Supreme Lord. Our debts must be redeemed penny by penny.”

We found this brief lesson to be enormously beneficial.

Amaro bowed his head, showing that he was ready to obey dictates of a higher nature, whatever they might be.

Silva, on the other hand, did not seem to have grasped the truths that Clarencio had iterated.

Hypnotized as he contemplated the dear woman, he displayed his indifference.

After having gazed upon her amid love and aversion, he broke the silence that had enveloped the room and screamed in desperation:

“No, I cannot change; I’m doomed! ... I shall hate the wretch who has come back! ... Only revenge will do. I cannot forgive! I cannot forgive!”

Once again enraged and foreboding, like a wild animal on the loose, he shook his fists at the poor woman lying in bed in heartbreaking prostration. His spirit body was now surrounded by a dark gray aura that emitted unpleasant, disquieting rays.

Clarencio freed him from the magnetic influence with which he was stifling his energies.

As soon as he found himself without the restraints that had been controlling his movements, Silva stepped back and exclaimed:

“I can’t stand it anymore! I can’t stand it anymore!”

And he ran out into the night.

Clarencio told us to follow him while he himself, with Blandina’s help, lent assistance to the railroad worker and his wife. The healthcare worker would surely retake his dense body in a precarious state of health. Anesthetizing passes would help him. He would not be able to recall the grave experience he had had. The experience caused by his mental obstinacy could have dangerous consequences.

Hilario and I instantly found ourselves beside Silva, who was being automatically drawn to his physical body like an iron molecule attracted by a magnet.

We examined him carefully.

His chest was heaving and his breathing was labored.

His heart was racing due to out-of-control arrhythmia.

We immediately got to work, soothing his mental field as much as possible by means of magnetic sedatives.

But in spite of our passes that completely enveloped him in reinvigorating energies, Mario woke up in agony, hesitant and trembling as if he had been running from a terrible inner storm.

Half-conscious, it took him several minutes to get a grip on himself.

His thoughts were in torment, nebulous ...

He tried to move but could not. He felt like he was bolted to his bed, like a corpse that had suddenly awakened.

He tried to collect his thoughts, but could not do that either.

He only knew that he had had a terrible nightmare, the magnitude of which he could not fathom.

Drenched in sweat and afflicted, he thought he was going to die.

Instinctively, he prayed for Divine Protection.

That was all it took for his soul to connect to our restorative fluids.

Little by little, he was able to move again. He got up and took a tranquilizer.

Frightened, he sat on the edge of the bed, and immersing his head in his hands, said to himself: "I'm really all messed up. Tomorrow I'm going to see a shrink. That's my only hope."

Yes – I agreed to myself – hatred causes madness. Whoever strives against the good falls into the claws of perturbation and death.

With that realization, we left.

Clarencio was waiting for us.

We needed to continue our lesson.

## 20

# Conflicts of the Soul

When we arrived back at Amaro's home, we were still able to observe him outside his dense body. With Clarencio's direct assistance, he was talking with Odila, his first wife.

When Odila saw Amaro (probably with Clarencio's help), she forgot about Zulmira for a few moments and knelt down at his feet, exclaiming:

"Amaro, throw her out! Enough of this woman in our home! She has wrecked our peace ... She murdered our son; she's no good for Evelina and she's a torment to you!"

Staring at Zulmira with a terrible look, she asked:

"Why are you keeping such an intruder around?"

A very downcast Amaro had been making an effort to focus on our instructor, but perhaps tormented at seeing his sullen, angry first wife again, he had lost his characteristic serenity.

While with us, as he discussed problems of a moral order weighing on his mind, he had maintained an enviable calmness with an aristocratic grasp of life's problems; but here, in the presence of the woman who dominated his sentiments, he turned out to be more accessible to imbalance and turmoil.

We could see that he wanted to respond to Odila's accusations, but his extremely pale face betrayed inhibitory emotion.

Situated between Odila and Zulmira, he seemed divided between love and compassion.

Odila continued her raving with heartrending insistence, while Amaro stood unmoving like a living statue of doubt and suffering.

I was hoping that, as he had done a little while earlier with Amaro, Clarencio would take Odila's mind back into the past in order to calm her soul. But when I asked him about it, he explained:

“No, it wouldn't work. Our drama would grow too large if we delved into the past too much. We need to stick to the line of work that was born from Evelina's prayer.

Noticing that the railroader was oddly troubled, the Minister led him away from Odila to the bed where his body lay.

The poor discarnate tried to cling to him, clamoring disconsolately:

“Amaro! Amaro! Don't leave me like this!”

The clock chimed 3:00 a.m.

Amaro woke up, exhausted.

He rubbed his eyes sleepily and thought he could still hear the appeal vibrating in the air:

“Amaro! Amaro!”

The shock of the encounter had been too much for him. Only the last phase of his spiritual incursion remained on his mnemonic screen: the image of Odila, imploring his help ...

There was no trace left of his conversation with us.

Leaving him to the fragmentary remembrance that loomed in his consciousness as a mere dream, we left.

Sister Blandina immediately asked us to help her with little Julio, whom she had entrusted to Mariana while she came looking for us.

As we made our way to Lar da Benção, I asked the Minister about a certain enigma that had been troubling my mind.

At the time of the war with Paraguay, Esteves had suffered the torture of poison as much as Julio had. So why were both affected so differently? The boy was still suffering from a painful throat, whereas the medic, Leonardo's victim, seemed not to have experienced the same result.

Clarencio smiled and explained:

“You haven't taken the causes into consideration. Esteves was poisoned, whereas Julio poisoned himself. There's a big difference. Suicide entails the

enormous complication of guilt. The mental fixation of remorse causes untold imbalances within the spirit body. The harm affects the recesses of the conscience, which creates and then concretizes it. We saw Leonardo Pires with the image of Esteves tormenting his mind, while Julio is still adversely affected due to the deliberate wrongs he yielded to eighty years ago. The thought that unleashes evil becomes imprisoned in its own results because it fatally suffers the consequences in the spirit body in which it manifests.”

And in light of my silent reflections, he added:

“It has to be that way.”

We arrived at Blandina’s lovely residence and went in.

Julio’s crying inspired compassion.

After we had greeted the devoted Mariana, who was assisting him with maternal zeal, the Minister examined him. Somewhat troubled, he said to Blandina:

“Let’s not worry too much. I hope to enable him to reincarnate a few days from now.”

“Yes, that shouldn’t be put off any longer,” she replied.

Obviously aware of our curiosity and of Hilario’s interest in gathering more information and knowledge regarding the case, the instructor asked us to observe the unfortunate child, saying:

“As you know, our body of rarefied matter is inwardly governed by seven force centers, which come together in the branches of the plexus. As they vibrate in tune with one another at the inflow of the directive power of the mind, they establish for our use a vehicle of electrical cells, which we may define as an electromagnetic field, in which thought vibrates within a closed circuit. Our mental position determines the specific weight of our spirit envelope, and consequently, the ‘habitat’ it needs. It’s only a matter of vibratory pattern. Each of us lives within a certain type of wave. The more primitive the condition of the mind, the weaker the vibratory inflow of the thought, inducing the compulsory agglutination of the individual to the regions of embryonic or tormented awareness, where the inferior lives to which it is attuned come together. The increase of the mental flow within the electromagnetic vehicle in which we move after we abandon the earthly body depends on the experience that has been acquired and stored in our own spirit. With this reality in mind, it is easy to understand that we either sublimate or

unbalance the delicate agent of our manifestations, according to the type of thought that flows from our inner life. The closer we are to the animal sphere, the greater the obscuring condensation of our organization, whereas the more we use our efforts to evolve toward the glorious constructions of the spirit, the greater the subtlety of our envelope, which combines easily with the beauty, harmony and light that reign in the Divine Creation.”

We were enthralled by this priceless explanation, but since Clarendo realized that we had matters at hand, he turned his attention back to Julio’s infirm throat and continued:

“We cannot avoid practical observations when we study the conflicts of the soul. Whatever the corruption of the thought is, such will be the disharmony in the particular force center that reacts in our body to this or that class of mental inflow. Let’s apply earthly terminology to our short lesson as much as possible so that you can better grasp what we are saying. As we analyze the physiology of the perispirit, we may classify its force centers by remembering the most important areas of the physical body. Thus, using the best expression for the vehicle that serves us presently, there is the ‘crown center’, which, on earth, is considered by Hindu philosophy as being the thousand-petal lotus and the most important center of all due to its high radiation potential and its connection with the mind, the shining seat of the consciousness. The crown center receives, first of all, the stimuli of the spirit, commanding the other centers, yet vibrating with them in a perfect system of interdependence. Considering in our exposition the phenomena of the physical body, and satisfying the imperatives of simplicity in our definitions, we can say that the energies of nourishment for the nervous system and its subdivisions emanate from this center, and that it is responsible for feeding the thought cells and for providing all the electromagnetic resources that are indispensable for organic stability. Therefore, it is the great assimilator of the solar energies and rays from the Higher Realms that can favor the sublimation of the soul. Next, there is the ‘cerebral center’, contiguous to the ‘crown center’, and which orders the various types of perception, which in the physical body, comprise sight, hearing, touch and the vast network of the processes of the mind that have to do with Speech, Learning, Art and Knowledge. It is in the ‘cerebral center’ that we possess the command of the endocrine center, which has to do with the psychic powers. Next, there is the ‘throat center’, which presides over the vocal phenomena, including the activities of the thymus, the thyroid and the parathyroid. Then, there is the ‘heart center’, which sustains the services of the emotions and overall



equilibrium. Proceeding on down, there is the ‘splenic center’, which, in the dense body, is seated in the spleen and regulates the distribution and circulation adequate for the vital resources in every corner of the body. Then, comes the ‘gastric center’, which controls the entrance of nourishment and fluids into the body, and lastly is the ‘genetic<sup>8</sup> center’, housing the sanctuary of sex as a molding temple of forms and stimuli.” The instructor paused briefly to rest and then continued:

“But we mustn’t forget that our subtle vehicle, like the physical one, is a mental creation on the evolutionary pathway, woven out of resources taken temporarily by us from the storehouses of the universe. It is a vessel that we utilize to house the divine light of sublimation in our eternal individuality, with which we must seek the realms of Pure Spirit. Everything is the work of the mind in time and space, making use of thousands of forms in order to become purified and sanctified for the Divine Glory.”

Clarencio stroked the boy’s ailing throat, indicating that it was the object of our lesson, and added:

“When, by acts contrary to the Divine Law, our mind harms the harmony of any one of our soul’s force centers, it is naturally enslaved to the effects of the unbalancing action, thus making the toil of readjustment necessary. In Julio’s case, he is the author of disturbance in the ‘throat center’, an alteration expressed by an infirmity or imbalance that will by necessity go with him into reincarnation.”

“How will he cleanse the deficiency?” I asked, edified by the explanations I had just heard.

In a very serene tone, the instructor answered:

“Julio will have to live with pain in his throat, thus healing himself by correcting the vibratory tonus of the ‘throat center’ and reestablishing it to normality.”

And to etch his explanation more surely on our minds, he concluded:

“Julio will be reborn in a physiologically defective body, which will somehow portray the injured area, his throat. He will suffer intensely from the vocal organ, which will undoubtedly be characterized by weak resistance to microbial attacks. In virtue of our friend having scorned the blessing of a physical body, he will be faced with dreadful struggles in order to learn how to appreciate it instead.”

Then, the instructor performed several magnetic operations to help the little patient, who remained calm, and after the two kindly sisters expressed their gratitude, we said goodbye and returned to our spirit home.

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§ Pertaining to genesis or reproduction; genetic. (genesic. Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/genesic> (accessed: June 25, 2011). – Tr.

## 21

# An Uplifting Conversation

As we were on our way back to our circle of work and study in order to discuss further measures for assisting the protagonists of the story that life was writing, I concluded that I should not waste the chance to gain a fuller understanding from our instructor concerning his explanations regarding the perispirit.

Whereas ordinary persons barely understand this vehicle of activity, knowing nothing about most of its life-benefiting processes and using it like outside renters, we discarnates are compelled to analyze this garb in order to understand it better.

Actually, faced with the new conditions of the spirit life, we begin to more fully appreciate the body we left behind on the earth. We finally grasp the secrets of its formation and development, its sustentation and disintegration, but we are still confronted with the enigmas of our new instrument. In the Greater Life, we are dealing with the subtle vehicle of the mind – at least in our current sphere – and we are gradually increasing our understanding about its peculiarities.

By the expression on his face, I could see that Hilario was just as eager to learn as I was. Encouraged by my colleague's attitude, I asked my first question in the form of a comment:

“Obviously, it is difficult for us to achieve the great equilibrium that will entitle us to make our final passage to the eminences of the Pure Spirit.”

“Ah, yes!” agreed the Minister in a grave tone of voice. “For us to have such a refined and wonderful vessel as the human body, Divine Wisdom spent thousands of centuries using the multiform resources of nature in the immeasurable realm of forms ... In order for us to come into possession of the sublime instrument of the mind on higher planes, we have to remember

that the Supreme Father takes all the time he needs to perfect and sublimate the beauty and precision of the spirit body that will confer on us the qualities that are indispensable for our adaptation to the Higher Life.”

“So,” Hilario began attentively, “we must attribute an important role to infirmities in the human realm because most of them play an important role in the regeneration of souls.”

“Exactly.”

“Each ‘force center’, I stated, “must be brought into complete harmony with the Divine Laws that govern us so that we can ascend toward Perfect Equilibrium.”

“That’s right,” Clarencio confirmed, “our moral lapses cause the condensation of inferior fluids of a gravitational nature within the electromagnetic field of our organization, and this brings about the natural bondage that is so characteristic of our incipient lives.”

Hilario then asked:

“But let’s say that a primitive, who is completely ignorant of the Superior Designs, indulges in indiscriminate crimes ... Would that person display the same types of lesions in the subtle tissues of the soul as a highly civilized European who has yielded to the business of crime?”

Clarencio smiled understandingly and replied:

“Let’s go slowly. A little while ago we commented on the issue of evolution. Just as the perfection of that primitive’s body was born from the primordial forms of nature, his spirit body had its beginnings in the rudimentary principles of intelligence. We mustn’t confuse the seed with the tree or the child with the adult, even though both appear on the same landscape of life. The perispirit of the primitive has to be looked at as a human proto-form that is extremely condensed due to its integration with denser matter. The perispirit of the primitive is to the refined organism of somewhat ennobled spirits as the anthropomorphic monkey is to the elegant person of the modern city. For primitives, the moral life has just begun to appear and their perispirit is still very pasty. That is why they will spend a long time in the school of experience, like the unformed block of marble under the hammer before it becomes a masterpiece ... They will spend centuries and centuries to rarify themselves, using multiple forms to acquire superior qualities, which, as they refine their organization, will confer on

them new possibilities for their growing consciousness. Instinct and intelligence are gradually transformed into knowledge and responsibility, and this renewal entitles the being to more-advanced means of manifestation ... The marvelous human body was patiently constructed on the earth over the course of the centuries, and the delicate vehicle of the spirit, on the highest planes, is being constructed cell by cell over the course of unending millennia...”

And with a significant look, Clarencio concluded:

“ ...until we change residences, after having finally become capable of leaving behind the pathway of forms and setting off in the direction of the realms of Pure Spirit, where inconceivable, unimaginable resources of supreme sublimation await us.”

The instructor had finished, but the matter was too important for me to suddenly lose interest in it.

I remembered my own personal experience with countless cases of obscure diseases and asked:

“Medicine would surely write glorious chapters if it would probe more securely the problems and troubles of the soul ...”

“It will someday,” confirmed Clarencio, sure of himself. “Someday, in accordance with lessons learned from the Divine Doctor, people will teach others that the cure for all ills resides within themselves. Nearly all human infirmities originate in the psyche.”

Smiling, he added:

“Pride, vanity, tyranny, selfishness, laziness and cruelty are vices of the mind that generate disturbances and diseases in its instruments of expression.”

In the interests of learning, I remarked:

“That is why there are purgatorial valleys after the grave ... death doesn’t mean redemption.”

“It never has,” clarified the Minister. “The sickly bird does not stop being sick just because it escapes from its cage. Hell is a creation of imbalanced souls who have come together in one place, just as the miry bog is a collection of slimy nuclei that congregate together. When, with a consciousness inclined toward the good or toward evil, we perpetrate this or that crime, we really can wound or harm someone, but more than that, we are

wounding or harming ourselves. If we kill our neighbor, our victim will receive so much sympathy from others that he or she will soon be reestablished within the laws of equilibrium that govern us, and will often come to our aid way before we can recompose the dilacerated threads of our conscience. When we harm this or that person, we actually harm our own soul first, because we lower our dignity as eternal spirits, delaying our sacred opportunities for growth.”

“Yes,” I agreed, “I have seen disturbing scenes of trial in the spirit world, and these have led me to think ...”

“Infirmity, as disharmony of the spirit,” interrupted the instructor, “continues on in the perispirit. Known diseases, in addition to others that have escaped human diagnosis, will persist for a long, long time in the tormented spheres of the soul, leading us to readjustment. Pain is the great, blessed remedy. It reeducates our mental activity, restructuring the pieces of our instrumentation and polishing the animic centers that our mind uses to develop itself on its journey toward the life eternal. Aside from the power of God, pain is the only force capable of altering the course of our thoughts, compelling us to make indispensable changes with a view to the Divine Plan for us, the execution of which we cannot avoid without grave harm to ourselves.”

Our home was now in sight.

The golden rays of the morning were sweeping over the distant horizon.

The Minister said goodbye.

This was the time of day when he always devoted himself to prayer.

## 22

# Sister Clara

On the night after the experiences that we described, the Minister invited us to visit Sister Clara. He was going to ask her to help him enlighten Odila.

I was growing more and more interested in the living novel of that group of souls that destiny had entangled in its web.

If I had been allowed to, I would have immediately returned to the rebellious Mario Silva or the patient Amaro in order to see how the story would play out, a story whose chapters were written in the living pages of their souls.

But I had to wait.

As we went to meet Clara, the moonlight shone down in a silvery outpouring upon the flower-carpeted landscape.

With my mind laden with concerns for our endeavor, I asked Clarencio about the assistance we were about to solicit.

Why was he going to ask for someone else's help, when he had guided the reincarnated Esteves's and Armando's minds so successfully? Hadn't he enabled their memories to go back to the remote days of their struggle in Paraguay? So why couldn't he instruct the unfortunate, sickly sister as well?

The Minister listened tolerantly to my concerns and replied:

“You're mistaken. Instruction does not always lead to transformation. Yes, I do have sufficiently developed magnetic energies capable of working on our recovering friends' minds; however, I still do not have a sublimated sentiment that can ensure the renewal of their souls. Within my limitations I am capable of speaking to minds, but I do not feel capable of redeeming hearts. To do that, to unravel the complex labyrinths of moral suffering, one must have reached higher degrees of human comprehension.”

I was about to ask another series of questions, but our instructor pointed out a beautiful building to us.

Surrounded by spacious flowerbeds dotted with trees, Clara's residence looked like a little school or a charming boarding school for girls.

And such was the case to a certain extent.

Our hostess did not live in a learning institution per se, although it was like an actual school, so great and enlightening were the classes she held there.

She received us in a large room. It did not look at all like a classroom, but she was being closely listened to by four dozen students in various conditions. They all looked very much at ease.

With large, bright eyes magnificently marking her countenance, and with the aristocratic lines of a face framed by ample hair, Clara looked like a young Madonna endowed with the best gifts of youth and maturity. She extended her small, fine hands to us, responding to our greetings with sincere joy.

Clarencio asked her to forgive us for interrupting her work.

"Don't worry about it," she replied, enchantingly at ease, "we are in the middle of a brief course regarding the importance of the voice in the service of speech. You can join in. Our class entails simple conversation."

Looking kindly at the Minister, she continued:

"Have a seat. I'm the one who should ask for forgiveness for making you wait a bit. But in a short while we can talk more privately."

And returning to her plain seat without any teacher-like attitude – so great was the gentle mother-like atmosphere she radiated around herself – she continued instructing her students:

"According to what we are learning this evening, speech, whatever it may be, invariably entails specific electrical energies, liberating rays of a dynamic nature. As we all know, the mind is the incessant generator of power through the positive and negative wires of the sentiment and the thought, thereby producing speech, which is an electromagnetic discharge regulated by the voice. That is why, in all our areas of activity, the voice modulates speech. This requires the purification of the inner life, because speech, after the mental impulse, lies at the base of creation; thanks to speech, people approach



and adjust themselves to the work they are responsible for, and by means of the voice, such work may be aided or retarded in space and time.”

As she paused briefly, a kindly woman asked:

“When we want to deal with a problem, is it crucial that we never become angry?”

“Yes, it is,” explained Clara. “It’s a proven fact that anger never does anyone any good. Anger is nothing more than a dangerous short-circuit in our mental energies due to a defect in our emotive world, resulting in destructive rays being emitted all around us.

“On such occasions, if we aren’t with someone who possesses the insulating material of prayer or patience, the sudden imbalance in our energies causes great harm, because, when thoughts of anger become interiorized, they can cause temporary mental blindness, dragging the mind into sensations rooted in the remote past, sensations that in turn drag us down into unfortunate experiences of lower animality without even realizing it. According to what we know, anger cannot and must not be expressed in what we say. An angry person is an out of control dynamo, and coming into contact with him or her may cause the strangest disturbances.”

A young woman who displayed obvious interest in the lesson argued:

“What if we were to replace the term ‘anger’ with ‘indignation’?”

Sister Clara thought for a moment and replied:

“Good point. We cannot finish our lesson without analyzing indignation as a state of the soul that is sometimes necessary. Of course, we must avoid excesses. Getting upset all the time about petty things demeans the gifts of life, wasting them inconsequentially without the least advantage for oneself or for others. Let’s imagine indignation as the raising of the tension in the power-plant of our organic resources, creating special effects that enable us to carry out our tasks efficiently. In exceptional cases, when such a power difference impacts our daily life, we mustn’t forget to control the inflection of our voice. Just as managing electrical energy requires monitoring the voltage, we need to monitor our indignation, especially when we have to express it by means of speech, projecting our voice only with enough power that can be used by those to whom we direct the charge of our sentiments. It is crucial for us to modulate the expression of what we are saying, just like the emission of electricity is modulated.”

And before the group, which was listening to the lesson with true respect, she continued after a brief pause:

“Our life may be compared to a lengthy learning course in whose innumerable classes we receive and give, help and are helped. In every circumstance, serenity is always the best adviser, but in a few aspects of our struggle, indignation is needed for us to express our being repulsed by deliberate acts of rebellion against the Laws of the Lord. During this elevated mental tension, however, we must never give way to violence and we must never lose our dignity, as we’ve received from the Divine Trust the gift of higher knowledge. Thus, it is enough for us to abstain from acts that we inwardly disapprove of, because our attitude is a magnetic induction current. All around us, whoever is attuned to us usually does what he or she sees us do. Consequently, what we do is a center of attraction. Thus, we need to be very careful about what we say during moments of high tension in our emotional world so that our voice does not come out in wild cries or in cruel remarks that are no more than hurtful shocks to others, sowing thorns of antipathy and revolt that are harmful to what we are supposed to be doing.”

Another friend who was following the lesson with uncommon interest asked respectfully:

“Sister Clara, how are we to understand voice disorders; for example, stuttering and diplophonia<sup>9</sup>?”

“Of course,” Clara replied, “the vocal organs also experience struggles and trials if needed for readjustment. We may use our voice to commit various crimes of mental tyranny, and we have to use it to repay such debts. Disorders of this sort compel us to do the work of recovery in silence, because when we have to endure someone else’s comments, we gradually learn to control our own impulses, bringing them in line with the good.”

As she spoke with complete simplicity, like a maternal angel guiding her children, Sister Clara commented a few minutes on this remarkable topic with amazing perfection of definition.

When the lesson ended, only a few young girls, who regarded our hostess as a true benefactor, lingered in the lovely home.

Clara led us into a small adjacent room, where Clarenco told her about the purpose of our visit. Someone down on earth needed to hear what she had

to say in order to make personal changes. Clara asked about the details of the endeavor.

Clarencio recounted the drama.

When she heard that the embittered woman had given up her husband, who had stayed behind on the earth, we saw immense compassion on her face. Her eyes filled with unshed tears ...

I understood that the noble instructor, endowed with a supreme moral character, had profound, unmanifested sorrows. Surely, we were seeking comfort for an unhappy soul in a soul that perhaps was suffering even more ...

“The poor woman!” she exclaimed, moved.

And affirming that she could take the time off, she generously agreed to go with us.

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<sup>9</sup> A condition in which the voice simultaneously produces two sounds of different pitch (dictionary.reference.com/browse/diplophonia). – Tr.

## 23

# A Maternal Appeal

The scene in Amaro's home did not seem any different than before.

Zulmira, tormented by Odila, who was truly vampirizing her energies, lay apathetic and disconsolate on the bed like a living statue of anguish and fear as she listened to the wind howling outside.

Thinner and more despondent, she looked exhausted.

After a few words with Clarencio, Sister Clara asked us to stand back from the bed a little ways, and approaching Odila, who like Zulmira could not see us, she stretched out her arms in prayer.

I was truly touched as I watched the lovely scene unfold divinely there in front of us.

The room gradually filled with light that radiated outward from Clara. Our new friend was like a star that had suddenly descended to the earth with two arms extended like wings ready to take sublime flight.

A large aura of splendor like etherealized, luminescent gold surrounded her light, sublime form ... Waves of varying tonalities radiated out from it in circles that closed in on themselves, going from shades of gold and opal to bright pink, from bright pink to sky blue, from sky blue to light green and from light green to soft violet, which then changed into other hues that I could not discern.

It seemed to me that Clara had become the center of an unimaginable, miraculous rainbow.

The whole house seemed too small for that blessed spring of soothing, indefinable rays.

Even Odila quieted down as if under the control of that soft constraint.

I was so ecstatic that I could barely articulate a few monosyllables as I sought an explanation from our instructor.

“Sister Clara,” said the Minister, equally ecstatic, “has attained the complete equilibrium of her force centers, which send out luminous, distinct undulations. In prayer, and at the inflow from her lofty mind, she emits vibrations from her purified sentiment, vibrations that constitute projections of the harmony and beauty flowing from her being. If we were on her evolutionary level, we could have an immediate relationship right now with that higher plane of consciousness, which appears to us now as only a display of light and color. We could perceive the glorious message arising from her heart instead of these radiations, which to our ears are music and language, wisdom and love from a wonderful, living thought ... Such perfect spiritual attunement, however, is only possible amongst those who have complete affinity with one another.”

The transfigured messenger seemed even more beautiful.

She approached Odila and covered her eyes with her lily-white hand.

“Watch,” said Clarencio joyously. “She can amplify Odila’s sight and she will be able to see Sister Clara just as we see her.”

In fact, when touched by those heavenly fingers, Evelina’s mother let out a cry of wild enchantment and fell to her knees.

Naturally dazzled by the blazing light surrounding the unexpected visitor, she began to weep, begging:

“O Angel of God, please help me! Please help me!”

“What are you doing, Odila?” asked the emissary with an unforgettable inflection of love.

“I’m here to avenge myself for love ...”

“But is there really a point of contact between love and revenge?”

Nodding timidly toward her sad companion stretched out on the bed, Odila tried to maintain her characteristic attitude, exclaiming cruelly:

“I have to get rid of this intruder, who has assaulted my home! This wretched woman stole my husband and murdered my son! ... Those who love take justice into their own hands!”

“Poor daughter!” replied Clara, embracing her. “One who loves sows life and joy, and fights suffering and death ... Whenever our worshipful love becomes a torment for those around us, we harbor no other sentiment but the frantic attachment to ourselves. We become a focal point of degrading selfishness. Our poor sister here is going through a dreadful trial. Doesn’t it pain you to see her defeated and miserable?”

“She married the man I love!” sobbed Odila, dominated more by the magnetic influence of the messenger than impressed by her lovely words.

“Wouldn’t it be better to bear in mind that he’s the one who married her?”

Caressing Odila’s now-trembling brow, she added:

“Odila, if we do not rid ourselves of jealousy while we have the opportunity to toil in the dense body, it becomes an afflictive bonfire that consumes our hearts after we die. Calm yourself! The woman of the flesh, such as you once were, has to give way to the woman of light, such as you must now be. The door to the earthly home, where you imagined you reigned over as a tiny, unending empire, shut along with your physical eyes! One’s stay on the earth is but one day of school ... All the things we used to enjoy while there are resources from the Lord who granted us their precarious ownership. While there, we rarely remember that the treasure of domestic love is somewhat like an invaluable crop, whose qualities we must extend ...

“We may begin the endeavor of love in the home, but we have to extend it to humankind as a whole. We have only one Father, the Lord of Infinite Goodness, on whom we focus our hopes ... Thus, we are all brothers and sisters, integral parts of one sole family ... Have you ever put yourself in Zulmira’s shoes, experiencing her difficulties and troubles? Have you ever put yourself in the situation of the husband whom you say you love? If you found yourself without his company, with children in need of consolation and sustentation, wouldn’t you feel grateful if someone came along to help you watch over them? You think only about your own problems ... However, your beloved husband is in a prison of dark, inner suffering as he struggles against troubling enigmas without your willingness to help him.”

“Don’t talk to me like that!” begged Odila with obvious signs of anguish. “I hate this wretch. She stole our happiness!”

“Think about it, Odila! Have you forgotten that woman is always a mother? The grave will not give you back the body that the earth has

consumed, so if you want to recover the love and trust of the husband you left behind, you have to love him with your spirit. Change the impulses of your heart! Don't think that Amaro would be capable of wanting you if he were to suddenly come to us and find you poisoned by so much resentment."

"But she killed my son!"

"How can you prove that?"

"She hated the way Amaro loved him."

"Yes, I'll admit that Zulmira acted like that. She is still inexperienced, and ignorance while we are incarnate can impede our sight; but that is no reason to blame your son's death on her ... Think about it! True fraternity would enable you to regard her as a daughter worthy of your love and guidance ... Instead of forging an enemy on the sinister anvil of cruelty, you could construct a noble and loyal devotion to enrich your life. If you would take the light of your love out of the burning flames of the hell of jealousy in which you suffer by your own will, you could be a real inspiration and blessing for your beloved husband and the daughter who prays for your assistance!"

Perhaps because Odila, nearly defeated, could only weep, Clara caressed her hair and added:

"I know that you are also suffering as a tormented mother ... However, remember that our children belong to God ... And if death took your son from his father's arms, it is because the Divine Will so ordered it."

The messenger caressed Odila's brow as if subjecting her to gentle magnetic operations.

After a few moments in which we could hear only the transformed Odila's sobbing, the venerable friend stated:

"Instead of fruitlessly devoting yourself to the vengeance that blinds your eyes and freezes your heart, why don't you work on clearing your own path so that you can see your little angel again and cuddle him in your arms?"

It was obvious that Clara had touched the sensitive spot of that troubled soul, because Evelina's unfortunate mother, as if she had cast off all the burdens that weighed upon her sentiments, cried out like a wild animal smitten with pain:

"My son! ... My son!"

Her convulsive weeping became even more anguished, more touching.

The emissary of the good enfolded her with maternal love and said to her:

“Rejoice, dear sister! Great is your happiness! You can render assistance and that is the greatest fortune! Nothing is keeping you from helping the companion of your human experience. He is within your reach. All it will take is a prayer of true love that shows your understanding and compassion so that you can overcome the short distance between your suffering and the son you adore! ... I have been waiting twenty-two centuries for one minute like this one for my longing and anguished heart, and my own loved ones still do not listen to me!”

Clara’s voice seemed choked with unseen tears.

Dominated by the heavenly messenger’s vibrations, Odila clung to her as she continued to weep convulsively, while Clara said with motherly enthusiasm:

“Let’s go, my child! Let’s seek our renewal in Jesus!”

Clara held her close as she led her out.

Clarencio said to us:

“Now, Zulmira can recover. Her adversary has left without the violence that would harm her mental field.”

Hilario and I left with him, although we were still eager to continue our edifying adventure.



## 24

# Reparative Care

Odila, under Sister Clara's sponsorship, was admitted to a treatment institution for a few days, and for seven nights in a row, we went with Clarencio to visit Zulmira in order to assist with her recovery.

Amaro's second wife was definitely getting better. Quieter. Calmer.

However, she still did not want to do anything.

She was no longer excitable but was still undernourished, apathetic and extremely despondent.

Attentive to our usual curiosity, Clarencio informed us:

"She is free now, but she needs some kind of stimulus to pull her out of her lethargy. She lacks the will to fight, to stay alive. Even so, let's have faith. Odila herself will assist with her recovery. As she regains her spirit sight, Odila will accept the imperative of selflessness and fraternity to build the kind of future she wants."

In fact, Zulmira did remain free and tranquil.

The parts of her body were functioning with irreprehensible harmony, but she still lacked something ...

The machine was up and running again, but was still idle, requiring adequate measures.

A week later, Sister Clara invited us for a chat.

She said that Odila had been truly transformed.

Submitted to magnetic assistance in order to probe her past, she had acknowledged her need to collaborate with her husband so that both could be victorious on the planes of the spirit.

She yearned to see her son again, so she was willing to do all she could to be useful to her husband and daughter.

Consequently, she would fight against the spontaneous revulsion she felt toward Zulmira, whom she would help as a sister, duly readjusting herself in order to strengthen and assist her.

Her benefactress was quite pleased.

She recommended that, as soon as Amaro left his physical body that night, we should bring him to the treatment institution where Odila was staying.

A conversation between the two would produce better results.

Evelina's mother was changing and would give proof of readjustment, thus initiating the first effort at reconciliation.

Clara's request was happily agreed to.

Sometime after midnight, when the railroad worker's body was under the gentle influence of sleep, we took him in spirit to the institution.

We waited for Clara in Odila's well-lit, flower-filled room.

On seeing his beloved wife, Julio's father, who had been only half-conscious, fell to his knees, as lucid as possible under the circumstances, and exclaimed in rapture:

"Odila! ... Odila!"

"Amaro!" responded his former wife, now completely transfigured. "Yes, it's me! And I'm asking for your courage and faith, serenity and bravery in the task at hand!"

"But I'm all worn out," he complained in copious tears.

Supported by her venerable friend, Odila stood up with some difficulty, and smoothing his hair, asked in concern:

"Worn out from what?"

"I'm just tired of life ... As you know, I got married again because I thought it would ensure our kids' future, but the woman I married is nothing compared to you ... I was duped! Instead of happiness, I have found only a disappointment that I cannot hide."

And giving her a heartwarming look, he said sadly:

“Our Julio died in an accident when surrounded by my best aspirations, our daughter is pining away joylessly in her room and their stepmother is wasting away in bed! ... Ah, Odila, can’t you see how I’m suffering? I’ve asked Heaven for death so that we can be together again in eternity, but death hasn’t come.”

Eyes moist with tears, his wife, understandably more beautiful because of the redemptive thoughts now flowing from her being, said to him with an unforgettable inflection:

“Yes, Amaro, I do see! I too have suffered much, but I now realize that we ourselves aggravate our pain ... Why should we change distance into rebelliousness and longing into poisonous bile? Why don’t we acknowledge God’s Supreme Majesty in the guidance of our destinies? We haven’t known how to cultivate the love that is a sacrifice on the earth for constructing our spiritual paradise ... We have demanded when we should have given; we have wounded when we should have healed! ... Amaro, we must calm our hearts so that life can help us understand it. We must yield ourselves so that we may receive the help we need from others ... Due to the roughness of my uneducated sentiments, I was nourishing the thornbush of jealousy, tormenting your mind and troubling our home! But in just a few short days, I got a fuller grasp of our problems by using the key of good will! ... I want to make myself a better person, to progress, to live again.”

Amaro contemplated her lovingly and reverently, and replied, downcast:

“Well, even so, the dreadful reality is still the same. We inhabit two different worlds ... Wretch that I am! I feel lost and unhappy!”

“I used to feel that way too, but I used silence and prayer to find the pathway to renewal.”

“What should we do with Zulmira? She’s come between us as a hindrance to our true togetherness.”

“No, don’t think like that! She wouldn’t come into your life for no just reason.”

Clarencio touched Amaro’s brow, enabling his mental field to return instantly to the memories of the debts he contracted while in Paraguay.

Amaro trembled and continued listening.

“If Zulmira has come into the temple of our love,” continued Odila, wonderfully inspired, “it’s because our love owes her the blessing of the happiness that we ourselves possess.”

“Yes ... yes,” Amaro agreed as he reviewed the fragmentary memories that loomed in his mind.

“Let’s regard her as our daughter and as Evelina’s sister, whose steps we must lead to the good. The home is not only a domicile for bodies ... but a nest for souls, and within its sweet shelter, we grow wings that will carry us to the heights of glory eternal. We should accept trial and pain as blessed instructors on our pathway to God.”

“But you know how much I love you!”

“You know that you are my greatest treasure in life, but today I can see a broader horizon ... What’s the use of an oasis that may be lovely to look at but not known about? What’s the use of building a palace out in the middle of the desert, where we would use our happiness to humiliate the travelers who passed by, dying of hunger and thirst? How do you see the love that would be perverted in isolation with the intent of keeping happiness all to yourself? We need to change, Amaro! It’s never too late to start over for the sake of the good! ... We must work, making use of time and life!”

Perhaps touched in his innermost fibers, Evelina’s father wept convulsively, eliciting our pity.

Odila embraced him tenderly while Clara invited us for a walk through a large garden nearby.

We found ourselves in full view of the night sky ...

Amaro and Odila went to a fragrant corner to talk in private.

We could see that Clara wanted to leave them alone together for a more secure spiritual adjustment. And while they exchanged comforting confidences, we went a short distance away to admire the beauty of the night.

The firmament sparkled wonderfully.

Far-off constellations waved to us, indicating a glorious future ...

Gentle vibrations passed lightly over us, caressing our heads like intangible fingers of the wind.

Flowers of rare beauty poured from the calyx rays of daylight clarity like graceful, tiny reservoirs of solar splendor.

Sister Clara fascinated us with her awe-inspiring words. With enchanting simplicity, she told us about her trips to other realms of work and accomplishment, praising the Heavenly Father's love and wisdom in each narrative.

We remained enrapt for a long time, exchanging impressions about the exalted life that constantly revealed itself to be most surprising and beautiful in every realm of creation.

A new day was drawing near.

We went back to the couple in order to take Amaro back home. As they finished their conversation, both had looks of peace and radiance.

Sister Clara kept her ward in her arms and the two of them followed us in our journey back.

When we reached his home, Amaro said goodbye, smiling and calm.

We were just ready to leave when Clara advised us:

“Let's wait. Odila will begin her task anew today.”

The clock showed 6:00 a.m.

Like a student on the day of a test, Julio's transfigured mother looked at us with extreme expectation.

Amaro retook his physical body, opening his eyes in a great mood.

He couldn't recall the details of his trip, but he was sure that he had been with his first wife “somewhere” and that he had seen her to be reanimated and happy.

He stretched his arms with the delightful peacefulness of someone who has found the end of a long, afflictive nervous tension.

He got out of bed, noticing that the day was starting out joyfully and lovely, but didn't realize that the joy and loveliness had been born within himself.

He felt like laughing and singing ...

After finishing up in the bathroom, where he had hummed a familiar song that reminded him of his first marriage, he returned to the bedroom.

Odila embraced him lovingly and exclaimed:

“Let’s go, my dear! Let us extend our happiness! Zulmira is awaiting our love.”

## 25

# Reconciliation

Amaro didn't register his discarnate wife's plea as audible words but as a silent appeal to his mental life.

Thinking of Zulmira, he went into their small eating area with the uncontrollable desire to tell her about the strange contentment he was feeling.

Wouldn't it be only fitting to envelop his sick wife in the wave of joy that had come over him?

Odila trembled for an instant when she saw his sudden happiness at the prospects of restoring his tenderness to his second wife. I understood the effort that such an initiative demanded of her, and once more I realized that the death of the body did not exonerate the spirit of its duty to renew itself. Deep down she did not immediately feel a complete absence of jealousy; she did, however, accept the ideal of sublimation that had been planted in her sentiment, and she did not seem willing to waste this opportunity of readjustment.

Noticing the weakening of her energies, Clara said to her maternally:

"Be strong. All the good that you do for Zulmira will rebound in your favor. Don't lose heart. Help yourself. By being willing to seek the good, you will accomplish miracles. Sacrifice is the price we pay for true happiness."

A loving embrace by her benefactress infused her with renewed energies.

Her eyes shone once more.

Embracing her husband, she gently induced him to go to the bed on which the poor woman was lying.

The patient obviously hadn't received any shows of affection from her husband for a long time, so she was really surprised when she saw his caring, happy face.

“Zulmira!” he asked as he bent down to her gaunt, disconsolate face, “are you feeling better now?”

“Yes ... I am,” she sighed hesitantly.

“Listen! Today I woke up thinking about us and our happiness ... Don’t you think it’s time for us to do something about all this suffering we’ve been going through? I’m really concerned about you. You’ve been bedridden and depressed ever since Julio died.”

I noticed that Amaro’s chest area was emanating a broad band of radiant energy, like a stream of silver-green rays of light that enveloped Zulmira’s chest area, awakening irrepressible emotions.

The poor thing began to cry, giving us the impression that the fluids pouring over her were cleansing her soul.

“As you can see,” said Clarencio, “sincerity makes characteristic resources available. It emits energies that leave no margin for error. The pure sentiment with which Amaro is now speaking to his wife will be a decisive factor in her recovery.”

Assisted by Odila, the railroad worker wiped away the tears streaming abundantly from those macerated, sad eyes and continued:

“I need you to trust me! After all, we are husband and wife ... How can I be happy without your help? We didn’t get married just to cry.”

“Oh, Amaro!” exclaimed Zulmira in agony, still retaining the last mental residue of her tormenting guilt complex, “how can I ever thank you for the joy of this hour! ... But I can still see Julio’s face ... I feel hounded by remorse. I didn’t do all that I should have to save him!”

“Let’s forget the past. We all belong to God and I truly believe that the Divine Will lives with us everywhere. Of course we really miss Julio, but we can’t neglect the life that Heaven has granted us. We have to fight for victory.”

Linked to the mind of his first wife as she did all she could to help him, he continued with a tender inflection in his voice:

“Don’t forget that we belong to the moral commitments we have assumed ... My love for my son used to mean everything to me, but it cannot be more important than our love for each other! ... Please, get ahold of



yourself! Let's live our life together! ... We still have Evelina and our happiness!"

The sick woman sat up with a reanimated and different look in her eyes.

And while her husband got comfortable beside her, Odila, with a satisfied look, went to Evelina's room.

We instinctively followed her in order to help her out if she ran into any problems. But to our ineffable surprise, she put her hand on the girl's head, soliciting her presence.

In just a few instants, Evelina's spirit returned to the room where her body was lying.

When she saw her mother, she ran to her.

Both fell into a long, emotional embrace mixed with tears.

"Finally! At long last!" cried the girl.

"My daughter! My child!"

Odila looked at her with eyes inflamed with hope and pleaded:

"Evelina, help us! If we don't come together under the light of understanding and toil, our house will fall ... Your father and I cannot do without your help. The happy continuation of our task depends on Zulmira's health and peace ... God has not brought us all together for indifference or selfishness but for wholesome service to each other!"

"Oh, Mom," explained the girl, ecstatic, "I've been praying for you to help us."

"Yes, Evelina, I know that in your selflessness you have remembered to pray. Jesus has answered your prayers ... I was deaf, the victim of the destructive din of my own incomprehension. But I feel that my soul has reawakened ... I can see that we must do something to restore the esteem of your father and the joy of our home."

"I'll keep on praying."

"Good. Don't forget to pray, my dear, but remember that effective prayer without deeds is like a flower without fragrance. Let's pray for the Lord's help, but let's do something to contribute to his divine apostolate ... Let's begin to trust your new mother again. Behave better toward her ... Get close to her and work on preserving peace around the house so that she can feel

sure of your affection and filial understanding ... A rose on the table, a diligent sweeping of the floors, an article of clothing carefully put away, a brush in its proper place – these are all services to Jesus in the family sanctuary by which we can practice our faith ... Don't just stop with good intentions. Get to work to manifest harmony. Be the angel of service in our humble home! Zulmira needs both a sister and a daughter! ... Use the opportunity to do the best you can!"

With indefinable happiness illuminating her face, Evelina embraced her mother with extreme tenderness and kissed her over and over.

Then in obedience to Clara, she retook her physical body and woke up filled with a joy that was so great that she felt as if she had come down from the heavenly realms.

Odila's loving and beautiful image filled the entire mirror of her mind.

She stretched out her arms, as if she could still touch her mother with her fingers of flesh, retaining a full memory of the unforgettable meeting.

Intensely happy, she leapt out of bed and got dressed.

After she had washed up, Odila took her in her arms and led her to Zulmira.

Induced by her mother's influence, she passed through the kitchen and came to her stepmother, offering her a small tray with a light meal.

Amaro and Zulmira greeted her warmly.

"My God," said Zulmira, smiling, "it looks like an angel has come into our home. The day really is getting off to a good start!"

Evelina reached the bed, hugged the two in a single embrace and said joyously:

"I had a dream about Mom! I saw her so clearly, as if she was right here with us. She said that we need to love each other and that I should be the daughter that Zulmira never had! ... Ah! What happiness! ... Mom has heard my prayers!"

The railroader made note of this, but kept his own memories of the night to himself so as not to injure the susceptibilities of his wife. And although she recalled the repeated nightmares when she had felt tormented by Odila's jealousy, Zulmira suppressed her own memories to adhere wholeheartedly to the optimism of that blessed moment of peace and renewal.

Contemplating her stepmother with rapture, the girl exclaimed:

“I want to be better, more diligent and easier to get along with! ... Dad, you and I are going to be happier from now on.”

Zulmira breathed a sigh of relief and added:

“No doubt about it, Odila must be our guardian angel ... This morning is too joyful for our happiness to be a mere dream or coincidence!”

That statement of gratitude coming spontaneously from the woman whom she had regarded as her enemy touched Odila’s innermost fibers. Unable to bear the emotion, she began to weep amid acknowledgment and rejoicing.

Sister Clara embraced her and said humbly:

“Weep, my child! Weep with joy! Truly, when sublime love enters our heart, the light of the Lord begins to govern our steps through life.”

## 26

# Mother and Son

True joy had crowned the domestic trio.

Displaying the expectations of a student hoping to receive her mentor's approval, Odila looked teary-eyed at Sister Clara and asked:

“Have I acted correctly?”

We could see that she needed an encouraging word.

The venerable friend held her close to her heart.

“You've done everything marvelously,” she said tenderly. “You have grasped the holy duty of love. You will bless this wonderful day of selflessness forever.”

Odila held onto her like a child in her mother's arms, weeping copiously.

“Now don't be like that!” pleaded Clara as she stroked Odila's hair.

We too were touched. Amaro's first wife responded with difficulty:

“I'm not crying because I'm suffering ... I feel light and happy ... Why couldn't I have understood all this before?!”

“Yes,” explained Clara, “you have lost a spiritual weight, enabling you to take a step upward. Our lower passions hold us to the earth, just as bird-lime<sup>10</sup> keeps a bird from flying away.”

And caressing her, she exclaimed:

“Let's go! You have shown pure love and so you will never lack pure love. From now on you will be a blessed messenger here, for you will work with the guardian angels of our destinies, who selflessly watch over us as they await us in the Higher Life. By yielding your love for your husband to another woman, whose collaboration he needs to redeem himself, you have won a

new patrimony of love from him; and by bringing your daughter to the one whom we must regard as a sister, you have acquired the merit you needed to regain the son whose future you shall guide ... This very day Julio will be at your side.”

Transfigured, Odila’s face revealed the bliss that flowed from her inner world.

The sun was inundating the earth with its life-giving rays as we took Odila to the hospital with the promise to come back for her later to make the trip to Lar da Benção.

A few hours later, when a break in our work commitments afforded us the perfect opportunity, we went to get her.

Upheld in Clara’s arms, Julio’s mother was supremely happy.

This was the first time since she had died that she had taken such a wonderful journey. She burst into exclamations of wonder before the amazing plays of light.

As we neared the place where we were headed, she inhaled the wholesome air in deep breaths, dazzled by the vision of nature saturated with fragrances and adorned with flowers.

She was ecstatic as she contemplated the hundreds of children who were playing merrily. Very pale, her attention focused on the infantile multitude as she eagerly looked for her son. Mentally, she was far from our group, so she let herself be led as if she were an automaton.

We accompanied Clarencio to Blandina’s residence, where she greeted us with her usual kindness.

We went in.

There was no need for a lot of talk.

Attracted to a large crib, Odila rushed to the infirm boy, crying in alarm:

“My son! Julio! My son!”

There can be no doubt that Universal Wisdom has put unfathomable secrets in the maternal heart. There is something miraculous and divine about the bonds that join mothers and children, something that we have never been able to understand.

The sickly child was suddenly transformed.

An indescribable expression of joy covered his face.

“Momma! Momma!” he cried in answer.

He stretched out his arms and held on to her tight.

In tears, she instinctively took him from the crib and tenderly kissed him.

After she had settled down somewhat, she sat down beside us with the boy on her lap.

Julio had indeed changed completely. He told his mother about his sore throat and showed her his severely wounded glottis.

When we had all recovered from our excitement, Blandina began the conversation:

“We knew that Divine Goodness would not leave our little patient without a mother’s tenderness. Julio will have his mother’s irreplaceable devotion from now on.”

Odila was understandably concerned about the boy’s organic situation and didn’t respond, but Clara said lovingly:

“We hope to room Odila here in the Park for a while, and of course she will be pleased to take charge of the boy.”

“Yes, this School for Mothers has vast resources,” replied Blandina. “Odila can safely provide Julio with everything he needs.”

“It grieves me to find him in this kind of shape,” said the worried mother. I don’t know why he can have such a large sore when he doesn’t have a physical body ... I’m not capable of suddenly grasping everything I see, because I have been out of my mind for so long and incapable of thinking rationally.”

The Minister and Sister Clara looked at each other knowingly, giving me the idea that they were conversing by means of thought.

Acknowledging Odila’s dolorous references, Clara indicated Clarencio and said good-humoredly:

“Clarencio has something to say about that.”

“Yes,” began the Minister carefully, “as is natural, our sister will encounter various problems connected with her pathway of spiritual growth. We are all infinitely far from the heaven we used to imagine while on earth

and each of us has deficiencies that we will have to overcome. The past is reflected in the present.”

Then, he added:

“Our destiny is like a river. No matter how different it becomes as it flows farther and farther from its origin, it is always connected to it by the continuous action of its current.”

“I shall try to understand,” said Odila, more sure of herself. “I’m a mother and I cannot shirk my duty to help my son. I’ll provide everything he needs for his well-being. I can see that happiness can be won in the world to which we have been led for our renewal ... I’ll do all I can to see Julio fully recovered. New ideas are bathing my mind. I absolutely have to make an effort. All those whom we love will have to be with us sooner or later ... Different hopes are animating my spirit today; tomorrow, in the near future, all my family will be here again and I cannot neglect doing something to find a place for us.”

She cast a vague and apprehensive look around the room as if she were contemplating far-off horizons, and concluded:

“A home ... happiness restored ... the blessing of being together again.”

The edifying conversation continued to brighten the room for a long time, warming the flame of friendship and trust within our souls.

Blandina and Mariana promised to help out, insisting that Odila stay with them until she got settled in at the learning institution she would be attending.

The renewed woman accepted gratefully.

We said our happy goodbyes.

After we had left Clara and were on our way back to our spirit home, I thought it would be a good time to ask the instructor about the issues that were boiling around in my mind.

Why couldn’t we tell Odila about Julio’s past? Was it wise to leave her uninformed when we knew all about the enigmas of her family? Why couldn’t we openly explain the need for the boy to reincarnate?

As usual, Clarencio listened serenely and kindly.

When I finished my questions, he replied:

“At first sight that would seem like the appropriate road to take; however the memories of the past must not be wholly awakened or needless anxieties would afflict the present. Truth for the soul is like bread for the body, which cannot go beyond the amount it needs for each day. Being too hasty would cause a disaster. Besides, we cannot be so vain as to foresee the measures that will be agreeable and constructive to the love of our sister. When she feels fully integrated into her role as a mother, she herself will accept responsibility for working for the boy’s reincarnation. Pleading for such measure to take place in his old home, she will find the blessed service of fraternity, and at the same time, she will feel more responsible for the endeavor. If we made all the decisions for her, Odila would be unable to act on her own, whereas entrusting her with the decisions required by the case, she will acquire a renewed interest in helping Zulmira, since Zulmira is to replace her as mother by providing the boy with a new body.”

Marveling at this new lesson, my questions were answered.

Clarencio, however, with the natural smile that normally marked his face, added calmly:

“Life is a school and each student enrolled in it has to receive the proper lesson. We’ll wait a few days. Since she herself is interested in helping the boy, Odila will come to us to arrange for the happiness of his return to earth.

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<sup>10</sup> Bird-Lime is a viscid matter used for catching birds (chestofbooks.com/reference/The-Domestic-Encyclopaedia-Vol1/Bird-Lime). – Tr.



## Preparing for the Return

Four weeks flew quickly by, when Odila came looking for us in the Temple of Assistance for a private meeting.

Clarencio, Hilario and I were not really surprised to see her.

She was somewhat downcast and worried.

With respectful tact, she told us about something that had been troubling her.

Julio still had the same wound on his glottis. She was rooming with him in suitable accommodations at the School for Mothers, and she was giving the boy all the care he needed to rebuild his energies; nonetheless, his was still struggling ... Neither medicinal measures nor magnetic passes had been effective.

She would do anything to see him strong and happy again.

She was hoping for some miracle that could ease her anxiety, but she had gone with Blandina to visit other departments of assistance for suffering children and had seen many who had problems that were perhaps even worse than her beloved Julio's.

She had been terrified by what she saw.

She had never even imagined that there could be such infirmities after death.

She had asked several friends to intervene in the matter on her behalf and every one of them had told her that the moral debts consciously acquired while incarnate could only be paid off while incarnate; that was why reincarnation was Julio's only option.

The physical body would serve to dampen his soul's infirmity, healing it little by little.

What had the boy done in a past life to warrant such a punishment?

The poor woman wiped her tears.

Clarencio, who had a profound knowledge of human suffering, spoke to her like a priest:

"Odila, the past is not the proper remedy for the present. Let's concern ourselves with the situation as it stands right now. Julio is in dire need and providing him with relief is our immediate concern."

The resigned mother agreed with a nod.

"I too believe," he continued, unperturbed, "that his reincarnation is an urgent matter if we want to see him on the road to recovery."

"Sister Clara suggested that I ask for your assistance. Please, help me, selfless friend!"

"We are all brothers and sisters," added Clarencio benevolently, "and we must all lend one another our mutual support. Julio is not an ordinary person and that is why it wouldn't be right for him to be reborn haphazardly like an uncultivated plant that germinates for no purpose in the forest of the inferior life. So, let's take a look at the picture of your closest relationships."

After a brief pause he continued:

"Don't you have a large number of close friendships down on the earth? In matters of assistance, we mustn't lose sight of our sentiments. In order to enter both the kingdom of the spirit and the kingdom of the flesh under the best conditions possible, we cannot do without the cooperation of sincere friends who know and love us."

"Ah, yes, I understand!" exclaimed Odila, somewhat disappointed. "Problem is, I was always so concerned about our home and family that I never really formed such relationships. Amaro, on the other hand ..."

"Exactly!" interrupted the Minister, to complete her sentence. "I'm certain that Amaro will continue to be a wonderful companion for the boy; still, we cannot do without Zulmira's help. We need her to act as mother. That being the case, you absolutely have to be more devoted, friendlier toward her ... One effort requires another. Without the oil of cooperation, the machinery of life won't work."

Odila's eyes sparkled with hope.

"I'll do all I can to help her, thereby helping myself," she replied earnestly. "In this imperative of fraternity, I can see the sweet will of the Lord, leading me to work willingly with Zulmira. "I can truly see how sublime the Infinite Goodness of Heaven is," she said with a smile. "At first, I fought against Zulmira because she wanted to be loved by my husband; now, I must fight on her behalf for the sake of my son. We make a big mistake when we fight over the love of others, but we correct our mistake when we seek to love ..."

"Your conclusion is without a doubt an illuminating lesson," agreed the Minister good-humoredly; we can see the Eternal Wisdom in everything."

"Should I follow some specific plan?"

"I think that your loving visits to your old home to solidify its harmony are the basic measure for Julio to find a climate of trust. I believe that he needs special attention, considering his situation as a sickly spirit for whom reincarnation will offer just obstacles."

The conversation continued a while longer amid the Minister's paternal counsels and the visitor's sincere humility.

After Odila had gone, we bombarded the instructor with the questions vexing our minds.

As a law, does reincarnation require the concurrence of friendship to fulfill it? Do the disaffections of life have any influence on our future? Wasn't reincarnation an imposition of nature?

Clarencio listened attentively to our questions and answered:

"The law is always the law. We need only respect it and live according to it. Our attitude, however, can either favor or frustrate its course, which will either favor or harm ourselves. Rebirth in the flesh acts identically for everyone; however, as we grow in knowledge and love, we are able to take part in all the tasks of moral growth in our recapitulations. Like the plant, the soul can sprout in any tract of soil, but it wouldn't be good to sow choice seeds on uncultivated land. Just as what occurs in the lower kingdoms prior to human evolution, reincarnation per se obeys automatic embryonic principles based on magnetic affinity; however, regarding individuals who are a few steps ahead of the ordinary crowd, it is possible to implement measures that favor the execution of the task to be undertaken. In such cases, the sowing of

affection is a decisive factor for obtaining the resources we need ... Those who cultivate friendships only within the blood-related family find it hard to carry out certain missions outside the family. The broader our arena of work and love, the broader the collaboration of others on our behalf.”

“What about when we carelessly allow antipathy to sprout around us?” asked Hilario.

“All lasting antipathy is a waste of time and often entails lamentable debts. The thornbush of aversion requires lengthy endeavors of readjustment. In many cases, we spend many years in order to heal the wounds of disaffection, losing contact with wonderful companions on our spiritual journey to the Great Light.”

What Clarencio said made us give the matter serious thought and that is perhaps why we raised no more questions.

Later on, we found out that Evelina’s mother had begun to surround the railroad worker and his sick wife with love, which, after much effort, finally reestablished the latter’s organic health.

As she made preparations for her son’s return, Odila dedicated herself wholeheartedly to the job of restoring the couple’s conjugal harmony and their contentment with life.

Consequently, after a few weeks had passed we received an invitation from Sister Clara to visit Lar da Benção.

The next evening, Odila would take Amaro’s second wife to meet Julio as the last preliminary step of the reincarnational process.

At the appointed time, we were ready.

Blandina, Mariana, Clarencio, Hilario and I talked excitedly in a room set aside for us at the School for Mothers, where we surrounded the white crib in which Julio was moaning from time to time.

With Sister Clara’s help, Odila had gone down to her former home in order to bring Zulmira back to us.

After some time of expectancy, the three arrived, surrounded by a luminous wave of peace.

Supported by her two guardians, the once-obsessed Zulmira seemed happy, in spite of the look of fear and insecurity in her eyes.

She responded to our greetings with the wonder that most incarnates show when they visit the higher realms of the spirit world before they die. Soon thereafter, still supported by her two companions, she approached Julio. On recognizing him, she asked in amazement:

“My God, is this really Julio?”

“Yes, it really is!” confirmed Odila. “We beg you to help him! He needs to reincarnate, Zulmira! Will you help him by becoming his mother?”

Zulmira broke into tears of joy.

She bent over the boy, caressing him with untranslatable tenderness and said in a voice nearly suffocated with emotion:

“I’m ready! I owe Julio the care I denied him before ... I praise God for this gift! I feel that I will never again be assailed by regret for not having done for him what I should have! ... He shall be my son, yes! ... I shall hold him ever so close! Please, help me, O Lord!”

She hugged the child and from then on she seemed incapable of any connection with us.

Perhaps suddenly reconnected to the troubling memories of the mental fixation she had gone through, she seemed deaf and blind under the influence of unexpected introversion.

At Clara’s urging, the Minister approached Zulmira and assisted her, recommending:

“It would be best to take our sister back home now. The continued shock of being here could cause serious harm. Tomorrow we will take the boy to the domestic sanctuary from whence he came, finally entrusting him to the task of starting out once again.”

The suggestion was obeyed.

And as Zulmira returned to her family temple, we began waiting eagerly for the following day.

## 28

# The Return

Preoccupied with Julio's case, the next day we asked Clarencio about the plans for the boy's reincarnation. He informed us concisely:

"The problem is very serious, yet quite simple. It will entail only a brief but necessary trial. Julio will have the troubling desire to remain on the earth for a long term with the loan of a physical body; however, since he has committed suicide twice, he will have to experience an early death twice in order to more securely value the blessing of earthly life. After spending several years in the lower regions of our plane, during which he futilely yielded to rebelliousness and idleness, he paid for having drowned himself. This time he will have to deal with the results of having poisoned himself. This is all very regrettable, but ..."

With a significant facial expression, he finished:

"Who can learn without the help that suffering provides?"

"But I wonder about his parents' suffering," considered Hilario hesitantly.

"My friends, justice is inalienable. We cannot avoid it. Due to Amaro's and Zulmira's emotional imbalance in the past, Julio slid down the dark slope of moral debt; now, he will have to recover with their assistance. Yesterday, by neglecting him, the couple induced him to fail; today, by loving him, they will ensure his success."

The conversation faltered, perhaps because the subject matter compelled us to think long and hard about it.

Reflecting on the absolute harmony of the Law, Hilario and I had no more questions. We waited for nightfall, when we would form a group of friends that would restore the ailing child to his former home.

It was almost dawn when we arrived at the railroader's residence. It was enveloped in darkness.

Odila carried the restless, moaning child in her arms, while the Minister, Sister Clara, Blandina, Mariana, Hilario and I silently surrounded them.

We entered the humble room.

As if he had been given an invisible sedative, the boy quieted down.

Clarencio explained:

“The child is experiencing great relief due to his contact with the fluids of his home. The rebalancing of his soul in such familiar surroundings will be a solid foundation for the success of his reincarnation.”

He did not continue, however.

Sister Clara motioned to him with a wave and he went into the couple's bedroom alone, undoubtedly to check on whether the time was right to entrust Julio to his future mother.

A few minutes later, he invited us to enter.

We witnessed the unfolding of a moving scene.

Zulmira, in her spirit body, extended her kindly hands to us. She was beautiful, radiant with joy ... As she received Julio and held him tight, she looked like a sublimated Madonna haloed by victorious motherhood.

Odila was weeping.

Clarencio lifted his eyes On High and prayed in a moving voice:

“Bless us, O Lord! ... Souls entwined in the hope of your infinite love and in the joy that comes from obedience to your will, we are here, accompanying a friend who has returned for recapitulation! Give him strength to submit in resignation to the cross that will be his salvation! ... O Father, uphold us as we travel the great redemptive road, on which problems and pain must act as our guides; strengthen our courage and serenity, and moderate our hearts so that we may serve you in any circumstance! ... Most of all, O Lord, we ask you to help our sister who has invested sacred feminine aspirations in the maternal apostolate! Sanctify her longings and strengthen her energies so that she may honor herself with you in the divine endeavor of creation!”

Saturated with paternal love – that love that reaches our spirit down to the secret fount of tears – the Minister's prayer left us enrapt.

Zulmira, however, touched us even more deeply. Attracted by the magnetic power of the prayer, she approached Clarencio with the boy and knelt down.

Such humble naiveté reminded me of the gospel narrative about the widow of Naim with her dead son at Christ's feet<sup>11</sup>, and I could not hold back the tears that flowed from my heart.

Equally touched by that spontaneous gesture of trust and faith, the Minister, transfigured, caressed her head.

Something sublime must have happened within the soul of that selfless missionary, of whom I had become so fond.

A starry outpouring descended from the Higher Realms, inflaming his brow, and beams of sapphire-blue light shot out from the hand with which he caressed the kneeling sister ...

We were enveloped by a few marvelous moments of expectation.

Then, Clarencio helped Zulmira up and led her to the bed with the child.

From then on, Zulmira seemed fully concentrated on the boy, who entwined himself with her like a mollusk accommodating itself to its shell.

Julio was finally able to sleep in peace.

Held on the maternal lap, he seemed to immerse himself into it.

On other occasions, I had witnessed the preparatory steps of reincarnation, which required the active concourse of technicians specializing in the process, along with benefactors from the higher life; but this time, the phenomenon was very simple. As it juxtaposed itself on the delicate tissues of the mother's perispirit, the boy's own subtle body gradually shrank before our eyes.

Sister Clara and her companions kissed the future mother, who was trying to retake her dense body with the comforted and waning child. We left, overcome with the pure joy born from a duty well-fulfilled.

Odila assumed responsibility for helping Zulmira, and Clarencio promised to keep a close eye on the natural processes of the incipient pregnancy.

When we were alone once again, the questions arose imperiously.

The Minister, with his usual admirable patience, began to explain:



“Julio’s reincarnation won’t require any special attention from our sphere. It is an experimental descent into the arena of dense matter and is of interest only to himself and his family members. However, if his life were meant to influence society as a whole, and if he were the holder of indisputable merit with responsibilities toward others, the matter would be quite different. Forces of a higher order would be fatalistically mobilized to interfere with his chromosomes to ensure that the embryo would be suitable for its mission.”

“What if the reincarnating spirit were a man of broad intellectual powers?” asked Hilario.

“We would have to pay special attention to the brain structure so that he would be ensured of having an instrument capable of enabling him to fulfill his duties involving the materialization of thought.”

“What if he were to be a doctor? A great surgeon, for example?” I asked in turn.

“He would receive special assistance in the development of his nervous system to ensure that he had complete control over his emotions.”

Since we had no more specific questions, Clarencio continued:

“However, embryonic principles function automatically in thousands of rebirths every day. The law of cause and effect does its work without any need for management on our part. In reincarnation, all that is needed is the parents’ magnetism, combined with the strong desire of the one who is returning to the arena of physical forms. When we return to the physical body, we are invariably animated by a firm purpose ... whether it be the desire to relieve the pain that torments us, the longing for spiritual victories that facilitate our entry to the Higher Life, the vow to recapitulate unfulfilled responsibilities, or the ideal to accomplish great endeavors of love amongst those with whom we have an affinity. Generally speaking, most souls that reincarnate satisfy the restless desire to start out again. Those who haven’t taken seriously enough the endeavor that life has entrusted to them quickly yield to the imperative to repeat the experience, and their reentry into the physical struggle appears as a redemptive blessing. Millions of destinies are restructured like that, like a huge forest being replanted. A seed grows, stimulated by the magnetism of the soil; a corporeal existence germinates anew, stimulated by the magnetism of the flesh.”

The Minister paused briefly, so Hilario asked respectfully:

“So, the maternal womb ...”

Our mentor finished his thought:

“Is an animic vessel of strong magnetic power or a living mold meant for the casting and recasting of forms under the creative breath of Divine Goodness, which, in every part, offers us resources for our evolution toward Wisdom and Love. This vessel attracts the soul that is eager for rebirth and that is attuned to it, reproducing its dense body in time and space, just as the soil engulfs the seed to enable it to germinate in keeping with the principles that enclose it. Motherhood is a sacred spiritual service, in which the soul spends centuries perfecting the qualities of the sentiments.”

The lesson was indeed invaluable, but we had to stop because time was calling us to other duties.

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<sup>11</sup> See Luke 11:7-16. – Tr.

## 29

# Regarding Reincarnation

The following evening, at our request Clarencio took us to Amaro's home for observations.

We respectfully entered the room, where Odila happily and kindly welcomed us.

Everything seemed to be going as planned.

Julio was sleeping.

He had not awakened again, his guardian stated happily. I had the impression that the reincarnating spirit was disappearing little by little into Zulmira's organic constitution, as if the future mother were a miraculous filter that was absorbing him.

The discarnate mother seemed satisfied and hopeful. She liked seeing the boy enveloped in deep sleep. His afflictions and groans had torn at her heart.

That is why rebirth was a blessing for her stress-filled maternal responsibilities.

We noticed that Julio's subtle body had undergone an enormous, startling change: it had shrunk considerably.

It seemed to me that both he and Zulmira, soul with soul, were immersing into each other. The young woman had acquired physical fullness and spiritual vivacity, whereas the boy was losing his outward appearance. Julio had peacefully gone to sleep, whereas Zulmira displayed a remarkable awakening to life. She too had changed appreciably. Like persons happy for having received new responsibilities where they work, she seemed happier about and more aware of her own obligations.

The fluidic transfusion was obvious.

The maternal organism was like an alembic used for refining the reincarnating spirit's energies in order to restore them to him as his new envelope developed.

Noticing our wonder, Clarencio explained with his usual kindness:

“Reincarnation, like discarnation, is one of the most telling biological shocks. United to the generative matrix of the maternal sanctuary as it seeks out its new form, the perispirit is subject to the influence of strong electromagnetic currents, which impose automatic reduction on it. Constituted of chemical principles similar to hydrogen in its properties, expressed through molecules that are significantly far apart, when the perispirit is connected to the female genesic center, it undergoes a remarkable contraction, like a covering of flesh subjected to a strong electrical charge; hence the volumetric reduction of the subtle vehicle because of the diminution of the space between molecules. Any matter that is not useful for the fundamental work of recasting the form is returned to the ethereal sphere, providing our perispirit with that aspect of wear and tear or greater fluidity.”

“So that means ...” ventured Hilario in his constructive curiosity.

“It means that the organogenic<sup>12</sup> principles essential to Julio's perispirit have already been reduced within the maternal altar, and like a magnet, they are agglutinating upon themselves the resources for shaping the new garment of flesh that will be the next vessel of manifestation.”

“And the form that is being rarified right there in front of us?” asked Hilario surprised:

“It is undergoing dissolution.”

And with the wonderful serenity that characterized his spirit, Clarencio continued his explanation:

“The physical body also seems to sleep during discarnation, when, in reality, it has begun to give back to nature the chemical units that compose it. The difference between the two processes is that the discarnating soul, even when in deplorable conditions of suffering and inferiority, is advancing to relative liberation, whereas the reincarnating soul is undergoing the process of returning to the webs of dense matter, in spite of being guided by noble objectives of evolution. It is for that reason that, led to organic reconstitution, we relive our entire biological past during the early stages of the fetal organization, albeit quickly. During the reconstruction of the form that will be

used while incarnate, each person automatically relives his or her entire past, stopping at the highest configuration that he or she has acquired for his or her endeavor, according to his or her degree of evolution.”

The simple manner in which Clarencio explained such complex issues induced us to sublimated thoughts concerning the magnitude of the Universal Laws.

Right there, facing an ordinary case of reincarnation assisted only by our prayers in the worship of fraternity, we received elucidations about the overall plan of existence.

Perhaps inspired by the same bandwidth of thoughts that preoccupied my own mind, Hilario asked:

“Do all these principles also apply to circumstances involving animals?”

“Of course; why wouldn’t they?” replied our instructor patiently. “We are all on the grand march of growth toward immortality. Along the infinite lines of instinct, intelligence, reason and sublimation, we are all connected to the law of rebirth as an inalienable condition of progress. We tackle multiple experiences and we recapitulate them as many times as needed on our grand journey to God. Pupae of intelligence in the obscurest sectors of nature evolve toward the realm of fragmentary intelligences inhabited by animals of a higher order, which, in turn, evolve toward the realm of human consciousness, just as human beings, little by little, evolve toward the glorious spheres of the angels.”

The instructor returned his attention to the bed on which mother and son were lying intimately associated, and stated:

“Let’s concern ourselves with the job at hand. Let’s study the case so that our obligation of solidarity may be well-fulfilled.”

This comment reoriented us.

Hilario, who, like myself, was interested in taking advantage of the lesson unfolding before us, asked for an explanation that would be as simple as possible regarding Zulmira’s and Julio’s physiochemical communion at that moment. Clarencio responded after reflecting a few moments:

“Let’s take, for instance, a ripe peach that has been covered with earth in order to be reborn. As it decomposes, it restores to nature’s reservoirs all the elements of its pulp and the other layers that clothe its vital principles. Within

the soil, it is reduced to the small seed that will be transformed, in space and time, into a new peach tree.”

The lesson could not have been more logical, more precise.

“So, that’s why,” added Hilario, studiously, “discarnate children need a longer or shorter period of time to demonstrate mental growth, just as happens during normal existence.”

“That’s the case with most of them, although there are exceptions to the rule. In many circumstances, there is no such imposition. When the mind has developed certain qualities, perfecting itself on higher rungs of spiritual sublimation, it can throw from itself the elements required for the composition of the vehicles of exteriorization it needs on planes that may be beneath it. In such cases, the spirit is in full control of the laws of agglutination of matter in the field of struggle familiar to us, and for that reason it controls the phenomenon of its own reincarnation without subordinating itself to it.”

We gazed at Zulmira’s peaceful face as she breathed, serene and happy.

“Julio’s case, on the other hand,” I considered, “seems really dolorous.”

“Dolorous but instructive, like the case of thousands of people every day,” responded Clarencio. “Due to debts acquired in the flesh, our defeated and infirm friend will find the means for his readjustment while in the flesh.”

“What about heredity?” asked my companion respectfully. “By losing the subtle body in which he used to weep in torment, will Julio, since he has fatalistically inherited the biological characteristics of his parents, resurface in physical life without the disease that used to persecute him?”

Clarencio smiled expressively and stated:

“Heredity, as understood scientifically, has its limits. Of course, parents and children, even when far apart morally speaking, always maintain a mutual magnetic affinity. Thus, the parents furnish certain resources to the reincarnating spirit, but such resources depend on the needs of the soul that uses them, because, when it boils down to it, we are actually heirs of ourselves. We assimilate our earthly parents’ energies according to our own good or bad qualities for the ennobling or torturous destiny we deserve due to our acquisitions or debts, which, emerging from our previous experiences, return to earth with us.”

“So, that means Julio will bring with him the infirmity he suffered while on our plane, just like someone who moves into a new home but brings with him his physical condition,” remarked Hilario.

“Exactly. His problem is spiritual in nature. During Zulmira’s pregnancy, Julio’s mind will remain associated to hers to influence the formation of the fetus. The entire cellular cosmos of the new organism will be impregnated by the infirm thought forces of our reincarnating brother. That being the case, Julio will be reborn with the deficiencies that he still bears, although blessed by the genetic matter that he will receive from his parents within the bounds of the law of inheritance for the constitution of the new envelope.”

After a brief pause, Clarencio concluded:

“As we can see, the mind is in command. The conscience traces out one’s destiny; the body reflects the soul. All aggregation of matter is subject to the impulses of the mind. Our thoughts fabricate the forms that we utilize in life.”

Our instructor stopped talking.

Odila began to tell us about her hopes for the future.

We conversed again animatedly.

And after a prayer by the Minister, our delightful meeting ended.

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<sup>12</sup> Pertaining to organogenesis, i.e. the formation and development of the organs of living things. (<http://www.answers.com>) – Tr.

## 30

# The Struggle to be Reborn

One month had gone quickly by concerning the events we have been narrating, when Odila came looking for us, pleading for help.

She was downcast, troubled.

For some unknown reason, Zulmira had come down with a bad case of tonsillitis.

She was suffering dreadfully.

Odila said that she had been watching over her for six days now.

She had done everything within her power to free her from the illness, but all to no avail.

In desperation, she had induced Amaro to summon a doctor, which he did, but the doctor could not figure out what was causing the illness. Since he did not know the true situation of his client, he could endanger her pregnancy with the wrong kind of treatment.

Thus, she was begging us for immediate help.

Clarencio did not hesitate.

It was nighttime when we headed for Amaro's home.

Zulmira was in bed, dreadfully ill. Her hair was in disarray; she had bags under her eyes and her face was flush with fever. She seemed to be waiting for someone who could help her get through the crisis.

The suppuration of her tonsils was polluting her breath and causing her unbearable pain.

The poor woman could only groan, half-suffocated and exhausted ...



Husband and daughter were doing all they could to encourage her, but Zulmira, whom we had left hale and hearty thirty days ago, was now profoundly despondent.

Various medications were all lined up on a nearby shelf.

Our instructor examined her carefully, and perceiving our curiosity, said:

“Zulmira needs our diligent help. We absolutely have to ensure the success of her mission.”

He carefully applied magnetic resources, especially to the areas of the brain and the glottis.

The patient improved almost immediately.

The circulatory activity had been restored.

The fever abated, enabling her to rest. She finally got to sleep, which would greatly help her recovery.

Hilario asked about the cause of the insidious illness that had manifested so violently, to which Clarenco responded:

“It’s a subtle matter. Besides offering organic service to the reincarnating spirit, the pregnant woman also has to endure its spiritual contact, which almost always is a sacrifice when it involves someone with dark debts of conscience. During gestation, the female organization experiences a veritable mental grafting. The thoughts of the being housed within the inner sanctuary envelop her completely, causing significant alterations in her biological cosmos. If the child is lord of broad evolution and owner of praiseworthy moral qualities, it lends its aid to the maternal field, flooding it with sublimated emotions and rendering the usually painful pregnancy a period of unspeakable hope and joy. But in Julio’s case, there are two souls who are on the same evolutionary level, paying off the same debts. They mutually influence each other.”

The Minister paused at length and returned to applying passes to help the patient.

Odila watched him closely.

Of all of us, she seemed the most preoccupied with the lesson. She seemed interested in everything in order to make herself more useful.

After a few moments, Clarenco continued:

“If Zulmira acts decisively in the formation of the boy’s new vehicle, he in turn acts vigorously on her, causing disturbing phenomena in her female constitution. The mutual exchange of impressions is unavoidable, and Julio’s throat problems have been impressed on the maternal mind, which reproduces them in the body. The current of exchange between mother and son is not limited to physical nourishment; it involves the constant interchange of diverse sensations. Zulmira’s thoughts have a tremendous effect on Julio, just as Julio’s have a tremendous effect on her. Their minds are juxtaposed, so to speak, keeping them in constant communion until nature completes its work. From associations such as this proceed the so-called ‘signs of birth.’ Certain inner states of the woman affect the fetal principle in some way, marking it for its entire life. This is because the job of motherhood is like a delicate shaping process, requiring much care and harmony so that the job may be completed.”

Then, with paternal devotion, the Minister performed various magnetic operations on the pelvic cavity, affirming the necessity to help the uterus due to the complex and difficult development of the reincarnating Julio.

My colleague, perhaps wanting to make that time of fraternity a time of study as far as possible, recalled a few of his own experiences as a doctor:

“During pregnancy, it’s quite common for the woman to experience an exaggerated sensitivity. The transformation of the nervous system under such circumstances is inarguable. Often, she displays a decrease in mental vivacity, and she often says things that are really eccentric. There are women who acquire sudden antipathies, whereas others indulge in fantasies that are as unexpected as they are unjustifiable. On many occasions, I used to ask myself if in most cases pregnancy didn’t entail temporary insanity.”

Clarencio smiled and replied:

“Your explanation is right on the money. A pregnant woman is an individual undergoing a lengthy hypnosis. Her psychic field has been invaded by the incarnating spirit’s impressions and vibrations. If the future child is not sufficiently balanced before the Law – and this is nearly always the case – the maternal mind is susceptible to registering the strangest imbalances, because, like a medium, she will be transmitting opinions and sensations of the incarnating spirit.”

“It used to trouble me to see the inadvertent aversion of many pregnant women toward their own husbands,” remarked Hilario.

“Yes. That occurs whenever an enemy from the past returns to the flesh in order to pay off debts it owes to the one who will serve as its father.”

“But there are cases,” I said, “where, on the world stage, we see daughters who obviously used to be quite hostile toward their mothers in the remote or recent past, such is the animosity that characterizes their relationship. In these instances, we see that such daughters are much closer to their fathers, living psychically in harmonious association with them but distanced spiritually from their mothers, who futilely do everything they can to break down the barriers that separate them. Are there obstacles to reincarnation in such cases?”

Clarencio gave me a significant look and responded:

“No, there aren’t. By being devoted to her husband, the wife easily yields to the needs of the soul returning to the domestic stronghold for regenerative purposes. If this involves someone who has a strong affinity for the head of the home, the husband will be gently encouraged to show more love toward his wife, since he feels enveloped by dual forces of attraction. Under this double charge of affinity, he will give much more of himself in attention and care, making his wife’s job as mother much easier.”

This clear and logical explanation satisfied us completely.

We conversed for a few more minutes, in which our instructor gave various instructions to Odila that she could use in case of emergency.

Edified, we returned to our circle of usual work; but only a few days later, Odila came to us asking for another intervention.

Zulmira was going through an appalling organic crisis.

Uncontrollable vomiting was assailing her ruthlessly.

She couldn’t keep down even the lightest meal.

Her digestive system displayed profound alterations.

The doctor couldn’t do anything because her stomach was rejecting all his resources.

We rushed to offer our assistance.

The pregnant woman was, in fact, in a threatening situation.

The ongoing nausea was causing the gradual incursion of anemia.

Clarencio, however, applied extensive magnetic passes, promising that the measure would lead to the necessary improvement.

Various duties were demanding our presence elsewhere.

Even so, after we had said goodbye, Hilario asked the reason for such a phenomenon, which, during all his medical experience on earth, had never been explained.

“We know that the medical science of the future will help women defend themselves against that sort of organic annoyance,” asserted the Minister. “It will find physiological causes for such conflicts, but the root of the imbalance is essentially spiritual. The maternal organism, absorbing emanations from the reincarnating spirit, acts as an exhaust mechanism for disintegrating fluids, fluids that are not always pleasant or easily borne by the woman’s sensitivity; hence the reason for such hard-to-treat cases of nausea.”

This information provided us with invaluable material to think about.

The weeks passed.

We insisted on visiting Amaro’s home from time to time, whether asked to or not, until one morning, Odila came to us acting like a jubilant child, announcing that the boy had returned to the terrestrial light.

The small family had decided to give him, once more, the name Julio.

We joined in her profound joy, and with the solidarity of true friends, we went to welcome him.

# 31

## A New Struggle

Little Julio was growing like a flower of hope in the garden of the home, but he was skinny and sickly.

His parents did all they could to assist him appropriately, but no matter what treatment they tried, the dolorous stigma in his throat persisted.

The large sore on the glottis made it hard for him to eat.

He was given wholesome meals along with mother's milk in order to strengthen him, but to no effect.

Nevertheless, in spite of the amount of care he required, he was a true blessing of happiness for his parents and sister. All three sensed in his tender little face a living point of spiritual interlacing.

We often held him to our hearts as we recalled all the work we had done for him before his return to the world, and we noted the optimistic tenderness with which Odila, now the family's benevolent familiar spirit<sup>13</sup>, was watching over him as he grew.

The little one had already begun to speak in monosyllables on the eve of his first year, when another struggle surfaced.

Winter had arrived with a vengeance and a menacing outbreak of the flu was going around.

Coughing and the flu were showing up everywhere, when on a day when we had a lot of work to do, Odila came looking for us once again.

The first time, she had asked us to help Zulmira; this time it was for Julio.

Assailed by a fearsome case of tonsillitis, he lay in bed exhausted and feverish.

We immediately left for the railroader's home.

A moist wind was blowing over the oceanic waters of Rio de Janeiro. Heavily clothed pedestrians in the streets made the city look like a cold place.

We arrived quickly at Amaro's home.

The scene was alarming.

We went into the room where the child was groaning, half-asphyxiated, just when the family physician was conducting a detailed examination.

Clarencio watched everything the doctor was doing.

The boy's throat displayed a large patch of whitish plaque and his breathing was labored and wheezy.

The instructor shook his head, as if he were confronted by an insolvable mystery, and then placed his right hand on the doctor's brow to compel him to think with greater attention.

Unable to detect our presence, Zulmira and Evelina looked worriedly at the doctor.

After a long silence, he told Zulmira:

"I think we'll have to get the help of one of my colleagues right away. While you make a phone call to your husband, asking him to come home from work, I'll go get the pediatrician."

The afflicted mother had a hard time holding back her tears.

Lost in thought, the doctor went out on the street, and as Evelina ran to the phone to tell her father what was going on, Zulmira, thinking she was alone in the room, embraced the patient, and weeping freely, prayed:

"Dear God, with much love I received the child you sent me! ... Please, don't take him from me now!"

Her tears pierced my soul.

Due to my emotional state of mind, I could not ask any questions, but Clarencio, unperturbed as always, stated compassionately:

"It's an obvious case of diphtheria. The congenital deficiency of the glottis has enabled the bacilli to take hold. Immediate help is critical."

The instructor had begun mobilizing powerful resources, when the downcast Amaro came into the room.

Amaro was trying to encourage Zulmira, when the doctor and pediatrician entered the humble residence.

Both doctors subjected the boy to a lengthy examination, exchanging impressions in a hushed voice.

Apprehensive, after suspecting it was a case of the croup, the specialist stated that a laboratory analysis was needed and decided to take a sample.

As he left, he promised the results within a few hours. He informed the anguished father that he suspected it was the croup. However, he reserved the final diagnosis for later. If his hypothesis were confirmed, he would send a trustworthy nurse to administer the proper serum.

Keeping close watch on the patient, the Minister told Hilario and me to go with the pediatrician to offer him all the help we could.

We followed him without hesitating.

The drizzle-soaked twilight fell rapidly.

In just a few minutes, we went through the front door of a large hospital, where our friend was to conduct the tests.

When we entered the cramped room, we were met with a truly stupefying surprise.

Mario Silva, in his white lab coat, was talking to Antonina, who was holding a pale, wheezing Lisbela on her lap.

The young woman, whom we had not seen again, had brought the girl to the specialist for a consultation.

Assisted by Silva, who had obviously been attracted to the visitor through affinity, mother and daughter had access to the private office, where the doctor diagnosed a case of pneumonia.

Antonina was advised to go home immediately so the girl could be treated.

Penicillin had to be administered right away.

Displaying immense tenderness for the child, Mario stood ready to help her.

He would call a taxi and would attend to the case personally.

His boss looked at the clock and acquiesced, stating:

“OK, you can go, but I need your help in a distant neighborhood at 10:00 p.m.”

The young man promised to return on time and a taxi took the trio to the house we had visited before.

In light of this unexpected development, we felt that we needed to consult Clarencio.

When we arrived back at the room, where little Julio continued to worsen, we told Clarencio what had happened.

He listened with interest and stated, concerned:

“There’s no time to lose. Let’s head for Antonina’s house. The law is bringing our friends back together again and Mario needs to be strengthened to practice forgiveness. The waves of hatred he is emitting can hasten the inevitable work of death in this case.”

We headed there right away.

After having begun treating the bedridden girl, Silva eyed Antonina, wondering where he had seen that tormented, Madonna-like profile before ... He had the distinct feeling that he knew her from somewhere ...

Pleasantly surprised, he felt like he was in his own house.

The affinity was not only obvious in his own heart, because Antonina and the children surrounded him with attention.

Inwardly fascinated, the healthcare worker said out loud that he was feeling a peace that he had not known for a long time. Antonina was overjoyed and smiling.

When he found out that Haroldo and Henrique loved sports, he struck up an animated conversation about soccer and won their friendship.

As she made coffee, Antonina joined in the conversation from time to time in order to bring the kids in line when their speech started to become unconstructive.

Only from this friendly conversation did we find out that Antonina had been widowed. Her husband, according to news received from a distant city, had died in an accident, the victim of his own carelessness.

Silva had looked pleased when he heard this.



He began to show an uncontrollable interest in the life of that welcoming home, which actually seemed to be his.

At 8:00 p.m. sharp, Antonina unaffectedly asked him:

“Mr. Silva, this evening we are going to have our home gospel study. Would you care to join us?”

Incomprehensively happy, Mario agreed.

That evening’s meeting was held beside Lisbela’s bed. She did not want to miss out on the benefit of the prayers.

A glass of pure water was placed on the nightstand.

With New Testament in hand and her companions all ready, Antonina asked Henrique to open with prayer.

The boy recited the Lord’s Prayer, and then asked Jesus to heal his sick little sister.

Clarencio approached the glass of crystalline water and magnetized it for the patient, who seemed remarkably comforted by the prayer she had heard. Then, he approached Silva, who received radiations from him.

“Who’s going to open the Book this time?” asked Haroldo with a gleam in his eye as he looked at the unsuspecting guest.

“Of course, our friend will do the honors,” replied his mother, indicating the healthcare worker.

Not knowing how to express the happiness in his heart, Mario took the little book. Clarencio touched his chest area and hands to influence him to open it to the right passage.

Trembling somewhat at taking part in a spiritual exercise that was completely new to him, and completely unaware of the assistance he was receiving, Mario opened to a particular passage as if at random, and then handed the book to Antonina, who read in a hesitant voice Matthew 5:25: “Make peace with your adversary while you are on the road with him, so that he does not hand you over to the judge and the judge hand you over to the official to have you put in prison.”

Antonina, who seemed more reserved that evening, asked the kids what they thought the passage meant. They eagerly told about some of their experiences at school, affirming that they always felt peace whenever they

forgave other kids for hurting them. Haroldo said that his teacher always smiled in satisfaction whenever he saw Haroldo's good will, and Henrique said that he had learned from the home gospel study that it was more pleasant to make an effort to live in harmony with everybody.

The conversation seemed in danger of losing steam, but our instructor placed his hand on Antonina's forehead to inspire her to say something appropriate.

"Haroldo," she asked with shiny eyes, "who would you say an enemy would be?"

"Well, Mom, you have taught us that having an enemy on our pathway is like having a bad sore on our body."

"That's exactly right," responded the widow with enchanting spontaneity; "without the fraternal understanding that makes sure that we are always kind to others, and without the forgiveness that forgets all the bad things that are done to us, life would be really hard to take. Also, when Jesus gave us today's lesson, he must have thought that right is not always on our side. We may get offended at times, but truth is, we offend others in turn. We need to forgive others so that others will forgive us. When we embrace the ideal of the good, we have to do all we possibly can to make things right with everyone who we have problems with, by being of service to them so that they view us in a different way again. Peaceable accord is worth more to us than the most valuable demand, because life doesn't end in this world and it is possible that if we seek justice for ourselves, we may be hardening the blindness of selfishness in our heart, and thus may end up dying with afflictive problems. The heart that holds on to rancor is a sickly heart, indeed. Feeding hatred or spite means bringing unnamable moral suffering on ourselves."

Silva was pale.

Those remarks smote him to the core of his being.

He looked so troubled that Antonina, noticing it, said with a smile:

"You surely don't have any enemies ... An industrious healthcare giver is obviously a brother to all."

"Yes ... yes ... No, I don't have any enemies," stammered Silva.

But on his mental screen, on which he was unable to control the eclosion of his memories, Amaro and Zulmira appeared as enemies that, in the depths of his soul, he couldn't forgive.

"I hate them both; yes, I hate them," he thought to himself. "I could never make peace with such enemies." Still, Antonina's sincerity enchanted him. That young widow and her three kids, seemingly overcoming all the obstacles put in their way, were a real example of how the spirit could be strengthened through sacrifice. He had never seen such ardent, pure faith before, the kind of faith needed for great moral constructions. Above all else, cords of strong affinity were drawing him to this woman, with whom he had felt attuned the moment he laid eyes on her. But no matter how much he combed his memories, he couldn't remember where, how or when he had known her. Nevertheless, he did feel an indefinable sense of well-being because of what she had said.

Gazing tenderly at her, he asked:

"Do you think that we should try to make things right with every sort of enemy?"

"Yes, I do."

"What if our enemies are such that merely being around them causes anguish?"

Antonina grasped the fact that some dolorous secret had come to the surface of his conscience as a result of the lesson, so she asked:

"I believe there are moral sufferings that are almost unbearable but that prayer is the most effective remedy for our inner troubles. If we are so unfortunate as to have enemies whose presence is troubling to us, we must resort to prayer and ask God to give us strength so that the imbalance will disappear; then, a road to readjustment will appear to our soul. We all need someone else's tolerance at some point in our life."

Mario's eyes sparkled.

"What if hatred overwhelms us even when we don't want it to?" he asked, worried.

"No hatred can withstand benevolence and good will. Whoever would try to get to know himself will find forgiveness to be very easy."

Silva had gone pale again.

Antonina guessed that the subject was speaking to his heart, and helped by our instructor, who was influencing her, she considered:

“A person with your duties is a missionary of fraternal love. Those who help the sick penetrate human nature and begin to acquire great compassion. Hands that heal cannot wound.”

Haroldo said the closing prayer.

Antonina served coffee and a simple cake.

The conversation was lively, but the guest looked at the clock and saw that it was time to go.

He gave instructions to Antonina concerning the sick child’s medication, and respectfully asked if he could come back the next day, not only to check on Lisbela, but also to talk with friends.

Antonina and the kids happily consented and told him he was always welcome. Mario had a new sentiment shining in his eyes and left that night as someone touched by blessed hope, on the road to a new destiny.

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<sup>13</sup> “Familiar spirits link themselves to certain persons by means of ties of varying duration in order to help them according to their power, which is frequently quite limited, however.” (see “The Intervention of Spirits in the Corporeal World”, *The Spirits’ Book*, Part Two, Ch. IX, International Spiritist Council). – Tr.

## 32

# Recapitulation

When he got back to the hospital, Mario Silva did not meet with his boss because he had left on urgent business. However, he received instructions from a nurse.

He read them closely.

There was a child who had a bad case of the croup and needed assistance right away.

In possession of the address and armed with everything he would need for treating the boy, Silva took a bus to Amaro's house.

Welcomed courteously by Amaro, he could not hide the perplexity that suddenly assailed him. He nervously stuttered a few monosyllables in response to the greeting.

His surprise showed in the extreme paleness of his face.

So, he thought in distress, this was the place? If he had known, he would have asked for some else to go instead. He hadn't planned on meeting these enemies again ... He loathed the man that had stolen his bride, and he couldn't look at Zulmira without feeling an inexplicable aversion ... A lot of times, when he recalled the past, he tried to figure out what would be the best way to get rid of her ... Why did he have to meet her again? Why should he save her child while he felt like setting fire to the place?

But something was interfering with his thoughts. Antonina and her kids at the home gospel study appeared on his mental screen. He seemed to hear the gentle, sincere words of that valorous woman once again, saying to his soul:

"The hands that heal cannot wound."

"An industrious healthcare giver is obviously a brother to all."

“Life does not end with this world.”

“We need to forgive others so that they will forgive us.”

Noticing his hesitation and wanting to put him at ease, Amaro invited him:

“Come in, Mario! I’m glad to see that a friend is going to help us.”

Indicating the next room, he added:

“Zulmira is in there with our son. The doctor called and said that the test for the croup was positive.”

Emotionless, the healthcare giver obeyed mechanically.

He went into the bedroom, troubled and pale.

When he saw the woman whom he had loved with all his heart holding the boy on her lap, he felt a sudden vertigo of repulsion.

Incapable of controlling himself, he felt a strange affliction weighing on his chest.

The desire for vengeance was blinding him ...

Zulmira would pay dearly for having deserted him – he thought, with eyes set on the dolorous motherhood that was being expressed in mortifying suffering.

He contemplated the child afflicted with dyspnea and gave free rein to uncontained animosity. He felt that he had hated him for a long, long time. He was surprised, startled by this ... How could he detest an innocent child with such vehemence? But thinking he could justify his awful frame of mind under such circumstances – the result of a connection he found unbearable – he did not try to analyze himself. The idea that Amaro and his wife would suffer irreparably from the death of the boy nourished his cruel plan for revenge. The happiness of that domestic temple depended on what he would do at that very moment. What if he were to cooperate with death by helping this sick child die? This criminal question passed through his mind like a dagger of darkness.

However, he remembered the prayer service at Antonina’s.

Her consoling statements came to mind:

“Peaceable accord is worth more ...”

“We mustn’t feed any kind of spite ...”

“Whoever judges is judged in turn ...”

“No one can rise to the highest levels of life while spiritually hardened ...”

“We never really know whether we are the ones who are offended or if we are the ones who are doing the offending ...”

“Forgiveness is the victory of the light ...”

The details of the edifying discussion were like intangible reins that halted the expansion of his wrongful desires.

Conflicted sentiments unfolded in his conscience for a brief minute ...

Almost staggering, he approached his tormented ex-bride, who recognized him immediately and tried to greet him.

He responded ceremoniously and got to work.

“Mario!” implored the poor woman in agony, “take pity on us! Please, help us! I had to bear the hardest sacrifices as I waited for my son ... Would it be right for me to have to see him die now!”

She was so choked up with tears that she could not speak anymore.

In the past, any request coming from that mouth would have stirred him to action, but now a cold indifference filled his soul. Why should he care about the pain of the woman that had left him? Zulmira had laughed at him years before ... Wasn’t it his turn to laugh now?

With an unkind look, he recommended the boy be put back to bed; then, he checked the child’s sensitivity.

With his mind hammered by the ideas gleaned during that evening’s gospel study, and with the sweet memory of Antonina, he tried for a new attitude.

Even so, as if he had an infernal genie in his mind, he picked up on the criminal suggestions that came into his head.

Giving the wrong medication to the child would of course cause a speedy death. Julio was already at death’s door ... He only needed a little shove and there he would go ...

However, Antonina’s face dominated his memory, exalting forgiveness.

If he had come here a day earlier – he thought to himself – he would have exterminated the child without mercy ... He would have used euthanasia as an excuse to ease his mind.

But now, like intrusive thoughts, the evangelical principles of fraternity and reconciliation tormented his conscience.

He waited in silence for the boy's wheezy reaction, and although he signaled serious complications that would certainly induce him to communicate with the physician in charge, he applied the anti-diphtheria serum. He secretly hoped, however, that it would turn out to be a deadly poison.

We could see that Mario's hands were emitting a dark substance, but Clarencio put his own hand on the boy to insulate him from it.

Considering the dread with which we observed the exteriorization of that darkly substance, our instructor explained:

“Those are deleterious fluids of hatred, with which Silva unknowingly wants to envelop the poor child; however, our defenses are holding.”

Odila, who had called for Blandina and Mariana, anxiously watched the treatment.

“My selfless friend,” she said to our instructor, “do you think Julio will get better?”

After he had established a broad magnetic band around the child to protect him from the visitor's influence, Clarencio shook his head and replied:

“Odila, it's time for you to come to grips with the truth. The boy will leave his body behind in perhaps just a few hours. His future requires failure in the present. But take heart ... The Divine Will, expressed in the Law that governs us, always does what is best.”

And perhaps because our heartbroken sister was about to make another plea, our devoted leader calmly stated:

“Don't ask questions for now; you'll understand later. Julio is in need of assistance, watch-care and love.”

Odila recomposed the expression on her face in a display of humility and discipline.



Mario was gazing at the child as if he were hypnotizing him to death, observing his facial contractions.

The parents were also gazing at him in dire expectation.

Just then, Julio began shaking and went pale.

His heart was out of control.

Now terrified, Silva took his pulse, looked into Amaro's afflicted eyes and told him in a gentler voice:

"The doctor needs to come right away. I fear an anaphylactic shock of fatal consequences."

Zulmira let out a hoarse scream and was helped by the loving Evelina as Amaro headed for the door to get the pediatrician.

A slow and dreadful hour went by in the cramped room ...

The physician worriedly examined the child, and then told the disconsolate father in private:

"Unfortunately, he is about to die and there's nothing we can do. If you are religious, let's entrust the matter to God. Now, only divine intervention ..."

Amaro lowered his head in dismay and said nothing.

The pediatrician exchanged ideas with Silva, who had gone pale, and gave him instructions. As he left, he told him to stay at the boy's side for a few more hours.

Zulmira had been given a sedative, which compelled her to rest.

Julio was now in a coma and was breathing with difficulty.

Meanwhile, the night was moving forward ... Dawn, washed by a light breeze, allowed for a view of the sky filled with twinkling constellations.

Seeing that his wife and daughter were sleeping, Amaro went over to the window, as if seeking consolation in the welcoming bosom of the night, and began to weep in silence.

Beside the dying child, Mario observed his suffering and humble attitude and realized that his own soul was touched to the core.

Why had he fought against such an enemy? he wondered. Amaro was like a statue of silent suffering. There he was: head down and defeated in his

modest home, where he was a man of the good and devoted to righteousness. Obviously he had already suffered a lot. His face, furrowed with premature wrinkles that held his tears, spoke of the cross of harsh experiences that weighed on his shoulders. How many troubling problems had that man, bent over because of the harshness of fate, confronted? How could he, Mario Silva, have been so coldhearted? He recalled the passages from that hour of study and prayer, and finally understood that the Gospel was founded on the best line of reasoning. It was better to reconcile oneself immediately with one's adversary than to hold a thorn of remorse in one's heart, and he sadly noted that, like a knife, remorse was shredding his ... No doubt, Amaro and his wife should have manifested distrust upon seeing him again and should have refused his help; however, they had welcomed him fraternally with open arms ... If they had wounded him in the past, weren't they now under the iron glove of terrible flagellation? He thanked God that he had not injected the now-dying child with poison; but still, hadn't he contributed to hasten his death? He felt like approaching the heartbroken father to try to comfort him, but he was ashamed of himself.

The two stayed where they were, mute and impassive, for almost two hours.

The dawn was beginning to reflect itself in the sky in broad, red streaks, when the railroad worker abandoned his thoughts and approached his almost-dead son.

With a moving gesture of faith, he took an old wooden crucifix off the wall and put it on the nightstand beside the dying child. Then, he sat down on the bed and took the boy on his lap with special tenderness. Assisted spiritually by Odila, who was embracing him, he gazed at the image of Christ Crucified and prayed out loud:

“Divine Jesus, have mercy on our weakness! ... My spirit is too fragile to deal with death! Give us strength and understanding ... Our children are yours, but how it pains us to have to give them back when your will demands their return!”

Tears interrupted his voice, but displaying his urgent need to pray, he continued:

“If it is your will for our son to leave us, O Lord, receive him into your arms of love and light! But grant us the courage we need to bravely bear our

cross of longing and pain! ... Give us resignation, faith, hope! ... Help us understand your purposes, and may your will be done now and forever!”

Streams of sapphire light flowed from his chest to envelop the child, who little by little fell into the deep sleep.

Julio disengaged himself from his physical body, finding shelter in Odila’s arms like an orphan seeking the warm nest of caresses.

Touched in the innermost fibers of his being, and realizing that death had extended its large wings there, Silva felt a violent commotion constraining his soul. Convulsive weeping shook his chest, while an unspoken voice, which seemed to arise from the recesses of his being, shouted in his conscience:

“Murderer! Murderer!”

Disoriented and unhinged, he ran out into the street, weeping in torment in the cold darkness.

## A Learning Experience

Amaro and his family, assisted by some neighbors, were putting a sheet over the boy's stiff body as we made our way back to Lar da Benção.

Held in Odila's arms, Julio seemed more relieved and peaceful than he ever had been.

As our sisters exchanged thoughts about the future, I asked our instructor about the serenity that now gladdened the boy.

"Julio has readjusted himself so that he can continue his evolutionary struggle," replied Clarencio. "His short rebirth did not only entail expiatory significance, necessary for the spirit that abandons the learning experience, but it was also a healing remedy for him. The stay in the physical realm acted as a resource that eliminated the wound in the delicate tissues of his soul. In many cases, the flesh functions like a filter that retains the impurities of the perispirit, freeing it from certain ills."

"That means ..."

"That means that from now on, Julio will be able to manifest himself outwardly in a healthy body, having acquired the merit to receive a duly planned reincarnation entailing elevated objectives of service. After a few months with us, he will have developed sufficiently to return to the earth in the praiseworthy condition of self-harmony."

"He'll go back in such a short time?" I asked, amazed.

"We hope so. He needs to concentrate on perfecting the nobler qualities for life eternal, and only the return to the school of the flesh can help him do that. Moreover, he needs to live with Amaro, Zulmira and Silva in a fraternal manner in keeping with the pure love that Christ taught us."

“This information,” I replied, “sheds new light on our study of life. We can see that complex, lengthy diseases have a specific function. Birth defects, Down syndrome, paralysis ...”

“That’s right. Sometimes the soul’s incursion into the realms of disequilibrium is so great that it must undergo a long journey to return to normality.”

And smiling, he added:

“The time of restorative hell corresponds to the time of the premeditated wrong. During many phases of our evolution, we are drawn to the webs of the flesh, which always reflects our intrinsic individuality, just as the clay is placed in the heat of the kiln or just as impure metal is cast into the red hot furnace. Purification requires effort, sacrifice, patience ...”

Before our wondrous eyes the horizon was painted with variegated colors, announcing the sun that seemed to be born from a sea of light and gold.

Far away, the stars were growing dim, while nearby, light clouds hurried along, driven by the breeze.

Clarencio contemplated the sky and considered:

“When our spirit learns a little bit about the glory of the universe, it awakens the most sublime hopes. It dreams about entering the divine spheres and longs to meet again sanctified loves waiting for it in distant vanguards; thus, it willingly accepts the hard work of readjustment. What are a few decades of selflessness on the earth when compared with the magnificence of centuries of bliss on worlds of wisdom and ennobling endeavor?!”

“Ah! If people only knew!” I exclaimed, remembering the rebelliousness that so often harms us in the world.

“They will someday,” objected Clarencio optimistically; “all beings progress and evolve toward God. Earth’s humans will grow into this great understanding and will happily praise the assistance of pain. Over the years, the acorn becomes a hoary oak, rich in beauty and usefulness, and over the millennia, the spirit becomes a supreme genius, crowned with love and wisdom.”

After a minute of silent adoration of nature, the instructor continued:

“Getting back to Julio’s case, we mustn’t forget that, between birth and death, thousands of Intelligences are working on their own recovery. To the degree that we clarify our consciences and strengthen our notion of responsibility, we start to realize that our spiritual worthiness entails non-transferrable service. We owe to ourselves everything that happens to us in terms of good or evil.”

“It’s interesting to observe,” said Hilario, thoughtfully, “how life, for the reestablishment of peace, requires the coming together of those who have been at war with each other ... In the past, Julio slid down the slippery slope of suicide under the influence of Amaro and Zulmira after having quarreled with Silva.”

“And now,” completed Clarencio, “with the help of Zulmira and Amaro, he has rehabilitated himself so that he can re-harmonize himself with Mario. It was only natural.”

“But where was Julio before he returned to the world?” I asked.

“After having gotten rid of his own body, satisfying a mere personal whim, he suffered the sad consequences of his deliberate act for many years in the circles closest to the earth. He had to endure the torments of having poisoned himself, an act that was repeated over and over again in his mental field. Premature death, when it entails rebelliousness against the infinitely compassionate laws that govern us, compels the spirit to endure a lengthy purgation on the spiritual landscape. We cannot cheat time, and a planned-out existence is dependent on a preset amount of time, which we must fulfill by doing what we are supposed to be doing. When that amount of time isn’t used adequately, we shoulder awful imbalances in our physical and spiritual make-up.”

“Does such a spirit suffer by itself?”

“Not always. If it doesn’t find itself in tormenting loneliness, it does find itself wherever its thoughts keep it imprisoned.”

In response to our insatiable curiosity, he added:

“Julio’s thoughts were nourished in the psychic atmosphere of Zulmira, Amaro and Silva, who acted as basic points for hatred. Jesus taught that people’s treasures will be where their hearts are, and in fact, with our minds we are drawn to persons, places and objects that are connected to our sentiments.”

“But was Julio in contact with them in the spirit world or in the experiences of the physical?”

“He simply took part in their lives, and life, in whatever sector of struggle, is invariable. Nevertheless, by detesting Amaro the most, he weighted most intensely on him. During his stay in the spirit world, Amaro experienced Julio’s relentless persecution, listening to his accusations and complaints in the purgatorial regions; and upon reincarnating in his current situation, he was closely followed by Julio, who afflicted his mind and demanded the necessary assistance to form a new physical body. Due to Amaro’s thoughtlessness when he was Armando, Julio took the route of the suicide. Consequently, the Law allowed his union with his friend-made-enemy, from whom Julio demanded renewal of a lost opportunity.”

Clarencio looked at us in a special way and added:

“The spiritual thread of the commitment always runs between creditor and debtor.”

“So, Amaro would have had a somewhat troubled childhood,” I pondered with the objective of study.

“Yes, as happens with most young people of both sexes in the daily struggle, he awakened too early to the ideal of parenthood. During dreams while outside his dense body, he would find himself with his enemy, who asked for his return to the world, and eager for reconciliation, he thought about marriage with extreme restlessness, desirous of paying the debt he knew he owed. He was still very young when he met Odila, who had been waiting for him, in keeping with the agreement both had made in the spirit world; however, Julio’s vibrations were so uncomfortable that Odila could not receive him right away and received Evelina first instead, since the couple’s connection with her was based on sweet affinities. Only after Evelina’s birth was Odila ready to incorporate the suffering suicide.”

“This point in our conversation,” I remarked respectfully, “makes me remember the inner conflicts of many young people. They sometimes jump into marriage completely inept for its huge responsibilities as if they were driven by unseen thrusters, without any consideration whatsoever for the imperatives of prudence. As if they were assailed by sudden madness, they disregard all advice from family and friends, only to awaken later with serious problems if not under a cloud of immense disillusionment. I can now see ...

At the base of youthful dreams, there are nearly always anguishing debts that cannot be avoided.”

“Yes, many, many love-related passions correspond to true obsessions or psychoses, which only reality can treat successfully. In many cases, behind the desire for marriage vibrates the past due to requests by discarnate friends or enemies, to whom we owe assistance so that they too can reincarnate. Love can be the manifestation of dark labyrinths from the past.”

As I thought about the struggles of the soul, thrown into life’s experiences with so many enigmas to solve, I remembered an old question that often came to mind.

“What about guardian angels?” I asked.

Due to the surprise on Clarenco’s face, I clarified myself respectfully:

“Forgive me, but I am still just a beginning student of the spirit life. Are there guardian angels in our sphere?”

Clarenco gazed at me in wonder and replied:

“Guardian spirits are found in all spheres; however, a few considerations are in order. Analyzed in their divine magnificence, angels of sublime vigilance follow us on the long road of evolution. They watch over us in accordance with the Laws that govern us, but we mustn’t forget that we all move about in multidimensional circles. The chain of the spirit’s ascent goes from the depths of the abyss to supreme heavenly glory.”

A brief pause brought a fatherly smile to his lips and then he continued:

“We need to remember that we are shaping our imperishable individuality in space and time at the cost of continuous, difficult experiences. The notion of a divinized and perfect being constantly at our side, available at our beck and call to answer our questions does not square with justice. What earthly government would put one of its wisest and most specialized ministers, who was in charge of ensuring everyone’s well-being, in the ongoing service of just one person who was almost always a stubborn cultivator of complex enigmas and thus in need of life’s harshest lessons? Why would an archangel be obligated to descend from the Light Eternal to follow, step after step, a person who was deliberately selfish or lazy? Everything requires us to be logical and reasonable.”

“So you mean to say that guardian angels do not live with us?”



“I’m not saying that,” he asserted.

And he graciously added:

“Even though it is millions of miles away, the sun is always helping the worm in its hole, even though the worm is not where the sun is.”

The two sisters at our side were enrapt in their contemplation of the sky as they talked about Julio’s future, mentally distanced from our conversation.

Clarencio’s lesson imposed serious reflection, and perhaps that is why silence had come over the group. But realizing the subject needed more clarification, he continued:

“An angel, according to the correct definition of the word, is a messenger. Now, there are messengers of all sorts of conditions and of all kinds of origins; consequently, antiquity always believed in the existence of good and bad angels. Since the oldest religious ideas, a guardian angel is an expression that defines a heavenly spirit who watches over an individual in God’s name, or is a person who is entirely devoted to another, helping and defending him or her. Whatever the sphere may be, the familiar spirits of our lives and struggles live with us. From the most brutish beings to the most sublimated, there is a chain of love, whose links we may symbolize in souls who care for each other or who are attuned to each other within the infinite gradation of progress. The spirit family is a constellation of Intelligences, whose members are on earth and in heaven. The member who is able to see a little more helps the sight of the still-struggling member to get rid of his or her blindness. All of us, no matter how low on the evolutionary scale, have someone nearby who loves us and drives us to go higher. We can see this most clearly in the circles of the densest matter. There are hearts that are constantly devoted to our esteem and well-being. And of all earthly affections, we would use a mother’s devotion as the best example. The maternal spirit is a type of angel or messenger, although often circumscribed to the iron prison of selfishness as she watches over her children. Besides mothers, whose love suffers many deficiencies when confronted with the essential principles of fraternity and justice, there are individuals who devote to us the greatest affection and sympathy, and who are capable of the greatest sacrifices on our behalf, in spite of being conditioned to selfish objectives. But we mustn’t forget that the admirable altruism of tomorrow begins with the narrow affection of today, just as the oak starts with the acorn. All individuals count on the praiseworthy devotion of kindred spirits. There is no

true orphanhood. In the name of Love, all souls receive assistance wherever they may be. Older siblings help younger ones. Masters inspire disciples. Parents help children. Friends are linked to friends. Colleagues help colleagues. This happens on every plane of nature, and fatalistically on the earth amongst those who are still in the flesh and those who have crossed over onto the dark gangway of death. The Greeks understood this and relied on their unseen geniuses. The Romans grasped it and worshiped their family numens. The guardian spirit is always a beneficent spirit for its ward, but we have to say that the ties of affection around us are still on the ascendant march toward the highest levels of life. With all the veneration we owe them, we have to realize that the familiar spirits that watch over us are great and respectable heroes of the good, but they are still very far from everlasting angelhood. Of course, they are evolving along ennobled lines on evolved planes, but they still feel individual inclinations and passions en route to the universalization of their sentiments. Thus, in the diverse religious schools, we need to heed the popular intuition asserting: ‘Our guardian angels are different from each other,’ or ‘Let’s pray to our guardian angels,’ realizing instinctively that the familiar spirits of our private lives are still in the field of specific affinities, and they often have to appeal to a higher nature to render this or that type of service.”

We arrived at Lar da Benção and the instructor’s explanation was imprinted on our souls as an unforgettable lesson compelling us to silence.

Blandina, however, asked Clarencio:

“Kind friend, can we be sure that Julio was supposed to discarnate now?”

“Absolutely. The Law has functioned precisely. There is no room for any doubt.”

“What about those streams of dark thought from Mario that seemed to poison him?”

“If we hadn’t been with him, he would have hastened the boy’s death; even so, the Law would have been fulfilled. However, Mario’s dark thoughts turned against him. He emitted them with the obvious purpose of murder; hence, he is experiencing the remorse of an actual murderer.”

Blandina’s gracious residence was now in sight.

Clarencio embraced her and concluded:

“We can be sure, my daughter, that wherever and whenever, we will receive from life according to our own deeds.”

## An Endeavor of Assistance

The following evening we were unexpectedly visited by Odila, who asked for our help.

Now that our concerned friend was aware of the dark drama that had played out in the recent past to better understand the troubles of the present, she understood the needs of Amaro and Julio, whom she loved as husband and son of her heart. She was asking us to help her with Zulmira, who was once again bedridden.

Answering Evelina's appeals, she had returned to her former home to encourage the one who had succeeded her in running the home. Now she was back and was troubled.

Zulmira was severely depressed.

She was refusing to take her medicine and she wouldn't eat.

She was weakening dreadfully.

Odila now understood that Zulmira's permanence in the world and in the flesh was exceptionally important to her family group, and with that in mind, she was asking for our help.

This brief information was urgent and moving due to the tone of loving affliction in which it was given.

We did not hesitate to respond.

It was past midnight in the city when we went through the welcoming door of Amaro's home, which had for so long been an invaluable point of activity for us.

Her mind fixated on the final moments of Julio's death, Zulmira lay in bed in deplorable prostration.

She had grown alarmingly thin.

Bags under her sunken eyes were a stark contrast to the paleness of her disfigured face.

She had fallen back into her former introspection. She was dwelling on Julio's drowning, and unaware of the fact that she had received him back into her arms as her own blessed son, she felt like a wretched defendant facing a court of justice.

Obviously – she thought, forlorn – she was suffering divine punishment. Just when everything led her to believe that the boy would grow up as a blessing for her home – according to her expectations – his death was a dolorous punishment imposed on her maternal heart. Ah! She must have been sentenced by the judges of Heavenly Wisdom. No one on earth knew about her remorse for having been a careless, cruel guardian, but she had obviously been recognized as such by the thousand-eyed tribunals of Incorruptible Law. She hadn't helped Odila's son as she should have, but had intentionally abandoned him ... Now, she had inexplicably lost the son who was to have fulfilled her hopes for a bright future. Was it really worth it to get up and face what, for her, represented the pain of living? She could see she was beaten. The guilt complex had retaken her mind and had smitten her heart.

There were several types of medication on the nightstand. Our instructor noted them, examined the patient and said:

“The pharmacy doesn't have the medicine that Zulmira needs. It has to come from within her. We need to renew her hopes and her love for life. Her mind is out of control again. She has lost all interest in the daily struggle and her refusal to eat has led to progressive inanition<sup>14</sup>.

“But if she could see the boy again,” asked Hilario, “wouldn't that be the best way to restore her to happiness?”

“That's what we are hoping,” agreed the Minister, “but at this stage, Julio needs at least one full week of complete rest. Until then, we absolutely have to spare his energies.”

Clarencio got to work, applying magnetic resources with our humble help.

Zulmira's nervous tension, however, had reached its apogee. We could only calm her down somewhat, but not enough to induce her to reparatory sleep, as we would have liked.

Odila felt more capable of taking care of her, when we were confronted by an unforeseen phenomenon.

Mario Silva, outside his dense body, entered the room like a flash of lightning. His haggard eyes had a wild look in them as he contemplated the patient for a few moments, and then left.

We looked questioningly at the Minister, who explained:

“Everyone knows that the criminal always returns to the scene of the crime. Remorse is a power that shackles us to the past.”

And because we wanted to go after the unexpected visitor, the instructor replied:

“Let’s just wait a bit. Mario will be back.”

In fact, a few minutes later, Silva did return. With the same demented expression, he stared at the patient, but this time he got down on his knees, exclaiming:

“Forgive me! Please, forgive me! ... I’m a murderer! A murderer!”

Instinctively, we were about to help him, but touched by the waves of our magnetic influence, the healthcare worker vanished.

“Poor friend!” said the Minister, saddened. “He’s suffering a lot. Let’s help him out.”

In a flash we were at Mario’s house. He was having a nightmare, confined to bed as the result of powerful sedatives.

We were surprised to see a discarnate nun praying nearby.

She stopped praying in order to greet us warmly.

“I just knew,” she said kindly and confidently, “that our Lord would send us the help we needed. I have been watching over him for a few hours now. Our friend’s situation – and she nodded toward Mario lying in bed – is obviously abnormal and I fear that he may be attracting diabolical spirits.

Clarencio assumed the look of a mere visitor in the eyes of the nun, who obviously felt encouraged by our presence.

“Are you a nurse?” asked our instructor politely.

“Not exactly, but I do work at the same hospital as Silva.”

She gazed at the half-asleep Mario and added compassionately:

“He’s truly devoted to helping sick children and we owe a lot to his diligence and caring.”

And speaking like a true Roman Catholic, she continued:

“Many blessed souls have come down from Heaven to show how grateful they are to him. This has happened so many times that, along with a few other physicians and assistants, he has merited the best attention of our Sisterhood.”

Displaying his usual tact, Clarenco asked:

“How did you know that our friend here was so distraught?”

“We didn’t receive any direct notification, but when he didn’t come to work today, that was enough to tell us that something serious had happened. Our superior gave me the job of finding out what it was. My hands are tied because I had no idea there were so many spirits of the darkness in the vicinity.”

The nun’s words were so full of spontaneous goodness and had evidence of such a charming, naïve and pure faith, that curiosity needled me inside. The temptation to study the fascinating issue of that charitable effort of assistance urged me to get involved in the matter, but one look from Clarenco was enough for Hilario and me to keep respectfully quiet.

“It’s truly moving when one thinks about the sublimity of your mission after leaving your earthly body,” said the Minister kindly, perhaps trying to elicit a little direct elucidation capable of satisfying our curiosity.

“Yes, it is. We work under the supervision of Mother Paula, who has explained to us that nursing in public hospitals is a form of benign purgatory until we merit new blessings from God.”

“But sister, I can see right now that your heart is partaking of the Lord’s peace.”

She lowered her eyes humbly and replied:

“I don’t think so. I’m just a poor nun working to redeem my sins.”

Mario lay moaning on the bed.

The Minister seemed to become unconcerned about any personal conversation and began to caress the patient’s forehead as if to inform us that the patient alone should be the focus of our interest.

The nun approached our instructor respectfully and said:

“Brother, Mother Paula says that the ears of God live in the hearts of great souls. I’m certain that you heard my prayers. I see you as being emissaries from the Heavenly Court. So, I feel it’s my duty to entrust our patient to you.”

Clarencio thanked her and explained that we were only going to be there long enough to administer the help that Mario needed.

The nun said that she had to inform the hospital about Mario’s condition and promised she would return shortly. She rushed out.

Now that we were alone, Clarencio explained, although still attentive to Mario:

“Our sister belongs to a spirit group of Catholic servants devoted to evangelical charity. There are several such institutions, where countless spirits are gradually prepared for higher understanding.”

“Under the supervision of authorities still connected to the Catholic Church?” asked Hilario in amazement.

“Why not? All religious denominations are of great worth in the spirit world. Like what happens with the human personality, belief systems have a clear, luminous region and another that is still in the dark. In our souls, the lucid region is nourished by our highest sentiments, whereas in the shadow world of our inferior experiences dwell inclinations and impulses that still chain us to animality. In religions, the field of sublimation is populated by benevolent and liberal spirits that are aware of our destination toward the good, whereas in the dark ranks of ignorance swarm souls weighted down with hatred and selfishness.”

And smiling, the Minister added:

“We are still evolving and each one of us lives at his or her proper level.”

“But like us, did she grasp the truth we had been confronted with after death?” I asked, intrigued.

“Each Intelligence,” he replied, enigmatically, “only receives the amount of truth that it can handle.”

On the bed, Silva was showing unmistakable signs of enormous anguish.



I was aware of the fact that my job of assisting him was urgent, but the spiritual charm of the nun, who was remarkably bound to earthly customs, aroused my curiosity so much that I could not help but ask:

“But that nun knows that she has left the world behind. She knows she has discarnated, yet she sees herself as she used to be?”

“Yes, she does.”

“Does she know that life extends to other spheres, other realms and other worlds? Will she finally realize that heaven and hell begin within ourselves?”

Clarencio shook his head and replied:

“No. She doesn’t seem like someone who has broken out of the circle of her own ideas in order to discover the surprises that the universe holds in store. Mentally, she is still bound to the concepts she chose while on earth as being the most suitable to her happiness.”

“And no one around here bothers her for living so far from the true knowledge of the path?”

The instructor gave me a look of paternal charity and replied:

“Above all, our sister deserves our greatest veneration for the good she is doing. As for the way to interpret life, we mustn’t forget that God is our Father. With the same tolerance with which He has been waiting for us to have a higher understanding, He will wait for her to have it too. Each spirit has a different pathway to travel, just as each world has the course peculiar to it.”

And gazing at me with particular attention, he observed:

“The main lesson here, Andre, is that of the sower who inevitably produces. As a healthcare worker, Mario Silva, despite his ruinous impulsivity, has been invaluable and humane, and has become a creditor of another’s love. As we have seen, he isn’t a man devoted to religious endeavors. He is angry and aggressive. Lately, he has been feeling like a criminal ... Still, he is rightly fulfilling the obligations he has assumed in life and he knows how to be patient and charitable as he does so. Consequently, he has won the sympathy of many and is fraternally watched over by a grateful nun.”

This lesson was truly moving.

I was getting ready to comment on it, but Silva began moaning. The Minister leaned over him and examined him at length.

Then, he stood up and stated:

“Poor friend! He still can’t get over Julio’s death and is suffering from a troubling guilt complex. His thought is connected to the boy like an image on a photographic negative. He has spent the whole day in bed extremely troubled. I can see that he did not go to Antonina’s home as he had planned. He feels defeated and ashamed of himself ... However, Antonina is the only one who has the medicine he needs.”

After a brief pause, we asked if it wouldn’t be possible for us to help him more effectively by means of passes, to which Clarenco responded confidently:

“That type of help would strengthen his energies but it wouldn’t solve the problem. Silva needs a change of attitude in order to get better. He needs fresh thoughts, and for now, Antonina is the only person capable of getting him back on his feet.”

I instinctively recalled the drama that had occurred at the time of the War with Paraguay and thought I was hearing the former Leonardo Pires’s story all over again.

Noting my thoughts, the Minister responded:

“Everything in life has its reason for being. In the past, Silva, as Esteves, got involved with Antonina, who was Lola Ibarruri, so that they could indulge in sinful pleasure by neglecting the finest obligations of life. In the present, they will be brought back together to make amends. Those who thoughtlessly associate with each other in the eyes of the Law wind up espousing huge debts that have to be paid off. No one can fool the principles that govern existence.”

I wanted to ask more questions, but Clarenco kindly put his finger to my lips and suggested:

“Enough curiosity, Andre! When we begin to discuss the Law, our conversation takes on the flavor of eternity, whereas the imposition of being of service conditions us to the present minute.”

Indicating the troubled healthcare worker, he said:

“We’ll return tomorrow afternoon to take him to Antonina’s. With her help, he will be able to get back on his feet. There’s nothing more we can do for him right now.”

A few instants later, the nun came back with another sister, who greeted us with attentive reserve.

Both had been given the job of helping their sick coworker. The sisterhood would be responsible for all duties of watch-care and spiritual nursing for as long as Silva was in such a state.

After a brief chat, we respectfully said goodbye and left, promising to return the next day.

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<sup>14</sup> The exhausted condition that results from lack of food and water ([www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inanition](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inanition)). – Tr.

## Moral Reconstruction

According to plan, we returned the next day, stopping first at Zulmira's home because her organic situation was more perilous.

The poor woman was even paler, more despondent.

The doctor had given her a number of costly drugs, but the poor thing was languishing in profound exhaustion.

Concerned, Amaro and Evelina were working tirelessly; nevertheless, Zulmira was letting herself die.

In light of our obvious apprehension, the Minister would only say:

“Let's wait. In a team effort like this one, the improvement of one member almost always leads to the improvement of another. It seems to me that Silva's recuperation will influence Zulmira in her fight against death.”

He gave her a brief treatment with magnetic passes.

Then, we hurried to Mario's home and found him to be as overexcited as he was the day before, although he was being selflessly assisted by the nuns, who continued praying for him.

The discarnate sisters welcomed us lovingly and told us that the patient still felt hopeless.

Clarencio, however, optimistically assured them that Mario would be coming with us and would return to health.

He approached the patient, touched his forehead and uttered a silent prayer.

As if he had received a transfusion of fluidic energies, Silva quieted down as if by magic.

He was definitely calmer, although still downcast.

His facial expression, revealing his inner turmoil, had been replaced by a dolorous serenity.

Clarencio applied a few passes and said:

“Silva really needs to hear what Antonina has to say, but he is hesitant. He is inwardly ashamed of himself. He thinks he is responsible for Julio’s death and fears contact with the spiritual nobility of our sister, in spite of feeling drawn to her. Even so, we shall work on bringing them together.

He caressed the tormented man’s head and added:

“The moment he unburdens himself, he’ll cleanse his mental atmosphere, which will in turn encourage his relief and the reception of renewing elements.”

Then, the instructor embraced him, enveloping him in loving kindness. That long, caring embrace seemed to us to be an appeal to Mario’s innermost energies because he immediately got up and dressed himself.

Unable to explain the sudden decision that was moving him, he went out on the street, followed closely by us, and took a taxi to the home of the kindly family that had lovingly welcomed him two days ago.

Antonina and her children joyfully opened their arms to him.

Enchanted, little Lisbela hung onto his neck after giving him a tender kiss.

She was still bedridden but feeling much better and happy.

As if she had known Mario for a long time, Antonina looked at him apprehensively.

Concerned, she could see that her guest was depressed, while he in turn seemed to be silently asking for her help and understanding.

Perceiving his inner anguish, the young widow invited him for a private talk in another room, where she and her kids held their home prayer service.

The healthcare worker apologized for wanting to talk about a personal matter and then began by explaining his absence the day before. Sentence by sentence, he entered the dolorous zone of his soul, telling all ...

He remembered that there, with her, he had received instructions that were highly meaningful to him, and that was why he wasn't hesitating to unburden his desolate spirit, pleading for her compassion and help.

In an effort to console him, Antonina heard him out to the end.

Mario told her about his youth; he commented on the psychological problems that had beset him since childhood; he described the love he had nourished for the girl that had abandoned him in the middle of his dreams; he told her about the trials that had punished his youthful pride; he emphasized his efforts to recover; and lastly, extremely troubled, he explained his meeting his former fiancée and former rival again, along with the dying boy ... He mentioned the inexplicable hatred he had felt toward the dying little angel; he appreciated the benefits that the home gospel study had had on his soul, burning with rebelliousness and bitterness; and he told her of his conviction that he had contributed to the death of the child he had hated at first sight ...

He felt like he had descended into a tormenting, moral hell.

Antonina felt the loving compassion with which mothers use to spiritually uplift their suffering children and asked him to calm down.

Silva, however, in convulsive weeping, was a patient who needed a wider intervention.

Irresistibly attracted to him, Antonina adopted a rather intimate approach and said:

“Mario, whenever we fall, we have to get back up so that the incessant movement of the carriage of life doesn't run over us. We only met two days ago, yet I feel that deep ties of fraternity have brought us back together. I don't think we are all here together by accident. Surely, the forces that guide our lives are impelling us to such emotional statements. Wipe away your tears so that we can see the road ... I know about your drama as a man cruelly tried in the forge of life, but please, cheer up.”

Looking gently at him, she continued after a brief pause:

“I too have struggled a lot. I have struggled and suffered. I got married out of love but found myself robbed of my highest hopes. Before death took him, my husband had relegated us to dolorous poverty. When our problems as a family were at their worst, I watched as one of my children died at the touch of the harsh trials that afflicted our home ... Thanks be to God, however, I know that we would experience only ignorance and misery if not for the help

of pain. Suffering is a sort of invisible fire that shapes our character. So, don't be so downcast. You're still young and you can accomplish great things."

"But I know for a fact that I'm a murderer!" Mario sobbed, heartbroken.

"Who says? We have to remember that, mindful of your profession, you attended to a boy who had been completely handed over to the domain of the croup. By the time you arrived, little Julio had already been suffocating under the wings of death."

"But this bad feeling? What about the remorse? I feel defeated, afflicted ... I'm afraid of myself."

Antonina gazed at her guest with her typical self-assuredness and replied:

"Mario, do you believe in the reincarnation of the soul?"

Because Mario gave her a strange look, she continued without waiting for a response:

"We are all travelers on the great road of eternity. The body of flesh is a workshop in which our soul toils, weaving the threads of its own destiny. We have come a long ways to relive dead centuries, like plants reborn from deep in the soil ... Obviously, you, Amaro, Zulmira and Julio are recapitulating some tragedy that may have happened a long time ago in space and time, but which is still alive today in your hearts. Because of your spontaneous confession, I have no doubt about my own participation in some incident of the struggle that has brought about these events. Love and hate don't just happen. They are the result of the constructions of our spirits over the millennia. I probably have my share of responsibility in this case too. Our immediate trust, our association in the matter without any previous basis, that fraternal sympathy with which you have come to me, and the interest with which I've been listening to your confession, all lead me to believe that the present is reflecting the past. That is why I'm offering to help you out somehow ..."

"Help me out? Mario interrupted, in despair. "That's impossible ... The boy's already dead."

Enveloped in Clarencio's radiations, Antonina replied calmly:

"And who says Julio can't come back? Who says we can't do something on his behalf?"

“What can we do? What?”

“Listen to me, Mario. Selfishness is not expressed only in our joyful moments. Suffocating and dreadful, it often expresses itself also in our sufferings. This happens when, in our grief, we think only of ourselves. You say you are an embittered, defeated criminal as if you were a repentant hero cast down from the altar of public admiration to the dust of disrespect. I believe that concentrating too much attention on imaginary guilt is mere vanity that imprisons us in empty anguish. As long as we are bemoaning our imperfections, we waste the time we could be using to better ourselves.”

And changing her tone of voice to be firmer:

“Have you ever thought about the parents’ suffering due to the separation? Have you thought about the mother’s shattered dreams? Why not extend a fraternal hand to the parents in the darkness of misfortune? I believe in the immortality of the soul and the redemption of our wrongs; I believe that today’s renewal is a symbol of the Lord’s grace being repeated continuously so that we may use his treasure of blessings for our growth or readjustment ... Why don’t you visit the home of our unfortunate friends at this time? They obviously need care and solidarity. Perhaps the Divine Goodness has some bit of work for you to do there for your evolution. Who knows? Maybe Julio will return as a result. For that to happen, however, his mother will have to get back on her feet.”

Going from frank counselor to kindhearted sister, she asked:

“Are you going to give someone else the privilege of such service?”

“I don’t have the courage!” lamented Mario in tears.

“No, Mario! On occasions like this, it’s not courage we lack but humility. In spite of being inconsequential and vain, our pride is too entangling and excessive. We cannot liberate the personality segregated in the mire of our exaggerated self-centeredness. In short, we imprison our hearts in the dark fortress of vanity and we don’t know how to surrender.”

Grasping on to this moral support, the healthcare worker pleaded:

“Antonina, I trust in your friendship and the lofty understanding that flows from your words. Please, help me! I came here only to ask for help and discernment. Tell me what I must do. Give me a plan. Forgive me for being so forward, but I’ve been a man without faith ... I have no authorities or friends to appeal to ... We’ve only known each other for a few days, but in



your heart and home I have found something new for my poor spirit ... Support and help me for the love of God, in whose providence you believe with such sincerity!”

Like a true sister, the young widow caressed his hands as if they were old friends, and now, also in tears of emotion and acknowledgment, she invited him to go with her to visit the suffering couple that night.

She would entrust Henrique and Lisbela to the care of a relative and they would leave for Amaro’s residence with Haroldo. She wanted to help Mario recover, and to do so she would like to accompany him in the way that would be most useful.

Mario gladly accepted her kindness.

He was convinced that at Antonina’s side he would find a solution.

Comforted, he smiled, and that is how we left the tormented healthcare worker under the blooming of a new and blessed hope.

# 36

## Renewed Hearts

Three days had passed since Julio's liberation.

Once again we were at Zulmira's side in the early hours of the night and found her completely spent.

The progressive weakening had put her organism in a perilous situation.

After examining her, even Clarencio remarked apprehensively:

"Our sister needs more effective help. She is almost completely exhausted."

The patient was receiving his magnetic assistance when Mario, Antonina and Haroldo entered the adjoining room.

We left our instructor with Zulmira and went into the room where the family meeting would occur.

Amaro and Evelina did the honors.

The hospitable Amaro appeared to be feeling greatly relieved. His smile, although sad, was big and spontaneous, displaying the inner contentment of someone who wanted to end an old, disagreeable feud.

Mario, on the other hand, looked constrained and awkward, whereas Antonina radiated sympathy and kindness, instantly winning the hosts' friendship.

Mario introduced Antonina and Haroldo as close friends, and then, evidently instructed by Antonina, he initiated a conversation by commenting on the painful impression that Julio's death had caused him. He apologized for not having returned as was his duty.

The unexpected incident had confused him.

He had gotten sick because of it.

He was very emotional as he spoke and had to hold back his tears as he recalled the child's final moments.

That display of emotion, combined with his sincere humility, touched Amaro's heart, which opened up more fully.

"I could see the grief that enveloped you at the moment when our little angel was snatched away by death," said Amaro. "Your affliction truly moved me, not only because of your professional devotion to helping us, but also because of the pure kindness of a friend who had avoided us for so long."

His former rival's kindness had a big impact on the healthcare worker.

The affable, caring vibrations of those remarks changed him inwardly.

Mario began to feel a soothing relief.

And while Evelina left the room to see about her stepmother, he went on describing the mental torture that had assailed him when he saw Julio lying there lifeless. He briefly described the guilt complex that had overcome him. Had he really done what the specialist had ordered? Had he administered the wrong amount of the medication?

When he paused, Amaro broke in, emphasizing kindly:

"There was no reason for such concern. When the doctor first visited us, I found out that our son was doomed. The serum was his last hope."

And with sorrowful resignation, he added:

"That wasn't the first time I've had to go through an ordeal like that. A long time ago I experienced the loss of the son from my first marriage. He drowned inexplicably on one of our rare trips to the beach. I must confess that I almost went crazy. So, I clung to my religion so that I wouldn't fall to pieces, and now I know we have to obey God's will. We are no more than creatures in need of divine help every instant of our human experience."

"Of course," Antonina broke in, optimistically, "without spiritual support, we couldn't take even one step on the terrain of true inner harmony. The death of the body isn't always the worst thing that can happen to us. How many times do hopeless parents have to watch the moral death of their children due to crime or addiction? I, too, lost one of the offspring that God had entrusted to me; still, I tried to get used to missing him without being rebellious, for the Lord's Wisdom must not be scorned."

“I’m really glad to hear that!” said the railroader. “After I had devoted myself more seriously to Catholicism by reading St. Augustine, I noticed a blessed renewal had come over me.”

And looking more attentively at Antonina, he asked:

“Are you Catholic too?”

She smiled subtly and replied:

“No, Amaro, in matters of faith I have accepted the evangelical approach of Spiritism; even so, that doesn’t keep me from believing that we serve the same Master.”

“Ah, yes! Jesus is our gateway. I don’t see religion as being a cause for division. With you being a Spiritist and I being a Catholic, we speak the same language when it comes to faith. I believe that, like the sun, Divine Providence shines on all.”

“It is a great joy to sense the nobility of your soul,” Antonina commented enthusiastically; “deep down, we want to be sincere Christians, and your kindness enables me to see the beauty of Christ in noble lives.”

Amaro was unable to respond, however.

A taxi stopped at the door and the family doctor got out of it to examine Zulmira.

After the usual greetings, he headed for her room. When he saw that Amaro meant to follow him, he told him to stay with his visitors because he was going to subject the patient to a meticulous examination and wanted to listen to her alone.”

Evelina showed the doctor to her mother’s room, where he was kindly received by Clarenco and Odila.

The conversation in the other room switched to being focused on Zulmira.

The worried Amaro talked about his bed-ridden wife, surmising the delicateness of the situation.

Zulmira had begun to languish with Julio’s illness and had not eaten a thing since his death.

In spite of all the doctors’ advice and all her loved ones’ appeals, she seemed completely disinterested in life.

She had weakened alarmingly.

As if he wanted to discuss his family matters with the attentive Mario, he told him about his wife's mental problems before the birth of Julio, whom death had snatched away.

With the victory of having become a mother, Zulmira had seemed like a completely new person.

She was more joyful, more alive.

She was in the best of health once again.

But with the child's discarnation, a new setback had struck the home.

Sickness had once more found asylum amid its four walls.

Mario, exchanging meaningful looks with Antonina from time to time, was caught between perplexity and disillusion.

Amaro's confession had been a display of true humility.

On many occasions, Mario had imagined Amaro as being a well of pride and arrogance, and he would often find himself arguing heatedly with him in thought.

But now, he saw that his antagonist was just an ordinary person who was as much in need of peace and understanding as he himself was.

The entente was progressing nicely, when the doctor came back into the living room.

With a distraught look, he said to the railroader:

"Amaro, we need to do something right now. Zulmira has worsened a great deal over the past few hours. The serum I gave her yesterday has not brought the required results. She is extremely weak. I believe a blood transfusion is crucial tonight so that we do not run up against any insurmountable obstacles tomorrow."

Amaro turned white.

Antonina turned silently to Silva as if to say, heart to heart:

"Don't hesitate. Now is the time to help. Use this opportunity."

Mario got up mechanically, and before Amaro could make any reference to the matter, he explained to the doctor:

“I would greatly appreciate it if you would accept my help. I’m a blood donor at the hospital where I work. If you would call your pediatrician colleague – the one you resorted to in Julio’s case – he will confirm it.”

And looking at his formal rival, he said in an almost pleading voice:

“Amaro, please let me do this! I want to help Zulmira somehow! ... After all, we are both good brothers now.”

Moved, Amaro embraced him in acknowledgement.

“Thank you so much, Silva!”

He did not know what else to say.

With eyes full of concern, he went into Zulmira’s room and enveloped her in manifestations of caring.

Antonina sat Haroldo down by a pile of old magazines and made herself available to Evelina for any housework that needed to be done, while Mario and the doctor left hurriedly to get what they would need.

An hour later, the patient’s room was brightly lit for the procedure.

Zulmira was surprised when she saw Mario, but she was too exhausted to show either interest or displeasure. When Mario introduced Antonina to her, she said only a few monosyllables with a slight smile of recognition.

Acting as nurse, the young widow looked like a providential figure.

She lovingly assisted the patient and helped the doctor with what needed to be done; and capturing the gratitude of her new friends, she worked with Evelina to ensure that all the measures having to do with hygiene were looked after in good order.

When the transfusion was completed, the patient responded as hoped; Silva, however, either because he himself had become weakened or because the amount of blood had been too much, collapsed in utter exhaustion.

But a different light shone in his eyes.

He looked as if he had lost the troubles that had been torturing him. He felt like he had been rehabilitated before his own conscience. He had brought to his former enemies his own heart in the form of a fraternal visit. And his energies, infused into the organic field of the woman who used to be his beloved, were helping him rid himself of the old thoughts of bitterness that had for so long flagellated his inner life.

Noticing his drop in energy, the doctor immediately took appropriate measures. Then Mario was made comfortable in a large chair by his friends.

The doctor seemed more encouraged when he left.

Antonina made some coffee, which was welcomed by all, and the conversation was resumed with joy.

Antonina offered to come back.

She was a factory worker, and as a mother she was responsible for three children; nevertheless, she was available for a couple of days.

Amaro remarked about how hard it was to find a nurse or governess at difficult times and gratefully accepted.

Antonina happily promised to return with Lisbela the next morning. She was certain that the girl could entertain Zulmira with her child-like behavior, thereby mitigating her longing heart as a mother.

Evelina was delighted and gave her a hug. She had become attuned to Antonina as if they were two sisters.

Having recovered his strength somewhat, and positively happy, Mario got ready to leave via taxi.

Everyone said goodbye in an environment of constructive cordiality.

Silva gazed at his companion with acknowledgment and caring. He felt reconciled with himself and radiated the silent joy of someone who had found happiness again.

## 37

# Readjustment

After our friends had left, Clarencio surrounded Zulmira with special care by giving her comforting passes.

The blood transfusion had done wonders.

Little by little, her force centers were settling down.

Ever since Julio's discarnation, the poor thing had not enjoyed as profound of a rest as she did now.

Our instructor asked Odila to prepare little Julio to meet his mother again.

Zulmira would be taken to him to renew her energies.

While our sister was off fulfilling this mission, Clarencio said optimistically:

"A comforting dream is a blessing of health and joy for our incarnate brothers and sisters."

We were about to respond, but the patient, as if under deep hypnosis, got up in her spirit body and stared at us in amazement.

The look in her surprisingly lucid eyes spoke of her maternal anxiety.

Clarencio stroked her hair as if she were his daughter, urging her to remain calm and trusting.

He was surrounding her in tender conversation when we left.

Borne up in our arms, Zulmira volitated without realizing it.

I noticed that the magnificent spectacle of nature had not gotten her attention. Her mental screen was occupied only by Julio's image.

Lar da Benção looked marvelous.



Flowers of rare beauty decorated the road and immersed it in a gentle fragrance.

Here and there, sweet melodies filled the air.

The blazing glory of the sky induced us to a prayer of reverence and praise to the Heavenly Father, but due to her inner torture, poor Zulmira seemed untouched by the magnificence of the surroundings, making me realize once more that the true paradise of the soul resides where love is to be found.

I could see that due to her loving devotion, the surroundings did not matter to her. In light of that tormented love, asking her anything would have been futile.

I think that if instead of the glorious light of Lar da Benção we had seen only darkness, for that suffering mother's spirit the scene would still have been like paradise if she could hold her unforgettable little one in her arms.

Who can rightly define the impenetrable secrets that God has placed in hearts that love?

When we went into the nursery, where the boy was sleeping under Odila's and Blandina's selfless watch-care, the suffering mother would have tried to throw herself on the sleeping child if Clarencio had not delicately restrained her, warning her paternally:

"Zulmira, don't disturb the little one if you really love him."

"But he's my son!" she cried, half out of her mind.

"We know that Julio was sheltered in your lap while he was on the earth, and that is why we are your companions on this trip to soothe your grief. Still, don't let selfishness darken your soul! ... A mother's love is a limitless treasure, of course; however, we mustn't forget that we are all children of God, our Eternal Father! Calm down! Ask the Lord for the necessary resources so that your devotion may be a positive measure for your needy little one!"

Touched by these words, Zulmira broke down in tears.

Lovingly supported by Odila, who was trying to lift her spirits, she recognized her and suddenly remembered the struggle they had gone through when the child had drowned.

Remorse struck her again, and she pleaded:

“Odila! Please, forgive me; forgive me! ... I can now see the hell I put you through when I neglected your son ... I’m paying for my deplorable carelessness with tears! Please, help me, dear sister! ... Be for my Julio the guardian that I was not for yours!”

Odila stroked Zulmira’s hair compassionately and replied:

“Now settle down! Affliction is a fire that consumes us ... Let’s pay life with the tribute of our resignation to suffering so that we may be truly worthy of heavenly assistance.”

And kissing her on the eyes, she added:

“Wipe away the tears that lash you needlessly. Serenity is our road to spiritual reconstruction. Don’t dwell on the past ... Let’s live in the present and do the best we can.”

“But now as I suffer the hardships of my trial,” stressed Zulmira in a bitter tone of voice, “I constantly recall your little angel.”

Odila held her close and led her closer to the sleeping boy. Nodding toward him, she explained happily:

“Listen to me, Zulmira! My little one is your little one. This Julio, here and now, was my Julio of yesterday. Heavy debts from the past have forced him to accept the difficulties of the moment ... In our present learning experience, his life was cut short twice so that he could more fully appreciate the blessing of the earthly school.”

Before Zulmira’s look of confusion, she added convincingly:

“The body of flesh is a garment that our Julio has used in two different ways via our intermediary.”

And smiling:

“So you can see that we are two mothers sharing one and the same love.”

We could see that the amazed Zulmira wanted to respond, but the shock of the revelation seemed to have paralyzed her vocal cords.

In the depths of her soul something had obviously altered her emotive field.

She dried her tears and her eyes shone with more clarity.

She looked like a living statue of inexpressible hope.

She willingly let Odila lead her to a nearby bed so that she could get the rest she needed.

Yes, now – she said to herself, surprised – I’m beginning to understand ... The Julio that had been prematurely expelled from the physical experience by drowning had returned to the world to make another attempt, which had also ended in just a short time ...

But why? Why?

Her grief-filled mind was trying to grasp the secrets of time by projecting it into the remote past, but her dilacerated mind pained her ... In reality, it would not be possible for her under these circumstances to make any incursion into the realm of her memories; still, she was finally beginning to understand the Eternal Goodness that unites souls by the same bonds of toil and hope on the redemptive way ... She recalled the cold animosity she had felt toward Julio shortly after her marriage to Amaro and the unmanifested jealousy that she felt because of the attention Amaro lavished on him. She realized that, by linking him to her maternal heart, Divine Providence had sublimated her sentiments.

She now felt an inexpressible caring and an illuminated love for him.

Her spirit thus transformed, she no longer saw Odila as a rival but as a benefactor, who had obviously witnessed her transfiguration.

She entwined herself with Odila in silent tears as if she were a daughter trying to hide herself in her mother’s arms.

Truly touched, Odila returned these loving manifestations by caressing Zulmira’s hair.

“She needs rest,” said Clarencio, “any further remembrance at this point would only increase her mental conflict.”

Odila let go, leaving Zulmira alone to get some rest, and followed us.

As we said goodbye, the instructor advised her to leave Zulmira in the nursery for a few more hours. That way, her dense body would be more fully benefitted by reparative sleep.

We would return later to take her back home in a way that would ensure her overall improvement as much as possible.

We left, but would return shortly.

When our instructor deemed it appropriate, we returned to Lar da Benção to restore our friend to her far-off nest.

It was 9:00 a.m. when the patient, under our watch-care, woke up in her physical body.

As Zulmira retook the denser cerebral apparatus, she could not describe the memory of her trip except as having been a wonderful dream.

She had the distinct impression that she had seen Julio “somewhere,” and this had certainly restored her peace-of-mind and trust.

She felt lighter, almost blissful.

Attending to her call, Evelina noticed the improvement and gave thanks to God.

She brought Antonina and Lisbela into the room. The widow had arrived earlier with her daughter with a big desire to be of help.

The happy patient greeted them. She vaguely remembered last night and thanked Antonina for the care she had given her. She accepted a nourishing breakfast and felt so much better that she did not hesitate to tell Antonina about the feeling of renewal that had come over her.

She was absolutely sure that she had seen Julio and had held him in her arms ... But where and how? She couldn't say. And yet, the happiness she was feeling was proof of the fact that she had reaped real benefits last night.

“Fortunately, the blood transfusion was a complete success!” exclaimed Evelina, delighted.

“Yes,” replied Antonina in agreement, “that measure was a great help, but I'm sure that Zulmira really did meet Julio again in the spirit realm, and that gave her renewed strength for the struggle.”

This faithful assertion was received by the patient with sincere joy.

“Do you really think so?” she asked with glistening eyes.

“Sure; why not? There is no death as we understand it. Our dearly departed loved ones extend their arms to us from the Beyond. I too have a son in the Greater Life and he has been an invaluable support.”

Zulmira displayed uncommon interest in the conversation.

There are times in our lives when we are punished by our hunger for faith, and Antonina was a radiant fount of optimism and moral support.

Evelina and Lisbela went to another part of the house to do some cleaning and the two friends began conversing more intimately.

Antonina's help was truly providential, because when we left, we saw that Zulmira, with soul restored by new hopes, showed the secure tranquility of blessed convalescence on her face.

## Marriage Bliss

The storm of sentiments in the group of souls we were observing was waning bit by bit.

Julio, in the spirit world, was no longer suffering as he waited for the right opportunity to return to the physical realm, and Zulmira, under Antonina's beneficent influence, had recovered enough to return to the joy of living.

Mario Silva, transformed under the young widow's guidance, had developed a strong bond with her and had grown used to her company.

A solid friendship had been formed among the various characters of our story.

They visited one another every week, which brought unspeakable pleasure to Evelina; in fact, she had become Antonina's ward, so great was the affinity that characterized their predilections and tendencies.

Amaro's domestic temple had been transfigured.

Optimism had infiltrated everyone's hearts.

They began taking walks on Sundays, and Silva, now part of the group, seemed to have returned to his original youthfulness.

The social camaraderie had changed his outlook.

He had lost the taciturnity in which most single men are immersed.

Lisbela had become strongly attached to him and the brothers Haroldo and Henrique had made him the confidant of all their childhood plans.

Amaro and Zulmira would often attend the Gospel study in Antonina's home with loving respect and would leave afterwards, edified and happy. They admired Antonina more and more, and using his limited abilities,

Amaro began to do what he could for the two boys' initial education, although he involved Mario in all such endeavors.

One bright Sunday morning, we were visiting Amaro's home to check on Zulmira's health, when Silva arrived to wait for Antonina and her kids. The whole group had planned on having a picnic lunch in a nearby park.

The Minister looked pleased and commented:

"Thanks be to Jesus, our young healthcare worker has really improved. He is happier, more accessible, well-disposed."

"One could say that a revolution has broken out within him," I asserted in agreement.

"Love is like that – a power that changes one's destiny."

Perhaps because Hilario smiled mischievously, Clarenco continued:

"When we were involved in helping Leonardo Pires, I was able to consult the plan traced out for Antonina's reincarnation and I know that she has promised to collaborate maternally so that he can receive a new physical body. As Lola Ibaruri, she was the cause behind the poisoning that exterminated his inner peace, a wrong that she now hopes to right. She will welcome as the son of her heart the one who was her companion in irresponsibility in the past, leading him to a higher order of instruction."

This comment really moved us.

Amazed, Hilario responded:

"That way, Silva ..."

But Clarenco cut him short:

"Silva and Leonardo are entwined in complex, mutual debts. For a long time now they have cultivated the thornbush of reciprocal aversion. Now caught in the web of blood kinship, we hope they can be reeducated. No one can avoid the Law."

As if his mind were taking in our conversation, connected to us by the invisible wires of thought, Amaro tapped Mario on the shoulder and said to him:

"Listen, Mario, I have no right to try and interfere in your life, but since I regard you as my brother, I have been thinking about your future ... Don't you think Antonina is a woman worthy of your ideal as a man of the good?"

Mario blushed and was speechless. His friend continued:

“Ever since we became friends again, my respect for her distinctiveness has been growing. She has been a real blessing here in our home. She’s still young and could help build a home that would be a sanctuary for your experiences. I’ve been really impressed by the sacrifices she has made as a young mother, but if she were married to you, she would stay healthy, and that would of course be invaluable to a lot of people. I’ve already asked about her at the factory where she works. She’s loved by everyone there. She has been a nurse for several coworkers and always a selfless sister. Her supervisors praise her irreprehensible conduct. That is quite remarkable for a widow who is only thirty-two years old. Besides, I’ve noticed that her kids are united to your heart, as if they belonged to you. Doesn’t it pain you to see her face her battles all by herself?”

Mario had recovered somewhat from his shock and replied humbly:

“I know what you mean ... I have thought about the possibility, but I’m not a young kid anymore.”

“Well, that’s why the present moment requires a plan ... A home is one of the most valuable investments for the future.”

“Even so, I think that the heart beating in my chest is like a dying bird. Frankly, I feel incapable of feeling any passion.”

“Now that’s just plain silly!” Amaro joked. “Happiness is nearly impracticable in the impulsive loves that bubble up from the sentiments like illusory champagne.”

And smiling, he emphasized:

“The ninety degrees in the shade passion between lovers is often just a wildfire that leaves only ashes behind. The more experience I get, the more I realize that matrimony is, above all else, a union between souls. I’m speaking with the wisdom of someone who has been married twice. Passion, dear fellow, is responsible for all the dollhouses that offer the saddest spectacles wherever you go. True friendship is the real guarantee of a blissful marriage. Without the foundations of fraternal communion and mutual respect, marriage soon becomes a heavy chain in the prison of social appearances.”

Mario listened to these thoughts amid ecstasy and wonder.



Yes – he thought – ever since he had met Antonina that first time, he had felt her to be the ideal woman capable of understanding his soul.

He had devoted himself to her and her three kids with immense caring and unsurpassable trust.

That generous and humble home had incorporated his life.

If he were forced to leave for any reason, there is no doubt that he would feel injured in his dearest joys ...

While Amaro was sharing his thoughts, Silva was remembering ... remembering ...

The image of Antonina was now occupying the recesses of his heart. The bravery and humility with which that noble creature was facing the most difficult problems touched the innermost fibers of his being. Her continuous yet joyful sacrifices on behalf of her children, her natural detachment from the futilities that usually blind the female sentiment, the human solidarity with which she was able to carry on relations with her neighbor, and especially the crystal-clear character that she exhibited in every situation of everyday life, seemed, in that instant, somewhat different in his imagination.

Lost in thought, he seemed to be contemplating the rosebushes outside, indifferent to the external world.

Several minutes went by like that as he relived and thought about the past.

Then, as if he had awakened from a long, mental escape, he looked his friend in the eye and agreed:

“Amaro, you’re absolutely right. I cannot disobey what life is ordering me to do.”

They were unable to continue, however.

The widow and her kids had arrived. Zulmira and Evelina welcomed them joyfully.

We left our friends in the sweet tumult of domestic intimacy and returned to our temple of service.

Hundreds of questions were assailing our minds, but Clarencio limited himself to saying:

“Time is like a wave. It ebbs and flows. We must reap what we sow.”

A few days later, some of Antonina's spirit friends brought the good news of the engagement. Mario and the young widow hoped to get married a few days from now.

We visited the future couple several times before the wedding, which we all waited for happily.

Acknowledging the gestures of friendship and love that they happily received constantly from the future bride and groom, Amaro and Zulmira offered their home for the ceremony, which, on the appointed day, was performed as a civil act amid the most accentuated simplicity.

A large number of spirits from our realm rushed to the railroader's home, including the discarnate nuns that held the healthcare worker in particular esteem.

Adorned with roses, Zulmira's home was buzzing with friends.

Happiness transpired on everyone's faces.

That evening, nearly all the guests got together again at Antonina's house.

The newly-weds wanted to pray in the company of affective bonds, thanking the Lord for the happiness of that unforgettable day.

The humble abode was filled with loving and illuminated spirits inspiring everyone with enthusiasm, hope, joy and peace.

Whoever saw that small home in all its expression of higher spirituality would say they were beholding a nest full of joy and light.

In the small, crowded room, an old uncle of the bride stood up and offered the prayer.

Clarencio approached him and stroked the head that the years had whitened, and his wizened lips, in the blessed heat of the inspiration with which our instructor enveloped his soul, prayed movingly to Jesus, asking him to help everyone in their obedience to his divine will.

Tears of serenity filled our eyes.

When the prayer ended, Haroldo, Henrique and Lisbela, dressed in white, passed out liqueurs and sweets.

Filled with emotion, we surrounded the newlyweds to say our goodbyes.

As we embraced them, we saw Evelina, in the glow of her springtime youth, accept the loving company of a young man who seemed to have his heart set on her.

The Minister smiled and explained:

“That is Lucas, Antonina’s brother. He is a future type-setter in Sao Paulo. His fine spiritual upbringing will soon be connected with Evelina to carry out the endeavors awaiting her in the world.”

Cutting short the possibility of our asking too many questions, he added:

“All is love on the pathway of life. Let us learn how to use it to glorify the good with our own toil. Everything will be a blessing.”

We left, immensely happy.

And because our responsibilities were calling to us from afar, we continued on our way with our selfless instructor, trying to assimilate the precious conjugation of the verb “to serve.”

# 39

## Thoughts

About one month after the Silvas' wedding, we were asked one night by Odila to go get Zulmira and Antonina for a private meeting at Lar da Benção.

Both of them looked enraptured outside their physical bodies.

Happily holding hands, they contemplated heaven and earth, touched with sublime hope.

A small group of friends were waiting for us at Blandina's home amid captivating displays of affection and appreciation. Sister Clara was one of the distinguished guests.

Upon contact with that environment of genuine fraternity, the two women yielded to the ecstasy of peace and joy.

Their inner exaltation was portrayed so purely on their faces that it was as if they had entered heaven itself.

Loving words and comforting emotions were being exchanged in the large room, which Blandina had decorated with flowers.

Love-filled remarks were filling the conversation, when Antonina, who was more lucid than Zulmira, asked about the reason for the blessing they were receiving.

Acknowledgement flooded their hearts, like the smell of perfume wafting from its vial.

Clara caressed her lightly and explained in motherly fashion:

“My daughters, on life's pathway we go through times of sowing and phases of reaping. Up to this point on your missions as women, time has provided you with shocks and enigmas that were planted long ago. With humility and faith, with a wonderful outlook and moral values, you have

overcome the arduous conflicts that frustrated your highest aspirations. Those were dark days of the past reflected in the present; but now your path will be much more peaceful. The patience to which you have been devoted has prevented the formation of clouds of rebelliousness and the sky is once again bright and cheerful. It is as if the day has been reborn, resplendent with light. The field of existence is in need of more work and it is the time for sowing.”

The conversation in the room stopped suddenly.

Everyone wanted to hear what Clara was saying. Their silence meant that she was regarded as the incarnation of wisdom.

After a brief pause, she continued:

“Now that the opportunity favors renewal, we need to know how to reconstruct our destiny. We mustn’t neglect it. Life is reduced to a sorry heap of darkness if it isn’t filled with toil. Let us run from the old marketplace of lamentation, where inactivity sells its bitter fruits! But to ascend the ladder of our evolution, we have to bathe our spirit each day in the living spring of love, love that is rewarded with the joy of giving! The Heavenly Father is omnipresent through the love that saturates the universe. Divine sentiment is the invisible current in which all worlds and beings are kept in balance. From the Throne of Magnificence flows the eternal fountainhead that sustains the angel in the heights and feeds the worm deep in the earth. Woman is a goblet that the All-Wise One has filled most intensely with the miraculous water of love so that life may be exalted. My sisters, let us be faithful to our mandate. On many occasions, if we are stuck in the mud of selfishness or the bird-lime of hatred, we pollute the sacred liquid and turn it into a destructive poison. Let us be cautious. The price of true peace lies in sacrificing our very lives. There can be no sublimation without renunciation in the castle of the soul, just as there can be no purification of the metal in the furnace without the fire of refinement!”

Clara looked at Antonina in a particular way and added:

“Daughter, our Zulmira needs no further incursion into the past to comprehend the holy duty of sheltering little Julio within the maternal sanctuary.”

We grasped the fact that Clara had perceived the need for Zulmira’s mental rest after the end of her long ordeal of preserving her own health and was trying to spare her any mnemonic exertion.

“Our friend here,” she continued, indicating Zulmira with a look, “is aware of the fact that motherhood awaits her again in a short time ... But what about you?”

With the radiant kindness that normally marked her face, she emphasized:

“Do you remember your former experiences and are you aware of the motives that inspired you to remarry?”

In light of the surprise on Antonina’s face, Clara, with a gesture familiar to us from Clarencio’s magnetic procedures, lightly caressed her brow and repeated:

“Remember! Remember!”

Enabled by Sister Clara’s power at certain centers of her memory, Antonina went pale and exclaimed, controlling her emotions:

“Yes, I’m the singer! I can see it all! ... The battles in Paraguay! ... A small farm in Luque! ... The abandoned family! ... Jose Esteves, today’s Mario ... Yes, I can see the reason for my second nuptials!”

With affliction in her eyes, she asked:

“And Leonardo? Where is Leonardo, the poor thing?”

“There’s no need to dig deeper into your memories,” responded Clara, “this isn’t a science lab but a fraternal get-together. You only need to remember.”

Then, turning her attention to both women, she continued:

“In a short while you will both be called to a new endeavor in the apostolate of motherhood. Zulmira will receive our Julio in the conch shell of her heart and you, Antonina, will restore Leonardo Pires, your grandfather and partner in destiny, to the treasure of an earthly body. Within the domestic sanctuary, unruly affections are recomposed so that we can proceed into the future, into the sunshine of happiness. My daughters, no one evolves without balancing their accounts with the past. So, let us pay the debts that have kept us prisoner in the lower circles of life, using our time of incarceration for redemption, for improving ourselves still more. Let us love, perfecting ourselves! Let us see the human home as the road to our regeneration! The family is a microcosm of redemptive obligations, in which we live to serve the greater family that comprises all humankind. Family members in need of

tolerance and caring are a difficult point that we have to overcome by using them to increase our humility and comprehension. A callous father, a mean husband or a rebellious son symbolize beneficent battle-lines, where we can practice the utmost patience, tenderness and devotion! ... Regarding our children especially, we mustn't forget that they belong to God and life above all else! ... In the physical realm, Divine Providence seals our memories when we are reborn, enveloping us with the renewing breath of blessed hope! That is why we need to remember that our children are always invaluable ties of existence that require our balance and discernment in all our decisions ... To fulfill the grand task imposed on us by motherhood, we must understand that their psychological makeup is different than ours, and that they often require a type of happiness that is out of harmony with our own way of being. Hence, we can unselfishly prepare them for the destiny they are called to fulfill! Enslaving love is like poisoned honey that entangles us in darkness. Let us keep our minds focused on justice so that our love may be a blessing that has the potential to instruct those around us in the school of wholesome labor!"

During a spontaneous pause, Zulmira asked humbly:

"Selfless benefactor, what is the best way for us to solve our problems?"

"You have both overcome frightening days of spiritual crises and have earned the chance to restructure your destinies. Now – let me repeat – it is time to sow. Let us seize this opportunity of reconnection. You are two power centers capable of working invaluable transformations in your families. Let us see friendship as fraternal understanding that tolerates and comprehends everything, that acts and helps to spread the Highest Good. In essence, being a neighbor or living together is a gift that the Lord grants us on behalf of our own readjustment."

Because Zulmira and Antonina wanted to ask more questions, Clara urged them:

"Don't be afraid. Prayer is the invisible thread of our communion with the Divine Plane, and in the light of prayer, we shall all live together. In doubt, let's always prefer self-denial. Taking responsibility makes problem solving easier."

She finished with a smile:

"Let's not forget the privilege of serving."

Little Julio was brought into the room by a large cortege of garrulous children.

Laughter and tears were mingled in praise to Divine Goodness.

After a few joy-filled hours, we escorted the two mothers back to the physical realm for their sublime labor in their earthly homes.



# 40

## In Prayer

One year after Antonina's wedding, we all went to Amaro's home, where we had so often met together amid prayer and expectation.

Life had gone on as always ...

Julio and Leonardo had been reborn in peace, almost at the same time, bringing lofty plans of service into the world. Newly arrived on earth, they smiled innocently at us on their mothers' laps.

Aware of their obligations, Amaro and Zulmira, Silva and Antonina continued close to one another, interlaced in fraternal understanding.

The humble home was magnificently decorated with flowers and was overflowing with smiling friends.

Lucas and Evelina were getting married.

On the two planes, everything was hope, joy, peace and love amongst incarnates and discarnates.

The newlyweds gazed at each other in bliss and Odila, as the home's "priestess," came and went, putting things in order and providing guidance for the event.

It was getting dark when, to everyone's delight, the judge read the marriage contract and pronounced the classic, "I declare you married in the name of the Law."

The two kissed each other with unsurpassable love and we were surprised to see that Odila, in silent prayer, had become transfigured and crowned with light. Her eyes looked more lucid as in rapture she contemplated her daughter.

But yielding to a secret impulse, instead of approaching Evelina, she went toward Zulmira, enlacing her in tears.

There was such natural love and spontaneous acknowledgement in the gesture that we were seized by intense emotions. Two maternal souls in the same vibration of peace were transfused, drawn together in inner victory by a job well-done.

Enveloped in the wave of tenderness in which she found herself immersed, Zulmira began to weep, overcome with inexpressible happiness, as if some unarticulated melody from heaven had entirely invaded her heart.

Right then and there, Amaro, a man touched with living faith, asked Antonina to say a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus.

Antonina did not hesitate.

Closing her eyes, she seemed to be reaching out to us in spirit like an antenna attracting a sound wave.

Clarencio approached her, and touching her forehead, he began to concentrate.

Gently influenced by the Minister, our friend prayed in a heartfelt voice:

*Dear Jesus, bless this time of celebration. We offer it to you as a token of our love and gratitude.*

*Please, help our friends who are getting married today. Turn their hopes into sweet reality.*

*Teach us, O Lord, to receive into the home the primer of light that you have given to us in the world – the benevolent school of our hearts for life immortal.*

*On this field of struggle, enable us to understand the generous sowing of renewal and fraternity, in which all of us must learn and serve.*

*May we finally become more like one another's brothers and sisters as we cultivate peace through our efforts for the good.*

*You, who consecrated the happiness of the home at the wedding in Cana, transform the living water of our sentiments into ineffable gifts of work and joy.*

*Reflect your love in the simplicity of our lives, just as the sun is reflected in the drop of humble water.*

*Lead us, O Master, to your heart, which we long for, eternal and supreme, for our destinies; and that your goodness may command our lives is our ardent desire, now and forever. So be it.*

Antonina had finished her prayer.

A sweet emotional exaltation hovered over everyone.

Deeply touched, Odila gathered Amaro and Zulmira in her arms, as if they were children of her soul.

I looked at Silva's wife, from whom the Minister had stepped aside, and I recalled the night when I visited her home for the first time.

I have never forgotten the excursion on which we were appointed to accompany her on her visit to her little Julio, when we were completely unaware of the importance of her participation in the upcoming drama we were about to share in.

I asked the instructor if he had known about our friend's situation at the time of our first contact.

"Yes, yes," he responded kindly, "but I didn't let you two know beforehand her significance in the living novel we would be following, because all of us, my friend, need to realize that toil is our lesson. Let us use our minds in the work we are here to carry out and we will receive the key to every enigma."

The lesson was extremely important, but I couldn't continue the conversation, since Sister Clara, embracing Odila, invited us to return.

Amid hugs of farewell, Lucas and Evelina got into the car that would take them to their new life in Sao Paulo.

The celebration had ended ...

I asked our instructor respectfully:

"Is our story going to end like this, with a laughter-filled wedding as in a film with a happy ending?"

Clarencio wore the smile of his usual wisdom and replied:

"No, Andre. The story hasn't ended. What ended was a crisis that gave us a reason to learn so many lessons. Because of the remarkable effort with which our friends dedicated themselves to their readjustment, they can now have a few years of relative peace, in which they can replant the field of their

destinies. Later on, however, suffering and trial, infirmity and death will return to test their achievements. Struggle perfects our lives until they become harmonized, struggle-free, with the Designs of the Lord.”

The Minister could not continue.

Our group of dozens of fellow spirits had started back.

The firmament was ablaze with fiery flames and could not have been more beautiful ...

Upon arriving back at Lar da Benção, however, we noticed that Odila was weeping.

That valorous womanly soul had won the battle over herself, but she did not seem very happy about her victory. Clara had secured a shining work position for her in a higher sphere, but our heroine seemed painfully troubled.

As we entered Blandina’s sanctuary, where we had so often met to examine the problems that had touched us, the Minister embraced Odila and suggested paternally:

“Odila, while we are celebrating our victory, tell us what heaven you’re looking for ...”

She approached Sister Clara and kissed her hand in a silent gesture of acknowledgment. Then, she turned to our instructor and responded humbly:

“Devoted benefactor, my earthly home is my heaven.”

“But you do realize that it no longer belongs to you.”

“Yes, I know that; still, I want to serve it, even if it doesn’t ... I love my husband for being my unforgettable companion of the life eternal. I bless the wonderful woman to whom he now belongs and whom I have come to love as the daughter of my tenderness ... I love my children, even though I know they cannot feel the heat of my heart ... God knows that now I love with no intentions of being loved and that I offer myself without expecting anything in return so that I may learn with Jesus to give without receiving.”

Her voice was choked with emotion.

On our part, our eyes were filled with tears.

Visibly moved, Clarenco raised her bowed head, stroked her hair, and putting a flower of light on her chest, he exclaimed:

“Wherever our love resides, there shines the heaven we dream of. You deserve the heaven you seek. Return, Odila, to your home whenever you wish. Be for your husband and the souls next to him a star every night and a blessing every day! True love has given you that right. Return and love ... And when you have risen from the human valley, your heart will be like a ray of sunlight, bringing to Christ the souls that you will shepherd in the immense field of life!”

Odila knelt down and kissed his venerable hands.

Just then, a deep longing assailed my oppressed soul.

I had the strange feeling of a father searching futilely for the children snatched from his love. Like a bird far from its nest, I was tormented by the longing to recover my own home right away ...

Hot tears welled up from my heart to my eyes, and afraid of disturbing the harmony reigning there, I went to a nearby garden. Alone, I gazed up at the star-painted night sky.

The breeze seemed to be saying:

“Only believe!” ... The fragrance of the flowers around me appealed silently, “Don’t hesitate!” And the twinkling constellations, hanging in the heavens, gave me the impression of flames of light eternal beckoning to me, urging me without words: “Struggle and perfect yourself! The fullness of your love will also shine someday!”

Then, in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father, I perceived that my pacified spirit was smiling once again at the ineffable touch of sublime hope.

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