



# CHICO XAVIER

BY THE SPIRIT  
**ANDRE LUIZ**

LIFE IN THE  
SPIRIT WORLD

# NOSSO LAR





Nosso Lar



Francisco Candido Xavier

# Nosso Lar

By the Spirit  
Andre Luiz

*Translated by Darrel W. Kimble and Marcia M. Saiz*



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# Contents

- A new friend
- A message from Andre Luiz
- 1 - In the lower regions
- 2 - Clarencio
- 3 - A collective prayer experience
- 4 - The spirit doctor
- 5 - Receiving medical assistance
- 6 - An invaluable warning
- 7 - Lisias's explanations
- 8 - The organization of services
- 9 - The problem of nutrition
- 10 - The "Forest of Waters"
- 11 - Knowing more about the spirit realm
- 12 - The Umbral
- 13 - In the Minister's office
- 14 - Clarencio's elucidations
- 15 - A visit from mother
- 16 - Confidences
- 17 - In Lisias's home
- 18 - Love: food for the soul
- 19 - The discarnate young woman
- 20 - Notions about the home
- 21 - The conversation continues
- 22 - The hour-bonus
- 23 - Knowing how to listen
- 24 - An urgent appeal
- 25 - A benevolent suggestion

- 26 - New perspectives
- 27 - Work, at last
- 28 - At work
- 29 - Francisco's vision
- 30 - Inheritance and euthanasia
- 31 - The vampire
- 32 - About Veneranda
- 33 - Curious remarks
- 34 - With the newcomers from the Umbral
- 35 - A special meeting
- 36 - The dream
- 37 - A lecture by the Minister
- 38 - Tobias's case
- 39 - Listening to Laura
- 40 - As you sow, so shall you reap
- 41 - A call to struggle
- 42 - The Governor's speech
- 43 - In conversation
- 44 - The darkness
- 45 - In the field of music
- 46 - A woman's sacrifice
- 47 - Laura's return
- 48 - Family worship
- 49 - Returning home
- 50 - A citizen of Nosso Lar

# A new friend

Prefaces, in general, introduce authors, praising their merits and commenting on their personalities.

Here, the situation is different.

Our incarnate friends would search in vain for a doctor named Andre Luiz, listed in conventional records.

Sometimes, anonymity is the child of real understanding and true love. In order to redeem a disgraceful past, former names are changed in the process of reincarnation. Temporary forgetfulness acts as a blessing of Divine Mercy.

Andre, too, has needed to pull the curtain over himself.

That is why we cannot divulge the true identity of this terrestrial doctor and human author; instead, we introduce him as a new friend and brother in eternity.

In order to bring valuable insights to his earth-bound brothers and sisters, he had to renounce all conventions, including his own name. He did so to avoid hurting beloved hearts that are still tangled in the old cloaks of illusion. Those who are harvesting the ripe ears of corn must neither offend those who are planting some distance away nor disturb the unripe crops that are still developing.

We are aware that this book is not unique, that other entities have already talked about the conditions of life beyond the grave. Nevertheless, we have long hoped to bring into our spiritual circle someone who might transmit to other persons the value of his own experience, with all the possible details for rightly understanding the laws that preside over the efforts of diligent and well-meaning discarnate individuals in spheres invisible to the human eye, although intimately connected to the planet nonetheless.

Of course, many friends will smile when they read certain passages of the narrative; however, the unusual has always caused surprise in all eras. For instance, who didn't smile some time back when someone talked about aviation, electricity and radiophony?

Surprise, perplexity and doubt are normal for students who have not yet completed all their lessons. Such is more than natural; it is really only fair. Thus, we will refrain from commenting on other peoples' insights. Every reader must analyze for him or herself what he or she reads. Therefore, let us talk only about the essential aim of this work.

Spiritism is rapidly increasing its number of followers. Thousands of individuals are becoming interested in its endeavors, methods and experiments. In such an immensely new area, however, people should not neglect themselves.

It is not enough simply to investigate phenomena, to adhere verbally to a particular creed, to improve statistics, to indoctrinate the consciousnesses of others, to proselytize or to win the public's opinion, no matter how respectable this all may be in the physical realm. What is essential is that we acquire an understanding of our infinite potential and that we use it in the service of the good.

Earth's human beings have not been disinherited. They are God's children engaged in constructive labor and clothed in flesh, and they are students attending a worthwhile school, where they must learn to evolve. The human struggle is their opportunity, their tool and their textbook.

Communication with the invisible is a sacred activity, which is acting to restore pure Christianity. However, let none neglect their own needs in the place they occupy by the Lord's will.

Andre Luiz comes to tell you, dear reader, that the greatest surprise of physical death is that it places us face-to-face with our own conscience, wherein we build our own heaven, remain in purgatory, or immerse ourselves in the infernal abyss. He reminds us that the earth is a sacred workshop and that nobody will despise it without paying the price for the terrible error to which he or she has subjected his or her own heart.

Keep Andre's experience in the book of your soul. It states that it is not enough for individuals to cling to their human existence; that it is necessary to know how to profit from such an existence with dignity; that the steps of a Christian – whatever his or her religious school may be – should move surely

towards Christ, and that in our doctrinal area, we need both SPIRITISM and SPIRITUALISM, but most of all SPIRITUALITY.

EMMANUEL

Pedro Leopoldo, October 3, 1943.

# A message from Andre Luiz

Life never ceases. Life is an eternal fount and death is only an obscure game of illusion.

A great river follows its course before joining the immense sea. Likewise, the soul also follows its course of various roads and goes through different stages. It too receives streams of knowledge here and there, augmenting the way it expresses itself and purifying its character before reaching the Eternal Ocean of Wisdom.

The closing of our corporeal eyes is a very simple process.

Changing out of the physical cloak does not solve the fundamental problem of enlightenment, however, because changing out of one's cloak has nothing to do with the profound solutions to the problems of destiny and being.

Ah! Paths of souls; mysterious ways of the heart! It is necessary to travel them before attempting the supreme equation of eternal life! It is crucial that you live out their drama, that you know them detail by detail during the long process of spiritual perfection!

It would be extremely childish to believe that the mere "lowering of the curtain" could settle the transcendental questions concerning the Infinite.

One life – one act.

One body – one garment.

One century – one day.

One task – one experience.

One triumph – one acquisition.

One death – one breath of renewal.

How many lives, how many bodies, how many centuries, how many tasks, how many triumphs, and how many deaths do we still need?

And the scholar of religious philosophy speaks of final decisions and definitive positions!

Alas! Everywhere, there are those who are learned in doctrine but illiterate in spirit!

It takes a great effort for human beings to enroll in the school of the Gospel of Christ, an admission process that nearly always happens in a strange way: They find themselves alone in the company of the Master, struggling with a difficult course, learning lessons without visible professors, and listening to long lectures without spoken words.

Very long, therefore, is our laborious journey.

Our poor efforts aim only to give us an idea of that fundamental truth.

Thus, I am thankful, my friends!

I appear to you all in the anonymity that obeys fraternal charity. Human existence presents a great number of fragile vessels that cannot yet contain the whole truth. Moreover, at this time we are only interested in the profound experience itself, along with its collective values. We won't torment anyone with the idea of eternity. First and foremost, the vessels must become stronger. We will only provide some light news to the eager spirit of our brothers and sisters on the path of spiritual realization, those who understand, as we do, that "the spirit blows wherever it pleases."

And now, my friends, may my thanks fall silently upon this paper, retreating into the great silence of sympathy and gratitude. Attraction and acknowledgment, love and joy live in the soul. You can be sure that I hold similar values for you within the sanctuary of my heart.

May the Lord bless us.

ANDRE LUIZ

# 1

## In the lower regions

I felt like I had lost all notion of time. The idea of space had left me long ago.

I was sure that I no longer belonged to the incarnate ranks of the world, but my lungs continued to take deep breaths.

How long had I been the puppet of irresistible forces? It was impossible to tell.

Actually, I felt like a prisoner trapped behind dark bars of horror. With my hair on end, my heart pounding, and scared stiff, I often cried out like a madman. I begged for mercy and clamored against the painful despondency that had taken hold of my spirit. But when my loud cries didn't fall on an implacable silence, they were answered by lamenting voices even more pitiful than my own. At other times, sinister laughter rent the prevailing silence. I thought that some unknown companion out there was a prisoner of insanity. Diabolical forms, ghastly faces, animal-like countenances appeared from time to time, increasing my panic. When it wasn't pitch dark, the landscape seemed to be bathed in a lurid light as if shrouded in a thick mist that was warmed from afar by the rays of the sun.

The strange journey continued ... To what end? Who could say? I only knew that I had to keep moving. Fear drove me blindly onward. Where were my home, my wife and children? I had lost all sense of direction. The fear of the unknown and my dread of the darkness paralyzed all my powers of reasoning as soon as I had broken free of my last physical ties in the grave!

My conscience tormented me. I would have much preferred a total absence of reason – or non-existence.

From the beginning, tears had run constantly down my face and I only rarely enjoyed the blessing of sleep; however, any feeling of rest was

suddenly interrupted. Monstrous, sneering creatures would awaken me; I had to get away from them.

I realized I was in a different sphere: one that arose from the dust of the earth, but it was too late. Anguished thoughts weighed heavily on my mind, and when I would try to make some sense of it all, a string of incidents would drive my thoughts into confusion. Never before had the religious problem seemed so profound to me. The principles that had been purely philosophical, political and scientific now seemed completely secondary for human life. In my present view, they did represent a valuable heritage on the earth; however, I had come to realize that humankind was not comprised of transitory lifetimes, but of eternal spirits on their way to a glorious destination. I could see that something stands above every merely intellectual thought. That *something* is faith – a divine manifestation to human beings. Such an analysis came too late, however. Indeed, I had known the words of the Old Testament and had often leafed through the Gospels, but I was forced to realize that I had never searched the sacred writings with the light of my heart. I had identified with them through the critique of writers who were either not inclined to sentiment and conscience, or who were in outright disagreement with the essential truths. On other occasions, I had followed the interpretation of priests, never leaving the circle of contradictions into which I had willingly entered.

Actually, from my own point of view, I had not been a criminal, but the philosophy of living for the immediate present had absorbed me fully. My earthly existence, which had been transformed by death, had been no different than the average standard.

Born of perhaps excessively generous parents, I had earned my academic degrees without much sacrifice and had shared in the vices of the youth of my time. I had set up a home, and had had children. I had searched for a stability that would guarantee my family's economic tranquility, but on self-examination, something in the silent pangs of my conscience made me feel like I had wasted my time. I had lived on the earth, enjoyed its benefits and reaped the blessings of life, but I had never contributed anything towards repaying my enormous debt. I had had parents, whose generosity and sacrifices I never appreciated, and a wife and children, whom I fiercely imprisoned in the unyielding web of destructive selfishness. I had had a home, whose doors I closed to all who walked the desert of anguish. Deaf to the most elementary duties of fraternity, I had delighted in the joys of my own

family circle, but had forgotten to share such a divine blessing with the immense human family.

In the end, like a flower in a greenhouse, I couldn't stand the atmosphere of the eternal realities. I hadn't nurtured the divine seeds that the Lord of Life had sown in my soul. I had wrongfully suffocated them in my insatiable desire for my own welfare. I hadn't trained my organs for a new life. It was only right, then, that I should awaken here like a cripple, who, thrown into the infinite river of eternity, was unable to swim in the unstoppable current of water, or like a miserable beggar, who, exhausted in the middle of nowhere, wanders about at the mercy of a furious storm.

Oh, dear friends on earth! How many of you could avoid the bitter path of sorrow by cultivating the inner fields of your hearts! Light your lamps before crossing the great darkness. Seek the truth before the truth finds you unprepared. Sweat and work now, lest you weep later.

## 2

# Clarencio

“Suicide! Suicide! Criminal! Wretch!” Insults like these surrounded me in every direction. But where were those cruel-hearted malefactors? I sometimes caught glimpses of them as they glided through the thick darkness, and when my desperation reached the breaking point, I would attack them with all my strength; however, I futilely beat at the air in these paroxysms of rage. Sarcastic laughter would then sting my ears as the shadowy specters vanished into the darkness.

Who could help me? I was tortured by hunger and parched with thirst. The most-ordinary incidents of physical existence were laid bare before me. My beard had grown and my clothes were beginning to tear due to my efforts at survival in that unknown region. However, the most painful circumstance wasn't the terrible abandonment in which I found myself, but the incessant attacks of perverse forces that vexed me on the solitary and dark paths. Those forces angered me and kept me from coordinating my ideas. I desired to reflect maturely on the situation, to frame its causes and establish new trains of thought, but those voices, those laments mixed with such blatant accusations, bewildered me irremediably.

“What are you looking for, you wretch? Where do you think you're going, you suicide!?”

Such ceaselessly repeated accusations rent my soul. I was a wretch, but a suicide? Never! Such a charge wasn't logical, I thought. I had left my body against my will. I remembered my desperate duel with death. I could still hear the last medical diagnoses announced at the hospital. I remembered the efficient assistance and the painful dressings during those long days that followed my grave intestinal operation. During such reminiscing, I could actually feel the thermometer, the unpleasant prick of the needle, and finally, the last scene that preceded the big sleep: my still-young wife and my three

children staring at me in dread at the prospect of eternal separation. Afterwards ... my awakening in this dark and dank landscape, and the great trek that seemed endless.

Why was I being accused of suicide when I had been coerced into giving up my home, my family and my loved ones' sweet company? The strongest man will come to the end of his emotional endurance. Though I had tried to be firm and resolute at the beginning, I began to sink into long periods of despondency, and instead of building up my morale, I felt like my suffering would never end, and long-repressed tears visited me more frequently, pouring out of my heart.

To whom could I run? No matter how great the intellectual education I had brought from the world, it could do nothing now to alter the reality of my life. Before the infinite, my knowledge was like tiny soap bubbles blown about by the impetuous winds that transform landscapes. I was something carried by the typhoon of truth to faraway places. However, the situation hadn't changed another reality of my essential being. Asking myself if I hadn't gone crazy, I found that my awareness was highly alert, and that fact made it clear to me that I was still myself, that I still possessed the sentiment and learning acquired during my material experience. My physiological needs remained unchanged. Hunger preyed on my every fiber, but my ever-increasing weakness never made me feel utterly exhausted. From time to time, I came across some seemingly wild vegetables growing along humble trickles of water, into which I thirstily threw myself. I devoured the unknown leaves and glued my lips to the dark spring as long as the irresistible forces would allow before driving me on. I often tasted the mud on the road, tearfully recalling the daily bread of before. I frequently had to hide from enormous herds of animalesque beings that trampled past me like bands of insatiable beasts. Those were blood-curdling sights, which only increased my despair! It finally dawned on me that there must be an Author of Life, wherever he might be. This idea comforted me. I had detested all the religions of the world, but was now feeling the need for mystic comfort. A doctor extremely caught up in the nihilism of my generation, I was in need of a renewed attitude. It was vital that I confess the failure of my self-centeredness, to which I had proudly devoted myself.

Finally, I was totally out of energy and I felt myself completely prostrate in the mire of the earth without enough strength to get up. It was during that

bitter crisis that I implored the Supreme Author of Nature to reach out to me with his paternal hands.

How long did my plea last? How many hours did I spend praying with hands folded like an afflicted child? I only knew that a rain of tears washed down my face and that all my feelings focused on a pain-wrought prayer. Had I been totally forgotten? Wasn't I, too, a child of God, even though I had never thought of knowing his sublime activities while engulfed in the vanities of the human experience? Why wouldn't the Eternal Father forgive me, when he provided nests to helpless birds and lovingly watched over the delicate flower in the wild field?

Ah! One must have suffered a great deal in order to understand all the mysterious beauties of prayer. It is necessary to have known remorse, humiliation and extreme misfortune to effectively drink the sublime elixir of hope! It was at that moment that the dense mist cleared away, and someone came forward – an envoy from heaven. A kindly old man smiled paternally at me. Then, he bent down and gazed intently into my face with his big lucid eyes and said:

“Courage, my son! The Lord has not forsaken you.”

Bitter tears seemed to bathe my entire soul. I was deeply moved and tried to express my joy and to remark about the consolation he had brought me; yet, gathering all my remaining strength, I could only ask:

“Who are you, kind envoy of God?”

The unexpected benefactor smiled kindly and replied:

“My name is Clarencio, and I'm nothing more than your brother.”

And noticing my exhaustion, he added:

“Remain calm and quiet for now. You must rest to regain your strength.”

Then, he called to two companions, who seemed to be devoted servants, and ordered:

“Let's give our friend some first aid.”

A white sheet was spread out on the ground like a stretcher, and the assistants readied to carry me away on it.

As they carefully lifted me, Clarencio thought for a moment, and then explained like someone who has just recalled a pressing obligation:

“Let’s go. I need to get back to Nosso Lar<sup>1</sup> as soon as possible.”

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<sup>1</sup> Portuguese for “Our Home”: A full description of this service colony is presented by the spirit author in chapter 8 – Tr.

## 3

# A collective prayer experience

Although I was being transported as any ordinary injured person would be, I saw a comforting picture unfolding before me.

Leaning on a staff made of some kind of luminous substance, Clarenco stopped in front of an enormous door carved into a great wall that was covered with graceful and flowery vines. When he touched a certain spot on the wall, a wide breach opened up, through which we silently entered.

A mellow light bathed everything. In the distance, a graceful focus of light seemed to suggest a sunset on a spring evening. As we proceeded, I could make out charming buildings arrayed along extensive gardens.

At a nod from Clarenco, my bearers slowly laid down my improvised stretcher. Next, I saw the welcoming door of a white building that looked like a large hospital. At my benefactor's call, two young men dressed in snow-white linen tunics ran eagerly to my stretcher, and as they laid me on an emergency gurney in order to carefully carry me inside, I heard the kind old man recommend:

“Put our ward in the pavilion on the right. I have another commitment waiting for me now, but early tomorrow I'll return to see him.”

I gave him a look of gratitude as I was led to a comfortable, richly furnished and spacious room, where I was offered a welcome bed.

Enveloping my two assistants in the aura of my thankfulness, I made an effort to talk to them and finally managed to ask:

“Friends, whoever you might be, could you tell me what new world this is? What sun does this bright and comforting light come from?”

One of them stroked my brow as if he had personally known me for a long time and explained:

“We are in the spiritual spheres close to the earth, and the sun that is shining on us at this moment is the same one that used to warm our physical bodies. Here, however, our visual perception is much richer. The sun that the Lord lit for our earthly endeavors is actually more precious and beautiful than we ever imagined when we were in the corporeal realm. Our sun is the divine matrix of life, and its brightness comes from the Author of Creation.”

As though my Self had been absorbed in a wave of infinite respect, I gazed at the soft light entering the room through its windows and I lost myself in deep reflection. I recalled that I had never even looked up at the sun during my days on earth, and I meditated on the immeasurable goodness of the One who has given it to us to shine on the eternal path of life. I was like a fortunate blind man, whose eyes are opened to the sublimity of nature after having lived for long centuries in darkness.

Next, they served me a stimulating soup, followed by highly refreshing water that seemed infused with divine fluids. The small portion of liquid revived me unexpectedly. I couldn't tell what kind of soup it was – if it was a sedative or a salutary medicine. New energies flooded my soul and profound emotions vibrated in my spirit.

My greatest thrill, however, had been reserved for the moments that followed.

I had scarcely gotten over my consoling surprise when a divine melody wafted into the room, sounding like a soft beehive of sounds coming down from the higher spheres. Those musical notes of marvelous harmony went straight to my heart. The attendant at my side noticed my inquiring look and explained:

“The twilight hour has come to Nossos Lar. In every center of this service colony dedicated to Christ there is a direct link to the prayers of the Government Center.”

And while the music anointed the surroundings, he took his leave and said:

“Be at peace now. I'll return right after prayer.”

I was suddenly filled with anxiety.

“May I go with you?” I pleaded.

“You’re still weak,” he gently explained, “but if you feel disposed to come along ... ”

The music had renewed my deepest energies. Overcoming any difficulties, I rose from the bed and took hold of the fraternal arm that was offered to me. Walking with faltering steps, I came to an enormous hall, where a large assembly was meditating in deep silence. From the bright ceiling hung delicate garlands of flowers that extended down to the floor, forming radiating symbols of high spirituality. No one seemed to notice my presence, even though I could hardly contain my overwhelming awe. Everyone looked as if they were waiting for something. Working to hold back the many questions boiling in my mind, I noticed that in the background a remarkable picture of a wonderful, almost flaring light was being drawn on a giant screen. By some kind of advanced televisory process, a marvelous temple scenario appeared. Seated on a dais was an old man crowned with light and robed in a white tunic of shining scintillations, gazing aloft in an attitude of prayer. On a lower level, seventy-two figures accompanied him in respectful silence. I was greatly surprised to notice that Clarencio was among those gathered around the shining old man and that he was taking part in the assembly.

I pulled at my attendant friend’s arm, and knowing that my questions couldn’t wait until later, he explained in a low voice that sounded more like a light breeze:

“Be still. All the inhabitants and institutions of Nosso Lar are praying with the Governor via the long distance projection of sight and sound. Let us praise the Invisible Heart of Heaven.”

He had scarcely finished his explanation when the seventy-two figures began singing a harmonious, indescribably beautiful hymn. While Clarencio was within the circle of the venerable companions, his countenance seemed to shine with an intense light. The celestial canticle was composed of angelic notes of sublime gratitude. Mysterious vibrations of peace and joy floated all around, and as the silvery notes sounded a delightful staccato, a wonderful blue heart<sup>2</sup> with golden rays became visible above us in the distance on a higher level. The prayers were then answered by caressing music, coming perhaps from distant spheres. Then, a heavy rain of blue flowers began falling on us. Although we could see those tiny celestial flowers, we couldn’t grasp them with our hands, and when they touched our heads, they just melted

away. I experienced an extraordinary renewal of energy upon contact with the fluidic petals as if some kind of soothing balm was being applied to my heart.

As soon as the sublime prayer service was over, I was helped back to my quarters by my friend, who had been standing close by. However, I was no longer the seriously ill patient of a few hours before. My first collective prayer experience in Nossos Lar had worked a complete transformation. An unexpected comfort filled my soul. For the first time after so many years of suffering, my poor, longing and tormented heart, like a chalice that had remained empty for so long, was once again filled with the generous drops of the liqueur of hope.

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<sup>2</sup> Symbolic image formed by the mental vibrations of the inhabitants of the colony – Spirit Author.

## 4

# The spirit doctor

The next day after a deep and restorative sleep, I felt the radiating blessing of the friendly sun. It was a pleasing message for my heart. It poured in through the wide window, bathing the room with caressing, comforting light. I felt like a different man. New energies touched my inner being. I had the impression that I was inhaling the joy of life in deep breaths. In my soul, only one somber note – I missed my home and the love of my family so far away. Many questions were floating around in my mind, but the sensation of relief was so great that it calmed my spirit and kept me from further concern.

I wanted to get up, to enjoy the spectacle of nature, all full of breezes and light, but I couldn't, and I concluded that, without the magnetic cooperation of my attendant, I wouldn't even be able to leave my bed.

I had scarcely gotten over this string of surprises when the door opened and Clarencio entered, accompanied by a friendly stranger. They greeted me attentively and wished me peace. My benefactor of the previous day asked about my general health, while my attendant assisted by providing information.

My old friend smiled as he introduced his companion: brother Henrique de Luna from the Medical Assistance Service of the spirit colony. He was dressed in white and his face radiated friendliness. Henrique examined me at length, smiled and spoke:

“It's a pity that you've come here by way of suicide.”

Clarencio remained serene, but I felt a surge of revolt within me.

Suicide? I remembered the accusations of those perverse beings of the darkness. Despite the stock of gratitude that I was beginning to accumulate, I couldn't accept such an accusation.

“I believe there has been a misunderstanding,” I distressfully affirmed. “That wasn’t the cause of my return from the world. I fought for over forty days in the hospital trying to defeat death. I endured two serious operations due to an intestinal occlusion.”

“Yes, you did,” the doctor explained, showing the same supreme serenity as Clarencio, “but the occlusion had its roots in deeper causes. Perhaps my friend hasn’t reflected on the matter enough. The spiritual organism contains an inner complete history of how one acted while in the world.”

Leaning attentively over me, he began to point out certain parts of my body:

“Let’s look at the intestinal area itself,” he exclaimed. “The occlusion was due to cancerous elements, which in turn arose as a result of some of my brother’s indiscretions – contracting syphilis, for instance. The disease might not have assumed such grave proportions if your mental attitudes had been based on the principles of moderation and fraternity. However, your often-exasperating and particularly dark lifestyle attracted destructive vibrations from those who came in contact with you. You have never imagined that anger is a river of negative forces, have you? Your lack of self-control and consideration in dealing with others – whom you unthinkingly offended many times – frequently led you within the sphere of sick and inferior beings. Such circumstances greatly aggravated your physical state.”

After a long pause, in which he carefully examined me, he continued:

“My friend, have you noticed that your liver and kidneys were damaged by how you lived – a terrible disregard for those sacred gifts?”

A pointed despondency invaded my heart. The doctor seemed unaware of the anguish that was oppressing me and continued his explanation:

“The organs of the somatic body possess incalculable reserves in accordance with the designs of the Lord. My friend, however, evaded many excellent opportunities and wasted the precious treasures of the physical experience. The long task that had been entrusted to you by the Great Ones of Higher Spirituality was reduced to mere attempts at work that you never completed. Your entire gastric system was destroyed as a direct result of your excesses in food and alcoholic beverages, which you thought to be completely harmless. Your essential energies were devoured by syphilis. As you can see, the diagnosis of suicide is incontestable.”

I thought about the problems of the human way of life and reflected on the wasted opportunities characterizing it. During my own life, I had managed to wear many masks, tailoring them to the situation at hand. Moreover, I had never imagined that at some other time I would be asked to account for those seemingly ordinary episodes, which I usually considered as unimportant incidents. Until now, I had always conceived of human wrongs according to the precepts of criminology, and every incident outside the criminal code was related to natural phenomena. Now, however, I was facing another system of judging such wrongs. I did not have to face courts of torture, nor did infernal abysses await me. Instead, smiling benefactors were commenting on my weaknesses as if they were dealing with a wayward child without his parents' knowing about it. That spontaneous interest, however, wounded my manly pride. Perhaps, if I had been visited by diabolic beings who tortured me with trident in hand, my failure would have been less bitter to bear. But Clarencio's exuberant goodness, the doctor's unbending tenderness and the attendant's fraternal patience all penetrated deeply into my spirit. I was not torn by the desire to react; I was struck with shame. I wept. I covered my face with my hands like a repentant and unhappy boy, and I began to sob with what seemed like irremediable grief. I couldn't disagree with Henrique de Luna. He had spoken an enormous truth. Finally, suppressing the impulses of my pride, I realized the full extent of my frivolities of another time. The false notion of personal dignity gave way to justice. Before my spiritual sight, only one torturing reality now remained: I really was a suicide. I had wasted the precious opportunity of the human experience and was nothing more than a castaway rescued by charity.

The kind Clarencio paternally stroked my hair while sitting by my bed and said:

“Stop lamenting so, my son. I went looking for you in answer to the intercessions of those who love you on the higher planes. Your tears grieve their hearts. Wouldn't you rather show your gratitude by remaining calm during the examination of your wrongs? Indeed, your situation is that of a suicide who didn't realize what he was doing, but there are hundreds of other souls who leave the earth daily in exactly the same condition. So settle down. Enjoy the treasures of repentance; remorse is a blessing no matter how late it arrives. And don't forget that affliction doesn't solve anything. Trust in the Lord and in our fraternal devotion. Rest your troubled soul, for many of us have already walked the same path as you.”

Touched by the generosity conveyed by those words, I rested my head on his fatherly shoulder and wept for a long time.

## 5

# Receiving medical assistance

“Are you Clarencio’s ward?”

The question came from a young man with a unique and kind face.

He was carrying a large bag – the kind used for medical implements – and addressed me with a welcoming smile. When I nodded, he relaxed and introduced himself:

“I’m Lisias, your brother. My supervisor, assistant Henrique de Luna, has assigned me to serve you as long as you need treatment.”

“Are you a sort of nurse then?” I inquired.

“I’m a visiting attendant from health services. As such, I not only help with nursing, but I also alert doctors whenever their help is needed and attend to the needs of newly-arrived patients.”

Noting my surprise, he explained:

“There are many workers who serve in my capacity in Nosso Lar. You’re a newcomer to the colony, so of course you’re still unaware of the extent of our activities. Just to give you an idea, I would inform you that there are over one thousand ailing spirits in this section alone, and this is one of the smallest buildings in our hospital complex.”

“Everything is so marvelous!” I exclaimed.

Guessing that my observations might soon degenerate into spontaneous praise, Lisias rose from his chair and carefully began his examination, thereby keeping me from expressing my gratitude.

“Your intestinal area displays serious lesions and obvious vestiges of cancer; your liver has a rupture and your kidneys show characteristic signs of premature failure.”

Smiling kindly, he added:

“Does my brother know what all of this means?”

“Yes,” I answered, “the doctor explained it yesterday and made it clear that these disturbances are all of my own doing.”

Noting my obvious embarrassment at this reticent confession, he hastily consoled me:

“I have a group of eighty patients under my daily care, and fifty-seven are in the same condition as you. Perhaps you haven’t realized that there are even mutilated patients. Have you ever thought about that? Did you know that imprudent persons who wasted their sight on evil arrive here without eyes? That criminals who used the gift of agility during criminal acts come to us paralyzed if not completely legless? And that those who were obsessed with sexual aberrations usually arrive completely insane?”

Noticing my natural perplexity, he proceeded:

“Nosso Lar is not a settlement of victorious spirits, in the normal sense of the word. We are happy because we have work to do, and there is joy in every corner of our colony, for the Lord has not deprived us of the blessed bread of service.”

Availing myself of a long pause, I exclaimed excitedly:

“Go on, my friend, explain it to me. I feel so peaceful and relieved. Isn’t this a heavenly region for the elect?”

Lisias smiled and explained:

“Remember the old teaching: ‘Many are called but few are chosen’.”

He gazed at the distant horizon, as though trying to recall experiences stored in his innermost memories and added:

“Many religions on the planet invite individuals to the heavenly banquet. No one who has once come close to the notion of God can in good conscience deny that fact. The number of those who have been called is uncountable, my friend, but where are those who have answered the call? With few exceptions, the human masses prefer to accept a different invitation instead. They waste their potential by deviating from the path of the good; they cave in to their whims and thoughtlessly destroy their physical bodies. The result: thousands of individuals are taken daily from the physical realm in a painful state of

confusion. Countless multitudes of insane, diseased and ignorant spirits wander around in all directions in the circles closest to the earth's crust."

Seeing my astonishment, he asked:

"Did you by any chance believe that the death of the body would bring us to the planes of miracles? We are compelled to work hard at difficult jobs, but that isn't enough. Regardless of our spiritual evolution, if we have debts on the planet, we must inevitably go back to set them right. We must wash our face in the sweat of the world and break the chains of hatred, replacing them with the sacred bonds of love. It wouldn't be just to impose on others the task of clearing the field where we ourselves have sown thorns."

Shaking his head, he added:

"It's a case of 'many are called', my dear friend. The Lord forgets no one, yet people rarely remember him."

Embarrassed at recalling my own wrongs in light of such great notions of individual responsibility, I confessed:

"How depraved I was!"

Before I could add further exclamations, my visitor put his right hand to my lips:

"Hush! Let's concentrate on the work to be done. One must know how to sincerely repent in order to start anew."

Then, he carefully applied magnetic passes<sup>3</sup> to me. While treating my intestinal area, he explained:

"Are you observing my specialized treatment of the cancerous area? Pay attention: All honest medicine is a service of love, a truly helpful activity; but the actual work of healing is up to each spirit individually. My brother, you'll be treated kindly, and you'll feel as strong as you did in the most beautiful days of your earthly youth. You'll work hard, and I believe you'll become one of the best coworkers in Nosso Lar. Nevertheless, the cause of your infirmities will stay with you until you have eliminated all the bad seeds that have corrupted your divine health, and which you have accumulated within your subtle body<sup>4</sup> through your moral indiscretions and your desire to enjoy yourself more than others. The earthly flesh that we abuse is also a blessed field where we can enjoy the fruitful results of a complete healing – if we do what we must."

I meditated on these concepts; I pondered the divine goodness, and feeling overwhelmingly sentimental, I wept copiously.

Lisias, however, calmly finished the day's treatment, and said:

“When tears aren't caused by feelings of rebellion, they are always a purifying medicine. So weep, my friend; unburden your heart. And let us bless those well-deserving microscopic organizations – the cells of the earthly flesh. They are so humble and so precious, so degraded, and yet so sublime for the spirit of service. They offer us a temple for rectification, but without them, how many thousands of years would we spend in ignorance?”

Having said that, Lisias tenderly stroked my brow and took his leave with a gesture of love.

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<sup>3</sup> Magnetic passes: “...Passes are the transmission of spiritual and psychic energies; however, there is no actual physical contact while they are being applied.” (Francisco Candido Xavier, *O Consolador* (The Consoler): Federação Espírita Brasileira (Brazilian Spiritist Federation), 1993 (translation ours). – Tr.

<sup>4</sup> That is, the perispirit: “The semi-material envelope of the spirit. Among incarnates it serves as the tie between the spirit and matter. Among discarnate spirits it comprises the spirits' fluidic body.” (The Medium's Book, chap. XXXII, Spiritist Glossary: International Spiritist Council, 2006) – Tr.

## 6

# An invaluable warning

The very next day, after evening prayer, Clarencio came to see me accompanied by my caring nurse.

His face radiated benevolence as he gave me a hug and asked:

“How are you? A little better?”

I reacted like any patient who finds himself the center of attention, and whose emotional fibers have been touched. In the world, fraternal kindness is sometimes misinterpreted. Giving in to my old habit, I began to explain myself while my two benefactors sat comfortably at my side:

“I can’t deny I’m a little better, but I’m suffering intensely. I’m feeling a lot of pain in my intestinal area and strange sensations of anguish in my heart. I never imagined I would be able to endure so much, my friend. Ah! How heavy my cross has been! ... Now that I can organize my ideas, I believe that the pain has sapped all of my available strength.”

Clarencio listened attentively and showed great interest in my lamentations, without the slightest gesture that would indicate that he wanted to stop me. Encouraged by his attitude, I continued:

“What is more, my mental suffering is enormous and indescribable! Now that the outward torment has subsided because of the assistance I’ve received, I must now turn to the storms within my soul. What has become of my wife and children? Has my eldest managed to make any progress by following my old ideals? And what about my little girls? My poor Zelia stated many times that she would die of loneliness if I were ever to leave her. What a great wife! I can still feel her tears from my last moments. I can’t tell how long I’ve been living the nightmare of being separated ... Continuous suffering has robbed me of all sense of time. Where is my poor wife? Weeping beside the ashes of my body, or in some dark corner in the regions of death? Oh! My pain is too

bitter! What a terrible fate for a man pledged to devoting himself to his family! I believe that very few creatures have suffered as much as I have! On earth, vicissitudes, disillusionment, maladies, misunderstandings and bitterness suffocating the rare moments of joy; after that, the sufferings caused by the death of my physical body ... Then, the tortures beyond the grave! What is life after all? A never-ending succession of misery and tears! Is there no recourse to sow peace? As much as I'd like to adopt an optimistic attitude, I feel that the notion of unhappiness is obstructing my spirit like a terrible block within my heart. What a sorry fate, my generous benefactor!"

By now, the storm of my complaint had led my mental boat to the wide ocean of tears.

Clarencio, however, rose serenely and spoke unaffectedly:

"My dear friend, do you really want spiritual healing?"

I nodded and he continued:

"Then learn not to talk about yourself so much or to comment on your own pain. Lamentation is the symptom of a mental illness that is time-consuming and difficult to treat. You absolutely must create new trains of thought and control your tongue. We will only become balanced if we open our heart to the sun of the Deity. If you regard the effort required as a crushing imposition and see suffering where there is actually an edifying struggle, you are showing the undesirable signs of spiritual blindness. The more you use words to exaggerate your painful thoughts regarding your personal experience, the more you bind yourself to insignificant memories. The same Father who watches over you and offers this generous roof over your head will also care for your family back on earth. We should certainly regard our family group as a sacred institution, but we shouldn't forget that our families are branches of the universal family under Divine Guidance. We are at your side to help you resolve your present difficulties and to make plans for the future, but we have no time to return to the barren regions of lamentation. Besides, in this colony we must accept the hardest work as a blessing of achievement, bearing in mind that Providence pours out its overflowing love upon us, while we live burdened with debt. If you wish to remain in this hospital, you must learn to think rightly."

By now, my tears had dried and I had been brought back to my senses by my benevolent instructor. I began to adopt a different attitude, even though I was ashamed of my weakness.

“While in your physical body,” continued Clarencio kindly, “didn’t you fight for the natural advantages resulting from good situations? Didn’t you appreciate receiving a legitimately-earned income in the hopes of increasing the welfare of your loved ones? Weren’t you interested in obtaining a fair wage for your job in order to assist your family and make them comfortable? It is no different here. Only the details have changed. Within physical circles, conventionalities and monetary guarantees are the norm; here, work and definable acquisitions of the immortal spirit are the rule. For us, pain means the possibility of enriching the soul; struggle is a way towards divine realization. Do you understand the difference? Weak souls remain inactive when faced with work, and they complain to anyone who will listen. Strong souls, however, accept labor as a sacred heritage, with which they prepare themselves on the path towards perfection. No one blames you for your homesickness or would ever think of depriving you of the source of your noblest sentiments. Even so, you must remember that tears of despair are not constructive. If you truly love your family, you must be cheerful in order to be of any use to them.”

There was a long pause. Clarencio’s words caused me to begin to think more healthily.

While I was meditating on the wisdom of his invaluable warning, my benefactor, like a father who forgets his children’s distractions and patiently restarts their lesson, asked again with a beatific smile:

“Well, how are you now? Better?”

Pleased to feel I had been forgiven, like a child anxious to learn, I replied:

“I’m fine now, and I’m ready to better understand the divine will.”

## 7

# Lisias's explanations

Clarencio's periodic visits and Lisias's daily attention continued.

As I tried to get used to my new duties, sensations of ease relieved my heart. The pain and the impediments to my getting around steadily decreased. I noticed, however, that whenever I thought about my physical problems, then the anguish, the fear of the unknown and the discomfort of maladjustment all returned. But in spite of everything, I felt a certain inner security.

I enjoyed myself by contemplating the vast horizons while leaning out of my spacious windows. The aspects of nature impressed me most of all. Nearly everything seemed to be an improved copy of earth. The colors were more harmonious and the substances more delicate. The ground was carpeted with vegetation, and there were large trees, rich orchards and delightful gardens. A range of hills crowned with light stood beyond the plain on which the colony lay. All the areas seemed to be caringly tended. There were graceful buildings not too far away, placed at regular intervals and displaying various shapes. Every one of them had flowers at the entrance. I noticed some charming little houses scattered among them, surrounded by walls of ivy. Various roses bloomed here and there, decorating the green with contrasting colors. Birds with brilliant plumage crisscrossed the skies, and at times they alighted in groups on the bright white spires that reached for the sky like huge lilies.

From the broad windows, I curiously observed the activity in the complex. I was extremely surprised to notice domestic animals among the leafy trees planted all in a row towards the back of the complex.

During my introspective battles, I lost myself in speculations of all sorts. Considering that I found myself on a spiritual plane per se, I couldn't understand the multiplicity of forms similar to those on the planet.

Lisias, my kind daily companion, was always ready to explain everything.

“The death of the body doesn’t lead humans to some miraculous state of being,” he said. “Every evolutionary process implies gradation. There are many, many regions for discarnates, just as there are innumerable and surprising planes for incarnates. Souls and sentiments, forms and things obey the principles of natural evolution and a just hierarchy.”

However, I was worried because I had stayed there in the hospital for so many weeks without a single visit from anyone I had known during my lifetime. After all, I wasn’t the only one in my circle to have deciphered the enigma of the grave. My parents had taken the great journey before me. Several friends had preceded me at other times. So, why had none of them appeared in that room of spiritual infirmity to bring comfort to my aching heart? A few moments of consolation would suffice.

One day I could no longer contain myself and I asked my attentive nurse:

“My dear Lisias, is it possible here to meet those who preceded us in the death of the physical body?”

“Why not? Do you think you have been forgotten?”

“Yes, I do. Why hasn’t anyone come to see me? On earth, I could always count on my mother’s selflessness, but so far I have heard nothing from her. My father also made the great voyage three years before me.”

“Well,” explained Lisias, “your mother has been helping you night and day ever since the crisis that foreshadowed your arrival. She doubled her maternal interest in your welfare when you lay down to abandon your terrestrial shell. Perhaps you haven’t realized that your stay in the lower spheres lasted for over eight years. In all that time, she never lost hope. She often came to Noso Lar to intercede on your behalf. She enlisted the kind services of Clarencio, who began visiting you frequently until the moment when the conceited doctor of earth gave way to the child of heaven. Do you understand now?”

I felt my eyes welling up with tears. I hadn’t known how many years I had been away from the terrestrial soil. I wanted to find out more about that unperceived watch-care but couldn’t. My vocal cords seemed numb and I had a knot of tears dammed up in my heart.

“That day when you prayed with all your soul,” continued Lisias, “when you realized that everything in the universe belongs to our Sublime Father, even your tears were different. Don’t you know that there are rains that destroy and rains that create? The same is true for tears. Of course, the Lord doesn’t wait for our prayers to love us; yet, we must have a certain receptive attitude in order to understand his infinite goodness. A dirty mirror cannot reflect light. Thus, it is not the Father who needs our penance; it is we who need penance because of the inestimable service it renders us. Do you understand? In answer to your caring mother’s pleas, Clarencio had no trouble finding you, whereas it took you a long time to find him. I was told that when your mother heard that her son had been rescued from the dark veils with the help of prayer, she wept with joy.”

“And where is she?” I exclaimed. “If I could, I would like to see her, to embrace her, to fall on my knees at her feet!”

“She doesn’t live in Nosso Lar,” explained Lisias; “she lives in higher realms, where she works not only for you.”

Noting my disappointment, he kindly added:

“Rest assured that she will come to see you sooner than you might think. When one ardently desires something, one is already on the way to obtaining it. In this particular instance, you have the lesson of your own case. For years, you wandered around like a feather at random, harboring fear, sadness and disillusionment. But as soon as you firmly thought of the need to receive divine assistance, you expanded the range of your mental vibrations and obtained vision and help.”

My eyes cleared up, and encouraged by the explanations I had just received, I exclaimed resolutely:

“Then I’ll wish it with all my strength and she will come ... she will come ... ”

Lisias smiled knowingly, and offering a generous warning, he affirmed as he took his leave:

“You must not forget that any worthwhile achievement requires three fundamental prerequisites: First, desire it; second, know how to desire it; third, deserve it. In other words, an active will, persevering work and justifiable merit.”

My visitor reached the exit with a smile while I silently meditated upon that complex plan that had been expressed in so few words.

## 8

# The organization of services

After some weeks under intensive care, I went out for the first time, accompanied by Lisias.

The spectacle of the streets impressed me. Wide avenues bordered with trees. Pure air – an atmosphere of profound spiritual tranquility. However, there was no sign of inactivity or idleness, for the city streets were crowded. Countless individuals were coming and going. Some seemed to be thinking of far-off places, but others looked at me warmly. It was my companion's job to guide me as endless surprises came our way. Realizing that I had many questions, he kindly explained:

“We are now in the area of the Ministry of Assistance. Everything we see here, all of the buildings and houses are institutions and shelters that are suited for the activities under our jurisdiction. Instructors, workers and other staff for our mission live here. This is the area where patients are assisted, prayers are heard and sorted, earthly reincarnations are prepared for, and rescue groups are organized on behalf of those who are weeping on the earth or who inhabit the Umbral.<sup>5</sup> Here, solutions are sought for all matters concerning human suffering.”

“So there is a Ministry of Assistance in Nosso Lar?” I asked.

“And why not? Our services are distributed in an organization that is improving daily under the guidance of those watching over our destinies.”

He gazed at me with his lucid eyes and continued:

“During our collective prayers, haven't you seen our spirit Governor, surrounded by his seventy-two assistants? Well, they are the Ministers of Nosso Lar. The colony's purpose is essentially labor and production, and is divided into six Ministries, each under the direction of twelve Ministers. There are the Ministries of Regeneration, Assistance, Communication,

Elucidation, Elevation and Divine Union. The first four connect us with the terrestrial spheres; the remaining two link us to the higher planes; thus, our spirit city is a transition zone. The Ministry of Regeneration carries out the most ordinary services, whereas the most sublime ones belong to the Ministry of Divine Union. Our boss, Clarencio, is one of the Ministers of Assistance.”

Availing myself of a natural pause, I exclaimed:

“Well! I never imagined the possibility of there being such a complete organization after death!”

“Yes,” Lisias explained, “the veil of illusion is very dense on the physical plane. Ordinary people are unaware that all manifestations of order in the world come from the higher planes. Just as wild nature may become a garden under the direction of the human mind, so may human thought – wild in primitive individuals – likewise be transformed into a powerful creative force when inspired by minds at work in the higher realms. No useful organization ever materializes on the earth unless its first rays have come down from the higher spheres.”

“Does Nosso Lar have a history like the great planetary cities?”

“Of course. The planes near the earth sphere possess their own specific nature. Nosso Lar is an old settlement that was founded by a group of distinguished Portuguese, who discarnated in Brazil during the sixteenth century. According to our annals in the Ministry of Elucidation, these settlers at first encountered tremendous and exhausting struggles. After all, there are unpleasant substances in the zones invisible to the earth, just as there are in the regions characterized by dense matter. There are enormous areas of undeveloped potential here, just as on the planet there are great tracts of wild and uncivilized nature. The initial endeavors were discouraging, even for the stronger spirits. Where we now sense delicate vibrations and see groups of majestic buildings, there used to be a mixture of primitive vibrations from the native inhabitants of Brazil and the childlike buildings designed by their rudimentary minds. The founders didn’t lose heart, however. They proceeded in their endeavors, copying the efforts of the Europeans who were arriving on the physical plane. The only difference was that our founders substituted persevering service, fraternal solidarity and spiritual love for that plane’s violence, war and slavery.”

By this time, we had reached a marvelously contoured square filled with large gardens. In the center of the square stood a magnificently beautiful

palace crowned with majestic spires that seemed lost to the sky.

“The colony’s founders began their efforts right here, where the Government Center now stands,” Lisias said.

Pointing to the palace, he continued:

“This square is the converging point of the six Ministries I told you about. They all start at the Government Center and stretch out in a triangular shape.” He explained respectfully:

“Our devoted Governor lives there and a staff of three thousand employees assist him in his administrative duties. However, he is the most faithful and untiring worker of all. The Ministers ordinarily travel to other spheres in order to renew their energies and acquire new knowledge, and we too have our habitual sideline activities, but the Governor has no leisure time on his hands. While he insists that we must rest, that we must take periodic vacations, he himself almost never rests, sacrificing even his sleeping hours. It seems like it’s his glory to render round-the-clock service. I’ve been here for forty years, and except for the collective prayer services, I have rarely seen him at any public function. His thought, however, reaches every circle of service, and his kind assistance involves everybody and everything.”

After a long pause, Lisias added:

“Only a short time ago, we celebrated the one hundred fourteenth anniversary of his magnanimous administration.”

Lisias fell silent in a token of reverence while I stood by his side, respectfully and raptly contemplating the marvelous spires, which seemed to pierce the skies.

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<sup>5</sup> The Umbral is the region “situated between heaven and earth. It is the doleful region of darkness built and cultivated by the human mind, which is generally rebellious, lazy, confused and feeble ...” (Francisco Candido Xavier, *Action and Reaction: Brazilian Spiritist Federation*, 2017. See further explanations in chap. 12 of the present work). – Tr.

## 9

# The problem of nutrition

Fascinated by the sight of the remarkable gardens, I asked my devoted assistant if I could rest for a few minutes on a nearby bench. Lisias willingly agreed.

A pleasant sensation of peace greeted my spirit. Playful sprays of colored water zigzagged in the air to form enchanting figures.

“Anyone observing this immense beehive of service,” I remarked, “might be led to inquire about several problems. What about provisions? I haven’t noticed a Ministry of Economy.”

“In the old days,” explained my patient friend, “services of that nature were much more important than now. However, our current Governor decided to reduce all the life practices that might remind us of purely physical phenomena. Thus, activities involving provisions were reduced to a mere distribution service under the direct control of the Government Center. In fact, the measure has been very beneficial. The annals show that a century ago the colony struggled greatly trying to adapt its inhabitants to the laws of simplicity. Many newcomers to Nosso Lar doubled their demands. They wanted sumptuous food and fine drinks, for they were still influenced by old earthly vices. Only the Ministry of Divine Union remained immune to such abuses due to its inherent characteristics; the other Ministries, however, spent all their time overburdened with problems of the sort. Our current Governor spared no efforts to solve the problem. As soon as he assumed his administrative duties, he adopted correctional measures. The older missionaries have told me about a string of curious incidents that occurred at that time. They said that, at the Governor’s request, two hundred instructors came down from a very high sphere in order to provide new instruction concerning the science of breathing and absorbing vital elements directly from the atmosphere. Numerous assemblies were held. Some of the technical

collaborators of Nosso Lar were against these innovations, arguing that, since this was a transition colony, it would be both unjust and impossible to immediately submit discarnate spirits to such drastic measures without gravely endangering their spiritual makeup. But the Governor didn't give in. The gatherings, the measures and the activities continued for thirty years straight. Some eminent individuals went so far as to form public protests in order to complain. On more than ten occasions, the Ministry of Assistance was overcrowded with patients who claimed to be victims of the deficient new system of nutrition. This would in turn encourage the enemies of the reductions to increase their accusations. In spite of it all, the Governor never punished anyone. He summoned the measures' adversaries to his office and paternally expounded on the aims and benefits of the diet, emphasizing the superiority of such methods of spiritualization. For the most rebellious enemies of the new process, he facilitated study excursions to more-elevated planes, and thereby won a greater number of followers."

I found this all very interesting, and after a long pause, I implored him:

"Please go on, my dear Lisias. How did the character-building struggle end?"

"After twenty-one years of persevering effort by the Government Center, the Ministry of Elevation gave in and cut its supplies down to what was strictly necessary. The Ministry of Elucidation, however, took much longer to make a commitment due to the great numbers of spirits working there, who were dedicated to the mathematical sciences. They were the most obstinate adversaries. Since they were used to the ingestion of protein and carbohydrates, which they deemed indispensable to the physical body, they wouldn't give in to the new concept applied here. They sent the Governor weekly lengthy observations and warnings full of analyses and numerical data, and they became quite indiscrete at times. The old Governor never acted alone, however. He enlisted the assistance of noble mentors who guide us via the Ministry of Divine Union, and never dismissed even the smallest report without having examined it in detail. While the scientists were making their arguments and the Government was stalling for time, dangerous disturbances were beginning to occur in the former Department of Regeneration, which has since then become a Ministry. Encouraged by the rebelliousness of the collaborators in the Ministry of Elucidation, some of the less-evolved spirits who were undergoing treatment there started acting contemptibly. These sorts of problems caused enormous schisms within the collective agencies of Nosso

Lar, which in turn encouraged a frightening attack by dark multitudes from the Umbral. They tried to invade the city by taking advantage of breaches in the Department of Regeneration, where a large number of collaborators had set up a sort of black market to provide for their nutrition-related vices. The alarm sounded but the Governor stayed calm. Terrible threats hovered over everyone. Nonetheless, he asked the Ministry of Divine Union for a meeting, and after conferring with our highest council, he had the Ministry of Communication temporarily closed. He ordered the detention cells at the Department of Regeneration to be prepared for isolating the more recalcitrant spirits. He admonished the Ministry of Elucidation, whose impertinences he had constantly endured for over thirty years, and temporarily prohibited any assistance to the lower regions. For the first time in his administration, he had the electric batteries in the city walls turned on in order to emit magnetic darts to serve as a common defense. There was neither actual battle nor attack within the colony, but only resolute resistance. For over six months, the diet at Nosso Lar was reduced to the breathing in of life-supporting elements from the atmosphere, along with water blended with electrical, magnetic and solar elements. Thus, the colony experienced what the indignation of a kind and just spirit could be like. At the end of this most difficult period, the Government was victorious. The Ministry of Elucidation admitted its error and cooperated in the work of readjustment. There were public celebrations, and they say that in the midst of the widespread joy, the Governor was moved to tears and declared that everyone's understanding was his heart's true reward. The colony returned to normal and the former Department of Regeneration was converted into a Ministry. Since then, there has been a greater supply of nutritive substances that remind us of earth – but only in the Ministries of Regeneration and Assistance, where there is always a great number in need of such substances. In all the other Ministries, the diet is limited to the essentials; that is, nutrition follows the rules of strictest sobriety. Nowadays, everyone realizes that the Governor's supposed impertinence was a highly valuable measure for our spiritual liberation. Physical expressions were reduced, giving rise to a marvelous coefficient of spirituality.”

Lisias fell silent while I handed myself over to meditating deeply on this great lesson.

# 10

## The “Forest of Waters”

Due to my growing interest in the colony’s nutrition-related processes, Lisias gave me an invitation:

“Let’s go to the colony’s great water reservoir. You’ll observe some interesting things there. You’ll see that water is essential for almost everything in our transition settlement.”

He had aroused my curiosity and I eagerly accompanied him.

When we arrived at a broad corner of the public square, my kind friend added:

“Let’s wait for the airbus.”<sup>6</sup>

I had scarcely gotten over my surprise at his remark when a large, crowded vehicle approached, floating about fifteen feet above the ground. I examined it closely as it descended to us like an elevator. It was unlike any vehicle I had ever seen before. It was very long, appeared to be made of a highly flexible material and seemed to be connected to invisible wires because it had a large number of antennae on its roof. (Later, my observations were confirmed when I visited the large workshops in Traffic and Transportation Services.)

Lisias didn’t give me any time to ask questions. We climbed in, sat down on comfortable seats and went on our way in silence. I felt shy, like anyone would feel among strangers. We were traveling so fast that we couldn’t make out the details of any of the buildings we passed along the way. The distance was not short, for it was only after forty minutes – including brief stops every few miles – that Lisias invited me with a calm smile to get off the airbus.

The scenery in front of me was of sublime beauty. The forest was in full bloom and the fresh air was embalmed with an intoxicating fragrance. It was

all an extraordinary gift of color and mellow light. A large river wound its way leisurely between luxuriant grassy banks sprinkled with blue flowers. The water ran by so peacefully, so crystalline that it seemed tinted in sky blue, mirroring the color of the firmament. Wide pathways cut through the green landscape. Leafy trees were planted at regular intervals along them, offering friendly shade like pleasant shelters in the light of the comforting sun. Fancifully-shaped benches invited one to rest.

Noticing my admiration, Lisias explained:

“We are in the Forest of Waters and it is one of the most beautiful regions around Nosso Lar. It is one of the favorite meeting places for lovers, who come here to exchange beautiful vows of love and fidelity for their future experiences on earth.”

This last remark raised a series of questions in my mind, but Lisias gave me no chance to ask what he had meant by it. Pointing to a building of enormous proportions, he explained:

“That is the colony’s great waterworks. All the water of the Blue River, which we see over there, is absorbed into huge compartments for distribution. The water needed for all the activities of the colony departs from here. Then, it converges below the Ministry of Regeneration as a river once again and flows along its ordinary course towards the great ocean of substances invisible to the earth.”

Noticing that I was truly surprised, he added:

“Water here has a different density. It is much lighter and purer, almost fluidic.”

Gazing at the magnificent buildings in front of me, I asked:

“Which Ministry controls the distribution?”

“Actually, that is one of the few material services performed by the Ministry of Divine Union,” explained Lisias.

“What do you mean?” I asked, not knowing how to reconcile the two ideas.

My attendant smiled and replied:

“On earth, almost no one really gives the importance of water a second thought. In Nosso Lar, however, we know much more about it. In the religious circles of the planet, people are taught that the Lord created water.

Well, it is logical that every service that has been created needs effort and work to keep it in good order. In this spirit city, we have learned to be thankful to the Father and his divine collaborators for such a gift. Our better understanding of water enables us to know that it is one of the most powerful vehicles for fluids of any nature. Here, it is used especially as medicine or as food. In the Ministry of Assistance, there are departments entirely devoted to mixing pure water with certain elements derived from sunlight and from spiritual magnetism. In most of the areas of our extensive colony, our diet is based on such a system. But since only the Ministers of Divine Union hold the highest standard of spiritualization among us, they have been allotted the task of magnetizing the waters of the Blue River for use by all the inhabitants of Noso Lar. After they perform this initial purification process, various departments carry out the specialized work of endowing the water with nutritive and healing substances. When the waters join together again far on the other side of this Forest, the river flows away from our region, bearing our spiritual qualities in its depths.”

I was completely astonished.

“On the planet,” I remarked, “I never heard of such a thing.”

“Human beings have been inattentive for many centuries,” Lisias continued. “The oceans have kept their planetary home in balance; potable water has nourished their physical bodies; the rain has supplied them with bread, and rivers are lifelines for their cities. Water’s presence offers them the blessing of home and work. However, they continue to think of themselves as the absolute masters of their world and they forget that before anything else they are children of the Most High. The time will come, though, when they will follow our example and give water its due importance as a gift from the Lord. They will understand that water is a creative fluid that absorbs the mental characteristics of each home’s inhabitants. Water, my friend, not only carries the residues of the body, but the impressions of our mental life as well. It is harmful in wicked hands, useful in generous ones, and when in motion, its current not only spreads the blessings of life but also acts as a vehicle of Divine Providence, absorbing people’s bitterness, hatred and anxieties, cleansing their physical home and purifying their inner atmosphere.”

My partner fell silent in reverence while my eyes gazed at the peaceful current of water that aroused sublime thoughts within my mind.

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6 A sort of air-car that would find its earthly counterpart in a cable-car. – Spirit Auth.

# 11

## Knowing more about the spirit realm

My benevolent friend wanted to share other observations with me about the several districts of the colony, but pressing duties called him back to his work post.

“You’ll get the chance to visit our different service areas,” he said. “As you can see, the Ministries of Nosso Lar are enormous centers of activity and not even several days of exploration would be enough for a detailed view of just one of them. But opportunities will not be lacking, and even if it is impossible for me to accompany you, Clarencio has the power to grant you a permit to visit any department.”

We returned to the airbus stop and didn’t have long to wait.

By now, I felt almost at ease and the presence of so many passengers didn’t bother me anymore. The day’s experience had brought me enormous benefits. My mind was swarming with pressing questions, so I took the opportunity to interrogate my companion a little more while it was still possible:

“Lisias, my friend, do you know if all spirit colonies are exactly like this one? Do they entail the same procedures and characteristics?”

“By no means. On the physical plane, each region, each place displays its own peculiar features, so you can imagine the multiplicity of conditions on our planes. As on earth, individuals here are identified according to common sources of origin and the greatness of the purposes they must fulfill. But we must remember that each colony – like each entity – stands at a different degree of the great ascent. All collective experiences vary from one another, and Nosso Lar comprises a collective experience of this particular kind. According to our archives, those who preceded us often sought inspiration in the endeavors of devoted workers of other spheres, and in compensation,

other groups now seek our help in forming their own settlements. So, each organization displays its own unique characteristics.”

The pause in our conversation was longer than usual, so I asked:

“Did the idea of forming Ministries originate here?”

“Yes, it did. The pioneers of Nosso Lar visited the service centers of Alvorada Nova<sup>7</sup>, one of the most important spirit colonies that surround us, and there they found division by department. Our founders adopted the same process, but replaced the word ‘department’ with ‘ministry’, except in the case of Regenerative Services, which only obtained its promotion under our current Governor. It seemed to the founders that organization into ministries would be more meaningful as an expression of spirituality.”

“How interesting!” I exclaimed.

“But that’s not all,” Lisias continued; “the organization is eminently strict concerning order and hierarchy. No prominent position is granted based on favoritism. In the last ten years, only four spirits have been granted defined responsibilities in the Ministry of Divine Union. After a long period of learning and service, most of us reincarnate again to carry on our work towards perfection.”

While I was curiously listening to his explanations, Lisias continued:

“When newcomers from the lower regions of the Umbral show that they are ready and willing to cooperate, they are housed at the Ministry of Assistance; but if they are rebellious, they are taken to the Ministry of Regeneration. When they show improvement over a period of time, they are admitted as workers in the services of Assistance, Communication and Elucidation in order to adequately prepare themselves for their future planetary tasks. Only a few spirits are allowed the privilege of a long stay in the Ministry of Elevation, and it is very rare indeed – every ten years – for any to reach the level of working in the Ministry of Divine Union. And don’t think that our jobs are vague expressions of some kind of idealistic activity. We are no longer on the sphere of the globe, where discarnate spirits are compulsorily promoted to ghost status. No, we live in an environment of hard work. The jobs in the Ministry of Assistance are laborious and complex; the duties in the Ministry of Regeneration require strenuous effort; those in Communication demand a high standard of individual responsibility; in Elucidation, they require a great capacity for work and profound intellectual

values; those in the Ministry of Elevation require self-denial and spiritual enlightenment; lastly, the activities in the Ministry of Divine Union require right wisdom and the application of sincere universal love. The Government Center, in its turn, is the busy seat of all the administrative activities, and numerous services are under its direct control, such as nutrition, electric energy, traffic and transportation, among others. Actually, the law of rest is strictly observed here, so that certain workers do not become more overburdened than others. But the law of labor is also strictly adhered to. As for rest and relaxation, the only exception is the Governor himself, who never uses what he is entitled to in this respect.”

“Doesn’t he ever leave the palace?” I inquired.

“Only on occasions when the public welfare demands it. The one exception is his weekly visit to the Ministry of Regeneration, the area of Nosso Lar with the largest number of disturbances due to the attunement of many of its inhabitants to their counterparts in the Umbral. Multitudes of wayward spirits are housed there. On Sunday afternoons, after prayer with the colony in the Great Temple of the Government Center, he spends his time working with the Ministers of Regeneration, assisting them in handling the most difficult problems. In such efforts, he is depriving himself of sacred joys in order to assist bewildered and suffering spirits.”

The airbus dropped us off in the neighborhood of the hospital, where my comfortable room would be waiting for me.

On the public street, I once again heard beautiful melodies floating through the air. Noticing my inquiring look, Lisias kindly explained:

“That music is coming from Nosso Lar’s workshops. After a series of observations, the Government discovered that music stimulates the efficiency of labor in all areas of constructive effort. Consequently, no one works in Nosso Lar without that joyful incentive.”

Meanwhile, we had reached the hospital entrance. A nurse eagerly met us and said:

“Brother Lisias, you are being called to the ward on the right for urgent service.”

My companion left displaying his usual calmness while I retired to my room. As usual, I had many questions on my mind.

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Z Literally, New Dawn – Tr.

# 12

## The Umbral

After receiving such valuable explanations, my desire to increase my knowledge regarding the various issues that Lisias had raised became stronger. His references to the spirits in the Umbral had aroused my curiosity. The lack of religious preparation while I was on the earth troubled me greatly here. What might the Umbral be? I only knew about the ideas of hell and purgatory from sermons at the Roman Catholic masses I had attended in obeying social protocol. About this Umbral, however, I had never heard a word.

When I saw my benevolent attendant again, I couldn't help asking him a lot of questions about it. Lisias listened carefully and then replied:

“Well, well ... you stayed there for so long and you still don't understand that realm?”

I recalled my past suffering and felt myself shuddering in dread.

“The Umbral begins within the earth's crust,” he obligingly continued. “It is a zone of darkness for those who, while on earth, were not resolute in following the path of their sacred duties in order to fulfill them. Instead, they lingered in the valley of indecision or in the swamp of numerous wrongdoings. When spirits reincarnate, they promise to fulfill a plan of service assigned to them by the Father. However, when they recommence their experience on the planet, they find it very difficult to keep their word, and only seek what will satisfy their own selfish ends. Thus, they hold on to the same hatred for their enemies and the same passion for their friends. But hatred is not justice, nor is passion love. Everything excessive and useless damages the economy of life. After death, all these multitudes of spiritually unbalanced entities remain in the misty regions, which are imbued with corporeal energies. A duty fulfilled is a gateway through which we pass into the Infinite on our way to the sacred continent of union with the Lord. It is

natural, therefore, that those who neglect their rightful obligations should have that blessing postponed indefinitely.”

Lisias noticed I was having a hard time understanding the full content of this lesson due to my almost total ignorance of spiritual principles; thus, he tried to make it clearer:

“Imagine that when we reincarnate, each of us is wearing a dirty garment that must be washed in the waters of human life. This dirty garment is our causal body, woven by our own hands during past lives. As we share in the blessings of a new earthly opportunity once more, we usually forget our essential purpose, and instead of purifying ourselves through the effort of the cleansing process, we become even more soiled by going deeper into debt and thus imprisoning ourselves in genuine slavery. Now if we return to the world seeking a way to rid ourselves of our impurities because they are out of harmony with a higher plane, how can we expect to enter this sphere of light in an even worse state than before? Therefore, the Umbral is a region intended for the flushing away of negative mental residues. It is a sort of purgatorial zone, where one gradually burns off the refuse of the bulk of illusions acquired after having degraded the sublime opportunity of an earthly life.”

The image could not have been clearer or more convincing.

There was no way to disguise my justifiable wonder. Understanding how beneficial his explanations were, Lisias continued:

“The Umbral is a region of profound importance for those still on the earth, for it embodies everything that is useless to the more highly evolved life. Consider how wisely Divine Providence has acted in allowing the creation of such a zone around the planet. There are legions of irresolute and ignorant souls, who are not wicked enough to be relegated to colonies of the most dolorous expiation, nor are they sufficiently virtuous to be admitted to the higher planes. They represent the ranks of inhabitants in the Umbral, and they are close companions of incarnate human beings, separated from them only by vibratory laws. It’s no wonder, therefore, that such a place is characterized by large disturbances. There, rebellious spirits of all kinds are grouped together. They form invisible cells of extraordinary power due to the concentration of their common tendencies and desires. Don’t many people on earth become desperate when the postman doesn’t show up, or when the train doesn’t appear? Well, the Umbral is full of such desperate beings. Since they

don't find the Lord ready to satisfy their every whim after the death of their physical bodies, and having realized that the crown of life eternal is nontransferable glory for those who work with the Father, these creatures show themselves as they truly are, wasting their time on useless endeavors. Nosso Lar is also a spirit society, but its cells are formed differently from those in the Umbral, where different types of unfortunate, idle and criminal entities form groups. It is a region of executioners and victims, of exploiters and exploited."

I took advantage of a spontaneous pause and exclaimed, highly impressed:

"What do you mean? So, there is no kind of defense or organization there?"

My attendant smiled and explained:

"Organization is an attribute of organized spirits. What do you expect? The lower zone to which we are referring is like a home where there is no food: Everyone whines and no one is reasonable. The absent-minded traveler misses the train; the farmer who does not sow cannot reap. However, there is only one thing I can say for sure: Even in the darkness and anguish of the Umbral, divine watch-care is never lacking. Each spirit remains there just as long as is absolutely necessary, and that is why the Lord has permitted the establishment of many colonies like this one, devoted to useful work and spiritual aid."

"So it would seem," I remarked, "that that sphere nearly blends in with the sphere of incarnates."

"Yes," confirmed my devoted friend, "and it is that region to where the invisible wires extend that connect human minds to one another. The plane is full of discarnate spirits and thought-forms of incarnate ones, because in reality, every spirit, wherever it may be, is a radiating nucleus of forces which create, transform or destroy, and which are exteriorized as vibrations that earth-bound science cannot understand at the moment. Whenever we are in the process of thinking, we are doing something elsewhere at the same time. It is through their thoughts that human beings find in the Umbral fellow spirits whose tendencies harmonize with their own. Every soul is a powerful magnet. There is an expanse of invisible humanity accompanying the visible. The hardest missions of the Ministry of Assistance are comprised of self-denying servants who do their work in the Umbral. Firefighters' jobs in the great cities

of earth are difficult because of the blazing flames and clouds of smoke they have to face; likewise, missionaries to the Umbral face heavy fluids constantly emitted by thousands of minds that are unbalanced in the practice of evil or terribly chastised by rectifying sufferings. Much courage and self-denial are required to assist those who don't understand anything about the help being offered to them."

Lisias paused once more. I was even more impressed and remarked:

"How I would love to work with those legions of wretched spirits and take the spiritual bread of enlightenment to them!"

My friendly nurse gazed at me intently, and after meditating in silence for a few moments, took his leave remarking:

"Are you really up to such a task?"

# 13

## In the Minister's office

With my increasing improvement, I felt the need for activity and work. After so long a time and after difficult years of struggle, I was again interested in the round of chores that normally fill up the regular workday of an ordinary person. I couldn't deny that I had missed out on many excellent opportunities while on earth and that many wrongs had dotted my path. Now, however, I recalled my fifteen years of medical practice and experienced a kind of emptiness in my heart. I likened myself to an industrious farmer standing in the middle of a field with his hands tied, making it impossible to work. Although I was surrounded by patients, I was not allowed to approach them like before as their friend, doctor and researcher. I heard incessant moaning from neighboring rooms, but I couldn't lend a hand – not even as a nurse or as a helper in first-aid cases. I obviously didn't lack the desire, but my position was yet too humble for me to be too bold. Spirit doctors employed different techniques. Back on earth, I knew that my right to intervene was rooted in the study of official texts and in the degrees I had earned. However, in this new environment, medicine began in the heart and was expressed in fraternal care and love. Any nurse – even the humblest – in *Nosso Lar* possessed understanding and power that were far superior to my knowledge. Therefore, any attempt at voluntary work on my part was unjustifiable, for I would be invading someone else's cornfield.

In light of such difficulties, Lisias was the ideal friend for my brotherly confidences.

When I broached the subject, he responded:

“Why don't you ask for Clarencio's help? He will surely give it. Ask him for advice. He always asks about you and is sure to do his best on your behalf.”

I was excited and my hopes were high. I would ask the advice of the

Minister of Assistance.

When I tried to set up an appointment, however, I was told that my kind benefactor would only be able to see me in his private office the next morning.

I waited anxiously for the appointed time.

Very early in the morning on the following day, I went to Clarencio's office. How great was my surprise when I found three other people in the same situation already waiting for him!

The kindly Minister of Assistance had arrived long before us, and was attending to matters much more important than talking to visitors and petitioners.

After finishing his most urgent work, he began calling us in pairs. I was puzzled by this procedure of holding a hearing. Later, I found out that he used it so that the solution of a case might profit not only the interested person but the other as well, thereby attending to general needs and saving precious time.

After several minutes, it was my turn.

I entered the office in the company of an elderly lady who was to be heard first by order of precedence. The Minister welcomed us cordially, putting us at ease in order to present our requests.

"Noble Clarencio," began my unknown companion, "I have come to beg your kind services on behalf of my two children. Oh! I can't bear missing them so much and I've been told that both of them are exhausted and overburdened with misfortunes down on earth. I realize that our Father's designs are loving and just, but I'm a mother! I can't stop feeling these pangs of anguish!"

The poor creature broke down in front of us and wept uncontrollably. The Minister looked at her sympathetically, but kept his personal firmness intact and answered gently:

"But sister, if you realize that our Father's designs are loving and just, what can I do?"

"I would like to be granted the means of watching over my children myself in the physical sphere!" replied the afflicted mother.

"I'm sorry, my friend," said the loving benefactor, "but only in the spirit of humility and service are we able to watch over someone. What would you

say about an earthly father who wanted to provide for his children, but then remained idle in the comfort of his home? The Father has created labor and cooperation as laws that no one may break without causing damage to himself. What does your conscience have to say on the matter? How many hour-bonuses<sup>8</sup> can you present for your request?”

The woman answered hesitantly:

“Three hundred and four.”

“It’s a pity,” continued Clarencio, smiling, “that you have lived here for over six years but have given the colony only three hundred and four hours of work. However, as soon as you recovered from the struggles you had suffered in the lower regions, I offered you a praiseworthy job on the Vigilance Team of the Ministry of Communication ... ”

“But that was intolerable work,” she interrupted, “a constant struggle with malevolent entities! Of course I couldn’t adapt to it.”

Clarencio continued, unperturbed:

“After that, I placed you with the Brothers of Support to perform regenerative duties.”

“That was even worse!” exclaimed the woman. “Those rooms were always crowded with filthy persons ... swearing, indecencies, misery ...”

“Seeing that you were having problems there,” explained the Minister, “I sent you to help in the Ward for the Mentally Disturbed.”

“But can anybody but saints tolerate them?” inquired the rebellious petitioner. “I did my best, but that bunch of deranged souls would frighten anybody!”

“My efforts did not stop there,” our patient benefactor continued. “I then placed you in the Investigation and Research Department at the Ministry of Elucidation, but by then I guess you were tired of my arrangements and deliberately retired to the Fields of Repose.”

“I couldn’t even stay there,” said the impertinent woman. “I only met with exhausting experiments, strange fluids and harsh supervisors.”

“Remember, my friend,” explained the devoted and unshakable instructor, “work and humility are the two sides of the path of assistance. In order to help someone, we need brothers and sisters who become our

coworkers, friends, protectors and servants. Before being able to assist those we love, it is essential that we establish currents of affinity. Without their cooperation it is impossible to lend them effective aid. The farmer who tills the soil earns the gratitude of those who enjoy the harvest. The worker who satisfies demanding bosses and carries out their orders in the place where the Lord has placed him provides sustenance for his home. The worker who constructively obeys his supervisors wins their goodwill and the goodwill of his companions and all those interested in his service. And no intermediate administrator can ever be useful to his loved ones if he doesn't know how to obey and serve worthily. No matter the pain in the heart or the difficulty, everyone needs to know that all useful service belongs to the Universal Giver above all."

After a short pause, he resumed:

"What, then, could you do on earth if you haven't yet learned how to put up with anything here? I do not doubt your devotion to your dear children, but it's important to realize that you would arrive there like a paralyzed mother, incapable of rendering any effective help at all. To deserve the joy of helping our loved ones, we must enlist the intercession of the persons whom we ourselves have helped. Those who do not cooperate cannot receive cooperation. That is the eternal law. And since you have accumulated nothing of your own to give, you can only turn to the charity of others. But how will you obtain any cooperation from them, when you haven't yet sown anything of your own – not even mere sympathy? So go back to the Fields of Repose and think about it. We'll examine the matter at a later time and give it our full attention."

The disquieted mother sat down and dried her tears.

Then, the Minister looked at me more cheerfully and said:

"What can I do for you, my friend!"

I rose hesitantly to talk to him.

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§ An amount related to each hour of service – Spirit Auth. (See chap. 22 for a full explanation – Tr.)

# 14

## Clarencio's elucidations

My heart was pounding and I felt like a shy student about to face a strict examining board. Seeing that woman in tears and pondering the Minister's serene strength, I felt an inner trembling and regretted having requested the hearing. Wouldn't it have been better to have kept quiet, to have simply waited for decisions to be made from higher up? Mightn't it be too presumptuous to apply for medical duty in a hospital where I myself was still a patient? Clarencio's frankness with the sister who preceded me awakened new thoughts in my mind. I wanted to give up, to renounce my aspirations of the previous day and to run for my room. But that was impossible. As though he had guessed my innermost intentions, the Minister of Assistance spoke to me in a firm tone of voice:

“And what can I do for you?”

In spite of the indecision gripping me, I was instinctively going to request any medical job that might be available in Nossos Lar. But my conscience warned me: Why request one type of work in particular? Wouldn't that be displaying the human error of vanity, which wouldn't even consider a job that wasn't related to one's titles and academic degrees? These questions brought me to my senses just in time. Rather confused, I spoke:

“I took the liberty of coming here today to ask you to help me reintegrate into the work scene. Now that the generosity of Nossos Lar has returned me to the blessing of organic harmony, I miss my old obligations. I'm interested in any useful work whatsoever as long as it keeps me from being idle.”

Clarencio looked at me at length as if guessing my hidden agenda.

“I see. You're telling me that any kind of job whatsoever will do, but deep down you miss your clients, your office and the whole atmosphere of service with which the Lord blessed you while on earth.”

Up to this point, his words were rays of comfort and hope, which I received in my heart with a confirming nod.

After a longer pause, however, the Minister proceeded:

“Nevertheless, you must realize that sometimes our Father honors us with his trust, but then we alter the real purpose of the service he has entrusted to us. You were a medical student, surrounded by every resource available for your studies. You never knew the price of a single book, for your generous parents paid all of your expenses. You began to earn a lot of money right after your graduation and were spared all the difficulties of a poor doctor, compelled to ask his friends for help in order to begin his practice. You prospered so rapidly that you transformed all those advantages into a career aimed at the premature death of your physical body. While young and strong, you committed many abuses while exercising the profession to which Jesus had led you.”

Before that firm yet kind gaze, a strange disturbance took hold of me.

I said respectfully:

“Your remarks are absolutely correct, but if possible I’d be grateful if you would grant me the means of repaying my debts by sincerely devoting myself to the patients in this hospital complex.”

“A very noble impulse,” said Clarenco less austerely. “Even so, you should remember that every task on earth involving a professional capacity is an invitation from our Father to enable human beings to enter the divine temple of service. For us, a degree is just a piece of paper, but on the physical plane it usually means an open door to all sorts of abuse. With such a piece of paper, a person should be able to study and serve the Lord in his divine services on the planet. This principle applies to all earthly activities, regardless of the customs in the areas where they are carried out. My brother, you received a medical piece of paper and consequently entered the temple of medicine. However, your actions while there do not authorize my endorsing your present wishes. How could I all of a sudden transform you into a doctor of ill spirits when you used to limit your observations exclusively to the physical body? I do not deny your excellent abilities as a physiologist, but the field of life is much broader than that. What would you say of a botanist who based all his definitions on the mere examination of the dry bark of a few trees? On earth, a great many physicians prefer only statistical conclusions with regard to anatomy. We agree that statistics is respectable, but it isn’t the

only science in the universe. As you know by now, doctors cannot stop at mere diagnoses and terminologies. They must penetrate the soul and probe its innermost depths. On the planet, many medical professionals are veritable prisoners of academia, and vanity has stolen the keys to their prison cells. Very few succeed in crossing the swamp of lower interests and overcoming common prejudices. The derision of the world and the scorn of their colleagues are reserved for such exceptions.”

I was amazed. I had never dreamed of such notions of professional responsibility. I was surprised by the interpretation of an academic degree reduced to a mere ticket of admission into areas of work in active cooperation with the Supreme Lord. Unable to argue, I waited for the Minister of Assistance to resume his explanation.

“As you can see,” he continued, “you are not adequately prepared for our services here.”

“Generous benefactor,” I dared to say, “I understand the lesson and bow before the evidence.”

Making a great effort to hold back my tears, I stated humbly:

“I would still be willing to submit to any kind of work in this colony of accomplishment and peace.”

With a look of approval, he answered:

“My friend, I don’t only offer you the bitter truth; I also have a word of encouragement. You cannot yet become a doctor in Nosso Lar, but in due time you will assume the role of an intern. Your present situation is not one of the best. Nevertheless, it is a more or less comfortable one, owing to the intercessions arriving at the Ministry of Assistance on your behalf.”

“My mother?” I asked, intoxicated with joy.

“Yes,” explained the Minister, “your mother and a few other friends, in whose hearts you planted the seed of sympathy. Soon after your arrival, I asked the Ministry of Elucidation to send me your records. I examined them closely and found much imprudence and thoughtlessness ... numerous abuses; but during your fifteen years of medical practice you also provided free aid to six thousand needy people. Most of the time, you practiced those meritorious acts condescendingly. However, you can see by now that even if done condescendingly, a good act spreads blessings along the way. Out of all those needy people, fifteen never forgot you and they have made fervent

appeals on your behalf. But I should add that even the good you did to the indifferent ones weighs in your favor here.”

Concluding his surprising elucidations with a smile, Clarencio added:

“You will learn new lessons in Nosso Lar, and after useful experiences you will be able to cooperate effectively with us and prepare yourself for the infinite future.”

I felt radiant. For the first time in the colony, I wept out of pure joy. Ah! Who on earth could understand such joy? Sometimes it is necessary to quiet our hearts before the magnificent Divine Silence.

# 15

## A visit from mother

Following Clarencio's recommendations, I tried to rebuild my strength in order to recommence my learning process. In the past, I might have felt offended at such seemingly harsh remarks, but under the circumstances I remembered my past errors and felt comforted. The body's fluids drive the soul into deep slumber. Actually, only now did I realize that the human experience can in no way be considered just a game. The importance of incarnation loomed clearly before me, displaying splendors unknown to me thus far. Bearing in mind all the opportunities I had wasted, I realized that I didn't deserve the hospitality of Nosso Lar. Clarencio had plenty of reasons to have spoken to me so frankly.

I spent the days immersed in profound reflection on life. Deep down, of course, I was very anxious to see my terrestrial home again. However, I refrained from asking for any more favors. The benefactors from the Ministry of Assistance were excessively generous to me. They guessed my thoughts. If they hadn't afforded me the immediate satisfaction of my desire, it must have been because the time wasn't yet right. Thus, I kept silent, resigned, though I was somewhat sad. Lisias did whatever he could to cheer me up with his consoling remarks. However, I was going through that phase of inexpressible retreat, when individuals are called by their innermost conscience to go within.

But one day, my kind attendant radiantly came into my room, exclaiming:

"Guess who has arrived looking for you!"

His joyful face and shining eyes gave him away.

"My mother!" I answered confidently.

My eyes shone with joy as I saw my mother enter with outstretched arms.

“My son, my son! Come to me, my dear one.”

I cannot say what happened next. I felt like the little boy who used to play barefoot in the sand of our garden while it rained. I held her tenderly and wept with joy, experiencing the most sacred rapture of spiritual bliss. I kissed her over and over; I held her in my arms and blended my tears with hers. I cannot say how long we remained entangled like that. She finally aroused me out of my rapture:

“Come, come, my son; don’t be so emotional. Excessive joy can harm the heart.”

But instead of carrying my dear old mother in my arms as I had done during the last weeks of her journey on earth, it was she who dried my flood of tears and led me to the divan.

“You’re still weak, my little son. Don’t waste your energy.”

I sat down beside her, and she tenderly laid my tired face on her knees, stroking my hair gently and comforting me in the light of sacred memories. I felt at that moment that I was the most fortunate man of all. I had the impression that my ship of hope had anchored in the safest of harbors. My mother’s presence brought infinite comfort to my heart. Those minutes gave me the idea of a dream woven with a fabric of inexpressible bliss. Like a boy looking for details, I noticed that her clothes were a perfect copy of an outfit she used to wear at home. I recognized the dark dress, the woolen stockings and the blue shawl. I gazed at her small head crowned with snow-white hair, at the wrinkles on her face, at her invariably sweet and calm eyes. With my own hands trembling with contentment, I stroked her dear hands and couldn’t say even a single word. My mother, however, was stronger than I and spoke serenely:

“We’ll never be able to thank God enough for such a great gift. The Father has never forgotten us, my child. How long we have been apart! But don’t think that I had forgotten you. Providence at times separates hearts temporarily so they may learn divine love.”

On noticing that her tenderness was the same as ever, I felt the pain of my earthly wounds once again. Oh! How difficult it is to rid ourselves of residue brought from earth! How heavy is the imperfection accumulated over

the centuries! So many times I had listened to Clarencio's healthy advice and Lisias's brotherly suggestions to refrain from feeling sorry for myself. Yet now, feeling the maternal tenderness, all my old wounds seemed to reopen. From weeping out of happiness, I passed to tears of anguish, bitterly recalling my earthly suffering. I didn't grasp the fact that her visit was not meant to gratify my whims, but was intended as a precious blessing of divine mercy. I relapsed into old habits and wrongly concluded that my mother ought to continue as the repository for all my complaints and endless grievances. On earth, mothers are almost always mere slaves from their children's point of view. Rare are the children who recognize their mother's devotion before losing her. Holding on to the same old wrong idea from the past, I lost myself in the land of painful confessions.

My mother listened to me in silence with an expression of indescribable melancholy on her face. With moist eyes, from time to time she held me tightly to her heart. Then, she spoke caringly:

"Oh, my son, I'm fully aware of the instructions ministered to you by our benevolent Clarencio. Don't complain. Let us thank our Father for blessing us with this meeting. We are now in a different school, where we are learning to be children of the Lord. When I was your mother on earth, I didn't always provide you with the best guidance. I too am working to readjust my heart, but your tears are dragging me back to the landscape of human emotions. Something is trying to cause my soul to backslide. I would like to agree with your complaints, to build you a throne as if you were the best creature in the universe, but such an attitude would be out of accord with the new life lessons we are now learning. Such gestures are forgivable on the physical plane, but here, my son, we must attend to the Lord before anything else. You aren't the only discarnate man righting his wrongs, nor am I the only mother that feels far from her loved ones. So, our suffering doesn't improve us because of the tears we shed or because of the hurts that bleed, but because of the gateway of light it offers to our spirit in order to make us more humane and wise. Tears and hurts make up part of the blessed process of expanding our purest sentiments."

After a long pause, during which a deeper awareness was solemnly warning me, my mother proceeded:

"If we can enjoy these moments in expressions of love, why should we waste them in the shadows of self-pity? Let's rejoice, my son, and work ceaselessly. Adopt a new mental attitude. Your trust in my caring comforts

me and your filial tenderness brings me sublime happiness, but I can't go back to the way things used to be. For now, let's love each other with a great and sacred divine love."

Her blessed words woke me up. I had the impression that invigorating fluids originating in maternal sentiment were uplifting my heart. My mother gazed at me kindly with a beautiful smile on her face. I rose respectfully and kissed her forehead, feeling that she was even more beautiful and loving than ever.

# 16

## Confidences

My mother's words consoled me and seemed to reorganize my inner energies. She talked about service as though it were a blessing to help us endure suffering and tribulation, which she regarded as actually being expressions of joy and valuable lessons. An indescribable and unexpected contentment bathed my spirit. These concepts nourished me in some strange way – I felt like a different man: more alive, happy and cheerful.

“Oh, Mother!” I exclaimed, “How marvelous the sphere where you live must be! What sublime spiritual thoughts, what bliss!”

She smiled and explained:

“Higher spheres always require more work and greater self-denial, my son. Don't imagine that your mother spends all her time in beatific visions, removed from her rightful duties. Now I don't mean for my words to convey any tone of sadness about my situation. Rather, I want them to reveal how necessary responsibility is. Since I returned from earth, I've been working intensely for our spiritual renewal. Many spirits remain bound to their earth homes after they discarnate, claiming they care about their loved ones too much to leave them behind. But here I have been taught that in order to be beneficial, true love must work nonstop. So, since my arrival, I've been trying hard to win the right to help those we love so dearly.”

“And Dad,” I asked, “where is he? Why didn't he come with you?”

My mother's face took on an odd expression as she answered:

“Oh! Your father! Your father! He has been in a region of thick darkness in the Umbral for twelve years. When he was with us, he always seemed faithful to family traditions and was meticulous in observing the chivalry of the upper business circles, to which he belonged until the end of his days. He also seemed fervent in his outward worship in church, but deep down he was

weak and maintained clandestine liaisons on the side. Two of his lovers were mentally tied to a vast network of evil spirits, and as soon as my poor Laerte discarnated, he faced an extremely bitter sojourn in the Umbral. He had made a lot of promises to those two unfortunate creatures and they were waiting anxiously to involve him in their web of illusion once more. At first, he tried to resist and made every possible effort to find me, but he couldn't understand that after death the soul will live according to its intrinsic nature. So, Laerte perceived neither my spiritual presence nor the devoted assistance of some of our friends. Having spent so many years pretending, he had damaged his spirit sight and had restricted his vibratory range. As a result, he found himself alone with those to whom he had thoughtlessly attuned his heart and mind. Family principles and his love for us nevertheless worried his spirit for some time. Somehow, he fought to repel temptation, but finally fell once again to be surrounded in darkness due to his lack of perseverance and correct thinking.”

Very impressed, I asked:

“But isn't there a way to pull him out of such infamy?”

“Alas, my son!” explained my mother, “I visit him frequently, but he doesn't even know I'm there. His vibratory strength is still too low. I've tried to inspire him to return to the right path, but the only result so far is that he has shed a few tears of regret from time to time without any serious decision to change. Those poor women keep him prisoner and intercept all my suggestions. I've been working intensely for years on end and have enlisted the assistance of friends in five different centers of higher spiritual activity, including Nosso Lar. Once, Clarencio almost succeeded in attracting him to the Ministry of Regeneration, but failed. One cannot light a lamp that has neither wick nor oil ... We need Laerte's mental cooperation in order to lift him up and open his spirit sight. However, the poor man remains internally inactive, wavering between indifference and rebellion.”

After a long pause, she sighed and continued:

“Perhaps, you haven't heard that your sisters Clara and Priscilla are also living in the Umbral and are bound to the earth's surface. I am compelled to attend to everyone's needs and my only direct help has been the affectionate cooperation of your sister Luisa, who passed over when you were still a baby. She waited for me here for many years and has been my right hand in the strenuous task of assisting our earth family. After having fought bravely by

my side on behalf of your father, your sisters and yourself, and because the disturbance in our still-incarnate family members is so great, she returned last week in order to reincarnate among them in a heroic gesture of sublime selflessness. So, I hope you will soon recover so we can double our activities of goodness.”

I was surprised by the information about my father. What sort of struggles could he be facing? Hadn't he seemed to be a faithful observer of religious precepts? Didn't he take communion every Sunday? Fascinated by my mother's devotion, I asked:

“So, you help Dad in spite of his involvement with those wicked women?”

“No, don't call them that,” said my mother. “Instead, call them our sick, ignorant or unfortunate sisters. They too are children of our Father. I've been interceding not only on Laerte's behalf but also on theirs, and I'm sure I have finally found a way to attract them all to my heart.”

I was really taken by such a display of selflessness. Then, all of sudden, I thought of my own family. I felt the old yearning for my wife and my dear children. While with Clarencio and Lisias, I had always managed to restrain my feelings and refrain from asking any questions, but my mother's look encouraged me to speak. Something made me sense that my mother wouldn't be staying much longer. I availed myself of the opportunity, inquiring:

“Since you have been assisting Dad so devoutly, couldn't you also give me some news about Zelia and the kids? I'm anxiously waiting for the time when I can return home to help them. Oh! They surely must miss me as much as I miss them! How my poor wife must be suffering from this separation!”

My mother smiled sadly and added:

“I've visited my grandkids from time to time. They are well.”

And after thinking for a few moments, she said:

“Don't worry about helping your family for now. First of all, prepare yourself so that we may be successful. There are issues that we must entrust to the Lord in thought before we work on solving them.”

I wanted to insist on the subject in order to gather some details, but my mother wouldn't hear of it and carefully avoided it. Our conversation lasted for quite some time and seemed to enwrap me in sublime comfort. A while

later she rose to say goodbye. Since I was curious to know how she had been living so far, I asked if I could go with her. She hugged me and said:

“You can’t, my son. I am urgently expected at the Ministry of Communication, where I will be provided with fluidic resources in the transformation chambers for my return journey. Besides, I still have to visit Minister Celio in order to thank him for the opportunity of this visit.”

She kissed me and left, leaving a lasting impression of happiness on my soul.

# 17

## In Lisias's home

Just a few days after my mother's unexpected visit, Lisias came looking for me on behalf of Minister Clarencio. I eagerly went with him.

The magnanimous benefactor welcomed me and I awaited his orders with enormous pleasure.

"My friend," he said amiably, "you will now be allowed to make observation visits to all of our work sectors except for the more-elevated Ministries. Henrique de Luna has informed me that your treatment was completed last week, so it is only proper that you now employ your time observing and learning."

I turned to Lisias as if he were a brother who ought to share my inexpressible happiness of the moment. My attendant answered me with a look of intense joy. I was simply ecstatic, for it was the beginning of a new life. Somehow, I would be able to work by joining different schools. Clarencio noticed my indescribable joy and remarked:

"Since you will no longer have to stay in the hospital complex, I will carefully examine the possibility of your rooming somewhere else. I will consult a few of our institutions ..."

Lisias interrupted him:

"If possible, I would be honored to welcome him into our home throughout his course of observation. My mother would treat him like a son."

I stared him in a rapture of happiness. Clarencio also gave him an approving look, saying:

"Very well, Lisias! Jesus rejoices with us whenever we receive a new friend into our hearts."

I embraced my helpful attendant, unable to express my gratitude.

Happiness can sometimes render us speechless.

“Keep this document,” said the Minister of Assistance, handing me a small folder. “It will enable you to visit the Ministries of Regeneration, Assistance, Communication and Elucidation for the period of one year. After that, we shall see what else can be done concerning your wishes. Learn, my friend; don’t waste your time. The intervals between earthly experiences must be rightly filled.”

Lisias offered me his arm and I left, giddy with pleasure.

A few minutes later, we arrived at the door of a graceful house that was surrounded by a colorful garden.

“Here we are,” exclaimed my kind companion.

And with a caring look he added:

“This is our home in Nosso Lar.”

I heard the doorbell ring inside and a kindly-looking older woman opened the door:

“Mother! Mother!” cried the attendant, introducing me happily. “Here is the brother I promised to bring to you.”

“Welcome, friend,” the woman exclaimed nobly. “Our home is yours.”

And embracing me:

“I understand that your own mom doesn’t live here, so in me you will have a sister acting as a mother.”

I didn’t know how to thank her for her generous hospitality. I was about to rehearse a few phrases to express my emotion and gratitude, but displaying a unique sense of humor, she seemed to have guessed my thought and was one step ahead of me:

“You are forbidden from thanking me. Please don’t. Otherwise, you will force me to remember too many of those conventional phrases from earth.”

We all laughed, and deeply moved, I said:

“May the Lord translate my gratitude to everyone in renewed blessings of joy and peace.”

We went inside. The atmosphere was simple and comfortable. The furniture was almost identical to furniture on earth, and other common objects

seemed only slightly different. There were paintings of sublime spiritual significance and a remarkably large piano. A big harp of delicate and noble design rested against it. Noticing my curiosity, Lisias said with a smile:

“As you can see, we don’t meet up with any angel harpists after the grave, but there’s a harp waiting for us here.”

“Oh, Lisias,” his mother interrupted him affectionately, “don’t be ironic. Don’t you remember last year when the Ministry of Divine Union welcomed some of the personnel from Elevation when those ambassadors from Harmonia<sup>9</sup> visited our colony?”

“Yes, Mom. I only meant to say that there really are such harpists, but we must develop our spiritual perception in order to hear them by making an effort to learn about divine things.”

A little later, after the usual introductions and as we were talking about our backgrounds, I learned that Lisias’s family was from an old town in the state of Rio de Janeiro, that his mother’s name was Laura, and that he had two sisters, Iolanda and Judite, living with him at home.

In Lisias’ home, we enjoyed an atmosphere of sweet and comforting intimacy. I couldn’t disguise my gratitude and enormous joy. That first contact with a domestic organization in the colony delighted me and the tender hospitality aroused profound emotions in my spirit.

In answer to my endless questions, Iolanda showed me some marvelous books. Laura noticed how interested I was in them and informed me:

“As for literature in *Nosso Lar*, we have an enormous advantage, which is that all of earth’s insidious authors – those who write psychological poison – immediately end up in the dark zones of the Umbral. As long as they persist in such an attitude, they are unable to recoup their spiritual balance – not even in the Ministry of Regeneration.”

I couldn’t help smiling as I continued looking at the beautiful photographic art on nearly every page.

Later, Lisias called me to show me some of the other rooms of the house and I was especially fascinated by the bathroom with its interesting fixtures. Everything was simple but comfortable.

I had hardly gotten over my admiration of the place when Laura invited us to prayer.

We sat in silence around a big table.

When a large device was switched on, we heard soft music playing. It was the twilight service. On the screen, I saw the same magnificent image that I had seen at the Government Center. I had never grown tired of contemplating that image every afternoon in the hospital complex, but this time I felt dominated by a deep and mysterious joy. And when I saw the blue heart forming in the background, I felt that my soul was kneeling in my inner temple in a sublime rapture of joy and gratitude.

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9 Literally, Harmony – Tr.

# 18

## Love: food for the soul

After the prayer, Laura offered us an invigorating broth and fragrant fruits; the latter seemed concentrated with delicious fluids. I was obviously surprised, so Laura remarked graciously:

“Actually, our meals here are far more agreeable than they were on earth and there are homes in Nosso Lar that dispense with them almost completely. But in the areas of the Ministry of Assistance, we cannot go without concentrated fluids due to the heavy tasks that the circumstances demand. We consume a great deal of energy, and we have to renew our sources of strength.”

“Even so,” remarked one of the young women, “that doesn’t mean that we who work for the Ministries of Assistance and Regeneration are the only ones who depend on food. None of the Ministries, including Divine Union, dispense with it completely; the only difference in the food is the nature of its substance. In Communication and Elucidation, for example, they eat a huge amount of fruit. In Elevation, they consume a lot of juices and concentrated fluids. In the Ministry of Divine Union, the forms of nutrition are beyond anything you could imagine.”

My inquiring look went first to Lisias and then to Laura, eager for an explanation. Everybody smiled at my natural perplexity, but Lisias’s mother satisfied my wishes:

“Our brother may not realize that the greatest sustenance for all creatures is love. From time to time in Nosso Lar, we are visited by large delegations of instructors who teach the principles of spiritual nutrition. Every nutritional system in the different spheres of life is fundamentally based on love. Even here, physical alimentation per se is simply a problem of transitory materiality – like machines on the earth, which need grease and oil. The soul in and of itself is nourished only by love. The more we ascend the evolutionary planes

of creation, the more thoroughly we understand this truth. Didn't you know that divine love is the mainspring of the universe?"

Such elucidations comforted me considerably. Noticing my inner satisfaction, Lisias interrupted:

"Everything balances out in the infinite love of God, and the more evolved the created being, the subtler the process of nutrition. For instance, the worm under the soil feeds essentially on earth. The large animal finds the necessary elements for nourishment in plants and the child sucks the maternal milk. Human beings gather the fruit of plants and prepare it for the table according to their tastes. We incarnates need juicy substances that are fluidic in form, and this process becomes gradually more refined as our individual ascent intensifies."

"Let's not forget about love as the true vehicle of life," Laura added, "for deep down, worms, animals, human beings and spirits depend exclusively on love. We all move about in it and without it we wouldn't exist."

"That is extraordinary!" I said, deeply moved.

"Don't you remember the gospel lesson that says: 'Love one another'?" continued Lisias's mother. "Jesus didn't teach principles like that referring only to charitable giving, for all of us will learn sooner or later that the practice of the good consists in simple duty. Jesus also counsels us to sustain one another through fraternity and sympathy. Someday, incarnates will understand that friendly words, gestures of kindness, mutual trust in the light of understanding, and fraternal interest – all treasures that naturally originate in profound love – are the solid nourishment of life itself. When we reincarnate, we experience great limitations, but upon returning here, we realize that sustained joy is a question of pure, spiritual nourishment. Homes, towns, cities and nations are formed in obedience to such principles."

I instinctively recalled the widespread theories about sex. Guessing my thoughts, Laura remarked:

"No one can say that sex is simply sex. Sex is a sacred manifestation of universal and divine love, but it is only one isolated expression of our infinite potential. Among more-spiritualized couples, tenderness and trust, mutual devotion and understanding are far more important than physical union, which between such partners is reduced to merely a transitory element. Their magnetic exchange is the factor that establishes the rhythm required for the

manifestation of harmony. Companionship and understanding are sometimes quite enough for their mutual joy.”

Taking advantage of the pause that followed, Judite added:

“We have learned in Nosso Lar that life on earth is balanced on love, although most people never realize it. Twin souls, kindred souls, and harmonious souls form pairs and large groups. By gathering together and mutually assisting one another, they balance one another in the plan of redemption. When weaker individuals lack such companions, however, they usually fail in the middle of the journey.”

“As you can see, my friend,” Lisias remarked happily, “even here we remember the Gospel of Christ: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone’.”

But before Lisias could say any more, the bell rang loudly.

He got up to answer the door.

Two polite young men came into the room.

Lisias addressed me courteously, “These are our brothers Polidoro and Estacio, fellow workers from the Ministry of Elucidation.”

Everyone happily greeted and embraced them.

After a few moments, Laura said with a smile:

“You have all worked hard and have spent the day worthily. Don’t spoil your plans on our account by canceling your trip to the Field of Music.”

Noticing Lisias’s concern, his mother told him:

“Run along, my son. Don’t keep Lascinia waiting. Our brother will stay with me until he can accompany you on such entertaining excursions.”

“Don’t worry about me,” I said instinctively.

Laura smiled and answered:

“I won’t be able to share the joys of the Field of Music today. My convalescing granddaughter is here after having returned from earth a few days ago.”

They all left in the midst of overall joy. Laura closed the door and turned to me to explain with a smile:

“They are going in search of the food we’ve been talking about. The ties of affection are stronger and more beautiful here. Love, my friend, is the

divine bread of souls, the sublime sustenance of hearts.”

## 19

# The discarnate young woman

“Doesn’t your granddaughter come to the table for meals?” I asked Laura, attempting a more intimate conversation.

“For the time being, she eats alone,” Laura explained. “The poor girl is still nervous and disheartened, and we don’t share our table with anyone who displays confusion or displeasure. Nervous exhaustion and anxiety emit dense poisonous fluids that automatically blend with nutritional substances. My granddaughter slept heavily for fifteen days in the Umbral while we watched over her. She should have been put in one of the hospital wards, but she came to stay here under my direct care.”

I told her I would like to have a visit with this newcomer from the planet. It would be very interesting to hear what she had to say. How long had it been since I received any direct news about ordinary life?

Laura willingly agreed when I told her my wish.

She led me into a comfortable and spacious room, where a very pale young woman was resting in a comfortable armchair. She was startled when she saw me.

“Eloisa,” explained Laura, “this friend is a brother who returned from the physical realm not too long ago.”

The young woman gazed at me curiously, although her deep shadowed eyes betrayed her great effort to concentrate. She greeted me with a wan smile as I introduced myself.

“You must be very tired,” I remarked.

Before she could answer, however, Laura tried to spare her any exhausting effort:

“Eloisa has been restless and afflicted. To a certain degree, her state is

certainly understandable. She had tuberculosis for a long time and it left deep scars on her spirit; however, we must never cease to be optimistic and courageous.”

I saw the young woman open her very black eyes wide in a futile effort to hold back her tears. Her chest began to spasm violently and she covered her face with a handkerchief, unable to hold back an anguished sob.

“Poor girl!” said the kind woman, embracing her. “Try to get a hold of yourself. These feelings are the result of a faulty religious education; nothing more. You know that your mother will be here shortly and that you can’t count on your fiancée’s fidelity. He isn’t at all prepared to offer you any kind of sincere spiritual devotion there on earth. He’s still a long way from understanding the sublime spirit of illumined love. Of course, he will marry another woman, and it is best that you simply get used to the idea. It wouldn’t be fair to insist on his suddenly coming here.”

Smiling maternally, Laura added:

“Let’s suppose he did come, bending the law. Wouldn’t your suffering be harder still? Wouldn’t you pay dearly for any part you might have played in his death? You won’t lack any devoted friendship and fraternal cooperation to help you become spiritually balanced here, and if you really love the young man, you must seek more inner harmony so that you can be of use to him later. And like I said, your mother will soon be here.”

The young woman’s tears filled me with pity. I decided to change the subject in order to keep her from crying:

“Where are you from, Eloisa?”

Laura kept quiet and seemed anxious to see her join in the conversation.

The girl dried her tears during a long pause and replied:

“Rio de Janeiro.”

“You shouldn’t cry so.” I objected, “You should be very happy. After all, you discarnated only a few days ago and you are already with your family without having had to face any storms on the great journey.”

Eloisa seemed to cheer up a bit and spoke more calmly:

“Well, you can’t imagine how much I’ve been suffering. Eight months of fighting tuberculosis, in spite of all the treatments ... The sorrow of having

infected my loving mother ... Besides, I can't describe all that my poor fiancée had to suffer on my account."

"Now, now, don't say that," remarked Laura with a smile. "On earth, we are always under the illusion that no pain is greater than our own. That's pure blindness – there are millions of people facing situations truly cruel when compared to ours."

"But Grandma, Arnaldo was so disconsolate and desperate ... " she answered. "All this makes me wonder ..."

"Do you really believe what you think you saw?" asked Laura in a tender voice. "I saw your ex-fiancée several times during your illness. It was only natural for him to be so deeply affected at seeing your physical body being reduced to ruin. But he isn't ready to understand pure sentiment and will get over his grief very soon. Illuminated love is not for just any human creature, so hold on to your optimism. No doubt, you will eventually be able to be of great help to him, but as for the possibility of any conjugal union between you, you'll discover that when you are finally able to travel with us to the spheres of the planet, he will have already married somebody else."

I myself was impressed by these remarks, and I noted Eloisa's pained surprise. The convalescing girl didn't know how to react, faced with her grandmother's serenity and common sense.

"Could that be possible?"

With an extremely caring gesture, Laura continued:

"Don't be stubborn or try to contradict me."

Seeing that the patient looked like she expected some kind of proof, Laura insisted very gently:

"Do you remember Maria da Luz, your co-worker who brought you flowers every Sunday? Well, when the doctor confidentially told Arnaldo that there was no hope for healing your physical body, he was deeply grieved but began to surround Maria with different mental vibrations. And now that you're here, their new attitude towards each other won't take long to express itself."

"Oh, Grandma! How awful!"

"Why awful? You need to get used to considering the needs of others. Your ex-fiancée is an ordinary man, unaware of the sublime beauties of

spiritual love. No matter how much you love him, you can't work miracles in him. Self-discovery is the privilege of each human being. Arnaldo will recognize the beauty of your idealism someday, but for the present he must be left to live through these necessary experiences."

"I simply won't accept it!" complained the young woman, weeping. "Maria da Luz, whom I always considered a most faithful friend ... "

Laura, however, smiled and spoke cautiously:

"Wouldn't it be better to entrust him to the care of a sister? Maria da Luz will always be your spiritual friend, whereas another woman might render your entrance into his heart more difficult for you in the future."

I was really surprised and Eloisa started sobbing again. The kind woman sensed my uneasiness, and perhaps with the purpose of instructing me as well as her granddaughter, she explained:

"I know what's causing your tears, my little dear; they were born in the uncultivated soil of our millenary selfishness, our undying human self-centeredness. But your grandma isn't saying these things to hurt you, but to wake you up."

While Eloisa wept, Laura invited me to go back with her into the living room, remarking that the patient needed to rest.

As we sat down, she spoke confidentially:

"My granddaughter arrived here extremely exhausted. She let her heart get entangled in the web of self-centeredness. In fact, she should be in one of our hospitals, but Assistant Couceiro thought it better to place her under our direct care. His decision really pleased me, because my dear Teresa, her mother, will arrive soon. A little patience and we'll find the right solution; it's just a question of time and peaceful surroundings."

## 20

# Notions about the home

I wanted to glean some of the educational values that naturally flowed from Laura's conversation, so I asked curiously:

“With so many duties at home, do you still work elsewhere?”

“Yes, I do. We live in a city of transition; nevertheless, the colony's purposes reside in labor and learning. Female souls in Nosso Lar assume numerous obligations that prepare them for either their return to the planet or their ascent to higher spheres.”

“But is domestic organization in Nosso Lar just like it is on earth?”

She gave me a meaningful look and explained:

“Actually, it is the home on earth that has for so long tried to imitate our domestic institution. With rare exceptions, married couples there are still weeding the soil of their sentiments that have been overrun with the bitter weeds of personal vanity and inhabited by the monsters of jealousy and selfishness. The last time I returned from the planet, I arrived here naturally harboring deep illusions. But it just so happened that during one of my crises involving wounded pride, I was taken to hear a great instructor in the Ministry of Elucidation. On that day, a new train of thought entered my mind.”

“Would you mind telling me something of what you learned?”

“The lecturer was highly versed in mathematics,” she proceeded. “He helped us realize that the home may be compared to the lines of a right angle on the plane of divine evolution. The vertical line is the female sentiment, and has to do with the creative inspirations of life. The horizontal line is the male sentiment, concerned with achievements in the field of common progress. The home is the sacred converging point where man and woman meet in order to understand each other correctly. It is the temple where individuals should join

spiritually rather than just physically. At the present time on earth, a great number of scholars who are versed in social matters are advocating various measures, calling for a regeneration of home life. Some go so far as to state that the human family institution is threatened. However, we must bear in mind that the home is in the middle of a sublime conquest, which humankind is slowly winning. After all, where in the circles of the planet can we find a real domestic institution that is based on true harmony, where rights and duties are legitimately shared? The majority of terrestrial couples spend the sacred hours of the day living indifferently and selfishly. When the husband is at ease, the wife seems desperate. When the wife keeps humbly silent, her companion tyrannizes her. The wife makes no attempt to encourage her husband along the horizontal line of his temporal work, nor does the husband try to accompany his companion on her divine flight of tenderness and sentiment towards the higher planes of creation. In social circles, they put on appearances, but in their private life, one takes long mental trips to faraway regions while the other talks about work. If the wife talks about the children, the husband thinks of his business. When the husband tries to study some difficulty at work, the wife's thoughts drift to the fashion designer's office.<sup>10</sup> In these circumstances, it's obvious that the divine angle is far from being properly drawn. The two diverging lines are endeavoring in vain to form the sublime vertex in order to build a new step on the great stairway of eternal life."

I felt these concepts deep down. Highly impressed, I remarked:

"Laura, these concepts open up a whole world of new thought! If we only knew all this down on earth!"

"A matter of experience, my friend," she replied. "Men and women will learn these lessons through suffering and struggle. For the moment, few realize that the home is an essentially divine institution, and within its doors we must live with all our heart and soul. When ordinary people are crossing through the flowery regions of betrothal, they regard each other while displaying their souls' best resources. That's why it is said that all beings are beautiful when truly in love. The most trivial subject has a peculiar charm even in the most frivolous conversation. During their courtship, the man and woman blend their sublime energies, but soon after they receive the nuptial blessing, most of them rend the veil of desire and fall back into the arms of the old monsters that tyrannize hearts. There are no mutual concessions; there is no tolerance; sometimes they don't even regard each other as friends. The

luminous beauty of love dies out when the couple lose their comradeship and the joy of talking to each other. From then on, the polite ones respect each other, while the antagonistic ones can hardly stand each other. There is no mutual understanding. Questions and answers are formulated in terse sentences. No matter how united their bodies are, their minds have already separated and have gone off in opposite directions.”

“All of that is so true!” I exclaimed.

“But what can we do, my friend?” replied the kind woman. “On the physical plane in the planet’s present evolutionary phase, there are very few unions between twin souls and only a few more marriages between kindred souls, but there is an overwhelming percentage of expiatory relationships. Most human couples are made up of prisoners in shackles.”

In returning to the thread of thought suggested by my initial question, she continued:

“Female souls cannot remain inactive here. They must learn to become mothers, wives, missionaries and sisters. A woman’s job in the home cannot be confined to a few idle tears of pity and many years of servitude. Of course, the desperate contemporary feminist movement is an abominable offense to the true attributes of the female spirit. Woman cannot duel it out with man in offices and other professions comprised of activities suited to the male spirit. Nevertheless, our colony teaches that there are noble services for women outside the home. Nursing, teaching, textiles, information, and customer-related services are very important. Men should learn to endow the domestic circle with the richness of their experiences, while women should transfer the sweetness of the home to the rough work of men. Within the home, inspiration; outside, activity. One can’t live without the other. How could a river be sustained without its source, and how could the water of the source flow on without the river bed?”

I couldn’t help smiling as I listened to her question.

Laura proceeded after a long pause:

“When the Ministry of Assistance entrusts children to my home, my work hours are counted as double, which can give you an idea of the importance of maternal service on the earth plane. However, when that isn’t happening, I have my daily tasks of nursing, with a 48-hour work week. Apart from my convalescing granddaughter, every member of our family works

somewhere. Eight hours per day working in the collective interest is an easy schedule for anyone. I would feel ashamed if I didn't do my part.”

She stopped talking for a few moments while I lost myself deep in thought ...

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<sup>10</sup> The reader would be reminded that Laura's remarks in this chapter portray attitudes about Brazilian home life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – Tr.

## 21

### The conversation continues

“Laura,” I exclaimed with interest, “this conversation brings up a lot of questions, and if you would pardon my curiosity ...”

“Of course, my dear,” she answered kindly, “you can always ask. Although I’m not in a position to teach you, I can nevertheless inform you.”

We both laughed at her remark, and then I asked:

“What about the issue of private property in the colony? For instance, does this house belong to you?”

She smiled and explained:

“As is the case on earth, private property is relative here. Our acquisitions are based on our work hours. Actually, the hour-bonus is our money. We can acquire any commodity with these bonuses, which are earned by our own effort and devotion. The buildings in general represent a common heritage under the control of the Government Center. However, each spirit family may earn the right to one home (never more than one) by presenting thirty thousand hour-bonuses, which may be accumulated over a certain period of work. Our home was acquired through the persevering work of my husband, who came to the spirit realm long before me. We were separated physically for eighteen years, though we were always united spiritually. Ricardo, however, didn’t rest during that time. When he was brought to Nosso Lar after a period of extreme trouble, he immediately understood the need to work hard and he began to prepare our future nest. Then, when I arrived, we settled down together in this house, which he had so carefully organized. We were truly happy together. At the time, my husband taught me everything he had learned. I had gone through a time of intense struggle during my widowhood because I was still a very young girl with children to raise, and had to work at a hard job to make ends meet. It was very difficult, but I

provided the offspring of our union with all the educational values at my disposal, although they too had to adapt to working hard at an early age. I understood later that my toilsome life had sheltered me from many dangerous temptations, and thus had ensured that I wouldn't have to experience the indecision and anguish of the Umbral. The sweat of the body and dedicated involvement with an honest job are valuable resources for the defense and ascension of the soul. Meeting Ricardo again and building a new love nest made me feel as if I were in heaven. We lived together for many years in continual happiness, working on our evolution, growing closer and closer to each other, and taking part in the progress of our loved ones. After some time, Lisias, Iolanda and Judite came to join us and we were even happier than before."

After a short pause, during which she seemed to be thinking deeply, she proceeded in a more serious tone:

"But the global sphere awaited us. Though our present was full of joy, our pasts demanded restitution in order for our future to be in harmony with the eternal law. We couldn't use hour-bonuses to pay our debts down on earth; that would require the honorable sweat of our bodies, the fruit of our labor. Due to our positive attitudes, our understanding of our pain-filled past was becoming clearer and we realized that the law of rhythm demanded our return."

These affirmations really impressed me. It was the first time in the colony that I had heard anything about past lives.

"Please excuse me, Laura," I exclaimed, interrupting her, "but I would like to say something. Forgive my curiosity, but until now I haven't been able to find out anything about my past lives. Aren't I free of physical bonds? Haven't I crossed the river of death? Did you remember your past right after you got here, or did you have to wait for quite some time?"

"I had to wait," she replied. "First of all, we must rid ourselves of all physical impressions. The layers of the lower nature are extremely thick and we must be mentally balanced to be able to remember the past constructively. As a rule, we all have made tragic errors during the cycles of eternal life. Whoever holds the memory of having committed a crime thinks he is the unhappiest creature in the universe, and whoever remembers having been the victim of a crime thinks his own misfortune is the greatest. Therefore, only a soul who is very sure of itself is endowed with the special gift of spontaneous

recollection. Others, however, are rightly prevented from remembering, and if they attempt to break such a law, they usually incur unbalance and insanity.”

“But did your memory of the past come about naturally?” I asked.

“Let me explain,” she answered kindly; “as my inner sight became clearer, I had vague recollections that disturbed me greatly. It just so happened that my husband was also experiencing the same thing, so we decided to consult assistant Longobardo. After examining our impressions in detail, this friend sent us to the magnetizers at the Ministry of Elucidation. We were kindly received and started the process by going to the Filing Department, where everyone’s private archives are stored. Specialists from the Ministry advised us that we could read our memories for the next two years as long as it didn’t interfere with our job at the Ministry of Assistance. Our memories spanned a period of three centuries. The director of Recollection Services wouldn’t let us go back any farther, arguing that we wouldn’t be able to bear the remembrance of those other times.”

“And was reading them enough to help you master your reminiscences?” I was curious to ask.

“No. The reading only gave us information. To our great surprise, after a long period of meditation in search of self-enlightenment, we underwent a series of psychic treatments aimed at penetrating the emotional realm of our memories. The spirits who were specialists in the subject applied magnetic passes to our minds, arousing certain latent energies. Only then were Ricardo and I able to master over three hundred years of integral memories. Thus, we learned how heavy our debts down on earth still were!”

“And where is our brother Ricardo now? It would be a pleasure to get to know him,” I affirmed, deeply impressed.

Laura shook her head:

“In light of our observations concerning our past, we agreed to meet each other anew in the spheres of the planet. Indeed, we both had a lot of work to do. Thus, Ricardo departed three years ago. As for me, I will follow him in just a few days. I’m only waiting for Teresa’s arrival in order to leave our family with her.”

And looking into the distance, as though her thoughts were far away at the side of her daughter still on earth, Laura added:

“Eloisa’s mother will be here shortly. Her passage through the Umbral will only take a few hours due to the great sacrifices she has made since childhood. She has already suffered enough, so she won’t need the treatments at Regeneration. Thus, I will be able to teach her my obligations at the Ministry of Assistance and take my leave in peace. The Lord will not forget us.”

## 22

# The hour-bonus

I noticed that Laura had suddenly become sad at remembering her husband, so I changed the subject:

“What can you tell me about the hour-bonus? Is it some kind of metal currency?”

My hostess’s sad expression vanished, and she replied attentively:

“It isn’t money per se, but an individual service coupon with purchasing power.”

“Purchasing power?”

“I’ll explain,” she replied. “Here in Nossos Lar, producing essential clothing and food is everyone’s job. There are central services of distribution at the Government Center and similar departments at the Ministries. The central storehouse is common property.”

At my silent look of wonder, she added:

“Everyone cooperates in improving the public welfare – the life of the community depends upon it. However, everyone who works acquires certain rights. Every inhabitant of Nossos Lar receives provisions of food and clothing in strictly necessary portions, but everyone who makes an effort to obtain hour-bonuses is entitled to certain prerogatives in the social community. Spirits who don’t yet work may have to do so here; however, all do receive basic lodging, but only those who contribute may own a private home. The idle ones are of course provided with clothing, but only devoted workers are able to satisfy their individual tastes in dress. Understand? Idle spirits may room in our fields of repose or in the treatment complexes at the request of working friends, whereas souls who work earn hour-bonuses and may enjoy the company of their loved ones in the entertainment areas, for example, or

they may take advantage of the teachings of learned instructors at the different schools of all the Ministries. We need to learn the price of each step on our spiritual ascent. Each one of us who works must contribute at least eight hours of useful service per twenty-four hour day. Since there are so many work programs, the Government Center allows those who are really willing to cooperate for the common good to put in four extra hours per day. Thus, many earn as much as seventy-two hour-bonuses per week, not counting those earned in sacrificial service, for which the bonuses are doubled and sometimes tripled.”

“Then is the hour-bonus the only standard of payment?”

“Yes, it is the standard payment for all our colony’s workers – not only administrators but subordinates as well.”

I was surprised and recalled the way things were organized on earth:

“But how can you reconcile the payment with the nature of the job? For example, if an administrator receives eight hour-bonuses in an ordinary day, will a driver receive the same? Isn’t the former’s work worth more than the latter’s?”

Laura smiled at my question and explained:

“Everything is relative. In positions of responsibility as well as in subordinate ones, if the work requires personal sacrifice, the corresponding remuneration is multiplied to compensate. To analyze your particular question more thoroughly, however, we first of all need to forget certain earthly preconceptions. The nature of service is an issue of utmost importance everywhere, but on earth the matter presents a more difficult problem. The majority of incarnates are simply preparing for the spirit of service by learning to work in the different sectors of human life. That is why it’s essential that earthly pay scales be set with scrupulous care. All material earnings are only transitory, but workers are often obsessed with how much money they are making. Some leave enormous fortunes behind that are spent recklessly by their heirs. Others accumulate bank accounts that cause their personal martyrdom and family ruin. On the other hand, it is fundamental to realize that seventy percent of earth’s administrators have no regard for the moral duties inherent to their positions, and the same may be said of an approximately equal percentage of those in subordinate positions. Almost all of them complain about a lack of professional incentive in spite of receiving salaries in keeping with the positions they hold. Governments and companies

pay doctors who neglect their duties and turn to other interests, and they pay ordinary workers who merely *kill* time. Where is the spirit of service? There are specialists in the finance industry who have never fully realized the responsibility of their obligations. They take advantage of favorable laws, and like poisonous flies on sacred bread, demand facilities, huge bonuses and pensions. You must realize, however, that all of them will pay dearly for their negligence. The time is still far off when social institutions will be able to fairly evaluate the quality of someone's labor, because on the higher spiritual planes, work is never compensated without taking into consideration the moral value that has been exerted."

These words awakened me to new concepts. Noticing my thirst for learning, my friend continued:

"An individual's real earnings are of a spiritual nature, and in our organization the hour-bonus varies considerably according to the nature of the job. In the Ministry of Regeneration, for example, we have the Regeneration hour-bonus; in the Ministry of Elucidation we have the Elucidation hour-bonus, and so on. Hence, when we examine the issue of someone's spiritual merit, we have to check the individual's work record to determine what kind of service has been rendered. The real earnings consist in experience, education, enrichment through divine blessings, and increased potential. Accordingly, diligence and dedication mean almost everything. Since this is a transitional city, most of us are preparing ourselves with an eye on having to return to physical circles. Following such a principle, it's only natural that a person who has put in five thousand hours at a job in regenerative work will have earned a greater measure of sublime effort on his own behalf; one who has worked six thousand hours in the Ministry of Elucidation will have become wiser. We may spend our hour-bonuses; however, because our individual file contains a record of the time we spend in useful service, it is even more valuable than hour-bonuses because it entitles us to valuable privileges."

Her explanations interested me deeply.

"Can we spend our hour-bonuses on behalf of friends?" I asked.

"Certainly," she answered, "we can share the blessings of our effort with whomever we please. It's a faithful worker's inalienable right. Thousands and thousands of individuals here in *Nosso Lar* have benefited from friendship and fraternal devotion."

She smiled and continued:

“The more work time we contribute, the greater the number of intercessions we are allowed. Here, we all understand that nothing is without its price, and that in order to receive we must give something in return. So, asking for something is a highly significant event for each one of us because only those who have earned the right are in any position to ask favors and provide help. Understand?”

“What about inheritance?” I inquired.

“That complication isn’t of any concern here,” Laura replied, smiling. “For example, let’s examine my own case. The time is drawing near for me to return to the physical realm. I have three thousand Assistance-hour-bonuses in my personal service account. I cannot leave them to my daughter who is about to arrive. Instead, their value will be placed in the common treasury and my family will only be entitled to inherit my home. However, my service record has entitled me to intercede on her behalf and to procure work and assistance for her. It will also assure me of invaluable assistance from organizations of our spirit colony during my stay in incarnate circles. In this regard, I am not just referring to the marvelous profit I’ve acquired in terms of experience during my years of working in the Ministry of Assistance. More than that, I’ll be endowed with higher values when I return to earth, displaying nobler qualities of preparation in order to be successful in my mission.”

I was about to express my admiration for how simple this process of earning, profiting, cooperating and serving was as compared with the prevailing principles on the planet, when I heard a low murmur of voices approaching the house. Before I could say anything, however, Laura said happily:

“Our dear ones have returned.”

And she got up to welcome them.

## 23

# Knowing how to listen

Inwardly, I was sorry that our conversation had been cut short. Laura's elucidations had uplifted my heart.

Lisias entered the house visibly happy.

"Hi! Haven't you gone to bed yet?" he asked with a smile.

And as the young men took their leave, he invited me cordially:

"Come out to the garden. You haven't seen the moonlight yet."

Laura started talking to her daughters while I accompanied Lisias to the garden, which was in full bloom.

What a superb spectacle! I was accustomed to the hospital's reclusion among large trees and had not yet glimpsed the marvelous picture of the moonlit night on display in the vast quarters of the Ministry of Assistance. Exquisitely colored gloxinias decorated the landscape. Snow-white lilies, slightly tinged with blue at the base of their cups, looked like goblets of fragrant perfume. I breathed deeply, feeling waves of new energy fill my whole being. In the distance, the spires of the Government Center displayed beautiful light effects. I was astonished and couldn't voice my feelings. I made an effort to express the admiration that had invaded my soul:

"I have never witnessed such peace! What a night!"

My companion smiled and explained:

"All of the well-balanced inhabitants of the colony have made a pledge to avoid emitting evil thoughts. Thus, the mental efforts of the majority have become an almost continual prayer, and the result is the vibrations of peace we are sensing."

After I had fully delighted myself by contemplating that remarkable picture – as if I had been drinking in the light and peace of the night – we went back inside. Lisias approached a small apparatus that had been placed in the living room in a manner similar to radios on earth. My curiosity was aroused. What were we going to listen to? Messages from earth? Guessing my thoughts, my friend explained:

“No, we aren’t going to hear any voices from the planet. Our broadcasts are based on vibratory forces more subtle than those on the earth.”

“But isn’t there any way to pick up broadcasts from earth?” I asked aloud.

“Of course. We have the means of doing so in all the Ministries, but in the home environment, our present condition is what really matters. Work-related information, news from Higher Spirituality, and lofty teachings are now much more important to us than any earthly thought.”

His remark rang true, but still bound by domestic ties, I asked:

“Do you really think so? What about the relatives we left behind? Our parents, our children?”

“I thought you would ask that,” he replied. “In terrestrial circles, we are often led to misinterpret situations. The hypertrophy of the sentiments is a malady for almost all of us and we are old prisoners of exclusivist attitudes. We often regard our family as solely related to blood ties and forget our broader obligations. We live without taking the true principles of fraternity into account. We preach them to everyone, but when the time comes to practice what we preach, we usually help only our own loved ones. But here, my friend, the coin of life displays its other side. Here, we must heal our old infirmities and rectify our wrongs. We’ve been told that in the early days of the colony, every dwelling was connected to the centers of terrestrial evolution; that is, no one could bear not hearing news about their families. From the Ministry of Regeneration to the Ministry of Elevation, Nossos Lar’s inhabitants lived in a constant war of nerves. A disturbing bit of news would often interfere with activities in general. But exactly two centuries ago, one of the generous Ministers from Divine Union urged the Government Center to do something about the situation. The former Governor had perhaps been too lax. After all, indiscriminate kindness encourages indiscipline and failure, and from time to time, news about their families down on earth would throw families here into a state of utter chaos. Whenever there were collective

catastrophes on the planet, it somehow affected a number of spirits in Nosso Lar, since they became true public calamities here too. According to our records, the city was more like an area of the Umbral than a region of proper rest and instruction. Supported by Divine Union, the Governor forbade this widespread interchange and a real struggle ensued. But the benevolent Minister who had introduced the measure put Jesus' teaching into practice: 'Let the dead bury their dead.' The innovation was soon victorious."

I objected, "But it would be interesting to get news about our dear ones in transition down on earth. Wouldn't it give us more peace of mind?"

Lisias had been standing by the receiver without turning it on. Seemingly interested in giving me a more detailed explanation, he added:

"Analyze yourself and see if that would really be the case. For instance, would you be able to maintain your peace of mind, to wait in faith and act in accordance with the divine precepts, while knowing that your dear child was either hurting another or being hurt himself? If someone told you that one of your brothers was now imprisoned as a criminal, would you be strong enough to keep calm about it?"

I smiled somewhat despondently.

"We shouldn't seek news from the lower planes," he continued obligingly, "except when we can actually offer effective assistance. And we must bear in mind that no one can help effectively while emotionally or mentally imbalanced. That's why suitable preparation is indispensable before we can contact our families again. If they offered an adequate arena for spiritual love, such an exchange would be worthwhile, but the overwhelming majority of incarnates have not yet attained any amount of self-control whatsoever. Most of them live foolishly, swept in and out by the high and low tides of the material order. In spite of our feelings of concern, we must avoid falling into a lower vibratory orbit."

However, displaying my petulant stubbornness, I asked:

"But Lisias, you have an incarnate relative – I mean your father. Wouldn't you like to communicate with him?"

"Of course, I would," he answered kindly. "Whenever we deserve the joy of doing so, we are able to visit him in his new physical body; likewise, he can contact us. However, we mustn't forget that we are fallible creatures. Thus, we need to bring our request before the right agencies and let them

decide on the appropriateness or the merits of the case. The Ministry of Communication is in charge of such visits. It is important to keep in mind that it is easier to descend from a higher to a lower sphere. However, there are certain rules saying that we must properly understand the situation of someone who is in a lower zone. It is just as important to know how to listen as to know how to speak. Nosso Lar went through a time of trouble because its inhabitants didn't know how to listen, and were thus unable to help effectively. Consequently, our colony was more often like a field of confusion."

I grew quiet, defeated by this powerful argument. I curiously watched as the friendly nurse turned on the receiver.

## 24

# An urgent appeal

When Lisias turned on the receiver, a soft melody wafted into the room, soothing us with its harmonious sonority. On the screen we could see the announcer in his work chamber. In a few moments, he began to speak:

“This is Station Two from Moradia.<sup>11</sup> We continue to broadcast our colony’s appeal on behalf of peace on the earth. We urge all our goodwill co-workers to pool their efforts in the service of preserving the moral balance of the globe. Please, help us, all of you who can spare a few hours to cooperate with us in the work areas that connect the dark forces of the Umbral to the human mind. After having spread the fiery torches of war in Asia, dark phalanxes of ignorant spirits are now laying siege to the nations of Europe, urging them into the crime of war once again. Our colony and all other colonies dedicated to working for the spiritual cleanliness of the circles nearest the planet denounce the actions of these concentrated powers of evil, and we request all the fraternal cooperation and assistance you can possibly give us. Remember that peace needs workers for its defense! Cooperate with us to the best of your abilities! ... There is work for everyone, from earth’s fields to our very gates! ... May the Lord bless us!”

The voice stopped and we heard the divine music again. The urgent tone of that strange call stirred my innermost fibers. Seeing that I needed help, Lisias explained:

“We are listening to Moradia, an old service colony closely connected with the lower regions. As you know, it is August 1939. All your personal suffering of late has left you little time to be aware of the grave situation in the world. Let me tell you that the nations of the planet are on the verge of a dreadful war.”

“What do you mean?” I was awe-stricken. “Wasn’t there enough bloodshed in the last great war?”

Lisias smiled, looking at me in silence with his deep, shining eyes as if lamenting the gravity of the hour humanity was now facing. For the first time, the friendly nurse had no words for me. His silence embarrassed me. I was especially awed by the immensity of the spiritual services offered on the planes of this new life. So, were there other colonies of benevolent spirits, who were pleading for assistance and cooperation? The announcer’s voice had the tone of a true S.O.S. On the screen, I could see how tired he looked. He displayed deep anxiety in his disquieted eyes. And his language? I distinctly heard him speak in clear and correct Portuguese. I had been under the impression that all spirit colonies communicated through vibrations of thought. So, were there great difficulties in the interchange? Noticing my confusion, Lisias explained:

“We are a long way from the ideal regions of pure mind. As on earth, there are a few who are in perfect harmony with one another and they can exchange thoughts without any linguistic barriers; but in general, we cannot dispense with the linguistic form, in the broad sense of the expression. Our field of battle is immeasurable. Earth humanity is made up of millions of people and is united with the invisible humanity of the planet, which numbers in the billions. Thus, it is impossible to suddenly reach the perfected zones right after the death of the physical body. Our national and linguistic heritage still remains with us here and we are restricted by psychic limitations. In the highly diverse sectors of our spiritual activity, there are a great number of spirits who are free from all limitations, but we must bear in mind that the rule is that we must endure such limitations. Nothing escapes the principle of sequence, which is an imperative of the laws of evolution.”

Meanwhile, the music had stopped and the speaker returned:

“This is Station Two from Moradia. We continue to broadcast the appeal of our colony on behalf of peace on the earth. A heavy fog is gathering over the skies of Europe. Forces of darkness from the Umbral are spreading in all directions, answering the call of the base tendencies of humankind. There are many in political office who are devoted benefactors, and who are struggling and making great sacrifices on behalf of international harmony. Some governments, however, are excessively centralized, offering little potential for spiritual collaboration. These countries lack governmental bodies that would offer intelligent and dispassionate counsel, and are thus moving towards a war

of great proportions. Oh, beloved brothers and sisters of the higher colonies, let us help preserve human peace ... Let us defend the centuries of experience of the many homelands of western civilization! ... May the Lord bless us.”

The announcer went silent again and the soft melodies returned.

Lisias remained silent and I didn't dare interrupt. After about five minutes of relaxing harmony, the same voice was heard once again:

“This is Station Two from Moradia. We continue to broadcast the appeal of our colony on behalf of peace on the earth. Brothers and sisters, let us invoke the help of the powerful Fraternities of Light, which preside over the destinies of the Americas! Help us to preserve the millenary treasures of terrestrial evolution! Let us march forth to aid defenseless groups; let us sustain the maternal hearts suffocating in anguish! All our forces are concentrating on the tremendous duel against the legions of ignorance. Help us in any way you can! We are the invisible part of earthly humanity, and many of us will soon return to the fluids of the flesh to expiate past errors. Incarnate humanity is also our family. Let us all unite in one single vibration. Let us turn the Light against the attack of darkness; let us use the resistance of the good in the war with evil. Rivers of blood and tears are threatening the fields of the European communities. Let us proclaim the need for constructive labor and expand our faith ... May the Lord bless us!”

After that speech, Lisias turned off the receiver, and I saw him discreetly dry a few tears that his eyes had not been able to hold back. With an expressive gesture, he spoke with great emotion:

“What self-denying workers our brothers and sisters of Moradia are!” “Nevertheless,” he added sadly after a short pause, “humankind will pay a terrible tribute of suffering in the days ahead.”

“But is there no possibility of preventing this tremendous catastrophe?” I asked, also moved.

“Unfortunately,” replied Lisias in a grave and pained tone of voice, “the general state of affairs is exceedingly critical. In answer to the appeals of Moradia and other centers working in the neighborhood of the Umbral, we have held numerous assemblies here. But the Ministry of Divine Union has already explained that incarnate humankind as a collective whole is like an insatiable person who has overeaten at a public banquet – the organic crisis that follows is inevitable. Many nations have nourished themselves on

criminal pride and vanity; they have been fiercely self-centered. Now they are experiencing the urgent need to expel these lethal poisons.”

Showing that he intended not to pursue the bitter subject any further, Lisias invited me to retire.

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<sup>11</sup> Literally, “Dwelling” – Tr.

## 25

# A benevolent suggestion

Early the next morning, I shared a light meal with Lisias and his family.

Before her children left for their jobs at Assistance, Laura encouraged my faltering spirit by saying good-humouredly:

“I’ve already arranged company for you today. I asked our friend Rafael to come by. He works at Regeneration. You may accompany him to the new Ministry. Rafael is an old acquaintance of our family and he will inform Minister Genesisio that I have sent you.”

I cannot describe the happiness that flooded my soul. I was radiant. I was deeply moved by her devotion and thanked her, unable to find words that could express my joy. Lisias was also very happy. He embraced me warmly as he left, touching my heart with his gesture. As she kissed her son goodbye, Laura recommended:

“Lisias, inform Minister Clarencio that I will be on my way to work as soon as I hand our friend into Rafael’s care.”

When we were alone, my friend’s devoted mother spoke kindly:

“My brother, allow me to give you some recommendations for this new path you’re on. I believe that a mother’s support is always worthwhile, and since your own mom doesn’t live in Nossos Lar, I would like to provide you with a bit of guidance at this time.”

“I’m most grateful,” I exclaimed emotionally. “I’ll never be able to tell you how much I appreciate your help.”

The kind lady smiled, adding:

“I’ve been informed that you asked for work a while back.”

“Yes, yes ... ” I agreed, remembering my meeting with Clarencio.

“I also know that you didn’t obtain it right then, but that you later received his authorization to visit the Ministries that connect us most closely with the earth.”

With a meaningful look, she continued:

“I speak by right of my greater experience and would like to offer you a few humble suggestions regarding the matter. Now that you have his authorization, you should avoid all impulses of mere curiosity as much as possible. Don’t be like a moth, fluttering about from light to light. I know that you have a strong bent for intellectual investigation. As a studious doctor who is always in search of new discoveries and enigmas, it would be very easy for you to get sidetracked in your new position. Don’t forget that there are many lessons to be learned that are more precious and worthwhile than merely analyzing things. Healthy curiosity can be a very helpful mental attitude, but also a dangerous one sometimes. The domain of curiosity can enable the resolute and loyal of spirit to accomplish great deeds, but those who are indecisive and inexperienced can meet with bitter pain without helping anyone. Clarencio has offered you a permit to visit the Ministries, beginning with Regeneration. Well, do more than simply observing. Instead of giving vent to your curiosity, carefully observe the activity at hand and jump in at the first opportunity. If given the chance to take part in the duties at Regeneration, don’t try to be ambitious by concerning yourself with the work scene at the other Ministries. Learn to build your circle of relationships and don’t forget that the spirit of investigation should always be second to the spirit of service. Minding the activities of others without having shown a good performance yourself might be considered a criminal impertinence. Many failures in the doings of the world have their origins in a similar anomaly: Everyone is ready to watch, yet rarely is anyone willing to perform. Only worthy labor endows the spirit with the indispensable merit to claim additional rights. Because it is located in the lowest region of our spirit colony, the Ministry of Regeneration is replete with hard struggle. All the teams that are entrusted with the most arduous missions are recruited from Regeneration. Don’t consider it beneath you to accept humble tasks. I would remind you that in all our spheres – from the planet to the highest colonies in the highest realms – the greatest worker is Jesus himself, and he wasn’t ashamed to wield the heavy saw of a carpenter. Minister Clarencio has kindly authorized you to get to know, to visit and to analyze. But if you work with common sense, you may convert observation into useful service. A supervisor may justly refuse your request for some special line of work because it is rightly reserved for workers whose efforts

and hardships have duly qualified them for it. But no one will turn down the cooperation of a willing spirit who loves to work for the sheer pleasure of serving.”

My eyes were moist. These words had been spoken with motherly affection and they sank into my heart like a precious balm. Seldom in my life had I met such charitable interest in my fate. Her advice touched my very soul, and as if desiring to temper the seriousness of her concepts with love, Laura added in a kind tone of voice:

“The science of beginning anew is one of the most noble that our spirit can learn. Those on the planet who fully understand it are very rare indeed – there are very few human examples of it. Nonetheless, we ought to recall Paul of Tarsus, a wise scholar of the Sanhedrin and the hope of his people, who because of his learning and youthful age was the target of everyone’s attention in Jerusalem. One day, however, he retired into the desert to begin his human experience all over again as a poor tentmaker.”

I could no longer contain myself. I took both her hands in mine like a grateful son and covered them with the joyful tears that bathed my heart.

Lisias’s mother now had her eyes fixed on the horizon and spoke softly:

“Thank you, my brother. I believe you didn’t come to this house by a blind stroke of luck. We are all interlaced in a web of secular friendship. Very soon, I will return to the circle of the flesh; even so, we shall always be together in heart. I hope to see you hale and hearty before my departure. Make this house your home. Work and be of good cheer, putting your trust in God.”

I gazed at her gentle face with my tear-filled eyes and experienced the joy that is born of pure affection. I had the impression of having known her as a devoted friend from olden times, although I tried in vain to place her among my most distant memories. I wanted to kiss her over and over with the tenderness of a son, but just then someone knocked at the door.

Showing inexpressible maternal tenderness, Laura said:

“Rafael has come for you. Go my friend, thinking of Jesus. Work for the good of others so that you may find your own.”

## 26

# New perspectives

I accompanied Rafael while reflecting on Laura's kind and wise suggestions, determined not to make mere observational visits, but rather to start a period of learning and useful service.

Amazed, I noticed the magnificent features of this unfamiliar region as we made our way to where Minister Genesio was waiting for me. However, I followed Rafael in silence, refraining from asking any questions. Instead, I was experiencing a new kind of mental activity; i.e. I was devoting myself entirely to prayer. I was asking Jesus to assist me on this new path so that I might not lack work and the strength to accomplish it. I used to be adverse to the practice of prayer, but now I turned to it as a valuable, sensible resource for my purposes of service.

Even Rafael looked at me curiously from time to time as if he had not expected such an attitude on my part.

The airbus left us in front of a large building.

We got off in silence.

Within a few minutes, I was standing in front of the respectable Genesio, a nice elderly man, whose face displayed uncommon energy.

Rafael introduced me fraternally.

"Oh, yes!" said the kind Minister. "So you're our brother Andre?"

"At your service," I answered.

"I received a note from Laura, saying that you would be coming. Please, feel at ease here."

Meanwhile, my companion respectfully said goodbye to the Minister, and then embraced me. Rafael was urgently expected at his duties in his own

department.

Setting his bright eyes on me, Genesio began:

“Clarencio has already told me about you, and showed a great deal of interest. We often receive personnel from the Ministry of Assistance on observational visits, which usually become periods of service.”

I understood his subtle allusion and remarked:

“That is my greatest desire. I have even prayed to the divine forces to assist my feeble spirit so that my stay in this Ministry might turn into a period of internship.”

Genesio seemed pleased, and availing myself of inspirations that inclined me to humility, I begged with moist eyes:

“Minister, I can see that my coming here via the Ministry of Assistance came about exclusively because of the mercy of the Most High, perhaps in answer to the constant intercession of my devoted and holy mother. I’ve noticed, however, that I have only been receiving benefits without producing anything useful in return. My place is surely here, taking part in regenerative activities. If possible, please turn my permission to visit into the possibility to serve. I now understand, as never before, the need to modify my own values. I’ve wasted too much time on useless vanity and have misspent a tremendous amount of energy on foolish self-worship.”

He appeared satisfied as he saw that I was speaking with living sincerity from the bottom of my heart. When I had asked Minister Clarencio for work, I wasn’t really aware of what I was asking at the time. I had certainly wanted to work, but perhaps not to serve. I hadn’t yet realized the value of time, or learned to appreciate the sanctified blessings of opportunity. Deep down, I had really wanted to continue being what I had been until then: the proud and respected doctor, blind to the preposterous claims of the self-centeredness in which I was living and imprisoned within my own preconceptions. Now, however, in light of all I had seen and heard, and understanding the responsibility of each child of God in the infinite work of creation, I was speaking from what was best in me. At last, I was being sincere. I wasn’t worried about the kind of job; I was seeking the sublime contentment of the spirit of service.

Genesio seemed surprised as he looked at me and asked:

“Were you really a doctor?”

“Yes ... ” I answered timidly.

He was silent for a few moments as if searching for a solution to my case. Then, he said:

“Your aims are praiseworthy and I ask the Lord to preserve you in such an honorable attitude.”

And as if concerned about cheering me up and lifting my spirits with new hope, he added:

“When the disciple is ready, the Father sends the master. The same applies regarding labor. When the worker is ready, work will appear. My friend, you have received enormous resources from Divine Providence. You are willing to cooperate; you understand your responsibility and you have accepted your duty. Such an attitude is undoubtedly favorable for you to accomplish your desires. In physical circles, we use to congratulate the person who attained financial prosperity or an outstanding position. Here, however, the situation is different. We value understanding, self-effort and sincere humility.”

Noticing my anxiety, he concluded:

“It’s possible for you to find a good occupation here, but for the time being it is better for you to visit, to observe and to study.”

Then, he contacted the office next door, saying firmly:

“I would like to see Tobias before he goes to the Chambers of Rectification.”

A few minutes later, a gentleman with a pleasant demeanor came into the room.

“Tobias,” explained Genesio, “here is a friend who has come from the Ministry of Assistance in order to observe. I believe a visit to the Chambers of Rectification would be greatly beneficial.”

I shook his hand and my new friend answered kindly:

“At your service.”

“Show him the way,” continued the Minister with great kindness. “Andre must become thoroughly acquainted with our duties here. Please see to it that he is given every opportunity available.”

Tobias very willingly agreed.

“I’m on my way,” he added good-naturedly. “If you would come with me ...”

“Certainly.” I answered, satisfied.

Minister Genesio was deeply moved and embraced me, saying words of encouragement.

Then I resolutely followed Tobias.

We crossed great city blocks, where the numerous buildings seemed like beehives of intense activity. Perceiving my silent questions, my new friend explained:

“These are the great factories of Nosso Lar. The preparation of juices, the manufacture of woven goods and all kinds of commodities employ over one hundred thousand individuals, who enlighten and regenerate themselves while working.”

A few moments later, we entered a magnificent building. Many workers were hurrying to and fro. After going down long hallways, we came to a gigantic stairway that led to the lower floors.

“Let’s go on down,” said Tobias gravely.

And noting my surprise, he explained solicitously:

“The Chambers of Rectification are located in the neighborhood of the Umbral. The unfortunate spirits being kept there can bear neither the light nor the atmosphere of the upper levels during their first days in Nosso Lar.”

## Work, at last

I could never have imagined the scene now unfolding in front of me. It was neither a blood-transfusion clinic nor a regular institute for the treatment of organic health. It was a series of vast wards connected with one another and crowded with truly emaciated beings.

Strange complaining filled the air. Groans, sobs and phrases of pain were uttered at random ... Ghastly faces, bony hands, monstrous looks bore witness to terrible spiritual misery.

My first impressions were so heartbreaking that I had to resort to the resources of prayer so I wouldn't faint.

Tobias was undisturbed and called an older nurse, who answered attentively:

"There are so few assistants," he wondered. "What happened?"

"Minister Flacus," explained the elderly woman in a respectful tone, "decided that the majority of them should accompany the Samaritans<sup>12</sup> on their duties today in the regions of the Umbral."

"Then, we must double our efforts," he said serenely. "We have no time to lose."

"Brother Tobias ... Brother Tobias! ... Have mercy!" cried out an old man, gesturing and clutching the bed like a lunatic. "I'm suffocating! This is a thousand times worse than death ... Help! Help! I have to get out ... to get out ... I need air, a lot of air!"

Tobias examined him carefully and asked:

"Why is Ribeiro so much worse?"

“He had one of his worst crises,” explained the nurse, “and assistant Gonçalves explained that the heavy waves of dark thoughts emitted by his incarnate family members were the main cause of his deteriorating condition. Since he’s still very weak and hasn’t accumulated enough mental strength to break free of his strongest ties to the world, the poor man hasn’t been able to resist as well as we would have liked him to.”

While the benevolent Tobias patted the patient’s head, the nurse continued:

“Early this morning, he took off without our permission, running around in every direction. He was yelling that he was needed at home, that he couldn’t forget his wife and weeping children; that it was cruel to keep him here so far from home. Lourenzo and Hermes tried as hard as they could to get him back into bed, but it was impossible. Then, I decided to apply some prostrating magnetic passes on him, which took away his strength and mobility for his own good.”

“You did the right thing,” Tobias said thoughtfully. “I’ll see to it that measures are taken to counteract his family’s attitude. They need to receive a bigger bag of worries so that they’ll leave Ribeiro alone.”

I looked at the patient, trying to determine his emotional state, and I identified the expression of a truly mentally deranged person. He had called to Tobias like a child who knows his benefactor, but he seemed utterly unaware of what was being said about him.

Noticing that I was puzzled, my new instructor explained:

“The poor man is still in a nightmarish phase, during which the soul sees and hears nothing but its own afflictions. In their real life – here – my friend, people reap exactly what they have sown for themselves. Our Ribeiro allowed himself to fall prey to many illusions.”

I wanted to ask about the cause of his suffering and the history of his situation, but I remembered the judicious advice of Lisias’s mother regarding my curiosity, so I kept still. Tobias talked to the patient with kind words of optimism and hope. He promised that he would see to the means of improving his situation, that for his own benefit he should remain calm and that he shouldn’t be upset at being confined to his bed. Trembling all over and with a ghastly face, Ribeiro smiled sadly and thanked him in tears.

We walked between numerous rows of well-kept beds, sensing the unpleasant emanations of the place, which, as I later learned, came from the patients' mental vibrations. They were still under the painful impressions of physical death, or in many cases, under the control of inferior thoughts.

"These wards are reserved only for male spirits," my companion kindly explained.

"Tobias, Tobias ... I'm thirsty and starving to death!" yelled a patient.

"Help me, brother!" shouted another.

"For the love of God ... I can't stand it any longer!" cried out a third.

My heart was heavy in the face of the suffering of so many creatures, and I couldn't help but ask:

"My friend, this lot of so many suffering and tortured spirits is so very sad! Why this anguishing picture?"

Tobias replied without hesitation:

"We mustn't see only pain and desolation here. Remember, my brother, that these patients are being taken care of, that they have just been taken from the Umbral, where so many traps lie in wait for those who are not prepared, who are not careful of themselves. The patients in these wards are at least being prepared for the work of regeneration. As for their tears, we must remember that their suffering is of their own doing. People's lives will always be centered on where they have set their hearts."

And after a pause, during which he seemed deaf to all the clamoring, he added:

"These are smugglers in the life of eternity."

"What do you mean?"

He smiled and answered firmly:

"They believed that earthly assets would have the same value on the planes of the spirit. They believed that criminal pleasure, the power of money, rebellion against the law and the imposition of their whims on others would cross the boundary of the grave and still be the case here, offering them new opportunities for further evil doings. They were thoughtless businessmen. They forgot to exchange their material acquisitions for spiritual credit. They didn't learn the simplest currency exchange operation in the world. When

they traveled to London, for instance, they never forgot to exchange their Brazilian *contos de réis*<sup>13</sup> for pounds sterling. However, the mathematical certainty of physical death didn't stimulate them to accumulate spiritual value. Now ... look at them: millionaires of the physical plane transformed into beggars of the soul."

Tobias was absolutely right! He couldn't have been more logical.

After he had distributed comfort and a lot of instruction to the patients, my new teacher led me to what looked like a large infirmary next door. He remarked:

"Let's take a look at some of the unfortunate half-dead."

Narcisa, the nurse, accompanied us diligently. She led us in and I nearly staggered before the anguishing surprise. Thirty-two men with sinister faces were lying motionless on very low beds and displaying only light breathing movements.

Tobias nodded towards them and explained:

"These suffering spirits are in a much heavier sleep than that of our other ignorant brothers. We call them 'negative believers'. Instead of accepting the Lord, they were intransigent vassals of selfishness; instead of believing in life, action and labor, they believed only in nothingness, idleness and the victory of crime. They turned their human experience into a constant preparation for a big sleep, and since they had no notion of morality or of serving the common good, there is nothing left for them now except to sleep on for many years filled with sinister nightmares."

I couldn't express my awe.

I looked on in amazement as Tobias very caringly began to apply strengthening magnetic passes over the patients. When he had finished treating the first two, they both began spewing a black substance from their mouths, a sort of dark and viscous vomit like some kind of terrible cadaverous emanation.

"They are expelling poisonous fluids," explained Tobias very calmly.

Narcisa was doing her best to keep up with the cleaning, but was unsuccessful. A large number of them had begun expelling the same dark and fetid matter. It was then that I instinctively grabbed some cleaning implements and ardently got to work.

The nurse seemed happy with the humble help of her new brother, while Tobias looked at me with satisfaction and gratitude.

The work continued throughout the day and brought with it a blessed sweat. None of his friends back on earth could possibly have appreciated the sublime joy of the doctor who had re-begun his self-education by working in basic nursing.

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<sup>12</sup> Organization of spirit benefactors in Nosso Lar – Spirit Auth.

<sup>13</sup> Contos de réis was the currency in Brazil at the time – Tr.

# 28

## At work

After collective evening prayer, Tobias turned on a receiver in order to receive word from the Samaritans at work in the Umbral.

Rightly curious, I was informed that work teams of that sort communicated with their headquarters at set hours.

I felt somewhat tired from all my intense effort, but my heart was singing hymns of inner joy. I had experienced the joy of labor at last – the spirit of service supplies us with mysteriously invigorating tonics.

After he had turned on the small apparatus, it began transmitting a message after a few minutes:

“Samaritans to the Ministry of Regeneration! ... Samaritans to the Ministry of Regeneration! There is a lot of work to be done in the abysses of darkness. We have managed to free a large crowd of unfortunate spirits. We have rescued twenty-nine brothers from the spiritual darkness. Twenty-two are mentally deranged and seven are experiencing complete psychic exhaustion. Our teams are getting the transportation ready ... We will arrive a few minutes after midnight ... Please, get everything ready.”

Noticing that Narcisa and Tobias exchanged wondering glances as soon as the strange voice stopped, I couldn't help asking the question on the tip of my tongue:

“What's going on? Why transportation en mass? Aren't they all spirits?”

Tobias smiled and explained:

“Brother, you are forgetting that you yourself arrived at the Ministry of Assistance in no other way. I know about the episode of your coming. We must always bear in mind that nature makes no leaps, and on the earth or in the circles of the Umbral we are clothed in very heavy fluids. The ostrich and

the swallow are both birds with wings, but the former can't rise into the heights unless carried there, whereas the latter cuts swiftly through the vast regions of the sky."

Indicating to me that there wasn't time for questions at the moment, he addressed Narcisa:

"Tonight's group is going to be very large. We must make immediate preparations."

"We're going to need a lot of beds!" The nurse replied, somewhat worried.

"Don't worry about that," Tobias answered resolutely. "We'll room the disturbed patients in Ward 7 and the exhausted ones in Chamber 33."

Then, as though remembering something very serious, he raised his right hand to his forehead and exclaimed:

"The question of lodging will be easy to solve, but the problem of assistance is a different matter. Our strongest assistants have been called to guarantee Communication's services involving the earth itself, where dark clouds are now surrounding the world of incarnates. We need personnel for the night shift because the workers helping the Samaritans will return extremely tired."

"I'm willing to help as much as I can," I exclaimed spontaneously.

Tobias gave me a look of deep sympathy mixed with gratitude, which made me experience a pleasant inner happiness.

"But do you really want to stay in the Chambers all night?" he asked, surprised.

"Aren't others going to do the same?" I inquired in turn. "I'm feeling strong and fit, and I need to make up for lost time."

My friend embraced me, adding:

"Well then, I confidently accept your cooperation. Narcisa and the other companions will also stay on duty. I'll also send over Venancio and Salustio because I know I can trust them. I myself won't be able to remain here on night watch due to previous commitments; however, if it is necessary, you or any of the assistants may inform me of any serious incident. I'll draw up the work plan to make your jobs as easy as possible."

We hurriedly began to make arrangements. While five attendants worked with Narcisa to prepare adequate clothing and nursing equipment, Tobias and I moved heavy supplies into Ward 7 and Chamber 33.

I couldn't explain what was happening to me. In spite of the fatigue in one of my arms, I felt an inexpressible joy in my heart.

In workshops, where most look for work because they understand its sublime value, service comprises the supreme joy. Frankly, I wasn't even thinking about the hour-bonuses or any other immediate recompense I might gain for my effort. Yet my satisfaction was profound when I realized that I would be able to happily and honorably present myself to both my mother and my benefactors at the Ministry of Assistance.

When he was about to take his leave, Tobias again embraced me and said:

"I wish you all the peace of Jesus, a good night and useful work. Tomorrow morning at 8:00 you can rest. Twelve hours of work per day is normally our limit, but we are under special circumstances."

I answered that I was sincerely content with his decisions.

Alone with a large number of nurses, I began to take a more kindly interest in the patients. Of all the attendants working with me, I was greatly impressed by Narcisa's spontaneous kindness as she helped everyone like a mother. Attracted by her benevolence, I tried to stay close to her. It was easy to enjoy the pleasure of her simple and kind conversation. The loveable old woman was like a sublime book of goodness and wisdom.

"Have you been working here long, my sister?" I asked at a certain point of our friendly conversation.

"Yes, I have been on active work duty in the Chambers of Rectification for six years and a few months, but I must stay here three more years in order to get my wish fulfilled."

Before my silent inquiring look, Narcisa said:

"I need a very serious endorsement."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I must meet some beloved spirits on earth because we have some evolutionary work to do together. My past was full of wrongs and I begged for a long time in vain for the opportunity to accomplish my aim. I was

anguished and afflicted. Finally, I was advised to talk to Minister Veneranda, and our benefactor from Regeneration promised to endorse my proposal at the Ministry of Assistance. But she required that I first work here for ten years so that I could correct certain unbalanced sentiments. At first, I wanted to decline the offer – the requirement seemed too hard. But I later realized that she was right. After all, the advice was intended for my benefit, not hers. And I profited a great deal by having accepted her advice. I feel more balanced and humane now, and I believe I shall live my upcoming experience on earth with spiritual dignity.”

I was about to express my admiration, but one of the patients near us yelled:

“Narcisa! Narcisa!”

This devoted sister had become the spiritual mother of suffering spirits, and I had no right to detain her any longer out of mere personal curiosity.

## 29

# Francisco's vision

While Narcisa was consoling the afflicted patient, I was being hailed over what was called an urban communications device.

It was Laura, who wanted to know where I was. In fact, I had forgotten to tell her about my decision to stay the night shift. I apologized to my benefactress and I gave her a brief verbal report on the new situation. Even over the wire, I could tell that she seemed to rejoice at the news and shared in my justifiable happiness.

At the end of our brief conversation, she graciously said:

“Very well done, my son! Show a passionate interest in your work, and let your heart be filled with the joy of being useful. This is the only way we can continue to evolve. But remember that this house belongs to you as much as to the rest of us.”

These words filled me with noble incentive.

Returning to pay personal attention to the patients, I found Narcisa struggling heroically to calm a young man who seemed oddly disturbed.

I tried to help her.

Blindly gazing into space, the poor boy was shouting in agony:

“Help me, for the love of God! I’m afraid, I’m afraid.”

And, with the painful look of someone who was experiencing profound horror, he exclaimed:

“Sister Narcisa, ‘it’ is coming ... the monster! I can feel the worms again! ‘It’! ‘It’! Save me from ‘it’, sister. I don’t want ... I don’t want!”

“Calm down, Francisco,” replied the dedicated nurse. “You can break free and feel serene and happy, but it depends on your own efforts. Just

pretend that your mind is a sponge, soaked in vinegar. You must wring out that sour substance. I'll help you, but you must do the hardest work yourself."

The patient showed he was willing to try, and he calmed down as he listened to her caring suggestions. However, he then took on the same pallor as before and began yelling new exclamations:

"But sister, listen to me! 'It' won't go away. 'It' is back again to torment me! Look! Look!"

"Yes, Francisco, I see it," she agreed patiently, "but it is essential for you to help me drive it away."

"Oh, what a diabolical ghost!" he added, weeping like a child and inspiring my compassion.

"Put your trust in Jesus and forget the monster," the wretched young man's nurse piously said, "and let me apply some passes. The ghost will flee from us."

And she applied healthy and comforting magnetic fluids to him. Francisco thanked her, looking enormously relieved.

"Now," he said, after the magnetic operation was over, "I feel calmer."

Narcisa arranged his pillow and asked a nurse to bring him a glass of magnetized water.

Her example as a nurse was constructive to me. Good, like evil, is everywhere mysteriously contagious.

Noticing my earnest desire to learn, Narcisa showed that she was willing to initiate me into the sublime secrets of service.

"What was the patient referring to?" I asked, really impressed. "Is he being pursued by some kind of shadow that I can't see?"

The old worker of the Chambers of Rectification smiled kindly and said:

"No. Actually, he is being pursued by his own corpse."

"What do you mean?"

"The poor man was excessively attached to his physical body and came to the spirit world after a disaster caused by his own sheer imprudence. For many days he refused to conform to his new situation and wouldn't leave his interred remains. He was so deeply ensconced in the domain of illusion that

he actually tried to resurrect his stiff body, and he spent a long time in that sad effort. He was terrified at the idea of facing the unknown, and was utterly unable to muster even the slightest detachment from physical sensations. Aid from higher spheres was of no avail, for he had closed his mind against every thought related to the eternal life. Finally, he experienced such atrocious suffering from the worms eating his body that the poor creature ran from his grave, aghast with horror. He then began to wander in the lower zones of the Umbral. However, his earth parents had considerable spiritual credit here, and they pleaded for him to be treated in the colony. The Samaritans brought him almost by force. His condition is still so grave that he won't be able to leave the Chambers of Rectification very soon. The friend who had been his physical father is now engaged on a dangerous mission far from Nossos Lar."

"Does he come to see the patient?" I asked.

"He has already come twice, and both times I was deeply moved by his silent grief. The young man's mental disorder is so great that he didn't even recognize his own generous and devoted father. He shouted in his affliction showing his painful dementia. His father came to visit him with Minister Padua from the Ministry of Communication. He seemed far above the human condition while in the presence of that noble friend, who had been responsible for hospitalizing his unhappy son. They spent quite a bit of time commenting on the spiritual condition of the newcomers from the physical sphere, but when Minister Padua took his leave – he had urgent duties to perform – the young man's father apologized for his human gesture and knelt by the patient's bed. He anxiously took his son's hands into his own as if transmitting invigorating vital fluids to him, and then weeping profusely, kissed his forehead. I couldn't hold back my tears and I left the room so they could be alone. I don't know what happened next between them, but since that day I've noticed that Francisco has improved a great deal. His total dementia has been reduced to occasional crises that are occurring farther and farther apart."

"I'm moved by all you've just said," I exclaimed, highly impressed. "But how can the image of his corpse pursue him?"

"Francisco's vision is the nightmare that many spirits face after physical death. They are excessively attached to their body, seeing and living for nothing else. They make it a true object of worship, and when the "breeze of renewal" comes, they refuse to leave it behind. They reject any ideas that they are a spirit once again and fight desperately to hold on to their physical body.

After a while, however, voracious worms appear and drive them away. By that time, they have become horrified by their body and they adopt a radically new attitude. But the sight of their own corpse – a powerful mental creation of their own doing – torments them to the innermost recesses of their soul. They experience disturbances and crises that last for a shorter or longer amount of time and many continue suffering until their ghost-corpse has completely disintegrated.”

Realizing that I was deeply troubled, Narcisa added:

“Thanks be to the Father, I have learned a great deal during these past few years of service. Ah! How deep is the spiritual slumber of most of our incarnate brothers and sisters! However, we should be concerned but not hurt by that fact. The chrysalis adheres to inert matter, but the butterfly will spring from it in flight; the acorn is almost imperceptible, yet a giant oak will grow from it; the withered flower returns to the ground, but its fragrance will continue to live on in the air. All embryonic life appears to be sleeping. We must never forget these lessons.”

Narcisa fell silent and I didn't interrupt her again.

## Inheritance and euthanasia

I hadn't yet recovered from my deep surprise when Salustio approached us to inform Narcisa:

“Our sister Paulina wishes to see her sick father in Ward 5. I thought I'd better consult with you before granting her request, because the patient is still experiencing an acute crisis.”

Showing her characteristic demeanor of kindness, Narcisa replied:

“Send her in here right away. She has the Minister's permission since she has been devoting all of her leisure time to the job of reconciling her family members.”

As the messenger hastily took his leave, the kind nurse said to me:

“You'll see what a devoted daughter she is!”

Less than a minute later, Paulina was before us. She looked slim and pretty in her light tunic woven of luminous silk. Her facial features portrayed angelic beauty, but her eyes displayed extreme concern. Narcisa introduced us politely, and probably feeling that perhaps she could trust me, Paulina asked, somewhat anxiously:

“How's Dad, my friend?”

“A little better,” said the nurse, “but he is still strongly unbalanced.”

“That's too bad,” replied the young woman. “Neither he nor the others will give up their present mental attitudes – always the same hate, the same disgust.”

Narcisa invited us to accompany her, and a few minutes later I was looking at an old man with a disagreeable face. With his hard stare, disheveled hair, deep wrinkles and withdrawn lips, he inspired more pity than

sympathy. However, I endeavored to overcome the inferior vibrations that had taken hold of me in order to see beyond the wretch to the spiritual brother. My feelings of repulsion disappeared and my thoughts began to clear. I applied the lesson to myself. How had I arrived at the Ministry of Assistance? My desperate appearance must have been horrible. When we examine someone else's misfortune while bearing in mind our own imperfections, there is always room for fraternal love in our hearts.

The old patient didn't have one kind word to say to his daughter, who greeted him tenderly. His harsh and rebellious stare made him look like a caged human beast.

"Are you feeling better, Daddy?" she asked with a daughter's extreme caring.

"Oh! ... No!" the patient cried in a guttural voice, "I can't get over the treachery. I have no peace of mind ... I can still see him by my side, injecting the deadly poison!"

"Don't say that, Daddy", she delicately entreated, "Remember that Edelberto came to our home as a son sent by God."

"My son?" shouted the wretch. "Never! Never! He's an unforgivable criminal, a son of hell!"

Paulina now spoke tearfully.

"Daddy, let us heed Jesus' lesson saying that we should love one another. We go through family experiences on the earth in order to acquire true spiritual love, but it is also essential for us to realize that there is only one truly eternal Father, who is God. But the Lord of Life grants us fatherhood and motherhood so that we may learn unstained fraternity. Our terrestrial homes are like caldrons for purifying our sentiments; they are like temples of sublime unity as we evolve towards universal solidarity. We have to struggle and suffer a great deal before we can rightly call one another 'brother' and 'sister'. The whole creation is but one family under the providential blessing of one sole Father."

As he listened to her very sweet voice, the patient broke into convulsive weeping.

"Forgive Edelberto, Daddy! Try to see him not as just a reckless son, but also as a brother in need of enlightenment. I was in our home today and witnessed serious problems. Right here, from this bed, you are enveloping all

of them in fluids of bitterness and incomprehension, and they are doing the same to you. The subtle vibrations of thought reach their target no matter how far away they may be. The hateful and discordant exchange of thoughts brings ruin and suffering to souls. Mom was so filled with anguish that she had to be taken to a mental hospital a few days ago. Amalia and Cacilda have sued Edelberto and Agenor over the huge amount of material property you accumulated. It's a terrible scene, but its shadows would diminish if your stubborn mind didn't think about revenge all the time. Here, you are in a deplorable state; back on earth, Mom is crazy and the kids are mixed up and hate each other bitterly. In the middle of such unbalanced minds, a fortune in money. But what good is it if there isn't even one atom of happiness for anyone?"

"But I left my family a great fortune," interrupted the unhappy old man rancorously. "I was looking out for everyone's welfare ..."

Paulina didn't let him finish and continued:

"We don't always know how to tell what might be beneficial when it comes to transitory riches. If you had assured their future by guaranteeing them mental peace and honest work instead, your efforts would have been a great deal of help. But Dad, sometimes we get used to accumulating money out of a spirit of vanity and ambition. Wanting to live above others, we only concern ourselves with the external aspects of life. Very few concern themselves with acquiring worthwhile knowledge, qualities of tolerance, the light of humility and the blessings of understanding. We impose our whims on others; we shun away from serving the Father and we forget the act of polishing our spirit. No one is born on the planet merely to pile up money in safes or accumulate bank accounts. It's only natural that human life demands that we make provisions for the future, and it is right that such provisions not lack faithful stewards who know how to administer them wisely. But nobody can be a steward for our Father while filled with greed and plans of domination. Such a way of life has ruined our home. When I was there, I tried in vain to render spiritual help to our home environment. While you and Mom sacrificed yourselves to increase your fortune, Amalia and Cacilda disdained useful work. They were idlers of high society and married idlers like themselves for financial gain. Agenor dropped out of school and spent his time in bad company. Edelberto graduated as a physician but was completely indifferent to medicine. He practiced his profession only rarely and visited his office more out of curiosity than anything. They all ruined their beautiful

spiritual potential, distracted by easy money and attached to the idea of their inheritance.”

The patient took on a look of horror and added:

“That damned Edelberto! Criminal and ingrate! He murdered me without mercy when I still needed to straighten out the terms of my will. Bastard!”

“Oh, please, Daddy! Have compassion on your son; forgive and forget!”

The old man, however, went on swearing loudly. The young woman was about to argue, but Narcisa gave her a meaningful glance and called Salustio to help with the critical patient. Paulina kept still while stroking her father’s brow and trying hard to hold back her tears. I was greatly impressed as I left the ward with Narcisa and Paulina a few minutes later.

The two friends exchanged confidences for a few minutes. Paulina graciously said goodbye, but her rightly worried eyes were filled with grief.

When we were alone again, Narcisa kindly explained:

“Inheritance cases are extremely complicated, as a rule. With rare exception, they are an enormous burden both to testators and legatees. In this case, however, it doesn’t only involve the problem of inheritance, but euthanasia as well. The ambition for money created problems and misunderstandings in Paulina’s family. Avaricious parents generally have spendthrift children. I went to our friend’s home when her brother Edelberto, a distinguished-looking doctor, used the so-called ‘easy death’ on his nearly-dead father. We did our best to prevent it, but to no avail. The poor young man was in financial trouble and was anxious to hurry the death of his father. And now we can see the results of his imprudence – hatred and infirmity.”

With an expressive gesture, Narcisa concluded:

“God created beings and heaven, but we insist on transforming ourselves into diabolical spirits, creating our own individual hells.”

# 31

## The vampire

It was nine o'clock at night. We still hadn't rested, except for brief moments during which we discussed various ways to solve spirit-related problems: here, a patient begging for help; there, another in need of comforting magnetic passes. When we went to assist two patients in Ward 11, I heard screams in a nearby ward. I instinctively moved towards the noise, but Narcisa quickly stopped me:

“No, don't; that is where the sexually unbalanced patients are. The scene would be too painful to look at. Save your emotions for later.”

I didn't insist but thousands of questions rushed to my mind. A whole new world was unfolding for my intellectual examination. I absolutely had to remember Laura's advice at every moment, so as not to become distracted from my duty.

Soon after nine, someone arrived from the back area of the enormous complex. It was a strange-looking little man, who seemed to be a humble worker. Narcisa welcomed him kindly:

“What's the matter, Justino? What is it?”

The worker was a member of the sentinel corps of the Chambers of Rectification. He was distressed and answered:

“I've come to inform you that a poor woman is begging for help at the large gate that leads to the agricultural fields. I think she must have escaped the attention of the frontline sentinels.”

“Why didn't you yourself see what she wanted?” inquired the nurse.

The worker made a scrupulous gesture and explained:

“According to our regulations, I couldn't, because the poor woman is covered with black spots.”

“What?” replied Narcisa, alarmed.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Then the case is very serious.”

I was curious and followed the nurse across the moonlit field. It was no short distance. We saw the silent trees of the vast complex side by side as they rustled gently in the soft breeze. After walking for more than a mile, we came to the large gate mentioned by the worker.

There before us on the other side stood the miserable figure of a woman begging for mercy. I saw nothing but the shadow of the unhappy creature, who was dressed in rags and had a grotesque face and legs covered with open sores. But judging from the alarmed look stamped on her ordinarily calm face, Narcisa seemed to see many more details that I could not perceive.

“Children of God,” cried the beggar on seeing us, “give shelter to a weary soul! Where is the heaven of the elect so that I may enjoy the peace I have longed for?”

That mournful voice moved my heart. Narcisa, in turn, also seemed to be moved, but spoke confidentially:

“Can’t you see the black spots?”

“No.” I answered.

“Your spirit sight still isn’t sufficiently trained.”

After a short pause, she continued:

“If it were in my hands, I would open the door right now, but on dealing with creatures in this condition, I can’t make that decision on my own. I have to talk to the chief warden on duty.”

She approached the unfortunate woman and spoke to her in a caring voice:

“Please, just wait a few minutes.”

We hurried back. For the first time, I met the director of sentinels of the Chambers of Rectification. Narcisa introduced me and then reported what had happened. He mouthed a meaningful gesture and remarked:

“You did right in telling me about this. Let’s go.”

We went to the gate. When we arrived, the chief warden, Brother Paulo, carefully examined the newcomer from the Umbral and stated:

“For the time being, this woman can’t receive our help. She is one of the strongest vampires I have ever seen. She must be left to herself.”

I felt scandalized. Wouldn’t we be neglecting our Christian duties if we abandoned this suffering creature to her fate? Narcisa seemed to share my view and was quick to plead:

“But Brother Paulo, is there no way that we can shelter this miserable creature in the Chambers?”

“If I allowed that,” he explained, “I would be betraying my responsibility as a warden.”

And pointing to the beggar, who was waiting for a decision and shouting impatiently, he exclaimed to the nurse:

“Narcisa, have you noticed anything else besides the black spots?”

Now, it was my instructor who said no.

“Well, I can see something else,” answered the chief warden. In a lower voice, he suggested:

“Count the spots.”

Narcisa looked at the unhappy creature and replied after a few moments:

“Fifty-eight.”

With the patience of those who know how to explain things lovingly, Brother Paulo continued:

“Those dark spots represent fifty-eight children murdered at birth. On each of the spots, I see the mental image of one of those destroyed little ones. Some were clubbed to death; others were suffocated. This unfortunate creature was a professional abortionist. She used to exploit the affliction of inexperienced young women and committed these terrible crimes under the pretext of easing their consciences. Suicides and murders may sometimes present mitigating circumstances, but her case is worse by far.”

I was astonished as I recalled the medical procedures that I often witnessed up close during my earthly days when in order to save the mother’s life it was necessary to sacrifice the unborn child because of the danger. However, Brother Paulo was reading my mind and added:

“I’m not referring to legitimate measures that make up part of a trial of expiation, but to the crime of murdering those who are just beginning the journey of their earthly experience, endowed with the sublime right to life.”

Displaying the sensitivity of a noble soul, Narcisa pleaded:

“Brother Paulo, I also made many mistakes in the past. Let’s help this unfortunate creature. If you would allow it, I will treat her with special care.”

The chief warden was impressed by her sincerity but answered, “My friend, I realize that all of us are indebted spirits; however, we have in our favor the acknowledgement of our weaknesses and the willingness to expiate our debts. But for now, this creature wants only to disturb those who are trying to work. Spirits who bring sentiments hardened by hypocrisy emit destructive energies, which is why we have a guard service in our colony.”

And smiling expressively, he continued:

“I’ll prove it to you.”

The chief warden approached the beggar and asked her:

“Sister, what do you wish of our fraternal cooperation?”

“Help! Help! Help!” she replied tearfully.

“But my friend,” he said assertively, “we must learn to accept expiatory suffering. Why did you so often cut short the lives of fragile little infants, who, with God’s permission, were about to begin their earthly struggles?”

Upon hearing this, she threw a terrible fit of hatred and shouted:

“Who’s accusing me of such infamy? I have a clear conscience, you wretch! ... I spent my existence on earth helping motherhood. I was charitable and pious, good and pure.”

“According to the living picture of your thoughts and actions, that isn’t so. I believe, sister, that you haven’t yet experienced the benefit of remorse. When you open your soul to the blessings of God and acknowledge your needs, then you may come back here.”

Angrily, the woman answered:

“Devil! Sorcerer! Servant of Satan! I shall never come back! I’m looking for the heaven they promised me, and I plan on finding it.”

Assuming a firmer attitude, the chief warden spoke with authority:

“Please go your own way. The heaven you are longing for isn’t to be found here. We live in a house of work, where patients are aware of their evil and want to be healed with the help of workers of goodwill.”

The beggar objected insolently:

“I haven’t asked for any remedy or assistance. I’m seeking the heaven I deserve after having done so many good deeds.”

And shooting us a dreadful look of extreme wrath, she discarded the appearance of a wandering infirm person and walked firmly away as though completely in charge of herself.

Brother Paulo gazed after her for several moments, then turned to us and added:

“Did you see what that vampire was doing? Her criminal condition was obvious, and yet she was pleading innocence. She is profoundly wicked, and yet declares herself good and pure. She suffers desperately and feigns tranquility. She has created a hell for herself, yet pretends to be looking for heaven.”

As we continued to listen to his lesson in silence, the chief warden concluded:

“It is fundamental to be cautious with either good or evil appearances. Of course, that poor creature will be aided elsewhere by Divine Providence. However, for the sake of true charity and the position I hold here, I couldn’t open our doors to her.”

## About Veneranda

As we entered the moon lit complex, I experienced a strange sense of wonder.

Those sheltering trees, those verdant fields held my unwavering attention. I was indirectly asking veiled questions, hoping that Narcisa would provide some explanation.

“In this great complex,” she said, “there aren’t only paths leading to the Umbral; there isn’t only the raising of plants for their nutritious juices. Minister Veneranda has also created excellent areas for our educational lessons.”

And noticing my positive curiosity, she continued:

“Those areas are the so-called ‘green halls’, which are used for educational purposes. Scattered among the trees, there are places wonderfully suited for the lectures given by the Ministers of Regeneration; others are used for visiting Ministers and scholars in general. However, there is one of rare beauty. It is reserved for the meetings of the Governor when he visits us. Periodically, the tall trees are covered with colorful blossoms, giving them the appearance of towers of natural charm. And we see the sky as our sheltering roof: We have the blessings of the sun and of the distant stars over our heads.”

“Those natural palaces must be truly wonderful!”

“They certainly are,” the nurse continued enthusiastically. “I’ve been told that forty years ago, Minister Veneranda’s proposal was excitedly applauded all over the colony. Thus, the campaign to build the ‘nature halls’ began. All of the Ministries cooperated, including the Ministry of Divine Union, which solicited Veneranda’s help in building such halls in the Forest of Waters. Delightful sanctuaries were built everywhere. I myself regard the

ones they built as schools as the most interesting. They vary greatly in size and shape. In the educational complexes of the Ministry of Elucidation, Veneranda built a virtual star-shaped castle of prodigious foliage that houses five large classes of students taught by five different instructors. In its center, there is an enormous apparatus that is used for showing images, like a movie projector on earth. It can show five different projections simultaneously. The initiative improved the city considerably, comprising something that is both practical and spiritually beautiful at the same time.”

When she paused, I asked:

“How are the halls furnished? In the same style as earthly ones?”

Narcisa smiled and remarked:

“No, there’s a difference. Inspired by the Gospel scenes of the age that witnessed the earthly pilgrimage of Jesus, Minister Veneranda suggested that we use natural resources to build the sanctuaries. Each ‘nature hall’ has benches and chairs carved out of materials taken from the ground and covered with soft, sweet smelling grass. Such materials give the halls a distinctive beauty. The Minister declared that it would be fitting to recall the sermons of the Master on the open shore during his divine travels along the sea of Tiberius. Thus, the idea of ‘nature furniture’ came from this recollection. The upkeep requires constant care, but the halls’ beauty more than makes up for it.”

The kind nurse interrupted her explanation, but noticing my silent interest, she continued:

“The most beautiful hall in our Ministry is the one reserved for the Governor’s lectures. Minister Veneranda learned that he had always been fond of ancient Hellenic landscaping, so she decorated the hall in that style, with small freshwater channels, beautiful bridges and ponds, seats made of the interlaced branches of trees, and rich vegetation. Each month the display of color is different due to the different species of flowers. The Minister reserves the loveliest for December in order to celebrate Christmas. That is when the city receives the most beautiful thoughts and earnest promises from our incarnate fellow spirits on earth, and when Noso Lar, in turn, sends its sincere prayers of hope and service to the higher spheres in homage to the Master of masters. That hall is a source of joy for all our Ministries. Perhaps you already know that the Governor visits us nearly every Sunday. He stays for hours there, conferring with the Ministers of Regeneration, talking to the

workers, offering valuable suggestions, examining the neighboring areas of the Umbral, receiving our visits and good wishes, and comforting convalescing patients. At night, when he has time, he listens to music and attends artistic shows that are staged by the youth and children of our educational institutions. Most visitors in Nosso Lar come to our Ministry just to visit that 'nature palace', which comfortably seats over thirty thousand people."

Listening to her interesting explanations, I experienced a mixture of joy and curiosity.

"Minister Veneranda's hall," Narcisa continued enthusiastically, "is also magnificent, and we pay special attention to its upkeep. All that we do in recognition of her great devotion is nothing compared to the outstanding service of that selfless servant of the Lord. She has introduced many, many beneficial measures to the Ministry on behalf of the most unfortunate inhabitants of our colony. The Government considers her service record at Nosso Lar as one of the most praiseworthy. She has put in the greatest number of work hours, and is the oldest officer in both the Government and the Ministry. In fact, she has been actively serving this city for over two hundred years."

Impressed by what she said, I remarked:

"She must be truly venerable!"

"She certainly is." Narcisa replied respectfully. "She is one of the most highly evolved individuals of our colony. The eleven Ministers who share with her in the directing of the Ministry of Regeneration always seek her advice before making any important decision. In many instances, even the Government Center consults her for her enlightened opinion. With the exception of the Governor, Minister Veneranda is the only spirit who has actually seen Jesus in the resplendent spheres. However, she never mentions that distinction of her spirit life and she avoids all reference to it. In addition to what I have told you, there was another incident involving her. One day about four years ago, Nosso Lar awakened to a celebration. The Fraternities of Light, which rule the Christian destinies of the Americas, paid a tribute to Veneranda. They awarded her the Merit of Service Medal for having completed one million hours of persevering, uninterrupted and uncomplaining service. Until now, she is the only one in the whole colony to be awarded with such an honor. A generous commission came to give her the medal, but in the

midst of the overall joy of the Ministers and the crowd, she only wept in silence. Afterwards, she donated the trophy to the city archives, claiming that she was unworthy of it. She transferred the honor to the collective spirit of the colony, in spite of the Governor's protests. She requested that all the upcoming celebrations for her deed be cancelled. Since then, she has never alluded to her award."

"What an extraordinary woman!" I said, "Why doesn't she go to higher spheres?"

In a lower voice, Narcisa said:

"Within herself she lives on planes far higher than ours, and only remains in Nosso Lar out of a spirit of love and sacrifice. I've heard that our sublime benefactress has been working for a thousand years to help a group of loved ones still on earth. Meanwhile, she patiently waits."

"How could I get to know her?" I asked enthusiastically.

Narcisa seemed to be pleased at my interest, and explained:

"Tomorrow, in the evening after prayers, Minister Veneranda is coming to the hall in order to enlighten some learners regarding thought.

## Curious remarks

A few minutes before midnight, Narcisa sent me to the large gate of the Chambers – the Samaritans must have been close at hand. It was essential to watch for their return in order to prepare for them in time.

I excitedly walked down the pathway amid leaf-covered, sheltering trees. Here, tree trunks that reminded me of the hoary oaks of earth; over there, fanciful leaves that brought to mind the acacia and the pine. The balsamic air was like a blessing. In spite of the broad windows in the Chambers, I had never experienced such a sensation of well-being. Thus, I walked silently under the comforting boughs. Fresh breezes stirred softly through them, enveloping me in a feeling of repose.

Finding myself alone, I began to think about all that had occurred since my first encounter with Minister Clarencio. Which was really the dream world: the earth or this spirit colony? What had happened to Zelia and the kids? Why was I being given so many explanations concerning the most varied aspects of life, but without any mention of my former home? My own mother had refrained from providing me any direct information and had advised me to keep quiet about it.

It all implied the need to forget the problems of the flesh so that I could work on my inner renewal; yet, probing the recesses of my being, I discovered that my longing for my family was still alive and well. I ardently desired to see my beloved wife, to be kissed again by my little ones ... Why should fate keep us apart now as if I were a castaway on some unknown shore? At the same time, noble ideas comforted my soul. In fact, I wasn't a forsaken castaway, and if my earthly experience could be classified as having been a wreck, it had all been of my own doing. Now that I had the opportunity to observe new expressions of intense and constructive labor in

Nosso Lar, I couldn't help but wonder how I could have wasted so much time on all sorts of trifles while on earth.

I had truly loved my companion-in-struggle dearly, and had always tenderly cherished our children, but on critically examining my conduct as a husband and father, I realized that I had failed to create anything solid and useful in the spirit of my family members. I had realized my failure too late. Those who do not sow their fields in a way that will provide them with bread, or those who do not guard the fountain that quenches their thirst cannot expect to be provided with all they need. Such thoughts kept recurring in my mind with irritating vehemence. On leaving the physical sphere, I had been faced with the torture of not knowing what had happened to my wife and children, who had been taken from domestic stability to the shadows of widowhood and orphanhood. It was futile to even think about it.

The light breeze seemed to whisper lofty ideas to my mind as if desiring to awaken it to higher thoughts.

These inner interrogations tortured me, but sticking to the imperatives of the task at hand, I approached the large gate and scanned the distance beyond the agricultural fields.

All was moonlight and serenity, sublime sky and silent beauty! While in ecstatic contemplation of the picture, I spent a few minutes in wonder and prayer.

A short time later, I saw in the distance two enormous shapes that really caught me off-guard. They looked like men of some indefinable semi-luminous substance. Strange filaments hung from their arms and legs, and there was a long thread of indefinable length connected to their heads. I had the impression that I was seeing two ghosts. I couldn't handle it. My hair standing on end, I ran back to the Chambers terrified. When I informed Narcisa of the incident, she could hardly keep from laughing.

"Well, my friend, she finally said good-naturedly, "you didn't realize what those characters were?"

I was deeply disgruntled and couldn't answer her question, so Narcisa continued:

"A long time ago, I had the same experience and was just as surprised as you. They are our own brothers from earth. I mean they are powerful spirits, who live in the flesh on some redemptive mission, and as capable initiates of

the Eternal Wisdom, they can temporarily abandon their physical bodies and travel about freely on our planes. The filaments and threads you saw are characteristics that distinguish them from us. So, you needn't fear. Incarnates who can come to these regions are extraordinarily spiritualized individuals, though they may appear humble or obscure on earth."

And encouraging me kindly, she remarked:

"Let's go there. It's 12:40 and the Samaritans could arrive at any moment."

I was satisfied with her explanation and returned with her to the large gate.

A long distance away by now, the two forms were calmly walking away from Nossol Lar.

The nurse gazed at them, made an expressive gesture and exclaimed:

"They are surrounded in light blue. They must be two very advanced messengers in the physical sphere and are here on some task we cannot know about."

We stood there for several minutes, lost in contemplation of the silent fields. A bit later, however, my kind friend pointed out a dark point on the moonlit horizon and remarked:

"Here they come!"

I could see the caravan moving towards us under the soft glow of the sky. All of a sudden, I heard the barking of dogs a long way off.

"What's that?" I inquired, startled.

"Dogs," said the nurse. "They are precious helpers in the dark regions of the Umbral, which is inhabited not only by discarnate human beings, but also by real monsters that I cannot begin to describe."

In a loud voice, the nurse called to the servants, sending one of them to the Chambers in order to inform the others of the Samaritans' arrival.

I attentively gazed at the strange group slowly approaching us.

Six big carts that looked sort of like stagecoaches were being led by a pack of happy and noisy dogs. The carts were being drawn by animals, which from a distance, looked like mules. But what caught my attention most were

the large flocks of birds flying close to and over the carts, and making strange sounds.

Surprised, I turned to Narcisa:

“Where’s the airbus? Couldn’t they use it in the Umbral?”

When she told me they couldn’t, I asked for an explanation.

As usual, the attentive nurse explained:

“It’s a problem of the density of matter. Think of water and air as an example. An airplane can fly through the atmosphere of the planet but cannot move through the ocean. For that, we must build certain machines like submarines. Out of the spirit of compassion towards the suffering inhabitants of the Umbral, the spirit communities of higher planes prefer to use transitional forms of transportation. Also, in many cases we often can’t do without the help of the animals.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, surprised.

“The dogs make the work easier; the mules patiently carry loads and supply warmth in the region when necessary. And those birds,” she added, pointing to them in the air, “are called ‘traveling ibises’. They help the Samaritans immensely by devouring hateful, wicked and odious thought forms in the fight against the darkness of the Umbral.”

The caravan was growing nearer.

Narcisa gazed at me with kind attention and concluded:

“Right now there’s no time for further explanations. The place to find out about the animals isn’t here but in the Ministry of Elucidation, where the complexes for instruction and experimentation are located.”

And giving orders here and there, she prepared to receive the new spirit patients.

## With the newcomers from the Umbral

Led by firm-handed workers, the packs of dogs stopped beside us.

Within minutes, we were all braving the enormous entrance corridors of the Chambers of Rectification. Attendants were hurrying about. A few of the patients were being led inside by force. Not only were Narcisa, Salustio and others throwing themselves into the toil with fraternal love, but the Samaritans were also mobilizing all their efforts in their eagerness to help. Some of the patients were behaving humbly and with resignation, whereas others complained loudly.

I, too, eagerly joined in the work and noticed that an elderly woman was having a difficult time trying to get down from the last cart. When I came near her, she exclaimed in alarm:

“Take pity, sonny! Help me, for God’s sake!”

I was interested and approached her.

“Good heavens!” she exclaimed, crossing herself. “Thanks to Divine Providence, I got out of purgatory ... Oh! What wicked devils tortured me there! What a hell! But angels of the Lord finally came.”

I was extremely curious as I helped her down. This was the first time I had heard references to hell and purgatory from someone who seemed calm and reasonable. I let my curiosity get the best of me and asked:

“So, have you come from far away?”

Speaking like that, I was putting on an air of profound fraternal interest like I used to do on earth, completely forgetting Laura’s wise recommendations for the moment. Noticing my interest, the poor creature began to explain:

“Very far, indeed. On earth, my son, I was a very good woman. I did a

lot of work for charity and said my prayers with sincere devotion. But what can one do against the wiles of Satan? Upon leaving the world, I found myself surrounded by monstrous beings, which dragged me with them into a real whirlwind. At first, I implored the protection of the celestial archangels, but those hellish spirits kept me prisoner nonetheless. However, I never lost hope of being rescued at any moment, because I had left some money to have monthly masses said on my behalf.”

Yielding to the noxious habit of making inquiries about matters that were none of my business, I insisted:

“That is so interesting! Didn’t you try to find out the reason for your stay in those regions?”

“Absolutely not,” she replied, crossing herself again. “Like I already told you, I did my best to be a good religious woman while on earth. But you know that nobody is free of sin. Although my fortune provided me with a peaceful life, my slaves often caused disorder and contention, and from time to time I had to have them punished. My overseers noticed every little misbehavior, so I had to give such orders every day. It wasn’t rare for some Negro to die at the whipping post as a warning to the others, and in order to keep the peace around the house, I was sometimes obliged to sell slave-mothers, separating them from their children. I felt the sting of my conscience on those occasions, but I confessed every month when Father Amancio visited the plantation. So, I was free of those venial sins because having received absolution in the confessional, and having taken communion by eating the sacred bread, I felt renewed in my duties towards the world and God.”

I was shocked with her story and began to instruct her:

“My sister, that kind of spiritual peace was false. The slaves were also our brothers. In the Eternal Father’s eyes, the children of servants are the same as the children of masters.”

At my words, she stamped her foot as if she knew better and said, irritated:

“Impossible! Slaves are slaves. If that weren’t so, religion would teach us otherwise. If there were slaves in the houses of bishops, why shouldn’t there be any on our plantations? Who would work the land if not them? Believe me, it was an honor for them to live in my slaves’ quarters! On my plantation, slaves never came to the guests’ courtyard except to carry out my

orders. Our virtuous Father Amancio once told me at confession that Africans are the worst creatures in the world, born exclusively to serve God in bondage. So do you think I would have any scruples in dealing with such creatures? Have no doubt about it: slaves are wicked beings, the children of Satan! I sometimes admire my own patience with which I used to tolerate that sort of folk. Let me tell you, I almost left my body unexpectedly from shock over the Princess' decree setting those hoodlums free.<sup>14</sup> That all happened many years ago, but I can still remember it perfectly. I had been sick for many days, and when Father Amancio came from town with the news, I suddenly got worse. How could we go on living with those criminals at large? Of course, they would want to enslave us in turn. Wouldn't it be preferable to die rather than to serve the likes of them? I remember I had a hard time making my confession. I received the priest's comforting words, but it seems that all demons are also African. They spied on me all the time and I have been obliged to suffer their presence until today."

"And when did you arrive?"

"In May of 1888."

I experienced a strange sensation of amazement.

With dim eyes, the old woman gazed at the horizon and said:

"It's possible that my nephews forgot to pay for the masses, although I left it clearly specified in my will."

I was about to respond in order to instruct her about the higher spiritual spheres, to provide her with new ideas of fraternity and faith, when Narcisa approached and said kindly:

"Andre, my friend, have you forgotten that we are rendering relief and aid to ill and disturbed spirits? What good will all this information be to her? Demented individuals will talk incessantly, and whoever listens to them is wasting their spiritual effort and may be no less crazy than they."

These words were spoken with such kindness that I flushed with shame and lacked the courage to reply.

"Don't worry about it," the nurse remarked gently, "let's get back to helping our deranged friends."

The old woman seemed worried and asked, "But do you really think I'm one of them?"

Displaying her excellent psychological skills, Narcisa looked at her kindly and explained:

“Of course not, my friend, I didn’t say that. Even so, I think you must be worn out. Your purgatorial effort lasted a very long time.”

“You’re right, you’re right,” agreed the newcomer from the Umbral. “You can’t imagine what I have suffered, tortured by those demons.”

The poor creature was about to begin the whole story over again, but teaching me how to behave in such circumstances, Narcisa cut her short:

“Don’t talk about evil. I already know all about your bitter and painful experiences. Calm down and be assured that I will assist you very soon.”

At the same instant, she humbly spoke to one of the attendants:

“You, Zenobio, please go to the female department and tell Nemesis that I would like her to come and take one more sister to the treatment beds.”

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<sup>14</sup> Slavery was abolished in Brazil on May 13, 1888 by a law signed by Princess Isabel, who had at the time temporarily replaced her father, Emperor Pedro II - Tr.

## A special meeting

We were storing the travel equipment and seeing to the service animals when I heard a friendly voice beside me:

“Andre! It’s you! Well, well, what a pleasant surprise!”

Startled, I turned around and realized that the Samaritan who was talking was Silveira, an old acquaintance of mine on earth. My father, an inflexible businessman, had taken all of his material assets from him.

Therefore, it was natural that I felt embarrassed at seeing him. I wanted to acknowledge his greeting, to respond to his friendly gesture, but the remembrance of the past rendered me speechless all of a sudden. I could not pretend in this new environment, where everyone could tell if you were being sincere just by looking at your face. Finally, Silveira himself noticed my discomfort and helped me out:

“Frankly, I didn’t know you had left your physical body and I didn’t have the slightest idea I’d meet you here in Nosso Lar.”

Noticing his spontaneous kindness, I was deeply moved and embraced him murmuring words of gratitude.

I wanted to offer some sort of explanation about the past, but I couldn’t. I wanted to apologize for my father’s actions, which had forced Silveira into bankruptcy. At that moment, it all came back to me. My memory once again showed me a living picture from my past. It seemed like I was listening to Mrs. Silveira pleadingly, trying to explain the situation when she had visited us. Her husband had been ill for a long time, and worsening their plight, two of their children had also fallen sick. Their expenses had risen, and medical care was very expensive. The poor woman was weeping and begging for a deferment. She humiliated herself, gazing pitifully at my mother as if trying to find understanding and help in the heart of another woman. I remember

how earnestly my mother pleaded with my father to forget the documents he had signed and to refrain from any legal action. My father, however, who was accustomed to large-scale transactions and was favored by luck, couldn't grasp the shopkeeper's situation. He was adamant. He stated that he was sorry for what had happened, that he would help in different ways, but as for the debts, there was nothing he could do but go ahead with the legal proceedings. He explained that he couldn't even consider breaking the long-established regulations of his firm. The promissory notes would have their legal consequences. He tried to console the afflicted wife, saying that there were other clients who were in an even worse situation than Silveira. I remembered my mother's sympathy towards the unfortunate tearful woman. My father remained indifferent to her entreaties, and after the poor woman had taken her leave, he scolded my mother severely, forbidding her to interfere in any more business matters. The poor family suffered utter financial ruin. I recalled perfectly the moment Miss Silveira's piano was being carried away to satisfy the last claims of the implacable creditor.

I wanted to apologize, but I couldn't find the right words, for at that time I had encouraged my father in his ruthless attitude. I considered my mother too sentimental in her views and I encouraged my father to prosecute Silveira to the finish. As I was still very young, vanity had taken hold of me. I wasn't interested in the suffering of others, nor could I see their needs. I thought only of the rights of my own home, nothing else. And in that regard, I had been unyielding. Any maternal exhortation was useless.

Defeated in the struggle, the Silveiras moved to a small town and lived in poverty and suffering. From that moment on, I never again heard mention of the family, which surely hated us.

These memories had flashed through my mind within seconds. In only one moment, I had recalled my dark past.

And while I could hardly disguise my despondency, Silveira smilingly called me back to reality:

“Have you been visiting your ‘old man’?”

His question, so filled with spontaneous caring, only increased my embarrassment. I answered that I had not yet had the satisfaction of visiting my father, in spite of my wish.

Silveira sensed my constraint, and perhaps seeing how upset I was, he prepared to leave. He gave me a polite hug and went back to work.

Very disconcerted, I looked for Narcisa, anxious to receive her advice on the matter. I told her what had just happened, giving details of our earthly relations.

After listening patiently, she remarked kindly:

“Don’t be surprised. A long time ago, I found myself in a similar situation. I have already had the satisfaction of meeting most of the people whom I had offended in the world. Today, I know that the Lord blesses us with new opportunities to rekindle friendships that have been interrupted, thus repairing the broken links in the spiritual chain.

And pressing her teaching a bit further, she asked:

“Did you take advantage of the situation?”

“What do you mean?” I inquired.

“Did you ask Silveira to forgive you? Remember, it is a joy to be able to recognize our wrongs. Since you were able to examine yourself in the light of understanding and identify yourself as an old offender, don’t pass up the opportunity to gain a friend. Go, my friend, and embrace him differently. Make the most of the opportunity offered to you, for Silveira is a very busy man and you may not get another chance very soon.”

Noticing my indecision, Narcisa added:

“Don’t be afraid. Whenever we follow our head and heart in the practice of the good, Jesus grants us the help necessary to succeed. Take the initiative. Accomplishing worthy actions – whatever they may be – represents a real honor for the soul. Keep the Gospel in mind and go seek the treasure of reconciliation.”

I didn’t hesitate. I ran after Silveira and talked to him openly, begging him to forgive both my father and me for the errors and offenses of the past.

“You see,” I affirmed, “we were both blind. In such a state, we couldn’t see anything but our own self-interests. Whenever money and vanity are involved, Silveira, it is difficult for a person not to take the wrong path.”

Silveira was deeply moved and didn’t let me finish.

“Now, now, Andre, is anybody free of sin? Do you think that I led a blameless life? Besides, your father was actually a good teacher and we owe him – my family and I – for blessed lessons in individual effort. If it had not been for his strong attitude in taking away our material assets, what would

have become of us in terms of our spiritual progress? Here, all our old concepts of human life are changed. Our adversaries are not our enemies; actually, they are our benefactors. Don't brood over these sad memories. Let's work with the Lord, acknowledging that life is endless."

And looking at my moist eyes, he gave me a fatherly hug and concluded:

"Don't waste your time on this. Before too long, I want to have the pleasure of visiting your father with you by my side."

I embraced him without a word, feeling new joy in my soul. It seemed that in a dark little corner of my heart a divine light had been turned on forever.

## 36

# The dream

The work went on without stopping. Some patients needed urgent care; a few unbalanced individuals, our full attention.

By evening, I had fully learned the technique of magnetic passes, which I applied to the patients who were in need of them.

In the morning, Tobias returned to the Chambers, and more out of kindness than for any other reason, he encouraged me with words of praise:

“Very well done, Andre!” he exclaimed with satisfaction. “I’m going to mention you specifically to Minister Genesisio so that you can receive double hour-bonuses for your first time on the job.”

I was about to say how grateful I was when Laura and Lisias arrived and embraced me.

“We are very pleased,” the benevolent woman said with a smile. “I followed you in spirit throughout the night, and your first time at work brought great joy to our domestic circle. I had the pleasure of passing the good news on to Minister Clarencio, who asked me to send you his congratulations.”

They exchanged pleasantries with Tobias and Narcisa, and then asked me about my impressions. I was all too happy to oblige.

My greatest joy, however, was still to come.

Besides Laura’s kind invitation to return home with them to rest, Tobias also offered me a resting room beside the Chambers of Rectification, to which he advised me to retire without delay. In fact, I felt an urgent need to sleep. Narcisa made me a bed with the love of a sister.

Alone in the spacious and comfortable room, I prayed to the Lord of Life, thanking him for the blessing of having been useful. The “blessed

fatigue” of those who have fulfilled their duties left me no time for further musings.

Within a few moments, a sensation of lightness filled my whole soul and I had the impression of being carried away in a small boat towards regions unknown. Where was I being taken? It was impossible to tell. A man sat silent beside me at the helm. I felt like a child, unable either to count or to describe the wonders along the way. I let myself be carried along without a word, amazed at the magnificence of the landscape. The little craft seemed to be sailing rapidly, even though it appeared to be ascending.

After a few minutes, I was in a marvelous harbor and somebody was calling to me in a familiar voice.

“Andre! Andre!”

I hastily got out of the boat like a child. I could tell that voice from a thousand others. A moment later, I was overwhelmed with joy in my mother’s arms.

She led me to a wonderful wooded area, where the flowers had a remarkable gift: they could retain light, offering a permanent feast of fragrance and color. Luminous golden tapestries stretched out under the rustling foliage of the great trees. My feelings of happiness and peace were ineffable. The dream was somehow different from those I had experienced on earth. I was perfectly aware that I had left my denser body in the resting room beside the Chambers of Rectification in Nossos Lar, and was completely aware that I was moving in a different sphere. My notions of time and space were accurate. The wealth of emotions that I was experiencing was growing more and more intense. My mother spoke a few words of sacred spiritual encouragement, and then explained kindly:

“I prayed to Jesus that I might be granted the sublime satisfaction of having you by my side after your first day of useful service. As you can see by now, my son, work is a divine tonic for the heart. When many spirits leave the earth, they linger unproductively and wait for miracles that never occur. Thus, their great potential is reduced to displays of parasitism. Some offer the excuse that they are discouraged because they are lonely; others state that they cannot adjust to the environment in which they were called to serve the Lord. But Andre, it is indispensable that we convert every opportunity in the spirit life into a reason to remember God and serve him. In the lower spheres, a bowl of soup given to the hungry, some balm offered to a leper or a gesture

of sympathy directed towards a disenchanted person are sublime deeds that are remembered forever in the House of our Father. Here, a look of understanding cast to the sinner, a promise from the Gospel brought to those in despair, or a bit of hope given to the afflicted are blessings of spiritual work that also weigh greatly in our favor.”

My mother’s expressions were ever so beautiful: her maternal eyes seemed to radiate a sublime light; her hands in tender gestures transmitted invigorating fluids and gentle emotions to me.

“The Gospel of Jesus, my dear Andre,” she continued kindly, “reminds us that there is greater joy in giving than in receiving. Let us learn how to put such a principle into practice in the daily efforts necessary for our own happiness. Always give, my son. Above all, never forget to give of yourself in constructive tolerance, fraternal love and divine understanding. The outward practice of goodness is a lesson and an appeal, enabling us to experience inward goodness. Jesus gave more of himself to the improvement of humankind than all the noble charitable donations by all the millionaires on earth put together. Don’t be ashamed to help the ulcerated patients or to clear the minds of the mental cases that enter the Chambers of Rectification, where, by the way, I followed your work last night in spirit. Work, my son. In all our spirit colonies, as on the spheres of the planet, there is an overabundance of restless souls, anxious for novelty and distraction. But forget about entertainment and look for useful service instead. I am very insignificant but can nevertheless watch you in spirit as you work in *Nosso Lar*, and I can follow the sufferings of your father in the regions of the *Umbral*; likewise, God sees and accompanies us all, from the most enlightened ambassador of his goodness to the lowest beings on the scale of creation – lower than the worms of earth.”

She made a short pause, and I wanted to take the opportunity to say something, but couldn’t. Tears of emotion kept me from speaking. She looked at me tenderly, understanding my situation. Then, she continued:

“Here, as in the majority of the spirit colonies, payment for work is done with hour-bonuses. Such payment unites two essential factors. The bonus represents the possibility of receiving something from our brothers and sisters in struggle, or of giving something to someone who takes part in our accomplishments. But the criterion for determining the value of the hour-bonus belongs exclusively to God. Like on earth, in awarding hour-bonuses, there can be many mistakes due to our fallible personality and our nature as

evolving creatures; however, as for the spiritual content of the hour-bonus, there is a direct connection between the worker and the divine forces of creation. That's why our experimental activities during our progressive march up from the physical sphere undergo continuous modifications everyday. Tables, registers and payments are modalities of experimentation used by the administrators to whom the Lord has granted the opportunity of cooperating in the divine works of life, just as he grants his creatures the privilege of being fathers or mothers for a certain amount of time on earth or on other worlds. Sincere administrators all do their utmost to carry out the duties assigned to them; every conscious father is full of devoted love. God also is an attentive Administrator and an extremely devoted Father. He forgets no one and reserves his right to make an agreement with his workers concerning the true use of their work time. All outward payment affects the personality undergoing the experience, but the entire value of time is important to the eternal personality – the one that will always remain in our circles of life on its way towards the glory of God. This is why the Most High gives wisdom to those who spend their time learning, and more life and joy to those who know how to deny themselves.”

My mother stopped talking while I dried my eyes. Then, she took me in her arms and fondly stroked my face. Like a boy who falls asleep after a lesson, I lost consciousness and awoke later in the Chambers of Rectification, experiencing an invigorating feeling of joy.

## A lecture by the Minister

During the course of my duties the following day, I was greatly interested in attending a lecture by Minister Veneranda. Since I was aware that I needed permission to attend, I asked Tobias about it.

“These lectures,” he said, “are only attended by truly interested spirits. Our instructors can’t afford to waste their time. Thus, you will be allowed to attend along with hundreds of other listeners from among the workers and patients of the Ministries of Regeneration and Assistance.”

With an encouraging gesture, he concluded:

“I hope you really enjoy it.”

I spent the day working hard. The contact with my mother and her beautiful remarks on the practice of good had filled my spirit with sublime peace.

As soon as I had woken up, her explanations about the hour-bonus raised important questions in my mind. How could God possibly be concerned about hour-bonus compensation? Wasn’t the reckoning of time an attribute of a human or spirit administrator? Tobias, however, clarified my starving mind as it searched for understanding:

“Normally, it is the administrator’s task to record workers’ time on the job, and to set measures of respect and consideration according to how much they deserve it. But as for the essential value of workers’ accomplishments, only the divine powers can accurately calculate it. There are workers who devote forty years to a special activity only to leave it with the same lack of knowledge as their first hour on the job, demonstrating that they have spent their time without the least bit of spiritual dedication. And there are people who have lived for one hundred years but leave their earthly existence just as ignorant as they were during their childhood. Your mom’s concept is really

valuable, for it can be easily explained by considering the hours spent by both good and bad people. The former become springs of blessings from the Eternal, while the latter are whips of torment and remorse as if they were accursed entities. Each child must settle his accounts with the Father according to that child's use of the opportunities to do good works."

His explanation helped me to reflect on the value of time in every sense of the word.

At the appointed time for the Minister's lecture after evening prayer, I went with Narcisa and Salustio to the large nature hall.

The green enclosure was a true wonder, and we sat comfortably on large grassy mounds. A wide variety of flowers were glittering under the light of beautiful candelabras and emitting a delicate fragrance.

I calculated that there were over a thousand individuals in the audience. By the way the great assembly was organized, I noticed that twenty were seated in a special place between us and the flowery dais, where the lecturer's chair could be seen.

I asked Narcisa who they were and she answered me promptly:

"We are in the general audience section. Those friends seated there in that special place are the ones who are the most knowledgeable on the subject of today's lecture – fellow spirits who are allowed to present questions to the Minister. They have acquired that right due to their devotion to the subject, and it is a right that we may also receive in our turn."

"Aren't you allowed to sit with them?" I inquired.

"No. For the time being, I may sit there only on nights when the instructor deals with the treatment of troubled spirits. However, there are brothers and sisters who may sit there for lectures on many subjects, depending on the knowledge they've acquired."

"A very curious procedure, indeed." I remarked.

"The Governor," the nurse continued, "established that measure for the classes and lectures of all the Ministers in order to keep their work from turning into digressions of unfounded personal opinions that would waste everyone's time. Any questions or points of view that are truly useful may be clarified or discussed, but at the proper time."

She had hardly finished speaking when Minister Veneranda entered the hall, accompanied by two distinguished-looking women, who according to Narcisa, were Ministers from Communication.

At the mere sight of Veneranda, enormous joy spread across every face. Physically, she didn't look like an elderly woman at all, in spite of what her name seemed to convey; rather, she looked like a mature, noble lady, very simple and unaffected.

After briefly talking with the twenty fellow spirits in order to inform herself of the audience's general needs concerning the night's subject matter, she began:

“As usual, I will not use our meeting to make a long speech. Instead, I am here to speak to you regarding a few observations about thought.

“At the moment, there are a few hundred listeners among us who are surprised by the fact that our sphere is full of forms similar to those on the planet. Haven't they learned that thought is the universal language? Haven't they been told that mental creation means nearly everything in our lives? Many, many brothers and sisters are asking questions as to why there are earth-like dwellings, utensils and languages here. This reality shouldn't surprise anyone, however. We mustn't forget that up to this point – as far as earthly existence is concerned – we have been living in old spheres of antagonistic vibrations. Thought is the basis for all human spiritual relationships, but we cannot forget the fact that we are only a few of the millions of souls in the universe who have not yet fully submitted themselves to the universal laws. We still cannot compare ourselves to our older and wiser kindred who live close to the Divine Father; instead, we are among the millions of entities living in the capricious lower worlds of the ego. The great instructors of humankind teach divine principles and expound on profound and eternal truths in the circles of the globe. In general, we learn about the universal laws via our earthly activities, but we do not obey them, and we acknowledge divine truths without consecrating our lives to them.

“Might it be possible that by simply accepting the power of thought, human beings could break free of their inferior condition? Not in the least!

“A hundred years in the flesh is a very short amount of time for us to rise to the level of being divine co-workers. During our earthly learning experience, we receive information about the power of the mind, but we

forget that all our mental energies have been used for thousands of years on destructive mental creations that are harmful to others and ourselves.

“We take spiritualization courses in the various religious schools of the world, but we frequently act exclusively in the realm of paying lip service to what we learn. None can fulfill their duties with words alone, however. The Bible teaches us that the Lord of Life himself did not stop at mere words, but supplemented his creative work with actions.

“We all know that thought is an essential force, but we can’t admit the fact that we have misused it for thousands of years.

“Now everybody knows that parents are obligated to nourish their own children; likewise, each spirit is compelled to maintain and nourish its own creations. A criminal idea will produce mental creations of like nature; a lofty principle will obey the same law. Let’s look at a most-ordinary symbol. After evaporating to great heights, water returns purified, carrying invigorating vital fluids either as life-giving dew or beneficial rain. If it remains in contact with earth’s impurities, however, it will become the habitation of destructive microorganisms.

“Thought is a living force everywhere. It is the creative atmosphere enveloping the Father and his children – the Cause and the Effects in the universal home. Through thought, human beings become angels on their way to heaven, or diabolical genii on their way to hell.

“Do you understand how important this is? Now, in evolved minds – both discarnate and incarnate – this mental exchange occurs without any need for forms, and it is important to point out that thought per se is the basis for all of the mind’s silent messages on the marvelous planes of intuition among beings of all kinds. According to this principle, a spirit who may have lived exclusively in France can communicate thought to thought in Brazil without using a specific language, which in such a case will always be that of the receiver. But of course, it will also depend on them being perfectly attuned to each other. However, we are not yet within the spheres of absolute mental purity, where all creatures are perfectly attuned to one another. Here, we are attuned to one another in isolated groups, and we are compelled to carry out the transitory tasks of earth so that we may return to earthly circles with a more-evolved experience.

“Nosso Lar, therefore, as a transitory spirit city, is a blessing granted to us as an ‘additional mercy’, wherein a few may prepare themselves to ascend

higher, while the majority may prepare to return to earth in expiatory service. Let us all understand how great the laws of thought are and strive to obey them from this day forward.”

After a long pause, the Minister smiled at the audience and asked:

“Are there any questions?”

Soon thereafter, soft music filled the hall with sweet melodies.

Veneranda stayed on for a while longer, displaying love and comprehension, refinement and wisdom.

Without any formal gesture to indicate that her speech had ended, she closed the lecture with an amusing question.

When at the sound of the usual music I saw my companions rising to leave, I was surprised and asked Narcisa:

“What’s going on? Is the meeting over?”

The kind nurse explained with a smile:

“That’s typical of Minister Veneranda. She always finishes the lecture when we are most interested. She likes to say that the Gospel lectures began with Jesus, but no one knows when and how they will end.”

## 38

### Tobias's case

On my third day at work, Tobias delighted me with a pleasant surprise. After work and in the evening, when others were beginning the night shift, he took me to his home, where beautiful moments of joy and learning awaited me.

As soon as we entered, he introduced me to two kindly women, one elderly and the other approaching middle age. He explained that the latter was Luciana, his sister, and the former was Hilda, his wife. Both were very affable and polite.

We gathered in Tobias's admirable library, where we began examining marvelous volumes both in terms of their bindings and their spiritual content.

Hilda invited me to visit the garden so that I could observe up close some gracefully formed floral arrangements. Every home in *Nosso Lar* seemed to specialize in raising certain kinds of flowers. At Lisias's house, there were hundreds of gloxinias and lilies, whereas at Tobias's, countless hydrangeas bloomed in green sheets smattered with violet. The beautiful bowers of delicate trees resembling tender bamboo were laced together with an interesting vine that joined all the trees together at the top like huge floral cords, forming a graceful roof overhead.

I didn't know how to translate my admiration into words. An inebriating fragrance filled the air. We were talking about the beauty of the overall landscape as seen from that angle of the Ministry of Regeneration, when Luciana called us back inside for a light meal.

Enchanted with the simple atmosphere, which seemed filled with sincere fraternity, I didn't know how to thank my generous host.

At a certain point in our friendly conversation, Tobias smiled and said:

“I don’t have to tell you that Andre here is still a newcomer to our Ministry and perhaps doesn’t know my family story yet.”

The two women smiled, and noticing my inquiring look, he continued:

“Moreover, there are many families in the same situation as ours. Well, I was married twice ...”

And nodding toward both women, he proceeded in a gesture of good humor:

“I believe I should tell you about my two wives; what do you think?”

“Oh, well, yes,” I murmured, extremely confused. “You mean that both Hilda and Luciana shared your earth experience?”

“That’s right,” he answered calmly.

Hilda cut in and said:

“Please, excuse our Tobias, brother Andre. He is always eager to talk about the past whenever we meet with someone newly arrived from earth.”

“Shouldn’t it be a cause for joy,” added Tobias with good humor, “to have defeated the monster of jealousy, and to have gained at least a small degree of true fraternity?”

“In fact,” I objected, “the problem deeply concerns all of us. After all, there are millions of people down on the planet who have married more than once. How can we resolve such an important problem in the light of eternal spirituality? We know that the death of the body only transforms; it doesn’t destroy, and the ties of the soul are carried throughout eternity. So what should we do? Condemn the man or woman who has married more than once? We would find millions of individuals in that situation. Many times I have wondered about that Gospel passage in which the Master, referring to marriage in eternity, promises us the life of angels.”

The host kindly interrupted, “Well, with all due respect to our Lord, we have to realize that we aren’t yet in the sphere of angels, but in that of discarnate human beings.”

“Then how can we solve the problem?” I asked.

Tobias smiled and remarked:

“Very simply. We all know that between the non-thinking being and the human being there is a huge gradated series of stages. Likewise, in our case,

the path to angelhood represents an immense distance to travel. Well, how can we aspire to the company of angelic beings if we aren't yet even fraternal with one another? Of course, there are strong-hearted travelers, who in a supreme effort of the will show themselves to be superior to every obstacle along the way. However, the majority can't do without bridges or the help of charitable guardians. In light of such a truth, cases of this nature are solved based on the principles of real fraternity, where we must bear in mind that true marriage is between souls and is thus a union that no one can break."

Luciana had kept still until that moment, but then interrupted:

"But it's important to remember that we owe all this happiness and understanding to the spirit of love and self-denial of our Hilda."

Tobias's wife displayed dignified humility:

"Oh hush. I don't possess those qualities. I'll try to summarize our story so that our guest might understand how painful my learning process was."

With the gesture of a loveable storyteller, she continued:

"Tobias and I were married on earth while still very young in obedience to sacred spiritual affinities. I don't think I need to describe the happiness of two souls who join together in matrimony and truly love each other. But death seemed jealous of our happiness and snatched me from the world when our second child was born. Our grief was indescribable. Tobias wept hopelessly and I felt incapable of subduing my own anguish. Dreadful days in the Umbral befell me. I could see no other way to handle the situation except to continue clinging to my husband and two little children, deaf to all explanations sent to me by my spirit friends via intuition.

"I wanted to fight like a hen beside her chicks. But I realized that Tobias had to re-organize the home and that the kids were in need of motherly assistance. The situation became frankly unbearable. My single sister-in-law couldn't stand the children, and the cook only feigned dedication to them. In addition, there were two young nannies who were completely unreliable. Thus, Tobias couldn't put off the reasonable solution to all this, and within one year after my death he married Luciana against my will. Ah! If you knew how displeased I was! I was like a wounded wolf. In my ignorance, I even fought with the poor woman and tried to kill her. It was then that Jesus granted me the providential visit of my maternal grandmother, who had discarnated many years before. She arrived somewhat casually – really surprising me – sat down and held me on her lap, just as she used to do in the

past, and asked tearfully: ‘What’s going on, my grandchild? What is your role in life? Are you a lioness or a soul conscious of God? Our sister Luciana is serving as a mother to your children. She keeps your house clean, works in your garden and helps your husband in moments of stress, and yet you don’t think she deserves to be his new companion in the struggles of life. Is this the way your heart gives thanks for divine benefits and the way you reward those who serve you? Do you want Luciana to be a slave but despise her as a sister? Hilda! Hilda! Have you forgotten your religious lessons of the Crucified? Oh! My poor grandchild, my poor girl! ... Then, I tearfully embraced my holy old grandmother, abandoned my old home and came with her to work in Nosso Lar. From that time on, Luciana became another daughter to me. I worked very hard. I devoted myself to serious study, to the moral improvement of my inner self and tried to help everyone, without exception, in my former home on earth. Tobias raised another family, which also became mine through sacred spiritual ties. Afterwards, he returned in the company of Luciana to join me and she shares in our complete joy. And that, my friend, is our story ...”

Luciana, however, interrupted:

“She didn’t tell you how much she has sacrificed in teaching me by her example.”

“What do you mean, my daughter?” asked Hilda, grasping Luciana’s right hand.

Luciana smiled and continued:

“Thanks to Jesus and to her, I learned that there are marriages of love, of fraternity, of trial and of duty. On the day Hilda embraced and forgave me, I felt that my heart had been freed from the monster of base jealousy. Spiritual matrimony unites soul with soul, while the other kinds of marriage are mere conciliations needed for solving problems or for the process of expiation – although all marriages are sacred.”

“So, we organized our new home based on genuine fraternity,” added Tobias.

Availing myself of a temporary silence, I asked:

“How are marriages accomplished here?”

“Through a vibratory combination,” Tobias explained attentively, “or to be more explicit, by utter and complete affinity.”

Unable to control my curiosity, I forgot to mind my manners and asked:

“Then, what is the position of our sister Luciana in this case?”

Before the spirit couple could answer, Luciana explained:

“When I married Tobias, a widower, I should have known our union would most probably be, above all, fraternal. However, it took me a while to understand that. In fact, it’s logical to conclude that when a couple suffers from restlessness, incomprehension and sadness, it indicates that they are married only physically and not spiritually.”

I wanted to ask another question but couldn’t without seeming indiscreet. However, Hilda read my thoughts and explained:

“Don’t worry. Luciana is already betrothed spiritually. Her noble companion of many lifetimes preceded her in returning to the physical plane a few years ago. She’ll follow him next year. I think the blissful meeting will take place in Sao Paulo.”

We all smiled happily.

At that moment, Tobias was hurriedly called to the Chambers of Rectification to attend to a serious case and we had to end our conversation.

## Listening to Laura

Tobias's story had impressed me deeply.

Because it was based on the new principles of fraternal union, his home made me reflect on my own condition. After all, I too still considered myself to be the head of a terrestrial household and I could imagine how difficult it would be for me in a similar situation. Would I have the courage to follow Tobias's example? I admitted that I wouldn't. In my view, I wasn't capable of displeasing my dear Zelia so much, and I would never accept such an imposition on her part.

The explanations at Tobias's home tortured my mind. I found no right answers that could satisfy me.

I was so preoccupied about it that on the following day I decided to pay Lisias a visit in my spare time. I was eager to hear what Laura had to say on the matter because I trusted her like a mother.

I received a joyful welcome, and then waited for the proper moment in which I could calmly and unhurriedly listen to Lisias's mother.

After the youngsters took their leave to pursue their usual diversions, I somewhat bashfully explained to my kind friend what was troubling me.

She tapped into her full life experience and began:

"You did the right thing in bringing me this question for our mutual consideration. Every soul-torturing problem requires the help of a friend to find a solution."

After a brief pause, she proceeded:

"Tobias's case is only one of the many we know about here and in other spirit colonies that are characterized by elevated thought."

“But it is shocking to our senses, isn’t it?” I remarked earnestly.

“If we think from the human point of view, such a thing would even be scandalous; however, my friend, now we must bear in mind all the principles of our spiritual nature. This means that we must understand the spirit of continuity that governs the evolutionary phases of life. Since we had to endure a long period of animal-like existence, we cannot expect to get rid of traces of it overnight. It took us many centuries to emerge from the lower geological layers. Sex is part of the heritage of our divine faculties that have taken us a long time to understand. It won’t be easy for you right now to grasp the higher meaning of the domestic organization you visited yesterday. However, the happiness there is great because of the atmosphere of understanding that has been created amongst the performers of the drama that began on earth. Not everyone succeeds in substituting bonds of light for chains of darkness in such a short time.”

“But is their case the general rule? Do all men and women who have married more than once reorganize their home here in the company of all the loved ones they have ever known?”

With great patience, Laura explained:

“Don’t be so radical. One has to proceed slowly. Many people may feel affection for one another, but they don’t really understand one another. Don’t forget that our vibratory affinities are far more important than those on earth. Tobias’s case is an example of the victory of true fraternity on the part of three souls interested in arriving at a right understanding. Those who don’t conform to the law of fraternity and understanding obviously won’t cross such boundaries. The dark regions of the Umbral are crowded with spirits that failed in similar trials. As long as they hate, they are like magnetic needles under the most antagonistic influences. As long as they don’t grasp the truth, they will suffer the empire of falsity, and consequently, they will be unable to enter the regions of higher activity. There are countless individuals who suffer for years without any spiritual relief, simply because they have neglected true fraternity.”

“What happens then?” I asked, availing myself of a brief pause. “If they aren’t admitted to spirit centers of worthwhile learning, where do those poor souls live while enduring such trials?”

“After they have experienced truly infernal suffering caused by the inferior creations they have invented for themselves, they will try to use a

new physical experience to achieve what they failed to achieve in the environment apart from their earth body. Divine Goodness grants their minds the forgetfulness of the past, and through blood ties they are reunited with those whom they deliberately shunned out of hate or misunderstanding. Thus, we can fully understand the meaning of Jesus' message when he advises us to immediately reconcile with our adversaries. His warning is really apropos and we must heed it for our own good. Upon finishing an earthly experience, souls can use their time wisely in the spirit world to accomplish spiritual deeds, which in turn help them return to dense matter – if necessary – with fewer concerns. There are many spirits who spend centuries trying to undo animosities and antipathies during their earthly existences, but then revert to them again after discarnating. For Jesus, my dear Andre, the issue of forgiving is paramount. Simply talking about forgiving is meaningless. Forgiving is more than a matter of mere words; one who truly forgives must move and remove the inner heavy burdens of the past.”

At this point, Laura fell silent as if she needed to reflect on the importance of the concepts she had just explained. Then, I added:

“The marriage experience is very sacred to me.”

She wasn't surprised by my remark:

“Our conversation would be of little interest to spirits still undergoing simple animal-like experiences, but we who understand the need for illumination with Christ realize that it is crucial to bear in mind not only the marriage experience but also the entire sexual experience, for it profoundly affects the life of the soul.”

Listening to her words, I couldn't help blushing, remembering my past as an ordinary man. My wife had been a sacred object, whom I placed above all other affections; however, on hearing Laura's explanations, those familiar words from the Old Testament came to mind: “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's house, or his wife, or his man-servant, or his maid-servant, or his ass, or his ox, or anything that is thy neighbor's.” Perplexed at Tobias's case, I all of a sudden felt unable to discuss the matter any further. Even so, my friend noticed my inner confusion and continued:

“Since the effort of righting wrongs is everyone's task, there has to be room for a lot of mutual understanding and a respect for divine mercy, which offers us so many ways to correct our wrong-doings. Every sexual experience of the individual who has already received some spiritual light is an

enormously important event, which is why fraternal understanding must precede any truly redemptive work. Just a short time ago, I heard a great instructor in the Ministry of Elevation affirm that if he could, he would materialize himself on the physical plane so that he could inform religious people in general that in order to be divine all charity must be based on fraternity.”

At this point, Laura invited me to visit Eloisa, who was still confined to her room. It was a strong hint that she didn't want to go into any more detail on the subject. After noticing the increasing improvement of the young new arrival from the planet, I returned to the Chambers of Rectification while immersed in deep thought.

Now, I was no longer preoccupied with Tobias's situation, or Hilda's and Luciana's attitudes. What impressed me most was the remarkable power of human fraternity.

## As you sow, so shall you reap

I couldn't explain why I wanted to visit the women's department of the Chambers of Rectification, but I spoke to Narcisa about it and she agreed to take me there.

"When the Father summons us to a certain place," she said kindly, "there must be some task awaiting us there. Each situation in life has a definite purpose. Don't forget to bear this principle in mind during your apparently casual visits. As long as our thoughts are dedicated to the practice of the good, it's easy to tune in to the divine suggestions that come our way."

That very day, the nurse took me with her to look for Nemesia, a prestigious worker in that sector.

We found her easily.

There were a lot of women, who looked more like human wrecks, laid out on rows of very white well-kept beds. Here, painful cries; over there, agonizing exclamations. Nemesia, who was endowed with Narcisa's benevolence, spoke to me kindly:

"By now, my friend must be accustomed to such scenes. The situation is nearly the same in the men's department."

And making a meaningful gesture to her companion, she said:

"Narcisa, please feel free to show our brother all the services that you think may be appropriate for his learning experience. Make yourselves at home."

My friend and I were commenting on human vanity – always attached to physical pleasures – recalling observations and teachings on the subject, when we reached Ward 7. There were dozens of women lying in individual beds spaced evenly apart.

I was studying the physiognomy of some of the patients, when one of them grabbed my attention. Who was this embittered woman with such a peculiar face? She looked prematurely old, and her lips were contracted so as to portray a mixture of sarcasm and resignation. Her dim and sorrowful eyes seemed to be defective. I began searching my memory and I was dismayed when I finally recalled her from my past. It was Elisa – the same Elisa I had known in my youth. Suffering had changed her, but there was no doubt about it in my mind. I remembered perfectly well the day this humble girl was brought to our house by an old friend of my mother, who accepted her recommendations and hired the girl to be our maid. At first, nothing unusual happened between us as we went about our daily routines. However, we eventually grew excessively intimate, forgetting about who should have been giving the orders and who should have been obeying them. Elisa seemed to be a bit on the wild side, and when we were alone she unabashedly referred to certain adventures of her adolescence, making the imprudence of our thoughts even more serious. I remembered the day my mother summoned me to give me a piece of good advice. Such intimacy, she said, was not proper. It was reasonable for us to show kindly generosity towards the maid, but it would be better for us to keep our relationship within wise limits. However, I had already crossed the line, and our comradeship developed into something else. Under enormous moral duress, Elisa finally left our house, lacking the courage to make accusations against me. Time passed and my memory of the episode reduced the affair to having been a fortuitous incident of human existence. Nonetheless, that incident – like anything else in life – had retained a life of its own, and here was Elisa right in front of me now, defeated and humiliated! What had become of this wretched creature who so early in life had opened the chapter of suffering? Where had she come from? Ah! ... In this case, I wasn't facing someone like Silveira, to whom both my father and I owed a debt; now, the debt was entirely mine. I even trembled, ashamed at the disinterment of such memories, and like a child anxious to be forgiven for his mistakes, I turned to Narcisa, asking for guidance. I truly admired the trust such saintly women inspired in me. I probably would never have had the courage to ask Minister Clarencio the kinds of explanations that I had asked of Lisias's mother, and my attitude would probably have been different if Tobias had been at my side at this particular moment. I had always regarded this kindly, Christian woman as a mother, so I turned to her, trusting her now more than ever. I could tell by the look Narcisa gave me that she seemed to

understand everything. I began talking and could barely hold back my tears, but at a certain point of my painful confession, my friend remarked:

“You don’t need to go on; I can guess the end of your story. Don’t indulge in destructive thoughts. I can understand your moral martyrdom from my own personal experience. However, if the Lord has allowed you to meet this sister again at this time, it must be because he thinks you are in a position to repay your debt.”

Sensing my indecision, she continued:

“Don’t be afraid. Approach and comfort her. All of us, my brother, encounter the fruits of the good or evil that we have sown along the way. This statement isn’t just a doctrinal platitude – it’s a universal reality. I have learned a great deal from similar situations. Blessed are the debtors who are in a position to repay.”

And perceiving my firm resolution to make the necessary adjustment to my account, she added:

“Go on, but don’t identify yourself for now; do so only after you have successfully helped her. It won’t be hard because of the fact that she is temporarily almost completely blind. By the energies enveloping her, I can identify the sad characteristics of a failed mother and a lost woman.”

We approached and I began to speak comfortingly to her. Elisa introduced herself, telling us her name and freely providing other information. She had been brought to the Chambers of Rectification three months ago. Willing to punish myself before Narcisa so that the lesson would be indelibly written on my soul, I asked:

“What’s your story, Elisa? You must have suffered a great deal.”

Sensing the warm tone of my question, she smiled resignedly and opened up:

“Why would I want to remember such sad things?”

“Painful experiences always teach us lessons,” I replied.

The unhappy woman, who displayed a profound mental transformation, thought for a few minutes as if organizing her ideas, and then spoke:

“My experience was that of all reckless women who exchange the blessed bread of work for the bitter gall of illusion. In the by-gone days of my youth as a child of an extremely poor home, I went to work in the home of a

wealthy businessman, where life imposed a huge transformation on me. This man had a son who was as young as I was, and we became very intimate – any reaction on my part would have been useless. Afterwards, I wrongly forgot that God reserves work for all those who love a sane life – no matter how delinquent they have been – and I gave myself up to a series of painful experiences, which I don't need to comment on. I knew pleasure, luxury and material comfort firsthand. This was followed by self-hatred, syphilis, hospitalization, abandonment and enormous disillusionment, which culminated in blindness and death. I wandered for a long time in terrible despair, but one day I prayed so much to the Virgin of Nazareth for help that in her name and out of love some messengers of good rescued me and brought me here to this place of blessed consolation.”

Deeply moved to tears, I asked:

“And him? What's the name of the man who made you so unhappy?”

I heard her speak my name and that of my parents.

“Do you hate him?” I inquired, distraught.

She smiled sadly and answered:

“Throughout the suffering of my past, I cursed his memory and fed a mortal hatred for him, but sister Nemesia has changed me. To hate him, I must hate myself. In my case, the blame must be shared between us. Therefore, I hold no one to blame.”

Her humility touched me. I took her right hand and a tear of repentance and remorse fell upon it.

“Listen, my friend,” I said with strong emotion, “my name is also Andre and I must help you. From now on, you can count on me.”

“Your voice,” Elisa said unknowingly, “is like his.”

“Well,” I continued, deeply moved, “up to now, I haven't had a family per se in Nosso Lar. But you will be my sister of the heart. You can rely on my devotion as a friend.”

A big smile seemed like a ray of light on the sufferer's face.

“I thank you so much!” she said, drying her eyes, “It's been years since anyone has talked to me as if I were family and consoled me with sincere friendship ... May Jesus bless you.”

At that moment, as my tears fell even more abundantly, Narcisa maternally took my hands and repeated:

“May Jesus bless you.”

# 41

## A call to struggle

During the first days of September 1939, Noso Lar suffered the impact that affected many spirit colonies connected with American civilization. It was the beginning of the Second World War and it would be as destructive in the physical sphere as it was disturbing on the spirit plane. Many spirits were trying to put the events of the war in perspective, unable to disguise their great horror.

It had long been known that the Great Fraternities of the East were experiencing major difficulties in enduring the hostile vibrations of Japan; however, interesting events of high educative significance could be observed in Noso Lar as well. Just as the noble spirit centers of old Asia were now fighting behind the scenes, our own colony had started preparing itself for the same kind of service. In addition to issuing valuable counsel regarding overall fraternity and sympathy, the Governor also suggested that we ought to be careful within the sphere of our thoughts and safeguard ourselves from any unworthy inclinations of an overly emotional character.

I realized that high order spirits in such circumstances regard the aggressor nations not as enemies, but as hooligans whose criminal activity must be stopped.

“Unfortunate are the nations that get drunk on the wine of evil,” Salustio told me; “although they may achieve temporary victories, such victories will only serve to lead them to their ruin, making their final defeat even more remarkable. When a nation starts a war, it is introducing disorder into the Father’s House, and it will pay a terrible price for it.”

I then began to understand that the higher zones of life turn in righteous defense against the wiles of ignorance and darkness that gather to spread anarchy and its resultant destruction. My fellow workers informed me that in events of this nature, aggressor countries naturally turn themselves into

powerful nucleuses of centralization for the forces of evil. Without being aware of the immense dangers to which they are exposing themselves, such peoples – except for the noble and wise spirits in their midst – become intoxicated by their contact with the perverse elements that they have summoned from the dark realms. Once-productive groups of individuals become automatons of crime. Infernal legions descend upon the great centers of collective progress, transforming them into areas of perversity and horror. But while the forces of darkness take hold of the aggressors' minds, spirit groups with noble intentions help the victims.

If we should feel sorry for one individual that opposes the law of the good, so much the more should we pity an entire nation that has forgotten justice.

At dusk, a few days after the first bombs had exploded on Polish soil, I was in the Chambers of Rectification with Tobias and Narcisa when an unforgettable clarion call was heard for over a quarter of an hour. We were all awestruck.

“That is a summoning from the higher planes to service in assisting the earth,” Narcisa explained.

“It is a signal that the war will continue, bringing terrible torment to the human spirit,” Tobias forlornly exclaimed. “In spite of the distance, the Americas' entire psychic life has its origins in Europe. We will have to work hard to save the New World.”

The clarion call continued its strange and magnificent modulations and I noticed that a profound silence had fallen over the whole Ministry of Regeneration.

Noticing my anxiously expectant attitude, Tobias stated:

“When the clarion call of alarm sounds in the name of the Lord, we must silence all noise so that its appeal may be engraved on our hearts.”

When the mysterious instrument sounded its last note, we went out onto the great plaza and looked up at the sky. I was amazed to see countless luminous points that looked like resplendent and distant little stars poised in the firmament.

“That clarion,” Tobias said, equally moved, “is used by the watcher spirits of the upper hierarchy.”

Returning to the Chambers, my attention was attracted by loud noises from the highest areas of the colony, where the public streets were located.

Tobias left Narcisa in charge of certain important activities concerning the patients and invited me to go out with him to watch the people moving about.

When we arrived at the upper floors, from where we could walk to the Government Center Square, we noticed intense activity in all sectors. Observing my natural curiosity, my companion explained:

“These huge groups are headed for the Ministry of Communication in search of news. The clarion call we heard just a while ago is only sounded in extremely serious circumstances. We all know that it was announcing war, but it’s possible that the Ministry of Communication might provide us with some essential information concerning the event. Observe the passers-by.”

Close by, two men and four women were walking, engaged in excited conversation:

“Can you imagine what we in Assistance will have to go through?” asked one of the women. “For months on end, the number of petitions has been extraordinary. It’s been almost impossible to keep up with all the work.”

“And what about us in Regeneration?” the older of the two men objected. “Our entire workload has increased considerably. In my department, watching out for vibrations from the Umbral has been requiring constant effort. I’m wondering what will happen to us next.”

Tobias held my arm lightly and exclaimed:

“Let’s go on a bit and listen to what other groups are saying.”

As we approached two men, I heard one of them asking:

“Do you think this calamity will affect all of us?”

The other seemed to be well-balanced spiritually and replied calmly:

“Well, I see no reason for jumping to hasty conclusions. The only thing new is an increase in work, which, as a matter of fact, is a blessing. As for everything else, it looks to me like everything is normal. Sickness is the teacher of health and disaster enables us to become more balanced. China, for instance, has been under fire for quite some time now, and yet you haven’t shown any signs of concern about that.”

“But now,” remarked his despondent companion, “it seems that I will have to change my work schedule.”

The other smiled and said:

“Helvecio, Helvecio, let’s forget ‘my schedule’ and think of ‘our schedules’.

I then looked to where Tobias was pointing and observed three women to our left, heading in the same direction. It was all a picturesque scene, even on that evening of disquieting expectation.

“I’m really concerned about the whole affair,” said the youngest one. “Everardo just mustn’t return from the world right now.”

“I don’t think the war will reach the Iberian Peninsula anyway. Portugal is very far from the theater of operations,” said another.

The third woman asked, “But why are you worried about him? If Everardo did come here, what would happen?”

“I’m afraid he would still regard me as his wife,” explained the youngest. “I couldn’t bear it. He’s such an ignoramus and there’s no way I could stand his cruelty again.”

“Don’t be silly,” one of her companions replied. “Have you forgotten that Everardo would be barred by the Umbral – or someplace worse?”

Tobias smiled and said:

“She fears the liberation of her thoughtless and cruel husband.”

After a few minutes, during which we observed many spirits, we reached the Ministry of Communication and stopped in front of the enormous buildings used for information services.

Thousands of individuals were nervously jostling one another. They all wanted information and explanations. Order seemed impossible. Extremely surprised by the loud clamor, I realized that someone had climbed to a high balcony and was asking for everyone’s attention. It was an older man of imposing appearance, who announced that within ten minutes the Governor would issue a statement.

“It’s Minister Espiridiao,” Tobias informed me, noticing my curiosity.

The noise subsided, and after a few minutes, we heard the voice of the Governor through several loudspeakers:

“Brothers and sisters of Nosso Lar, do not indulge in disturbing thoughts and speech. Getting upset is not constructive; anxiety will be of no use to us. We must be worthy of the clarion of the Lord, obeying the divine will by working quietly at our posts.”

That clear and compelling voice of someone who spoke with authority and love had a singular effect on the crowd. Within just one hour, the entire colony had returned to its normal state of calm.

## The Governor's speech

On the Sunday following the clarion call, the Governor promised to hold an evangelical service at the Ministry of Regeneration. The essential aim of the event, Narcisa explained, was to prepare new schools of aid in Assistance and training centers in Regeneration.

“We must organize enough members for emergency hospital work,” she said. “Even though the armed conflict is taking place so far away, we must establish adequate measures against fear.”

“Against fear?” I asked, wondering.

“Why not?” objected the nurse. “Maybe you find it strange – as many people do – but there is a high percentage of human lives that are suffocated simply by the destructive vibrations of dread, which are as contagious as any dangerous epidemic. We classify fear as one of an individual's worst enemies because it settles in the citadel of the soul and attacks its deepest forces.”

Observing my amazement, she continued:

“Have no doubt about it; in the current state of emergency, the Government Center places training against fear far above even the lessons in nursing. Remaining calm is a guarantee of success. Later, you'll understand the importance of such imperatives.”

I found no argument against her words.

On the eve of the great event, I had the honor of joining several other workers in the job of cleaning and adorning with natural decorations the large hall that was reserved for use by the colony's greatest leader.

I was understandably anxious. For the first time, I would see up close the noble leader who was so deserving of everyone's praise. I wasn't alone in my expectations, for a goodly number of my companions felt the same way.

Caravans from all the departments in Regeneration had started arriving since dawn that Sunday, and I had the impression that the entire societal life of our Ministry had now converged on the large nature hall. The Great Choir of the Government Center Temple, together with the boys' choir from Elucidation's schools, began the celebration with a wonderful hymn entitled "Always with Thee, Lord Jesus," sung by two thousand voices. Other melodies of singular beauty filled the spacious hall. The sweet murmuring of the wind, channeled into waves of fragrance, seemed to respond to the soft harmonies.

All the workers from Regeneration were allowed to enter the enormous green hall, for according to the program, this evangelical service was being specifically dedicated to them. But the other ministries were also represented by several delegations.

For the first time, I got to see some of the workers from the Ministries of Elevation and Divine Union, who appeared to be clothed in shining light.

The celebration exceeded everything I could have dreamed of in terms of beauty and captivation. Musical instruments of sublime vibratory power filled the fragrant surroundings with melodies.

At ten o'clock, the Governor arrived, accompanied by the twelve Ministers from Regeneration.

I will never forget the noble and imposing figure of that elderly man with snow white hair. His face seemed to reflect both the wisdom of age and the energy of youth; the tenderness of the saint and the serenity of the conscientious and just administrator. Tall and slender, with penetrating and wonderfully lucid eyes, he was dressed in a white tunic and used a staff, although he walked upright like a young man.

To satisfy my curiosity, Salustio informed me:

"The Governor has always valued patriarchal attitudes, with the idea that it is necessary to administer with paternal love."

After he sat down in the highest seat, we heard the children's voices sing the hymn "To You, O Lord, Our Lives," accompanied by sweet harps.

The energetic and lovable Governor first glanced around the gathered assembly of thousands of attendants; he then opened a luminous book, which my companion informed me was the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He looked through it carefully, and then began reading slowly:

“And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; do not be troubled, for all this must come to pass. But the end has not yet come.” (The words of the Master in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 6).

With his voice greatly amplified electronically, the colony’s leader offered up a prayer with deep emotion, invoking the blessings of Christ. Next, after greeting the representatives from Divine Union, Elevation, Elucidation, Communication and Assistance, he addressed all the workers of our Ministry with special attention.

It would be impossible to describe the sweet but energetic, loving and convincing intonation of that unforgettable voice, or to translate onto human paper the divine considerations of his Gospel commentary, which was imbued with a profound sentiment of veneration for sacred matters.

At the end of his sermon and amidst respectful silence, the Governor addressed the workers from Regeneration specifically, exclaiming more or less in these words:

“It is to you, my brothers and sisters – whose labors are closely connected with terrestrial activities – that I address my personal appeal, expecting much from you because of your noble dedication. Let us give our best in terms of courage and spirit of service. When the forces of darkness aggravate problems in the lower spheres, it is imperative that we kindle new light to dissipate the thick darkness on the earth. Today, I have dedicated this service to all the workers of this Ministry, placing the confidence of my heart in each one of you. Thus, at this moment I am not addressing our brothers and sisters whose minds already function in the higher spheres of life; rather, I am addressing you who still carry traces of the dust of the world on your sandals, to support this gigantic task. Nosso Lar needs thirty thousand workers trained in defense service: thirty thousand, who are willing to forget demands for rest and personal considerations while our battle is being fought against the unleashed forces of crime and ignorance. There will be plenty of work for all in the regions along the vibratory border between our colony and the lower planes, for we cannot wait for the enemy to arrive at our spirit home. In all collective organizations, it is imperative to regard preventive medicine as the primordial measure for preserving internal peace. We in Nosso Lar are over one million individuals devoted to higher designs and to our own moral growth. Would it be charitable to allow the invasion of millions of rebellious spirits? Therefore, we cannot hesitate to defend the common good. I know that many of you at this moment might recall the Great Crucified One. Yes,

Jesus gave himself up to a mob of rioters and criminals out of love for the redemption of us all, but he did not hand the world over to disorder and destruction. We must all be ready to make individual sacrifices, but we cannot give up our home to evildoers. Obviously, our essential job consists in confraternity and peace, and in love and relief to those who suffer. Of course, we consider all evil as a waste of energy and all crime as a disease of the soul. However, Nosso Lar is a divine heritage that we must defend with all the energies of our hearts. Whoever does not know how to persevere is not worthy of enjoyment. Therefore, let us prepare legions of workers to go to earth to teach and console, and to go to the Umbral and the Darkness on missions of fraternal love. But in this Ministry, we must especially organize a special legion of defense that can safeguard our spiritual achievements within our vibratory borders.”

He continued his speech at length along such lines, focusing on certain fundamental measures and making considerations that I could never describe. Ending his comments, he repeated the reading of the verse from Matthew, invoking once again the blessings of Jesus and the strength of his listeners so that none of us might receive the divine gifts in vain.

Moved and amazed, I listened to the children sing a hymn, which Minister Veneranda had entitled “The Great Jerusalem.” The Governor stepped down from the dais amidst vibrations of great hope, and it was then that a gentle breeze started to blow above the trees, bringing from far-off regions – perhaps – marvelous blue rose petals that lightly melted away as they touched our heads, filling our hearts with intense joy.

## 43

# In conversation

The Ministry of Regeneration maintained its air of festivity, although the Governor had left to join his most intimate circle.

Many were talking about the event. Hundreds of fellow spirits were volunteering for the arduous work of defense in response to the appeal of our great spiritual leader.

I found Tobias in order to consult with him about the possibility of volunteering, but the benevolent brother smiled at my innocence and said:

“Andre, you have just begun a new job. Don’t be in such a hurry to ask for more responsibility. There will be work for all, as the Governor has just told us. Don’t forget that our Chambers of Rectification comprise centers of day-and-night active effort. Don’t worry. Remember that thirty thousand workers will be called for permanent vigilance; thus, there will be large gaps to fill in the rear guard.”

Noticing my disappointment, my kind companion added, good-humoredly after a short pause:

“Content yourself with your enrollment in the school against fear. You can be sure that it will do you a lot of good.”

Just then, I received a big hug from Lisias, who had taken part in the celebration as part of the delegation from the Ministry of Assistance.

With Tobias’s leave, I walked with Lisias in order to have a more private conversation.

“Have you met Minister Benevenuto in Regeneration, the one who arrived the day before yesterday from Poland?” he asked.

“I haven’t had the pleasure.”

“Let’s go meet him,” Lisias replied, enveloping me in the vibrations of his great brotherly love. “For a long time, I have had the great honor of including him in the circle of my personal acquaintances.”

After a few moments, we were in the large green hall that had been dedicated to the work of the Minister of Regeneration, whom I knew only by sight.

Several groups of visitors were exchanging ideas under the cover of large trees. Lisias led me to the largest group, where Benevenuto was exchanging impressions with several friends. Lisias graciously introduced me and the Minister welcomed me, kindly admitting me into his circle.

The conversation continued its natural course and I noticed that the situation on the earthly sphere was being discussed:

“The picture we’re seeing now is so painful,” commented Benevenuto in a grave tone; “accustomed to the service of peace in the Americas, none of us could imagine what the spiritual aid work was going to be like on the fields of Poland. All is darkness and difficulty down there. One cannot expect sparks of faith in the aggressors nor in most of the victims, for that matter, because they have given themselves entirely up to frightful impressions. The incarnates don’t help us; they only consume our strength. I have never seen such great collective suffering since I began my ministry.”

“Did the delegation stay there for a long time?” Someone asked with interest.

“We remained there for all the time available to us,” replied the Minister. “The head of the expedition, our colleague from Assistance, thought it wise that we focus exclusively on the task so that we could enrich ourselves by observing the situation and by taking better advantage of the experience. In fact, the conditions couldn’t have been better. I found that our own capabilities were far from the extraordinary capacity for endurance possessed by the self-denying spirit workers on duty there. They were effectively performing all the assisting tasks in spite of the suffocating atmosphere, which was saturated with destructive vibrations. The battlefield that is invisible to our earthly kin is a real hell of indescribable proportions. Never does the human spirit show its condition as a fallen soul as thoroughly as it does in war – it displays remarkably diabolical features. I saw intelligent and cultured men precisely localize certain sectors of peaceful activity as targets for what they called ‘direct hits’. Bombs of high explosive power destroyed

buildings that had been patiently built. The poisonous fluids of the machine guns, together with the pestilent emanations of hatred, made any help almost impossible. However, what distressed us most was the sad condition of some of the military aggressors when they left their physical bodies due to their wounds. Most of them came under the control of dark forces and ran from the missionary spirits, calling them all ‘ghosts of the cross’.”

“But weren’t they rescued so that they could learn the truth?” someone asked, interrupting.

Benevenuto mouthed a meaningful gesture and answered:

“It is always possible to attend to peaceful lunatics in their home, but what remedy can we use for the furiously insane except to place them in an asylum? There was nothing to be done with such creatures except to leave them to the abysses of darkness, where they will naturally be compelled to readjust themselves and to have worthy thoughts. It is proper for assistance missions to rescue only those who are willing to receive help from above. So, the scenes we witnessed there were very heartrending for many reasons.”

Availing himself of a short pause, another remarked:

“It is almost unbelievable that Europe, with so many cultural treasures, is suffering such a calamity.”

“Lack of religious preparation, my friends,” remarked Benevenuto in a firm tone voice. “An educated intelligence is not enough for humankind. It is necessary to enlighten their thoughts about the eternal life. Churches are always holy in their fundamentals and their pastorate will always be divine when they preach the Truth of God. But a political pastorate will never quench the spiritual thirst of civilization. Without the divine breath, religious personalities may inspire respect and admiration, but neither faith nor trust.”

“But what about Spiritism?” one of the others asked abruptly. “Didn’t its first doctrinal manifestations surface in the Americas and Europe over fifty years ago? Hasn’t that new movement continued to spread the eternal truths?”

Benevenuto smiled, mouthed an extremely meaningful gesture and added:

“Spiritism is our great hope and in every respect it is the Consoler of incarnate humankind, but its progress is still very slow. It is a sublime gift, which most people do not yet have the ‘eyes to see’. An overwhelming percentage of new adherents approach this divine resource still under the copy

of old religious vices. They want to reap its benefits, but are unwilling to give anything of themselves. They invoke its truth, but don't go in search of it. While many scholars reduce mediums to mere human guinea pigs, many believers act like certain patients, who, though healed, believe more in sickness than in health, and never come to stand on their own two feet. Generally, down there they are looking for materialized spirits to perform transitory phenomena, whereas here we are spending our time looking for spiritualized human beings to perform serious labor."

The play on words aroused expressions of good humor in everyone, but the Minister resumed gravely:

"Our tasks are really astronomical. We cannot forget that every person is a seed of divinity. Let us attack our duties with hope and optimism, and always be convinced that if we do our share, we may rest in peace, for the Lord will do the rest."

## 44

# The darkness

Lisias shed more light on the characteristics of his culture and his sensitivity, thereby adding to the joys of the gathering. He masterfully played cords on his zither, reminding us of the old songs and melodies of earth.

What a truly wonderful day! Spiritual joys followed in succession as if we were in heaven.

When I found myself alone with the kind nurse from Assistance, I tried to tell him of my sublime impressions:

“Have no doubt,” he said, smiling, “that when we meet with those whom we love, something comforting and constructive happens inside us. It’s the nourishment of love, Andre. When a number of souls join in the accomplishment of this or that activity, their thoughts mingle, forming centers of living power, through which each one receives a share of joy or suffering from the overall vibration. That’s why on the planet the problem of environment is always a factor to be considered in the life of every person. All individuals live according to what they have cultivated. If we daily offer ourselves up to sadness, we will feel sad all the time. If we exalt infirmity, we will suffer its harm.”

Noticing my surprise, he concluded:

“There’s no mystery in it; it’s the law of life, both in the efforts of the good and in the activities of evil. From get-togethers of fraternity, hope, love and joy, we will leave with fraternity, hope, love and joy within us. But from every get-together involving inferior tendencies, where selfishness, vanity or crime predominate, we will leave poisoned with the destructive vibrations of those sentiments.”

“You’re absolutely right!” I exclaimed. “In your words, I can see the principles that govern life in human homes. Whenever there is mutual

understanding, we live in the antechamber of heavenly bliss, but whenever there is misunderstanding and cruelty, we live in hell.”

Lisias good-naturedly smiled in agreement.

At that point, I remembered to ask him about something that had been troubling me for a while. When the Governor was speaking to us, he had referred to the circles of the earth, the Umbral and the Darkness, but up until that moment, I had never heard of the Darkness. Wouldn't it be the Umbral itself, where I had lived in dense darkness for many years? In the Chambers, hadn't I seen many unbalanced and ailing patients of all sorts from the zones of the Umbral? Remembering that at the beginning of my experience in Nosso Lar, Lisias had given me some valuable explanations about my own situation, I entrusted my innermost doubts to him, expounding my perplexity.

With a serious expression, he said:

“We call the lowest regions we know of ‘the Darkness’. Think of people as travelers through life. A few of them advance resolutely towards the essential object of the journey. These are the noblest spirits, who have discovered the divine essence within themselves, and they march towards the sublime target without vacillating at all. However, the majority remain at a standstill; hence the multitude of souls who linger for centuries and centuries, repeating their same old experiences. The former advance in a straight line; the latter walk in a big circle. In that movement, redoing old efforts and retracing the path they have already trod, they are at the mercy of endless vicissitudes. Thus, most usually get lost in the forest of life, bewildered in the labyrinth they themselves have traced with their own feet. The millions of beings wandering in the Umbral belong to such a class. Others prefer to walk in darkness because of the selfish preoccupations that absorb them, and they usually fall into precipices, lingering at the bottom of the abyss for an indefinite time. Do you understand?”

His explanations could not have been clearer.

However, I was touched by the length and complexity of the subject and said:

“What can you tell me about such falls? Do they only happen on earth? Are only incarnates susceptible to falling down the slope?”

Lisias thought for a minute and answered:

“Your observation is appropriate. Wherever it may be, the spirit can fall into the abysses of evil; however, in the higher spheres the defenses are stronger. Consequently, the guilt of the wrong committed is also greater.”

“But,” I objected, “I have always thought that such a fall was impossible in regions foreign to the terrestrial body. The divine environment, the knowledge of the truth and assistance from above seem like they would be infallible antidotes against the poison of vanity and temptation.”

My companion smiled and explained:

“The problem of temptation is more complex. The landscapes of the terrestrial planet are replete with divine atmosphere, knowledge of the truth and assistance from above. However, there are many people who fight deadly battles among the sheltering trees and the fields of spring. Many commit murders by moonlight, insensitive to the profound suggestion of the stars. Others exploit the weaker ones, even while hearing elevated revelations of the higher truth. Earth does not lack landscapes and expressions that are divine in their essence.”

The nurse’s words touched me deep within my soul. In fact, armies usually prefer to wreak destruction during spring and summer, when nature covers the ground and the firmament with marvels of color, fragrance and light. Armed robberies and murders are preferably committed at night, when the moon and the stars fill the planet with divine poetry. The majority of humankind’s executioners are eminently educated persons, who despise divine inspiration. Having changed my conception of the spiritual fall, I added:

“Lisias, could you give me an idea where this region of the Darkness is located? If the Umbral is connected to the human mind, where is this place of suffering and horror?”

“There are spheres of life everywhere,” he answered. “The void will always be a mere literary image. There are living forces in everything, and each species of being lives in a specific zone of life.”

After a brief pause, in which he seemed to meditate deeply, he continued:

“Naturally, as was the case with the rest of us, you placed the regions of life beyond the death of the physical body only in the circles that begin on the surface of the planet and those above it, but you did not take into account the

level beneath. Life, however, pulsates in the depths of the ocean and in the center of the earth. Furthermore, there are principles of gravity for the spirit, just as there are for material bodies. Earth isn't only a field that we can hurt and despise at our good pleasure. It is a living organization, the possessor of laws that will enslave us or free us according to our deeds. It's obvious that the soul overburdened with guilt won't be able to ascend to the surface of the wonderful lake of life. All in all, I should remind you that free birds fly to great heights; those that get themselves trapped in the vine-filled forest will be restrained from taking flight, and those tied to heavy weights are mere slaves of the unknown. Do you understand now?"

Lisias didn't need to ask that question. As it was being drawn before my eyes, I quickly analyzed the immense picture of purifying struggles in the lower zones of life.

As someone who needs to reflect on his next words, my companion thought and thought ... and concluded:

"Just as we carry in our innermost being the higher and the lower, the planet also has both high and low inner expressions, with which it corrects the guilty and opens the passage to life eternal for those who triumph. As a human doctor, you understood that there are elements in the human brain that control the sense of direction. Today, however, you realize that such elements aren't physical per se, but rather spiritual in essence. Those who like to live exclusively in darkness will dim their divine sense of direction. Therefore, it will not be surprising if they fall into the Darkness, for the abyss attracts them, and all of us will arrive at the place towards which we direct our steps."

## 45

# In the field of music

Late that afternoon, Lisias invited me to accompany him to the Field of Music.

“You should enjoy yourself a little, Andre,” he said with kindness.

Seeing that I was reluctant, he said:

“I’ll talk to Tobias. Narcisa herself has taken the day off. Let’s go!”

However, I perceived an odd inner phenomenon. In spite of my very few days on the job, I was already dedicating much love to those Chambers. Minister Genesio’s daily visits, Narcisa’s company, Tobias’s inspiring presence and the comradery of my fellow workers had all spoken deeply to my spirit. Narcisa, Salustio and I spent all our leisure time improving the place here and there and easing the situation of the patients, whom we loved with all our hearts, as though they were our own children. Taking my newness at my position into account, I approached Tobias, to whom Lisias spoke with respectful familiarity. Tobias assented to Lisias’s request and was quite willing to allow me to go:

“Great idea! Andre needs to visit the Field of Music.”

And embracing me:

“Take your time. Enjoy it! Come back tonight, whenever you like. We have plenty of workers for now.”

I gratefully followed Lisias. When we arrived at his home in the Ministry of Assistance, I had the pleasure of seeing Laura again. She informed me that Eloisa’s selfless mother would be returning from the planet the following week. The house was filled with joy. Things appeared even more beautiful inside the house and there were new arrangements in the garden.

As we took our leave, Laura embraced me good-naturedly and said:

“So, from now on in the colony we will have one more visitor to the Field of Music! Watch out for your heart! ... As for me, I’ll be staying home today. I’ll get back at you, though, pretty soon: It won’t be long before I’m looking for my nourishment down on earth!”

Amidst everyone’s joy, we went out into the street. The two young women of the household accompanied Polidoro and Estacio, with whom they were talking excitedly. Soon after we got off the airbus on one of the squares of the Ministry of Elevation, Lisias said affectionately:

“At last, you are going to meet my fiancée. I’ve already told her a lot about you.”

“It’s interesting,” I observed, intrigued, “that there are couples who are engaged here too.”

“And why wouldn’t there be? Does sublime love live in the mortal body or in the eternal soul? There, in the terrestrial sphere, love is like a sort of gold hidden among rough stones. But people so often mix it with their needs, desires and lower tendencies that one can rarely distinguish the slag from the precious metal.”

His observation was logical. Noticing the beneficial effect of his explanation, he continued:

“Betrothal is far more beautiful in the spirit world. There are no veils of illusion to obscure our sight. We are who we are. Lascinia and I failed many times in past physical experiences, and I must confess that almost all of the disasters of the past were caused by my imprudence and absolute lack of self-control. The freedom that the social laws of the planet grant the male sex has not yet been fully understood. Rarely do any of us use such freedom in the world to work on our spiritualization; most of the time, we convert it into a descent towards animalism. Women, on the other hand, have until now had the advantage of the strictest discipline. In their transitory life, they have suffered under our tyranny and have borne the burden of our impositions. In the spirit world, however, our values get readjusted. We are only really free when we learn to obey. It seems like a paradox, but it’s an expression of the truth.”

“So, do you have any new plans for the physical plane?” I inquired.

“Of course,” he was quick to explain. “It couldn’t be otherwise. I must enrich the treasury of my experiences, and furthermore, my debts on the

planet are still enormous. Lascinia and I will build our little home of happiness here very soon and I believe we will finally return to earth in about thirty years.”

At that moment, we arrived at the Field of Music. Lights of indescribable beauty bathed the large park, which displayed the enchantment of a real fairy tale. Luminous fountains formed amazing designs: a spectacle absolutely new to me.

Before I could express my profound wonder, Lisias, in good humor, recommended:

“Lascinia always comes here with her two sisters, and I was hoping you would be their escort.”

“But Lisias ... ” I answered, reluctantly, remembering my old marital status, “you ought to understand that I am bound to Zelia.”

On hearing my reply, he laughed and added:

“That was all I needed to hear! No one wants to harm your sentiments of fidelity. However, I don’t think marriage should make you neglect your social life. Don’t you know how to be just someone’s brother, Andre?”

I also laughed, embarrassed, and didn’t know what to say.

At that moment, we reached the entrance, where Lisias kindly got our tickets.

Once inside, I noticed a large group of people standing around a graceful gazebo, where a small orchestra was playing light music. Flower-bordered paths extended in several directions before us, leading to the interior of the park. Observing my admiration for the songs being played, my companion explained:

“At the outer edges of the field, there are certain artistic expressions that meet the personal tastes of those who cannot yet understand divine music, but in the center there is universal and sublime music – sanctified art par excellence.”

Indeed, after we had walked down a few pleasant pathways – each flower seeming to possess its own kingdom – I began to hear a marvelous harmony filling the air. On earth, there are small groups that worship fine music, whereas the multitudes prefer popular music. Here, however, it was the opposite: The center of the field was crowded. I had already seen

numerous gatherings of people in the colony, and I had felt in awe at the meeting that our Ministry had dedicated to the Governor, but what I saw now exceeded everything that had astonished me up to this point.

The cream of Nosso Lar's society displayed itself magnificently.

It was neither luxury nor excess of any kind that made the scene so splendid and marvelous. It was the natural expression of it all – simplicity blended with beauty; pure art and life without artifice. The women showed extremely refined taste, without any excess jewelry that could detract from the divine simplicity. Large trees unlike any of those known on earth adorned illuminated and sheltered areas.

There were not only affectionate couples lingering along the flowery pathways. There were also groups of ladies and gentlemen enjoying themselves in animated, worthwhile and constructive conversation. Although I felt sincerely humbled by my own insignificance before that most-select assembly, I understood the silent message of affinity in all the eyes that met mine. I heard talk concerning the physical circles, but I never detected even the slightest trace of malice or accusation characteristic of incarnate people. The discussions were about love, intellectual refinement, scientific research and uplifting philosophy, but all the comments were positive and belonged to the higher sphere of mutual understanding, without any clash of opinions. I noticed that the wisest of them restrained the vibrations of their intellectual power, while the less-endowed tried to raise theirs in order to acquire the gifts of higher knowledge. In numerous conversations, I heard references to Jesus and the Gospel, but what impressed me most was the prevailing note of joy in all the discussions. Nobody remembered the Master with negative vibrations of useless sorrow or unjustified despondency. Jesus was remembered by all of them as the supreme instructor of visible and invisible terrestrial organizations. He was full of understanding and kindness, but was also conscious of the energy and vigilance necessary to preserve order and justice.

That optimistic gathering fascinated me. Right before my very eyes was the concretization of the hopes of a great many truly noble thinkers of earth.

Deeply awed by the sublime music, I heard Lisias say:

“Our musicians act in harmony to absorb rays of inspiration from the highest planes, and earth's great composers are sometimes brought to spheres such as ours, where they receive melodic expressions. They then transmit them to human ears, adorning the themes received via their own genius. The

universe, Andre, is full of beauty and sublimity. The eternal and shining spark of life has its origin in God.”

However, the attendant from Assistance wasn't allowed to continue.

We were met by a graceful group. Lascinia and her sisters had arrived and we had to attend to the imperatives of amiable socialization.

## 46

### A woman's sacrifice

A year had passed in constructive work that brought me immense joy. I had learned to be useful and had encountered the pleasure of service, experiencing increasing joy and confidence.

I hadn't yet returned to my earth home in spite of the immense desire that burned in my heart. I had at times intended to ask permission to go there, but something always seemed to hold me back. Hadn't I received enough help already and couldn't I always count on the kindness and esteem of all my companions? Consequently, I realized that if it were somehow useful, I would long ago have been sent to my former home environment. Thus, I had to wait for the go-ahead. Furthermore, although I was working hard in Regeneration, Minister Clarencio was still the person responsible for my stay in the colony – Laura and Tobias never grew tired of reminding me of that fact. I had met with the benevolent Minister of Assistance many times, but he always kept silent about the matter. Moreover, Clarencio never changed his reserved attitude in performing duties regarding his authority. Only on Christmas, when I was involved in the festivities in Elevation, did he touch lightly on the subject, guessing how much I missed my wife and kids. After commenting on the joys of the night, he assured me that the day was not far off when he would accompany me to my familial nest. Deeply moved, I thanked him and good-naturedly awaited the time. But it was now September of 1940 and my dream had not yet come true.

What comforted me was the certainty of having spent all my time in useful service in the Chambers of Rectification. I hadn't rested. Our duties went on and on without a break.

I had become accustomed to helping the patients, and I had learned how to interpret their thoughts. I kept in touch with poor Elisa, indirectly guiding her to better endeavors.

Nonetheless, to the degree that my emotional balance consolidated, my anxiousness to meet my loved ones once again became more intense.

I missed them so much, and it hurt me deeply. In compensation, from time to time I received a visit from my mother, who never abandoned me to my fate, even though she still lived on the higher planes.

The last time we had met, she said she intended to tell me all about her new plans. Her maternal attitude of sweet resignation towards the moral sufferings that wounded her sensitive soul moved me profoundly. What new resolutions had she made? Intrigued, I awaited her visit, anxious to know about these plans.

During the first days of September 1940, my mother came to the Chambers, and after kind greetings, she told me of her decision to return to earth; she gently explained her plan. Surprised and displeased, I protested:

“I disagree. Return to the flesh? Why? Why start out again on the road of darkness without any pressing need?”

Showing a noble expression of serenity, my mother replied:

“Haven’t you considered the afflicted condition of your father, my son? For many years I have worked to uplift him, but my efforts have been in vain. Laerte is a skeptic with a poisoned heart. If he persists in such a negative attitude, he will be drawn into deeper abysses. What ought we to do, Andre? Do you have the courage to see your father again in such a situation without offering him appropriate help?”

“No,” I answered, greatly impressed. “I would work to help him, but you could assist him from here, couldn’t you?”

“Of course. But spirits who truly love don’t limit themselves to lending a helping hand from afar. What good are a lot of material riches if we can’t share them with our loved ones? Could we stay inside a palace while our children were out in a storm? I can’t remain at a distance. Since I can count on you here, I’ll join Luisa in order to help your father to find the right path once more.”

I thought and thought; then replied:

“I would still insist. Aren’t there ways to get around this eventuality?”

“No, it’s not possible. I have thoroughly studied the situation, and my hierarchical superiors have agreed to my wishes. I can’t raise the lower to the

higher, but I can do the opposite. What else could I do? I cannot hesitate for a minute. In you, I have support for the future. Don't lose your way, my son. Assist your mother when you are finally able to travel between the spheres that separate us from the earth's surface. Meanwhile, take care of your sisters, who may still be in the darkness of the Umbral in active work of purgation. Very soon, I'll be once again in the world, where I'll meet Laerte to carry out the work the Father will entrust to us."

"But how are you going to meet him? In spirit?"

"No," she replied with a significant expression on her face. "With the cooperation of some friends, I located him on earth last week. We prepared him for his imminent reincarnation without him being aware of our direct assistance. He wanted to escape from those women who still subjugate him – perhaps with good reason – and we availed ourselves of his decision in order to bind him to a new physical situation."

"Is that possible? What about our individual freedom?"

My mother smiled, somewhat sad, and explained:

"There are some reincarnations that occur drastically. Even if the patient lacks the courage, there are friends who help him swallow the sacred but very bitter medicine. As for unrestricted freedom, the soul can only claim that right after understanding its duty and performing it. Besides, it is necessary to understand that the debtor is a slave to what he has committed himself. God created free will; we ourselves created fatalism. Therefore, we have to break the chains we have forged for ourselves."

While I lost myself in serious thought, she returned to her previous observations:

"The unhappy sisters who persecute him don't want to lose him, however, and were it not for the divine protection of our spirit guardians, those women could have perhaps deprived him of this opportunity for reincarnation."

"My goodness!" I exclaimed. "Is that possible? Are we at the mercy of evil forces to that extent? Are we mere puppets in the hands of our enemies?"

"These questions, my son," she explained very calmly, "should stop in our hearts and on our lips before we contract any debt and transform our brothers and sisters into adversaries along the road. Never take any loans from evil."

“And what about those women?” I asked. “What will become of those unhappy creatures?”

“They will become my daughters over the next few years. You mustn’t forget that I am going into the world to help your father. No one is able to help effectively by intensifying the forces of the enemy, just as on earth you can’t put out a fire with gasoline. Love is indispensable, Andre. Those who don’t believe in this truth go astray, wandering around in the desert. Those who err leave the true road and sink into the swamp. Your father is now a skeptic, and those poor sisters carry heavy burdens in the mud of ignorance and delusion. In the not-to-distant future, I will embrace them in my motherly arms in the course of fulfilling my new life experience.”

And as she gazed at the horizons of tomorrow with shining and moist eyes, she concluded:

“And later on ... who knows? I may return to Nossos Lar, surrounded by other sacred affections for a great festival of joy, love and unity!”

Admiring her spirit of self-denial, I knelt down and kissed her hands.

From that moment on, my mother was no longer only my mother. She was much more than that. She was the messenger of Assistance, who knew how to transform enemies into children of her heart in order to help them once more to find the pathway of God’s children.

## 47

# Laura's return

My mother wasn't the only one who was preparing to return to earth's circles. Laura was also on the eve of the "great undertaking." Informed of the event by some of my companions, I joined in a demonstration of affection and appreciation that a number of workers – particularly those in Assistance and Regeneration – were giving to the noble lady on account of her return to the human experience. The loving tribute took place on the night when the accounting department gave her a complete report of her entire service in the colony.

It is impossible to translate into ordinary words the spiritual significance of that intimate celebration.

The enchanting residence was full of melody and light. The flowers looked even more beautiful.

Several families had come to honor the friend who was about to return. The majority of the visitors offered her their farewell wishes and then quickly took their leave. However, her closest friends remained until late at night. Thus, I had the opportunity to hear curious and wise observations.

Laura seemed more circumspect, more serious. I noticed that she had to make an effort to share in the general optimism. In the crowded living room, she explained to the accounting department representative:

"I don't think I'll be around for more than two days. I've already finished the procedures at Elucidation's Preparation Services."

And with a somewhat sad look, she concluded:

"As you can see, I am ready."

The representative, with a look of sincere fraternity, said encouragingly:

"I hope you are excited about the struggle. It's a glory to return to the

world in your condition. You have thousands and thousands of hours of service in your favor in our community of over a million fellow spirits. Besides, your children will greatly stimulate you from here.”

“All that is definitely comforting,” Laura said without disguising her inner concern, “but we must understand that reincarnation is always a mission of the utmost importance. I know that my husband has preceded me in the enormous effort and that my beloved children will be my constant friends, yet ...”

“Come now! Don’t get caught up in conjecture!” Minister Genesio interrupted. “We must trust in divine watch-care and in ourselves. The resources of Providence are unlimited. We must break the dark glasses that give us the picture that the physical landscape is a bitter exile. Don’t think of possibilities of failure; visualize only the probability of success. Furthermore, it’s only fair for you to count on us, your friends, who will not be far away, as far as ‘vibratory distance’ is concerned. Think of the joy of helping old friends and reflect on the immense glory of being useful.”

Laura smiled, looking more encouraged, and remarked:

“I have asked for the spiritual assistance of all my friends so that I may keep sight of the lessons I have learned here. I know that the earth is full of divine greatness; we just need to remember that our sun here is the same one that nourishes incarnates. Even so, my dear Minister, I fear the temporary oblivion that befalls us. I feel like a patient who has just been healed of many wounds ... In fact, the wounds don’t hurt anymore, but their scars remain. The slightest scratch would be enough to return me to infirmity.”

The Minister mouthed a gesture of understanding the meaning of her assertion and said:

“I’m aware of what the darkness of the lower inner sphere represents, but courage is essential, and you must proceed. We will help you to work much more for the good of others than for your own self-satisfaction. The greatest danger has always been to linger in the complex temptations of selfishness.

“Here,” she continued wisely, “we can count on the spiritual vibrations of most of the inhabitants, who have nearly all been educated according to the lessons of the Redeeming Gospel. And even though old weaknesses may creep up to the surface of our thoughts, we can find a natural defense in the environment here. On earth, however, our good intentions are like a mere flickering flame in an immense sea of aggressive forces.”

“Don’t say that,” interrupted the benevolent Minister. “Don’t attach such importance to the influences of the lower zones. That is like arming the enemy so that he can torture us. The field of ideas is also a battlefield. Every light we kindle on earth will shine there forever, for the gale of human passions can never blow out a single light of God.”

Laura now seemed to see everything more clearly because of his suggestions. Her mental attitude seemed to have changed radically and she spoke boldly:

“I’m convinced that your visit has been providential. I needed to have my spirits lifted; I only lacked your exhortation. It’s true: our mind is a constant battlefield. We must annihilate the evil and darkness within us, surprising them in the trenches without giving them the importance they claim. Yes, now I can see your point.”

Genesio smiled, satisfied, and added:

“Within our individual world, each idea is like a separate entity ... We need to think about this. If we nourish the elements of the good, they will impel us towards our happiness and will be our armies of defense. On the other hand, if we nourish any element of evil, we build a safe haven for our worst enemies.”

At this point, the accounting department representative remarked:

“We can’t forget that Laura is returning to earth with extraordinary spiritual credit. Just today, the Government Office sent a note to the Ministry of Assistance, recommending that the technical staff from Reincarnation take the utmost care in dealing with the genetic elements that will shape our sister’s new physical organism.”

“Ah! That is true,” she said, “I asked for such a measure so that I wouldn’t have to be subjected too much to the laws of heredity. I’ve been very worried about the bloodline.”

“Notice,” said the representative eagerly, “that your merit in Nosso Lar is so great that the Governor himself has determined direct measures.”

“So, don’t worry, my friend,” said Minister Genesio with a smile. “You’ll have several companions at your side working for your welfare.”

“Thank God!” Laura exclaimed, comforted. “I only had to hear you; I only had to hear you ... ”

Lisias and his sisters, now including the kind and benevolent Teresa, displayed sincere joy.

“My mother needed to forget her worries,” the devoted attendant from Assistance commented. “After all, we won’t be asleep up here.”

“You’re right,” she concluded. “I’ll cultivate hope, and will trust in the Lord and in all of you.”

From then on, all the comments entailed confidence and optimism. No one talked about her return to earth except as a blessed opportunity to learn and to do the good.

As I took my leave late that night, Laura said in a maternal tone of voice:

“Tomorrow night, Andre, I’ll be expecting you. We’ll be having a small, intimate, friendly gathering. The Ministry of Communication has promised us a visit from my husband. Although Ricardo is already in a physical body, he will be brought here via the fraternal aid of some of our fellow spirits. I’ll be saying goodbye tomorrow. Please, come.”

I thanked her, deeply moved, and made a great effort to keep back the tears welling up in my heart from missing her already.

# 48

## Family worship

The gathering at Lisias's home wouldn't perhaps seem so surprising to practitioners of Spiritism. From my own point of view, however, it was a new and interesting situation.

In the spacious living room, a small assembly of a little over thirty people was gathered. The arrangement of the furniture was very simple. Comfortable chairs were placed in rows of twelve before a platform, where Minister Clarencio acted as the director, surrounded by Laura and her children. About twelve feet away, there was a large crystalline globe about six feet in diameter, and whose lower part was wrapped in wires connected to a small apparatus that resembled a loudspeaker.

Many questions were dancing around in my mind.

Everyone had taken their seats in the large room, but I noticed fraternal conversation occurring in various groups.

Sitting beside Nicolas, an older worker from the Ministry of Assistance and a close friend of Lisias's family, I dared to ask him a question. This friendly companion readily answered:

"We're all set and just waiting for the order from Communication. Our brother Ricardo is still in his childhood, so it won't be difficult for him to leave his physical ties for a few moments."

"Will he actually come here?"

"Why not? Not all incarnates are chained to the soil of the planet. Like homing pigeons, which often spend much time flying on duty between two places, there are some incarnate spirits who live going back and forth between the two worlds."

And pointing to the apparatus in front of us, he said:

“That is where he will appear to us.”

“Why a crystalline globe? Couldn’t he show himself without it?” I asked curiously.

“It’s important to remember,” Nicolas said thoughtfully, “that our emotions can transmit forces that are likely to be disturbing to the spirit. That crystalline chamber is made of insulating material, which our mental energies cannot penetrate.”

At that moment, workers from Communication called Lisias to the phone. The time had come. We could finally begin the culminating work of the meeting.

It was forty minutes past midnight, according to the clock on the wall. Noticing my questioning look, Nicolas said in a low voice:

“Only now is it quiet enough in Ricardo’s new home on earth. The whole house is at rest and his parents are asleep, and in his new phase, he is not totally confined to the cradle ... ”

Nicolas was unable to continue. Minister Clarenco rose and asked for a true homogeneity of thoughts and a real fusion of sentiments.

Everyone fell silent and Clarenco offered a simple but moving prayer. Then, Lisias played a melody on his zither, filling the air with profound vibrations of peace and enchantment. Right afterwards, Clarenco spoke again:

“Brothers and sisters,” he said, “let us all now send Ricardo our message of love.”

Next, I was surprised to observe that Laura’s daughters and granddaughter, accompanied by Lisias, were leaving the platform. Judite, Iolanda and Lisias took their position by their respective instruments: the piano, the harp and the zither, while Teresa and Eloisa added their voices to form a gracious family ensemble.

Melodious chords formed the echoes of a soft melody and the music rose, gracious and divine, sounding like the celestial cooing of heaven. I felt myself being elevated to sublime spheres of thought, when I heard silvery voices filling the room. Lisias and his sisters were singing a marvelous song they had composed.

Using only human words, it is difficult to phrase the meaningful stanzas, which were so full of spirituality and beauty, but I will try to do so in order to show the richness of affections on the planes of life that extend beyond death:

Dear father, when the night  
Brings the blessing of rest,  
Receive, gentle father,  
Our affection and devotion!

While the stars sing  
In the light that renders them pale,  
Come and join in our prayer  
The voice of your heart.

Do not worry on the road  
Filled with shadows of oblivion,  
Do not let suffering hurt you;  
Do not wound yourself in evil.

Fear no earthly pain;  
Remember our alliance;  
Preserve the flower of hope  
For immortal bliss.

While you sleep in the world,  
Our awakened souls  
Recall the dawn  
Of this higher life.

Look to the cheerful future,  
Wait for us, who one day  
Will return to the joy  
Of the garden of your love.

Come to us, generous father;  
Return to the peace of our nest,  
Turn to the lights of the path,  
Even though only in your dream.

Forget, for a minute, the earth  
And come to sip the pure water  
Full of consolation and tenderness  
From the founts of Nosso Lar.

Our home has not forgotten you:  
The sacrifice, the goodness,  
The sublime clarity  
Of your lessons in morality.  
Come across the dense darkness.  
Defeat the flesh, dear father;  
Climb to the top of the mountain;  
Come to join us in prayer.

At the last words of this beautiful composition, I noticed that the globe was beginning to fill with a milky grayish substance, and soon displayed the friendly figure of a middle-aged man. It was Ricardo. It is impossible to describe the sacred emotion of the family as they lovingly greeted him.

After having addressed his wife and children specifically, the newly-arrived gave us a friendly look and asked us to repeat the pleasant filial song, which he listened to bathed in tears. When the final strains had ended, he said:

“Oh! my children, how great Jesus’ goodness is! He has crowned our family Gospel worship with the supreme joys of this night! In this room, we have together sought the path of the higher realms. Many times, we have received the spiritual bread of life, and it is still here that we meet again for holy incentive. How happy I am!”

Laura wept discreetly. Lisias and his sisters also had eyes filled with tears.

I perceived that the newly-arrived Ricardo could not speak easily and had only a short time to stay amongst us. Everyone else probably had a similar impression, for I saw Judite embracing the crystalline globe and exclaiming caringly:

“Dear father, tell us what you want from us; tell us how we can be useful to your devoted heart!”

Then, I saw that Ricardo looked intently at Laura and whispered:

“Your mother will soon come and join me, my little daughter! Later, you shall all come as well! What more could I wish for to make me happy except to pray that the Master will bless us forever?”

We were all moved to tears.

When the globe began once more to show the same grayish color, I heard Ricardo exclaiming as he readied to say goodbye:

“Ah! my children, I have something to ask you from the depths of my soul! Pray to the Lord that I may never have an easy life on earth so that the light of gratitude and understanding may remain alive in my spirit!”

That unexpected request moved and surprised me at the same time. Ricardo spoke caring goodbyes to everyone as the curtain of grayish substance covered the whole chamber, which then returned to its normal appearance.

Minister Clarencio prayed emotionally and the session closed, leaving us immersed in indescribable bliss.

I started towards the platform to embrace Laura as she was busy acknowledging her friends’ many greetings. I wanted to express my deep

impression and gratitude, but someone stopped me.

It was Clarencio, who lovingly said:

“Andre, tomorrow I’m going to accompany our sister Laura to the physical plane. If you like, you may come with us to visit your family.”

My surprise couldn’t have been greater. A deep sensation of joy took hold of me, but I immediately remembered my work at the Chambers of Rectification. The benevolent Minister, guessed my thoughts:

“You have a fair number of extra work hours in your favor. It won’t be difficult for Genesio to grant you a week off after your first year of active cooperation.”

With intense joy, I thanked him, weeping and laughing at the same time. At last, I was going to see my beloved wife and children again.

## 49

# Returning home

Like a child who follows in the steps of his benefactors, I arrived in my hometown with the indescribable sensation of a traveler returning home after a long absence.

No, the surroundings had not changed noticeably: the old trees of the neighborhood, the sea, the sky, the same smells in the air. Intoxicated with joy, I no longer noticed the expression of extreme preoccupation on Laura's face, and I took my leave of the small band, who went on ahead.

Clarencio embraced me and spoke:

“You have a whole week at your disposal. I'll come here daily in order to see you and to handle the problems of our sister's reincarnation. If you wish to return to *Nosso Lar*, you can do so in my company. Take care, Andre!”

After a last goodbye to Lisias's devoted mother, I found myself alone, deeply breathing the air of times past.

I didn't waste any time examining details: I quickly crossed the few streets on the way home. My heart was beating faster and faster as I got closer to the large entrance gate. The wind, like yesteryear, whispered caresses in the trees of the yard. Azaleas and roses were in bloom, greeting the light of spring. Across from the front door rose the stately palm tree that Zelia and I had planted on our first wedding anniversary.

Full of joy, I went inside. Everything had changed radically. Where was the old wooden furniture? And the big portrait, in which my wife, myself and our little children formed such a gracious group? Something made me anxious. What had happened? I began to stagger with emotion. I went into the living room, where I saw my youngest daughter, now transformed into a

marriageable young woman. Almost at the same moment, Zelia came out of our bedroom following a gentleman who at first sight seemed to be a doctor.

I shouted my joy with the full strength of my lungs, but the words only seemed to echo throughout the house without being heard by the inhabitants. Then, I understood the situation and fell silent, downcast. I embraced my wife with the care of my immense longing for her, but she seemed totally insensitive to this gesture of love. Zelia very respectfully asked the man something I couldn't immediately make out. The man answered obligingly in a low voice:

“Only tomorrow will I be able to make a sure diagnosis, for the pneumonia is displaying serious complications due to his high blood pressure. Dr. Ernesto is in need of extreme care and absolute rest.”

Who could this Dr. Ernesto be? I lost myself in a sea of questions, when I heard my wife anxiously plead:

“But Doctor, please save him! I implore you! Oh! I couldn't bear a second widowhood!”

Zelia wept and wrung her hands in great anguish.

A thunderbolt couldn't have struck me with greater violence. Another man had taken over my home. My wife had forgotten me. The house was no longer mine. Had it been worth it to have waited so long only to reap such disillusionment? I ran to my room and discovered that there was different furniture in the spacious alcove. On the bed was a middle-aged man, clearly in a deteriorating state of health. Beside him, three dark figures walked to and fro, showing quite a bit of interest in aggravating his sufferings.

At first, I was willing to hate this intruder with all my strength, but I was no longer the same man as before. The Lord had called me to the teachings of love, fraternity and forgiveness. Although I realized that the poor man was surrounded by inferior entities devoted to evil, I was unable to help him immediately.

I sat down, despondent and downcast, watching Zelia walk in and out of the room several times, caressing the sick man with the tenderness that she had devoted to me in the past. After a few hours of bitter observation and meditation, I returned, staggering into the living room, where I found my two daughters in conversation. A few more surprises awaited me. The older one

had married and a little baby was on her lap. What about my son? Where could he be?

Zelia appropriately instructed an old nurse, and then, having calmed down somewhat, came to talk with her daughters:

“I came to see you today, Mom,” exclaimed the older, “not only because I wanted news about Dr. Ernesto, but also because today my homesickness for Daddy has been tormenting my heart. Ever since this morning, I’ve been wondering why I have been thinking so much of him lately. It’s something I don’t know how to define ...”

She didn’t finish. Abundant tears gushed from her eyes.

To my great surprise, Zelia addressed my daughter in an authoritarian manner:

“Oh, come now! I’ve just about had enough! As afflicted as I am, I still have to tolerate your silly worries. Why are you so sentimental, my daughter? You know I’ve strictly forbidden any mention of your father in this house. Don’t you know how it annoys Ernesto? I sold everything that reminded us of the dead past. I even went so far as to have the walls redone and you can’t help me out with this?”

My younger daughter interrupted:

“Ever since my poor sister began to get interested in that damned Spiritism, she’s been living with this foolishness inside her head. Where have we ever seen such nonsense? This story of the dead coming back is utterly absurd.”

Although the other was still crying, she spoke with difficulty:

“I’m not talking about religious convictions. So it’s a crime to miss Dad? Don’t you love him too? Don’t you have any feelings about him? If Daddy were with us, Mom, his only son wouldn’t be doing all the crazy things he’s been doing around here.”

“Now, now,” Zelia replied, nervous and annoyed. “Each of us must follow the fate assigned by God. Don’t forget that Andre is dead. Don’t come to me with lamentations and tears for the irremediable past.”

I approached my weeping child and tried to dry her tears, whispering words of encouragement and consolation; she didn’t hear them, but registered them subjectively as comforting thoughts.

At last, I found myself face to face with an odd turn of events. Now I understood the reason why my true friends had delayed my return home for so long.

Anguish and disappointment confusedly followed. My home now seemed to have been a treasure store transformed by robbers and worms. There were no belongings, titles or affection! There was only one daughter who remained a sentinel to my old and sincere love.

Not even the long years of suffering during the first days of my life after death had caused me to shed such bitter tears.

The night came and the day returned, finding me in the same perplexing condition, hearing opinions and witnessing surprising attitudes that I could never have imagined.

In the evening, Clarencio came by to offer the elixir of his friendly and true words. Seeing my disappointment, he kindly said:

“I understand your sorrow, but at the same time I rejoice for this excellent opportunity for you to have witnessed all this. I don’t have any new instructions; any advice on my part would be inopportune. My dear friend, I cannot help but remember Jesus’ recommendation that we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. When that recommendation is followed, it always works real miracles of happiness and understanding on our path.”

Deeply moved, I thanked him and asked him not to forsake me, but to give me the support I needed.

Clarencio smiled and said goodbye.

Then, faced with the bitter reality and absolutely alone, I began to ponder that Gospel recommendation and felt more serene as I reflected on the situation. After all, why condemn what Zelia had done? What if I myself had been widowed? Would I have been able to bear prolonged loneliness? Wouldn’t I have found a thousand excuses to justify taking a new consort? And the poor patient? Why and how could I hate him? Wasn’t he also my brother in the House of Our Lord? Wouldn’t our home perhaps be in a worse state if Zelia hadn’t accepted this loving alliance? Therefore, I had to fight against my fierce selfishness. Jesus had led me to other resources. I could no longer act as a man of the earth. My family wasn’t only a wife and three children on the planet; instead, it was comprised of hundreds of patients in the Chambers of Rectification, and it now extended to the whole universal

community. Dominated by new thoughts, I felt the lymph of true love beginning to blossom from the beneficent wounds that reality had opened in my heart.

## A citizen of Nosso Lar

On the second night, I felt exhausted. I began to grasp the value of spiritual nourishment through mutual love and understanding. Back in Nosso Lar, I had spent many days on active duty without ordinary food while training in the elevated work to which many of us dedicated ourselves. The presence of my dear friends, their displays of affection, the absorption of pure elements from the air and water had been enough. But here I found nothing but a dark battlefield, where my loved ones had become enemies. The precious reflections that Clarencio's words had inspired in me brought a certain peace to my heart. At last, I understood human needs. I was not Zelia's owner, but her brother and friend. Likewise, my children were not my property, but instead, my companions in struggle and achievement.

I remembered that Laura had once affirmed that every creature in active service should proceed like a bee buzzing about the flowers of life, which represent noble souls in the field of memories, extracting from each one the substance of valuable examples in order to acquire the honey of wisdom.

I applied her precious advice to my own case and began to remember my mother. Hadn't she sacrificed herself for my father to the point of adopting those unhappy women as her beloved daughters? Nosso Lar was replete with such edifying examples. Minister Veneranda had been working for centuries for the spirit group most closely connected to her heart. Narcisa sacrificed herself in the Chambers to obtain a spiritual endorsement to return to the world on a mission of assistance. Hilda had defeated the dragon of the lower emotion of jealousy. And what about the expression of fraternity by my other friends in the colony? Clarencio had welcomed me with the devotion of a father; Lisias's mother had received me as a son, and Tobias as his brother. Each companion in my new struggle offered me something useful for building the different mental attitude that had begun to rise quickly within my spirit.

I tried to distance myself from the obviously ungrateful dynamics occurring in that domestic environment. I decided to put divine love above everything else and to place the just needs of my fellow creatures ahead of my own personal sentiments.

Still very tired, I went into the room of the sick man, whose condition was worsening by the minute. Zelia was caressing his face, and bathed in tears, said:

“Ernesto, Ernesto, have pity on me, my dear! Don’t leave me alone! What will become of me if you die?”

The sick man caressed her hands and responded with immense affection, despite his labored breathing.

I prayed to the Lord for the strength I needed to maintain the right understanding, so I started regarding this couple as my brother and sister.

I realized that Zelia and Ernesto loved each other immensely. And if I actually felt like the fraternal companion of both, I should help them with all the resources within reach. I began my work by trying to enlighten the unhappy spirits who were keeping a tight rein on the patient; however, the difficulty in doing so was enormous. I felt completely debilitated.

During this emergency, I remembered one of Tobias’s lessons when he had told me: “Here, in Nosso Lar, not all of us need an airbus for transportation, because the more elevated inhabitants of the colony have the power of volitation at their disposal. Nor do all of us need communication equipment to converse over long distances, because we mutually maintain ourselves on a plane of perfect thought attunement. Those who are attuned in this way may use the process of mental conversation at will, regardless of the distance.”

I thought about how useful Narcisa’s help would be, so I experimented. I concentrated in a fervent prayer to the Father, and in the vibrations of the prayer, I addressed Narcisa, asking for her help. I mentally told her of my painful experience, informed her of my intention of helping the couple and insisted that she not forsake me.

Then, the unexpected happened.

After twenty minutes – more or less – when I was still asking for my friend’s help, someone lightly touched my shoulder.

It was Narcisa, who had come to help. With a smile, she said:

“I heard your appeal, my friend, and I have come.”

I couldn't contain my happiness.

The messenger of the good observed the situation, understood the gravity of the moment and added:

“We have no time to lose.”

First, she applied comforting passes to the patient, freeing him from the dark spirits, who fled as if by magic. Then, she invited me firmly:

“Let's go outside into nature.”

I followed her without hesitation, and noticing my inquiring look, she remarked:

“Human beings are not the only ones who can receive and emit fluids. The same occurs in the forces of nature, in the various kingdoms into which it is divided. In the case of our patient, we need trees. They will help us effectively.”

Surprised at this new lesson, I silently followed her. After we arrived at a place where there were several enormous trees, Narcisa called someone with expressions I couldn't understand. Within moments, eight spirit entities answered her call. Greatly surprised, I saw Narcisa ask them if there were any mango and eucalyptus trees in the neighborhood. After being informed by her friends, who were completely unknown to me, the nurse explained:

“These friends are day-to-day workers of the plant kingdom.”

And noticing my surprise, she continued:

“As you can see, there is nothing useless in our Father's House. Wherever there are those who need to learn, there are those willing to teach. And whenever a difficulty arises, Providence shows up. The only unfortunate being in the divine work is the improvident spirit who has condemned itself to the darkness of evil.”

Within a few moments, Narcisa had blended a certain substance using the emanations of the eucalyptus and mango trees, and throughout the night we applied the medicine to the patient through his ordinary breathing and by absorption through his pores.

The ailing man experienced remarkable improvement. Early in the morning, his doctor remarked, extremely surprised:

“It appears that something extraordinary happened last night! A real miracle of nature!”

Zelia was radiant. The house was full of renewed joy. As for myself, I felt great jubilation in my soul. Profound relief and beautiful hopes reinvigorated my being. I realized that the powerful ties of the lower emotions had been broken within me forever.

That day, I returned to Nossos Lar in the company of Narcisa. I experienced the power of volitation for the first time. In a moment, we had covered a great distance. The banner of joy had unfurled in my soul. I told the kindly nurse about the lightness I was feeling, and she explained:

“In Nossos Lar, a great number of spirits could do without the airbus and transport themselves at will within the areas of our vibratory range, but since most have not yet acquired that faculty, we all abstain from using it in the public streets. This abstention, however, doesn’t keep us from using the procedure outside the city when it is necessary to cover long distances and to save time.”

New understanding and new joy enriched my spirit. Instructed by Narcisa, I went to and fro between my earth home and the spirit city without any great difficulty. Thus, I could intensify Ernesto’s treatment – his improvement was firm, obvious and rapid. Clarencio visited me daily, showing satisfaction with my work.

At the end of the week, my first leave of absence from the Chambers of Rectification was over. Happiness had returned to the couple, whom I started to love as my brother and sister.

It was time to return to my duties.

In the dim and comforting light of the evening, I had taken the road back to Nossos Lar totally changed. During those seven quick days, I had learned precious practical lessons in the living cult of understanding and fraternity. The sublime evening filled me with magnificent thoughts.

How great Divine Providence is! I said to myself. With what wisdom the Lord arranges all the works and situations of life! With what love he watches over all creation!

Something interrupted my meditation. Over two hundred of my friends had come to meet me.

They all greeted me generously. Lisias, Lascinia, Narcisa, Silveira, Tobias, Salustio and many other workers from the Chambers were there. I didn't know what to do. I was taken by surprise. It was then that Minister Clarencio came forward, held out his right hand and spoke:

“Until today, Andre, you have been my pupil in the colony. But from now on, in the name of the Government Center, I declare you a citizen of Nosso Lar!”

Why such magnanimity when my triumph was so small? I couldn't hold back the tears of emotion that choked my voice. And bearing in mind the greatness of the divine goodness, I threw myself into Clarencio's fatherly arms, weeping with gratitude and joy.

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