



CHICO
XAVIER

DICTATED BY THE SPIRIT
ANDRÉ LUIZ

LIFE IN THE
SPIRIT WORLD

WORKERS
OF THE
ETERNAL LIFE



Workers of the Life Eternal

Francisco Candido Xavier

Workers of the Life Eternal

Dictated by the Spirit
Andre Luiz

*Translated by:
Tonia L. Wind, Darrel W. Kimble and Marcia M. Saiz*



Copyright © 2008 by
BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION

First Edition – 01/2019

Original title in Portuguese:
OBREIROS DA VIDA ETERNA
(Brazil, 1946)

ISBN: 978-85-9466-158-6

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic, or electronic process, or in the form of a phonographic recording; nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, or otherwise be copied for public or private use without prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by
BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION
Av. L2 Norte – Q. 603 – Conjunto F (SGAN)
70830-106 – Brasília (DF) – Brazil
www.febeditora.com.br
editorialexterior@febnet.org.br
+55 61 2101 6198

INTERNATIONAL DATA FOR CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION

L953o Luiz, Andre (Spirit)

Workers of the Life Eternal / dictated by the spirit Andre Luiz ; [received by] Francisco Candido Xavier ; [translated by Tonia Leigh Wind, Darrel W. Kimble and Marcia M. Saiz]. – 1st edition – Brasília, DF (Brazil) : FEB, 2019.

320 p. (Life in the spirit world; 4)

Original title: Obreiros da vida eterna

ISBN: 978-85-9466-158-6

1. Spiritism. 2. Psychographic works. I. Xavier, Francisco Candido, 1910-2002. II. Brazilian Spiritist Federation. III. Title. IV. Series.

CDD 133.93
CDU 133.7
CDE 00.06.02

Contents

Rending Veils

- 1 - An Invitation to the Good
- 2 - In the Sanctuary of Blessing
- 3 - The Sublime Visitor
- 4 - “Casa Transitoria”
- 5 - Brother Gotuzo
- 6 - During the Night
- 7 - A Mental Reading
- 8 - Darkness and Suffering
- 9 - Praise and Gratitude
- 10 - Purifying Fire
- 11 - New Friends
- 12 - A Training Expedition
- 13 - A Liberated Fellow Spirit
- 14 - Rendering Assistance
- 15 - Continuing to Learn
- 16 - A Christian Example
- 17 - An Unusual Request
- 18 - A Difficult Disengagement
- 19 - The Loyal Servant
- 20 - Giving Thanks

Rending Veils

Modern humans, in their study of the stratosphere and the subsoil, encounter the same plight before the mouth of the grave as did the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans of times past. The centuries that have swept away entire civilizations and that have recast cultures, have failed to transform the mysterious face of the grave. Death is a millenary question that continues to wound sentiments and torture minds.

In all schools of religion, theology, in representing the guidelines provided by the venerable patriarchs of faith, seeks to control believers' emotional realm by seeing to the immediate interests of the incarnate soul. In order to do so, it created clear-cut areas in an attempt to standardize God's edicts through the decrees of medieval kings, decrees wrought upon the basis of audacious ingenuity.

Of course, regions of punitive anguish and reparatory pain exist among the highly varied dimensions of the universe, just as dark, appalling consciences pulsate among the many levels of society; however, theology's service in this sense, although respectable, attentive to traditional dogmatism and the interests of the clergy, establishes the "non plus ultra"¹, which meets neither the demands of the mind nor the longings of the heart.

How can we immediately cast into hell the wretched individual who became entangled in evil simply because he or she did not know any better? In the name of Divine Wisdom, what can be bestowed upon the primitive who thirsts for domination and the hunt? Curse or learning? How could the unfortunate spirit, who only made contact with the truth at the very moment it left its body, be led to the abyss of darkness? Along the same line of reasoning, why should disciples of the good be promoted to heaven for all eternity, when they had only just begun practicing virtue? What kinds of duties will characterize the activity of redeemed souls in the Heavenly Court? Are they to graduate as apostles only to be sent into mandatory retirement? In heaven, what is to become of the loving father whose children have been

handed over to Satan? What bliss awaits the dedicated and faithful wife whose husband is burning in all-consuming flames? Would Divine Authority, always perfect and boundless, be so short of resources as to prevent, beyond the corporeal plane, the benefit of the true cooperation that the fallible and flawed authorities of the world encourage and uphold? Would it be right to deny to those who have passed through the doorway of the grave into the fullness of the greater life the potential to evolve when on the terrestrial plane, where they would be subject to all kinds of limitations, there are evolutionary paths for all forms and beings? Could the word “labor” be unknown in heaven when nature on earth bestows explicit missions of service on all creatures on the planet from the lowest of living things all the way up to human beings? How can one justify a hell where souls moan in anguish with no hope when even imperfect men and women nowadays receive the renewing influx of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in prisons, which have become great schools of regeneration and spiritual-mental healing? And how are we to acknowledge a heaven where selfishness receives absolute consecration in the infinite delight of those bestowed with grace without any show of compassion for those denied of privilege, those who have fallen naively into the traps of suffering, if among the remotest communities living in obscure physical zones, legions of fraternal assistance are gathered to provide aid to the uneducated and unfortunate?

These are opportune questions for sincere theologians of our time; not, however, for those who are trying to join forces in order to solve the great and unfathomable problem of humankind.

Spiritism has begun the invaluable work of affirming the continuation of life after death, a natural phenomenon on the path of ascension. Multiple spheres of spirit-related activity interpenetrate one another in the various realms of existence. Death does not extinguish friendly cooperation, mutual aid, comforting intercession or evolutionary service. The vibratory dimensions of the universe are infinite, as infinite as the worlds that populate the immensity of space.

No one dies. Far and wide, the quest for perfection continues.

Life sprouts anew; it purifies and uplifts its multiple teams of servants, leading them in radiant triumph to Supreme Union with the Divinity.

In introducing this new endeavor, in which Andre Luiz appears rending veils, let us remember that Allan Kardec – the unforgettable Codifier – refers

several times in his works to the errant state, in which a countless number of discarnate human creatures are held. It should be noted further, however, that going from the material sphere to the errant state does not mean absencing oneself from initiative or responsibility, nor does it mean simply roaming aimlessly around in some kind of aerial vortex with no essential directives. Along the same train of thought, we might observe that those reborn on the dense plane as individuals who have gone from the spirit life to materiality do not symbolize any kind of unconscious or senseless immersion in the currents of the corporeal world. In the same way as those who arrive on the earth's surface, those who leave it also find societies and institutions, temples, churches and homes, where progress continues toward the Most High.

Thus, at the beginning of this book we should state that Andre Luiz has sought to provide information on the regions of erraticity that surround the earth in all directions as he describes the emotional scenes that are carried from dark realms to spheres bordering human deliberation and passion. Once again, he explains that death is the arena of the sequence of events, and that it is not the fountainhead of miracles. He also says that here or there, humans are the fruit of their own actions and that divine laws are eternal organizations of justice and order, balance and evolution.

Of course, some less-informed readers will find all this very strange, and such incorrigible impenitent souls will smile in mockery. But it does not matter. Jesus himself, who is God's Christ, experienced displays of sarcasm stemming from ignorance and frivolousness ... Why then should those of us who are mere coworkers in "the other world" think we are invulnerable?

Therefore, let us continue serving the truth and the good, filled with optimism and courage on our way to Jesus, with Jesus.

EMMANUEL

Pedro Leopoldo (MG), March 25, 1946

¹ Non plus ultra: Latin for "the uttermost point." – Tr

1

An Invitation to the Good

Before starting the work of our first aid expedition, Assistant Jeronimo took us to the Temple of Peace in the area devoted to assistance services, where a learned instructor would be commenting on the need to work with unfortunate spirits in the lowest circles of spirit life encircling the earth.

The marvelous night poured forth divine inspiration.

Far away, sparkling constellations looked like pearls that had been carefully arranged on a deep blue velvet bedspread. The lunar landscape displayed enchanting detail. Although they were so distant, the peaks and craters stood out in an ecstasy of priceless filigree. The Southern Cross twinkled like a sublime symbol embroidered on the dark blue depths of the firmament. Canopus, Sirius and Antares were shining boundlessly as if they were dazzling and depictive buoys in the heavens. The Milky Way, lending us the impression of a prodigious nest of worlds, looked like a deluge of shiny coins pouring from a gigantic, invisible cornucopia, inviting us to contemplate the lofty secrets of divine nature. And soft nocturnal breezes kissed our minds in ecstasy as they rushed by, whispering grand thoughts in our ears before moving on to distant spheres ...

The Temple, which had been built at the foot of a graceful hill, had a festive look to it due to the enchanting lighting that was projecting distinctive effects onto the adjacent pathways. Its towers stretched high into the sky like shiny spires set against the indefinable blue of the clear night, and here below, multi-shaped flowers looked like sparkling goblets serving light and fragrance while gently swaying to the endless breeze blowing through the foliage.

We were not the only ones interested in that evening's lecture; there were many groups of brothers and sisters going inside and making themselves comfortable in the sanctuary. There were spirits of all sorts, a fact that enabled us to sense the widespread interest in the upcoming lesson.

Assistant Jeronimo, Father Hipolito, Nurse Luciana and I followed them in. We made up a small work team that would be responsible for operating in a help and study capacity down on the planet for approximately thirty days, thereby contributing to our own personal spiritual development.

Jeronimo, the guide for our activities due to his distinctive status, noticed that my curiosity had been aroused by the lively conversations going on around us, and explained kindly:

“Your interest regarding the subject is perfectly understandable. I can tell you that almost all of the learners and interested individuals streaming into this center are members of commissions and spiritual aid groups operating in less evolved regions.”

And setting his gaze on the ranks of the young and old who continued entering the Temple, he added:

“The lecture to be given by Instructor Albano Metelo deserves special consideration tonight. He is a champion at providing aid to the uninformed and suffering spirits living in the circles nearest the earth’s surface. The audience here tonight consists of various learning groups and his experience will be infinitely beneficial to us.”

A few minutes later, we in turn entered the well-lit sanctuary.

Gentle melodies were wafting through the air before the instructional lecture began. Fragrant flowers decorated the environment, perfuming the spacious nave.

After a few highly agreeable moments of waiting, the emissary appeared on the simple, yet magnificently lit speaker’s platform. He was an elderly man of respectable demeanor; his white hair wove a crown of luminous snow. His magnificently lucid, calm eyes radiated a compassionate energy that immediately captured our hearts. After waving his friendly hand over us as if he were bestowing a blessing, the Temple choir began singing the hymn “Glory to the Faithful Servants”:

O Lord!

Bless your faithful servants,

Messengers of your peace,

Sowers of your hope.

*Where there are shadows of pain,
Light the lamp of joy for them;
Where evil reigns, threatening the work of the good,
Open the hidden door of your mercy for them;
Where thorns of hate emerge,
Help them cultivate the blessed flowers of your sacred love!*

*O Lord! They are
Your unnamed heroes,
Who eradicate swamps and thorn bushes,
Cooperating in your divine sowing ...
Grant them the inner joy
Of the sacred light in which redeemed souls are bathed.*

*Anoint their hearts with the celestial harmony
That you reserve for sanctified ears;
Reveal to them the glorious visions
You hold for the eyes of the righteous;
Decorate their breast with the stars of loyal virtue ...
Fill their hands with blessed gifts
So that in your name they may share
The law of the good,
The light of perfection,
The food of love,
The cloak of wisdom,
The joy of peace,
The power of faith,
The abundance of courage,*

*The grace of hope,
The medicine of healing! ...*

*O Lord!
Inspiration of our lives,
Master of our hearts,
Refuge from earthly centuries!
Make your divine laurels
And your eternal gifts
Shine on the lucid brows of the good –
Your faithful servants!*

The Instructor listened in silence with tear-dampened eyes, allowing his inner joy to show through, while most of us in the audience discretely disguised the tears that the harmonious accents of the hymn had wrenched from our hearts. As the last notes of the sublime melody were lost in space, Metelo, without any gesturing formalities, greeted us with expressive simplicity and wished us the peace of the Lord. He then proceeded:

“My friends, I am not deserving of your display of love this evening. I have not faithfully served the One who has loved us from the very beginning, and that is why I find your hymn bewildering. Being a mere soldier in the toil of the Gospel, I am still working in the arena of my own redemption.”

He took a short pause to gaze at us paternally, and continued:

“But ... who I am as a person per se is of no matter. I have come to speak to you about our unpretentious work in the spirit regions connected to the earth’s surface. O my brothers and sisters! We must appeal to our most recondite energies. The purgatorial zones are multiplying frighteningly around incarnate humans. Far removed from the theaters of anguish, bound to the spiritually constructive achievements of our spirit colony, and maintaining valuable reserves of the infinite life for this humankind struggling in suffering and darkness, we do not always form a precise idea about the ignorance and pain that torment the human mind with regard to the problems of death. Here, happiness causes inexhaustible fountains of hope to spring forth. Those who

prepare themselves before making greater flights into eternity come with their sights set on the higher spheres in contemplation of the endless hereafter, whereas those who put forth the effort to merit the blessing of reincarnating on the earth set their strongest aspirations on the supreme objective of redemption, preparing themselves to face the future. They are fearless in their requests for work and undaunted in their enthusiasm. In this colony, all the details of life loudly proclaim our quest for balance and spiritual evolution. Not too far from us, the rays of the radiant dawn of better worlds have begun to shine, inviting us to the beatific vision of the universe and to glorious union with the Divine. However ...” The speaker made a significant pause as if listening to voices and evocations from distant lands, and then continued: “What about our brothers and sisters who still ignore the light? Are we to ascend to God in a shut circle? How can we operate in selfish isolation and then set off on our way to the loving, loyal Father, who makes the sun shine on saints and criminals, the righteous and the unrighteous?”

Metelo displayed a flame of sacred fervor in his piercing eyes, and after a moment of reflection, exclaimed:

“Would we who look for sanctity and justice perchance receive such guidance if the means of regeneration here were different for us? As creators of our own destinies by natural appointment from the Creator, where would we be now if our watchful benefactors had not provided us with watch-care and the benefits of opportunity? There can be no doubt that the opportunities for spiritual evolution are gratifying to all. However, it is vital to consider the fact that the blessing of the wellspring might well turn into stagnant, poisonous water if we were to confine it to an isolated well. And the gifts we have received are so numerous, and the natural talents that have been divided among us so vast ... Would our joy be complete if tears followed in our footsteps? How could we sing hymns of blissful hosannas over a chorus of weeping? Every impulse to reach the summit is most noble, but what will we see after the ascent? In the midst of the joy of some, we would perceive the destruction and destitution of countless others! ...”

At that moment, enveloped in the vibrations of the audience’s intense interest, he changed the tone of his enlightening speech and began again with indefinable melancholy:

“In times gone by, I too was obsessed with hurriedly climbing the mountain. The light from above intrigued me, so I broke all of the ties holding me down below and set out on the difficult journey upward. At first, I was

wounded by sharp thorns along the path and experienced excruciatingly painful disappointments ... However, I managed to overcome immediate obstacles and was joyfully awarded a very small honor. Nevertheless, as I looked back I was startled by the terrifying sight of the valley: suffering and ignorance reigned in utter darkness. Discarnates and incarnates were fighting each other in colossal battles, competing for the gratification of their animalistic senses. Hatred was creating loathsome diseases; selfishness was stifling noble impulses and vanity was producing unspeakable blindness ... I felt happy because of the position that distanced me from such extensive suffering. Nevertheless, as I was commending myself more and more, full of anticipation of climbing even higher peaks, one specific evening I noticed the valley was enshrined in resplendent light. What merciful sun was visiting the dark abyss of agony? Angelic beings were swiftly descending from their radiant pinnacles on high and were settling in the lowest regions in obedience to the blessed light's power of attraction. 'What is happening?' I dared to ask one of the celestial heralds. 'Today, our Lord Jesus is visiting those who are wandering in the darkness of the world and he is setting enslaved consciences free.' Not one more word. The messenger from the divine plane could not grant me any more time. He urgently needed to descend to work along with the Master of Love to lessen the disasters of moral downfalls, mitigate hardships, dress wounds, dry tears, attenuate evil, and above all, open new horizons to science and religion so as to undo the multi-millenary night of ignorance. Alone once again on my pilgrimage toward the Most High, I reconsidered the attitude that had made me so impatient. Truthfully, where was my spirit headed, so unconcerned about the immense human family, from whom I had drawn my richest acquisitions for immortal life? Why should I regard the valley with disdain if Jesus himself – the center of my aspirations – was solicitously working so that the Light from On High might pierce the entrails of the earth? Was I not committing the deplorable crime of usury by forgetting about those amongst whom I had acquired the itinerary meant for my own ascension? How was I to climb alone, preparing a private heaven for my soul but regretfully disassociated from the values of cooperation that the world had generously and abundantly lavished upon me?"

The Instructor appeared deeply moved.

"So I stopped," he continued, "and went back. The vertical, purifying path toward spiritual ascendancy is, in fact, the sublime destiny of all. The summit, bathed in solar splendor, is always a worthy challenge for those who wander aimlessly around on the plain. The peak naturally polarizes the

supreme hopes of those who still remain below ... Yet, to the degree that we enter upon the higher realms, the sublime laws of fraternity and compassion become engraved upon our minds and hearts. The great guides of humankind did not measure their own greatness except by their ability to return to the circles of ignorance in order to exemplify love, wisdom, self-denial and forgiveness for one's fellow beings. It is for this reason that we must season with the salt of understanding every impulse to evolve spiritually, avoiding falling into the precipice of deadly selfishness and vanity.”

Metelo became silent for a few moments, and before the peaked emotion with which we were following his lecture, he began speaking in a different tone of voice:

“Long ago, when we were still enveloped in the fluids of earthly flesh, we mistakenly presumed that vanity and selfishness could only victimize incarnates. Despite its respectable ministry, theology enclosed our minds in delusional notions about the kingdom of truth. We hoped for a heaven that is easily won in spite of human imperfection, and we feared a hell in which regeneration would be impossible. Our ideas concerning death were confined to these two foolish confines. But today we know that after the grave there is merely a continuation of life. Heaven and hell reside within us. After having passed over from the grave, virtue and vice, sublime expressions and animal impulses, balance and discord, the struggle for spiritual evolution and the potential for failure continue here, and this compels us to seek serenity and prudence. We find ourselves nowhere other than on a different field of variegated matter in other vibratory realms of the planet itself, upon whose surface we have had nearly countless experiences. How can we not therefore balance our hearts in the effective act of solidarity? Obviously, we are not exhorting anyone to dive again into the mire of old. We do not wish for our provident fellow spirits to regress to the status of prodigal children who have intentionally distanced themselves from the Eternal Father, nor do we intend to interfere with the arduous progress of workers of goodwill on their way to the crown of life. We appeal to you only in the sense that you take part in the aid work in the realms of darkness. You are available and have free time while carrying out the ennobling tasks to which you have been called in our spirit colony. Nothing is more reasonable than your taking advantage of the opportunity to plan for your own spiritual progress. On the other hand, in the role of an old coworker in aid missions, I would venture to ask for your widespread interest in those who roam in ‘the valley of the shadow of death,’ awaiting the possible alms of your time on behalf of our fellow beings, who

now face unfortunate situations, not as a result of God's will, but rather because of their own lack of foresight. All the same, who among us has not been careless at one time or another?"

The speaker took an even longer pause and continued:

"We cannot, for the time being, expect greater and more effective cooperation from our incarnate friends. Imprisoned behind the bars of their senses, they are progressing slowly as they learn the laws that govern matter and energy. When invited to visit our edifying circles while away from their physiological instrument, they then return to it, disconcerted by the quick glimpses they managed to store in their memories, and in telling their contemporaries about them, they taint the simple, pure water of the truth with their personal 'points of view' and preferences in the realm of science, philosophy and religion. For instance, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the novelist, brought by friends to the regions closest to earth, returns to his circle of action and outlines aspects that he alleges belong to the planet Venus. Huyghens, the astronomer, mentally receives some information from our spheres of struggle and pens theories referring to life on other worlds, asserting that biological processes on distant orbs are exactly like those on the earth. Teresa d'Avila, the sanctified nun, is transported to the landscape of our plane where tormented souls lament, and returns to her material body describing hell to her listeners and readers. Swedenborg, the great medium, traverses a few sections of our zones of action and portrays the customs of the 'astral dwellings' as best he can, engraving on the narratives the strong characteristics of his personal concepts. Almost all those who have come temporarily to our arena of labor return to human endeavors displaying the experience they went through, painting it with the colors of their inclinations and the state of their soul-mind. Because they are deeply rooted to the 'lower ground' of the 'self', they believe they glimpsed other worlds in situations very similar to those on earth, our marvelous temple, whose appurtenances are not restricted to the sphere of the planet's surface upon which incarnates rest their feet. The earth is also our great mother, whose inviting arms stretch to space beyond her, offering us other arenas for our betterment and redemption."

Altering his tone of voice, he continued:

"Individuals, however, pass through brief periods of life in the corporeal world. The majority are held in the expiatory stations of arduous redemption and are immersed in the disturbing vibrations of suffering and fear. They turn death into a sinister goddess. They portray this natural phenomenon of

renewal with the darkest of colors. Clinging to the emotions of the passing day, they are unable to broaden their hopes, and they regard the temporary separation of death as a terrifying night of bitter farewells. Victims of the ignorance in which they take pleasure, they immerse themselves in forests of darkness, where they lose all their peace of mind, and become delirious prisoners of horrendous hells created by themselves in fervent delusion. How can we hope for their precious collaboration to the extent we desire if, due to their disregard for their own destinies, they plunge daily into the rivers of despair, disenchantment and dread? Let us therefore join hands to help them according to evangelical directives, unveiling new horizons to them and lighting their evolutionary pathways.”

With glowing and tear-clouded eyes – perhaps from remembering scenes from the spheres of darkness, and which were unbeknownst to us – Metelo kept silent for some time, and then responded in an appealing tone:

“Let us remember the Divine Master and not disdain the honor to serve, not according to our personal whims, but rather in conformance with his principles and laws. Vast arenas of work await our fraternal help, and the sowing of the good will produce our own unending happiness! ...”

Noticeably touched by emotion, he spoke for a few more minutes, and then invoked the Divine Energies, drawing out of us tears of overwhelming joy.

Radiant blue rays of light showered down upon the sanctuary, imparting to us the answer from the Higher Planes.

Metelo meditated for a few moments, and then, in a large globe filled with a milky substance, and which was located in the center of the temple, he displayed several live scenes from his arena of action in the lower zones. It was a movie displaying all of the sounds and miniscule anatomic minutiae inherent to the scenes he had witnessed in his ministry of Christian kindness: unfortunate discarnates in precipices of anguish, begging for mercy; assorted monsters, defying ancient mythological descriptions, appearing horrifyingly at the feet of their wretched victims.

In using this advanced image fixation process, the landscapes, observed from such close range, were not just impressive, they were horrible. Inside the milky substance in which they were cast, they took on expressions of indescribable animation. Morose processions of human beings appeared,

stripped of their bodies under obscure and threatening skies that were cut by violent phenomena of a magnetic nature.

For the first time I was observing this sort of demonstration without concealing my emotion. Where were all of these immense ranks of suffering spirits headed? How would the agglomerations of dispirited and semi-unconscious souls, whom I was astonished to see bogged down in dark wells of mire and suffering, provide for themselves?

At a certain moment, the Instructor's voice broke the silence.

Looking at a particularly heartbreaking scene, he exclaimed in a firm voice:

“Many of you know that in those expiatory realms dwell the two spirits who were my beloved parents in my last corporeal experience, and who are still prisoners of torturous memories. However, you must believe that we are not moved by any selfish purpose in giving aid, for the Lord has taught us that our family may be found everywhere.”

I noticed that no one dared to gaze at Metelo during his humble declaration. Feeling deeply moved before that display of evangelical understanding, I noticed the look of warning that Assistant Jeronimo gave me when the living, sound-filled scenes had ended, and I tried to refrain from voicing any further concerns regarding Metelo's private drama, neutralizing my impulses of mere curiosity.

When the work had ended, having taken a little over two hours, including the instructive lecture, several groups were presented to the Instructor by one of the Temple directors.

I got the impression that nearly the whole gathering was made up of spirits who were genuinely interested in voluntarily helping their neighbor. By the greetings and the words they used, I perceived that in the sanctuary there were large and small groups of spirit servants on different missions with multiple objectives. Some of them were dedicated to aiding discarnate criminals; others to helping distressed mothers who had been unexpectedly reaped by the renewals of death; still others showed an interest in atheists because of their remorse-imprisoned consciences. Others were interested in the physically infirm, in those who were agonizing on the earth, in demented souls with no physical bodies, in children having problems in the sphere invisible to human eyes, in disheartened and saddened souls, in varying classes of imbalanced spirits, in lost or wayward missionaries, in spirits bound

to their visceral corpses, and in workers of nature in need of inspiration and care.

Our mentor had a benevolent word of encouragement and esteem for all.

When it was our turn, Jeronimo politely introduced us:

“Metelo, here are three fellow spirits who will be accompanying me shortly on an aid mission.”

“Very good! Very good!” he exclaimed. “May the Divine Servant inspire you.”

He embraced us candidly and asked:

“Are you leaving with a specific obligation?”

“Yes,” confirmed our guide. “Over the next thirty days, we are to assist five of our dedicated coworkers who are ready to discarnate. They have worked faithfully for the cause of the good, and our superiors have entrusted us to attend to them individually.”

“I foresee great success,” Albano Metelo stated, setting his serene gaze upon us.

Displaying spontaneous joy at these words, Jeronimo kindly added:

“I believe in the dedication of my fellow spirits. With me I have an ex-Catholic priest, a nurse and a doctor. We will be four spirit servants on active duty.”

“I understand,” said the Instructor.

“We are authorized to conduct experiments and studies, and eventually to provide help, depending on the circumstances in light of the nature of our work, which will provide us an opportunity to make various observations.”

Metelo gave us a comforting smile full of optimism and confidence, greeted each of us individually, and after warmly embracing our director, he exclaimed:

“May the Master enlighten and guide you.”

Those were his farewell words. Another aid group approached him and we left the Temple of Peace, full of beneficial thoughts about serving our fellow beings in God’s name.

Outside, the night of marvels was truly a silent celebration in which the scent of flowers invited us to the celestial banquet of light.

2

In the Sanctuary of Blessing

On the eve of our departure, Assistant Jeronimo took us to the Sanctuary of Blessing, located in the area reserved for aid services, where, as he explained, we would receive messages from enlightened instructors who reside in regions that are purer and happier than our own.

Our guide did not wish to leave without first having a word of prayer in the Sanctuary – something he always did before embarking on any kind of assistance work for which he was directly responsible.

Thus, according to plan, we all met late in the afternoon in a huge, peculiarly arranged hall, where large, impressive electrical apparatuses at the back of the room caught our eye.

The small gathering was select and distinctive.

The administration of the Sanctuary never allowed receiving more than 20 members of an expedition at a time. Because of this rule, only three aid groups ready to embark on trips to the lower regions were able to take advantage of the opportunity.

One group of twelve, led by a sister of revered demeanor named Sempronia, would be devoted to helping at shelters for homeless children. Another group, headed by Nicanor, a highly educated and dignified assistant, would for some time be taking part in tasks aimed at assisting mentally ill spirits at an old asylum. Finally, there was our group of fellow spirits, responsible for helping a few friends who were in the process of discarnating. That brought the total to twenty spirits.

Assisted by an aide, Instructor Cornelio, the institution's director, conversed with us, displaying simplicity and graciousness, magnanimity and understanding.

“Right from the beginning of our administration,” he explained, “we have tried to establish the utmost good use of time with the least amount of opportunity. In order to make the experience more meaningful, we have not welcomed aid groups indiscriminately for some time now. We bring service groups together according to the situations for which they have been appointed. On the days that we welcome those who are going to render their services down on the earth, we cannot see coworkers entrusted with working exclusively in the zones of discarnate spirits, such as purgatorial areas and others that may be classified as truly horrendous. We must choose and order our words carefully so as to create an environment that is favorable for the service intended. What is said creates the environment and has a defining role in the success or failure of a mission. Furthermore, since this place is devoted to the sublime task of aiding our governing spirits who reside on the higher planes, it would not be fair to divide our attention; rather, with all the energies within our grasp, we must consolidate our spiritual bases so that those governing spirits may bestow the resources we seek. Understanding the extent of the tasks at hand and the respect we owe to those who help us, it seems to us that we need to heal old imbalances of unnecessary and many times disturbing and dissolute verbal interference.”

While we listened spellbound, he paused briefly in his enlightening statements and then continued:

“Moreover, many centuries ago a prophet proclaimed that ‘timely advice is like a golden apple in a silver basket.’² Therefore, if we are truly interested in spiritual evolution, a precise understanding of ‘time’ is our inalienable duty. We must value time and put each item and situation in its proper place so that the Word – the divine power – may act as the Father’s ‘coworker’ in our actions.”

We smiled happily.

“Nothing could be more logical and constructive,” opined Sempronia, the distinguished guide who would for the first time be leading an aid expedition on behalf of incarnate orphans.

The Sanctuary’s director, perhaps realizing how we needed for him to provide clarification about using words, continued:

“It is regrettable that down on earth such limited attention is paid to the power of words, which are currently so highly corrupted among humans. In the corporeal world’s most respectable institutions – according to reliable

information from the authorities who guide us – half of people’s time is spent uselessly on idle and inappropriate conversations, and we mean only the ‘most respectable’ of conversations. Our brothers and sisters in humanity are unaware of the fact that their words create living images that develop in the mental soil onto which they are cast, thereby producing good or bad consequences according to their origin. Of course, these forms live and proliferate, and taking into account the inferiority of human desires and aspirations, such temporary creations can only work destructively through formidable, though invisible, misunderstandings.”

The interest that his definitions sparked in his listeners was clearly obvious. After a slightly longer pause, he continued cautiously:

“Every conversation paves the way for events that are in accordance with its nature. Among the vibratory laws surrounding us on all sides, it is an indirect force of strange and mighty power that always materializes the hidden objectives of whoever assumes intentional control over it. When we were entrusted with assuming the management of this sanctuary, we brought instructions from our Superiors to silence all comments that tend to create elements opposed to the joys of the Divine Blessing. And that is why, thanks to Jesus’ providential love, we have been able to maintain an institute in which our mentors from the higher realms can be sensed. The absence of any unworthy word, along with the continued presence of edifying conversation, facilitates the development of subtle energies in which our divine guides find accessories that can in some way be adapted to our common need for spiritual edification.”

He made a gesture like a storyteller who suddenly remembers an important minute detail and said:

“When we first embarked upon our modest work, we had a sizeable response. At that time, people were coming to the Sanctuary without any inner preparation. These friends continued repeating the earthly scenario, in which devotees seek out temples and churches in the same way that traders search for new markets. We were not to manage spiritual gifts as if we were running a warehouse of benefits catering to self-centeredness. From the first day, however, supported by the authorization that had been granted us, we forcefully struck at the old habit. Over a few days, we spent our time teaching the reverence that was owed to the Lord, the need for inner cleanliness of thought, and the elimination of the ugly habit of attempting subornation of the Divine One with fallacious promises. And when we consciously felt that the

lessons were complete, we began to apply corrective measures. Vibration meters were installed, which indicated the nature of the words that were being used. From then on, it was very easy for us to identify infractors and to bar them from entering the Chamber of Enlightenment, where we say our prayers ...”

Perhaps noticing that some of us were making certain mental evaluations, he remarked, smiling:

“We believe any reference to the imperative for clean thoughts to be unnecessary. Those who seek a place that specializes in blessing cannot harbor ideas of hatred or malediction.”

We immediately understood the purpose of this indirect and subtle teaching, and we kept quiet, forewarned as to the need to safeguard our minds against long-standing evil suggestions.

Desiring to help us express our cheerfulness and cordiality, Cornelio gazed at a large clock that symbolically displayed a fanciful figure of an oversized human eye on its face, on which two luminous rays indicated the hours and minutes, and said in a fraternal tone:

“According to a notification we received several days ago, today we will be visited by a messenger from the upper echelons of the hierarchy. However, we still have some time before this exceptional event. Considering the token of love we owe those who guide us from the higher realms, it would not be proper to send our invocation of blessing either before or after the appointed time. Thus, I invite all the coworkers to make themselves at home ...”

And looking at the three in charge of each mission, he added after some reticence:

“While I come to an agreement in private with the mission leaders, you have about an hour in which to exchange constructive ideas.”

Cornelio then addressed our guides in private, and after splitting into various little groups, we struck up friendly conversations.

Attending to my wishes, Father Hipolito – as we affectionately called him – introduced me to Assistant Barcelos from the team of spirit servants assigned to assisting the mentally ill. He had been a dedicated teacher on the corporeal plane, and had a fond interest in new approaches to psychiatry.

He greeted me most graciously, and after the first few courtesies, he asked kindly:

“Is this the first time you will be taking part in an aid expedition?”

“In fact,” I explained, “it is my first. I have gone along on several other missions to the earth, but only as a student, and with limited opportunities to help out. But now Assistant Jeronimo has accepted my help, and I am very happy to be going along.”

He gave me a captivating look, in which both satisfaction and surprise were evident, and then remarked:

“Work is always beneficial.”

Interested in his advice and explanations, I humbly replied:

“In accompanying aid expeditions as a learner, I had more than one opportunity to visit two large, old asylums for the mentally ill of our country, and I saw first hand the extent of the services set aside for the servants of goodwill in those homes of purification and pain. The nursing activities in them were, in my opinion, some of the most meritorious.”

“Certainly,” he agreed, pleased with my interest, “mental illness is a painful arena of human redemption. I have personal reasons for devoting myself to this branch of spiritual medicine, and I can assure you that it would be hard for us to find as many anguishing dramas and such complex problems anywhere else.”

“And have your efforts been very fruitful?” I asked curiously.

“Yes. I have come to some encouraging conclusions regarding the subject, enabling me to infer that, with the exception of extremely rare cases, all mental anomalies stem from imbalances of the soul. We are far from having a sufficient number of trained workers to effectively help those who are imprisoned in the dungeon of dreadful and bitter obsessions. The number of patients in this area is so great that there is no other resource except resignation. Hence, we continue to assist them superficially, waiting, above all else, for divine providence. In cases of systematic persecution by vindictive and cruel spirits from realms that are unperceivable to ordinary people, we are invariably dealing with either a tragedy that began in the present due to the lack of foresight of the interested parties, or a tragedy that has come from the recent or remote past because of heavy liabilities. If modern psychiatrists were to grasp the secret of such facts, they would start

applying a new treatment based on Christian sentiments rather than resorting to some type of hormonal or electric shock therapy.”

I remembered closely following the assistance rendered to obsessed spirits and added:

“I myself examined a few torturous cases of obsession and possession and was greatly impressed by the near perfect mental connection between persecutor and victim.”

Barcelos made a significant gesture and emphasized:

“An obsession is the terrible living story of a crime, a story that is experienced over and over again. Preceding their accomplices to the grave, co-conspirators and characters in these silent dramas (quite often unknown to other people) come back to the company of their partners in crime because they are terrified by the sinister consequences they must confront beyond the grave ... They instinctively grab onto the magnetic organization of their incarnate fellow spirits, infecting their power centers, weakening their nerves and shortening the vital tonus elimination process because they thirst for the same type of companions with whom they were flung into the abyss. They project sad and dark mental images, in which the compassion of many redeemed souls turning from the higher realms in merciful gestures of intercession and urgent help stands out.”

He paused slightly to gather his thoughts, and proceeded:

“However, I have been observing another area related to this matter lately. Before my return to the spirit plane, and eager for new information concerning the soul-mind aspect of the human personality, I carefully examined Freud’s doctrine. Impressed with the psychological variations of the adolescents under my direct observation, and enthusiastic about solving the profound enigmas that surround terrestrial individuals, I found a whole new world in psychoanalysis. But no matter how much I studied the prodigious collection of effects, I was never fully satisfied with my investigation of the causes in the area of the phenomena I was examining. Despite the fact that I regarded myself as an adherent of the eminent Freiberg professor, only here did I realize that there were links missing in the positivation theory of the origins of psychoses and various other imbalances. ‘Inferiority complexes’, ‘repression’, ‘libido’, and ‘subconscious emersions’ are not factors acquired during the short span of one earthly existence, but instead they are characteristics of a personality that has egressed from past

lives. The subconscious is, in fact, the enlarged vault of our memories, a repository of emotions and desires, impulses and tendencies which are not projected onto the screen of immediate realizations, but which extend well beyond the limited realm of time in which a corporeal body moves. The subconscious represents the stratification of all the struggles resulting in mental and emotional acquisitions after the utilization of many bodies. Therefore, Sigmund Freud's theories, as well as those of his followers, are lacking in the principles of reincarnation and the knowledge of the true location of nervous disturbances, whose origin rarely lies in the ordinary biological arena, but almost invariably in the pre-existing perispiritual body, the carrier of serious congenital disturbances that have resulted from moral deficiencies cultivated through frenetic attachments by the reincarnate spirit during past lives. Sexual psychoses, inborn tendencies toward delinquency (so thoroughly studied by Lombroso), outrageous desires, and eccentricity (oftentimes unfortunate and dangerous), all represent modalities of patients' spiritual heritage, a heritage that resurfaces from times gone by due to ignorance or the personality's own intentional carelessness in discordant circles."

There was a pleasant pause, which I took advantage of in order to gather my thoughts on the subject, taking into consideration the constructive arguments that the Assistant had made for the benefit of my own enlightenment.

I recalled my limited knowledge of Freudian doctrine, and returned mentally to my old office, where I had been sought out many times by clients who had been attacked by strange and unknown mental illnesses, and who had been helped by my humble notions of medicine, in spite of my lack of specialization in that area. There were varying degrees of maniacal, hysterical and schizophrenic individuals, in whose minds there was still enough lucidity for a pilgrimage through scientific books on the matter. They had devoured Freud's teachings; however, if his theories were valuable for processes of analysis, they did not offer any kind of substantial and effective help to the patient. The wound had been uncovered, but there was no healing balm. The painful "cyst" had been pointed out, but there was no "scalpel" for a beneficial surgery. For this reason, Barcelos' explanations, if utilized by earth's Christian doctors, could complete the meritorious work that the Freudian theory had brought to academic circles. Before I could formulate further inner considerations, however, he said:

“I have my duties toward the mentally imbalanced; nevertheless, my greatest effort lately has been in the area of inspiring humanitarian doctors so that unintentionally disturbed individuals can be helped in time. After the mental illness per se has been verified, in the majority of cases the soul-mind related disharmony also ends. It is very hard to restore to perfect mental health disturbed patients who have previously been diagnosed as mentally ill, although our battle for the full recovery of the largest possible percentage of patients has been unceasing. Prior to complete imbalance setting in, there is a lengthy period of time in which psychiatric help could be providential and effective. Therefore, wouldn't it be an important endeavor for us to indirectly guide a well-intentioned doctor indirectly in order for him or her to help the likely-disturbed patient in time by using a comforting word and restorative kindness? Countless numbers of persons remain on the corporeal plane, seeking answers to the profound problems related to the being per se. Regarding the conclusions of human scientific writers – whose points of view differ regarding minute details – in the sphere of earthly spiritual development there are five classes of psychoses: paranoid, perverse, mythomaniac, cyclothymic and hyper-emotive. These encompass, respectively, persecution mania and delusions of grandeur, moral imbalances and weaknesses, hysteria and mythomania, fits of depression, phobias and anxiety attacks.”

The speaker smiled, paused for a moment, and then continued:

“This is the scientific definition used by our colleagues, who, just as we ourselves used to do in the past, have only the recourse of diagnosing and analyzing in minutest anatomical detail. Arabesques of gold upon the sands of the Sahara would not make the desert any less arid. The same applies to shiny terminology regarding the dark portrait of suffering. We must make the moralizing concept of the congenital personality – which undergoes gradual improvement – known around the world by divulging new propositions that transverse people's realm of fallible reasoning and penetrate people's hearts, thereby restoring their hope for an eternal future and rebuilding the self on its essential foundations. Reincarnationist ideas will renew the landscape of life on earth, not only conferring upon individuals the weapons needed for their battle against their own inferior conditions, but also providing them with an effective, healing remedy. Many centuries ago Plotinus affirmed the fact that all antiquity accepted as a certainty the doctrine that if the soul commits wrongs, it is compelled to expiate them by suffering in the dark regions and returning thereafter to other bodies in order to embark upon its trials once again. Thus, our human fellow spirits regrettably lack the knowledge of the

transitory nature of the physical body, and the knowledge of eternal life, incurred debt and necessary redemption through many experiences and repetitions.”

Barcelos was silent for a few moments, while I pondered the extent of his expertise. It was with good reason that he held the title of Assistant because he was not merely a helpful brother but an in-depth specialist in the subject to which he had avidly dedicated himself. His discourse was equal to a quick course in psychiatry from a new perspective, and it was my duty to make use of it for my own benefit for the related tasks of everyday service.

Wanting to convey my admiration and contentment, I remarked gratefully:

“In hearing your ideas, I realize that missionaries of the good, wherever they might be, are always sowers of light.”

But he appeared not to have heard my word of praise, and after a long pause, continued in a different tone:

“You, my friend, examined a few cases of obsession involving invisible agents and incarnate patients, and were impressed with the mental magnetization between them. Right now we are walking on different ground, however. We are referring to people’s need for enlightenment before their fellow spirits of the evolutionary plane. In the sphere of imprecise memories, which manifest as sympathies and antipathies, we can see the landscape of obsessions transferred to the corporeal arena, where, obeying vague and innate recollections, men and women, joined together through kinship or moral commitments, become one another’s persecutors and unconscious torturers. Domestic animosity and seemingly irreconcilable temperaments between parents and children, husbands and wives, and relatives and siblings are the result of repeated conflicts of the subconscious, which has been led to corrective repetitions of the distant past. Brought together once again in the expiatory or reparatory struggle, the old characters in these dramas feel and see on their inner mental screens complicated and difficult situations of times past, despite the dark contours of their memories, carrying within themselves heavy burdens of misunderstanding, currently defined as ‘inferiority complexes’. Identifying within itself inner issues and situations that are incomprehensible to others, the incarnate spirit who acquires memories of its own past – however imprecise – unavoidably lends itself to being a candidate for mental illness. In this category, my friend, we have down on the planet an

increasingly higher percentage of potentially mentally ill people in need of the help of psychiatrists and neurologists who, in turn, maintain a position opposite the truth, prisoners to academic concepts and the strict conventions of official precepts. These, in particular, are the patients in whom I am most closely interested for my personal studies. They are the unnamed victims of the world's ignorance, the completely misunderstood unfortunates, who, in incipient madness, continue gradually on their way to the asylum or the bed of unknown infirmities merely because they lack the living water of understanding and the mental lucidity that would show them the path of patience and tolerance for the benefit of their own redemption.”

“And are there many such distressing cases?” I inquired, lacking an argument at the same high level as the ideas I had heard.

The Assistant smiled and explained:

“Oh! My dear friend, the extent of human suffering in this sense is boundless.”

Barcelos was going to continue, but a distinct bell rang, summoning us to prepare for prayer.

We needed to heed it.

3

The Sublime Visitor

Gathered in a small, well-lit room, I noticed that the air was imbued with a sweet, lingering fragrance.

Cornelio recommended that we pray fervently and harbor pure thoughts. Leading the way, the Instructor stopped in front of a small chamber made of a substance similar to clear, transparent glass.

I studied it carefully. It was a sort of crystalline chamber, inside of which two or three people could easily fit.

Easily distinguishable by his pure white tunic, the director of the Sanctuary held out his right hand toward us and exclaimed in a serious tone:

“The emissaries of Providence must not sow the light without benefit; it would be a serious wrong on our part to receive divine grace uselessly. In meeting with us, the Father’s messengers exercise sacrifice and self-denial; they endure the vibratory shocks of our lower planes; they retake the form they abandoned long ago; they humble themselves to be like us, and so that we may become as elevated as they are, they see fit to ignore our weaknesses in order for us to become participants in their glorious experiences ...”

He interrupted his flow of words, gazed at us in silence and continued in a different tone of voice:

“We understand that there, on the outside, faced with the moral ties that still bind us to the corporeal realms, receiving past recollections from afar is almost unavoidable. Memories pluck the strings of our emotions and we become attuned to past memories of an inferior order. Here, however, in the Sanctuary of Blessing, it is vital to abide by a steadfast attitude of serenity and respect. Such an environment provides the foundation for the emission of pure energies, and for that reason we will hold all fellow spirits present responsible for any unharmonious minutia in the work to be accomplished. So

let us express the loftiest thoughts possible regarding the reverence we owe our Most High Father! ...”

To any other class of onlookers, Instructor Cornelio might have appeared excessively methodical and strict, but not to us; we could sense his profound sincerity and deeply-rooted love for all things sacred.

After a long pause during which we were to prepare ourselves mentally, he humbly continued:

“Let us project our mental energies into the crystalline chamber. The image that appears will be a symbolic landscape in which still waters, personifying peace, nourish a robust tree, symbolizing life. I will be responsible for creating the trunk, while the mission heads will intertwine their creative energies to form a peaceful lake.”

And addressing us in particular – the most humble coworkers – he added:

“You will create the branches and leaves of the tree, and the vegetation surrounding the serene waters, as well as the characteristics of the stretch of sky that must cover the mental painting.”

After a slight pause, he concluded:

“This is the scene that we will offer the distinguished visitor who will talk to us in a few minutes. Let’s pay attention to the signals.”

Two assistants stationed themselves at attention next to the small chamber, and at the sounding of a harmonious alarm, we all entered into deep concentration, emitting the power of our innermost energies.

Under the pressure of my own effort, I felt that my mind was shifting toward the crystal chamber, into which it seemed like I had entered and was now placing tufts of grass next to the image of the lake that would be appearing ... Using my active powers of imagination, I remembered the species of plant that I wanted to be part of that temporary creation, and brought it from the terrestrial past to that sublime instant. I structured all of the minute details of the roots, leaves and flowers, and I worked intensely within myself, reliving my memory and attaching it to the picture as accurately as possible ...

When we were given the signal to stop, I retook my natural position as observer in order to examine the results of the experience. Oh, how

wonderful! ... There before my eyes was an entirely transformed chamber. Waters of indescribable beauty and a marvelous sky-blue color reflected a corner of the sky, bathing the roots of a venerable tree, whose trunk silently told of its greatness. Extraordinary miniatures of cumulus and nimbus clouds stood in the sky, seeming to hover far away from us ... The banks of the lake, however, appeared nearly barren, and the branches of the trunk looked scantily dressed.

The Instructor hurriedly began speaking again and addressed us sternly:

“My friends, your task has not been fully completed. Pay close attention to the uncompleted details and give a more effective outward expression to your inner power! You still have fifteen minutes to finish your work.”

No further explanation was needed for us to understand what he meant, and we once again concentrated on consolidating the minute details that were required to complete the scenery.

I tried to imprint more energy on my mental creation and sought to place tiny flowers on the modest branches as quickly as possible, remembering my gardening duties in the beloved home that I had left behind on earth. I prayed and asked Jesus to teach me to complete the task of those who wanted the blessing of his divine love in that Sanctuary, and when the alarm sounded once again, I must confess that I was brought to tears.

The striking likeness of the grass that my wife and children had so admired while in my company in the world now adorned the banks of the lake with a marvelous shade of green, and delicate blue flowers, similar to wild forget-me-nots, had sprung up in abundance ...

The tree was covered with a rich covering of leaves and exceptionally beautiful vegetation completed the picture, which now seemed worthy of a first-rate artist on the earth.

Cornelio smiled, displaying great satisfaction, and instructed the two assistants to keep their hands firmly on the chamber. At that moment, and as if an unknown magnetic procedure had gone into action, our collective painting started to show signs of temporary life. Something light and imponderable, like the caressing breath of nature, softly rustled the great tree, making the bushes and tiny plants sway as they were reflected in the deep blue water, which gently rippled from time to time ...

My grass was now so alive and so beautiful that the painful longing for my old home suddenly threatened my still-fragile heart. Weren't those the same tiny flowers that my wife used to put in my secluded study every day? Weren't they the same ones that made up the delicate bouquets that my children used to give me every Sunday morning? Powerful memories overcame me, unexpectedly oppressing my soul, and I asked myself what mystery would make a spirit who had been enriched with new observations and values, and who was now breathing in the highest realms of intelligence, feel the need to return to the tiny sphere of the heart – like the luxuriant and stately forest that cannot go without a single condensed drop of water to moisten its roots ... I felt the poorly-concealed longing to compulsively snatch my family away from the earth and bring them back to be with me in a new home – where there was no separation or death – and enable them to experience the joys of the life eternal ... I was close to tears, but a glance from Jeronimo was all it took for me to pull myself together again.

I cast aside every anxious thought and was able to assume once more my position as a coworker focused on the edifying events at hand.

Standing in front of the living landscape while we remained seated, Cornelio lifted his arms toward heaven and prayed:

“Father of the infinite creation, in your mercy allow your heavenly messengers once again to be bearers of your celestial inspiration to this place, which is consecrated to the joys of your blessing! ... O Lord, fount of all wisdom, dispel the darkness that still remains in our hearts, and which prevents us from beholding the glorious vision of the future you have in store for us. Let majestic, lofty thoughts of trust vibrate spotlessly in our midst and enable us to sense the beneficent current of your infinite kindness, which cleanses our barely-awakened minds still ridden with dark memories of the carnal world! ... Help us to worthily welcome your devout emissary! ...”

Concentrating on the work at hand, the Instructor continued in another tone of voice:

“Above all, O Father, bless your children departing on the road to lower spheres to sow the good. Share with these humble representatives of your greatness your gifts of infinite love and inexhaustible wisdom so that they may fulfill your holy designs ... Above all other bestowals, however, provide them some extent of your divine tolerance, your sublime indulgence and your infinite understanding so that, without desperation or despondency, they may

fulfill their fraternal duties in relation to those who still ignore your laws and who suffer the consequences of their cruel transgressions! ...”

The Sanctuary’s guide fell silent, and in the midst of the imposing stillness of the chamber we noticed that the scenery that had been formed from our mental substance had begun to glow inexplicably even in its minutest contours.

I had the feeling that a small sun was about to appear in a corner of the sky in the extraordinary picture. Resplendent rays pierced the emerald background and were reflected in the water.

Cornelio, with his arms raised to heaven, but without any kind of ritualistic undertones (in light of the spontaneous simplicity of his gestures), exclaimed:

“Greetings to our Beloved Father’s messenger!”

At that moment, before our astonished eyes, someone appeared inside the chamber between the vegetation and the sky. Wearing a lily-white cloak, he resembled a priest of some unknown sect. With his kindly old man’s face, he appeared with a halo of indescribable light, and we remained entranced and captivated by the expression in his eyes in a mixed feeling of reverence and enchantment that made it impossible for us to mentally escape his sublime presence.

We could see only the upper portion of his body, giving me the impression that the lower part was naturally hidden in the abundant vegetation. His arms and hands, though, were revealed in all their anatomically minute detail because with his right hand he blessed us with a wide gesture while holding in his other hand a small roll of radiant parchments, allowing us to see a golden cord tied to his waist.

Visibly moved, the director of the Sanctuary greeted him by name:

“Esteemed Asclepios, be with us!”

In a clear, attractive voice, the emissary wished us the peace of Christ, and then spoke to us in a tone that could not be defined in human language (heeding the imperatives of my conscience, I will refrain from rendering any incomplete and imperfect translation).

We listened to him with intense feeling, and none of us were able to hold back our tears. The words of that wonderful messenger, who had arrived from

the higher realms to bring us the divine blessing, indescribably touched our souls and awakened our eternal spirits to the infinite glory of God and immortal life.

I would be unable to describe what was happening within me. I had never heard anyone with such a mysterious and fascinating magnetic power for instilling teachings as that messenger possessed.

Upon blessing us at the end of his wonderful speech, tiny specks of silvery light radiated from his right hand in the shape of miniscule stars, which he cast over us, piercing our chest and forehead, and enabling us to experience the inenarrable joy of someone who happily and deeply inhales vital and renewing breaths of life.

All of us wanted that divine moment to last forever, but everything led us to believe that the messenger was about to leave.

However, interpreting the thought of the majority, Cornelio spoke to him and humbly inquired if the brothers and sisters who were present could ask him a few questions.

The celestial herald acquiesced, smiling in a silent gesture that made us feel at ease, giving me the impression that he had been awaiting such a request.

Sister Sempronia, who for the first time was leading the spiritual aid group to help orphans, was the first to consult him:

“Venerable friend,” she said with clear sincerity, “down on earth there are some coworkers who are hoping for a word of incentive and encouragement from us in order for them to continue carrying out the services to which they are wholeheartedly devoted. For quite some time now, they have been experiencing outright persecution and have been tolerating the continuous sarcasm of adversaries who wound their sensitive spirits, attacking their best efforts through countless acts of malice. Of course, they have not yielded to these ghosts of darkness and they continue to mobilize their energies in the work of Christian endurance ... Acting as a coworker on this spiritual aid expedition, which I will now be leading for the first time, I know firsthand the dedication which these sisters are displaying in their sublime work for the good, but I cannot ignore the fact that they have been heroically and faithfully suffering from the onslaught of cold-hearted, cruel enemies for almost thirty years now.”

After a short silence that nobody dared interrupt, Sister Sempronia concluded by asking:

“What should we tell them, my venerable friend? What enlightening and comforting words would uphold their courage in such a long battle? With souls bent on our duties, we await your generously opportune advice.”

We then witnessed something unexpected. The messenger listened patiently and kindly, displaying great kindness and interest on his face, and when Sempronia had finished consulting him, he purposefully took a sheet from amongst the pristine white parchments that he had brought, and held it out for us all to read Matthew 5:44:

“But I say unto you: Love your enemies; bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and slander you.”

This clarifying and informative act could not have been more direct or instructive.

A few moments went by, and then Sempronia humbly exclaimed:

“I understand, venerable friend!”

The emissary, displaying no airs like those who teach out of self-pride, commented:

“When they are properly understood and welcomed in a Christian manner, adversaries comprise invaluable help on our journey toward divine union.”

This verbal synthesis condensed explanations that would only be reasonable in short speeches.

In my opinion, despite his beautiful and spiritually uplifting teaching, we felt that any prolonged questioning on our part would be unadvisable. However, Brother Raimundo, from the spiritual aid group devoted to assisting the mentally ill, took the initiative and asked:

“Tolerant friend, what should I do when faced with the added troubles confronting me in my duties? Having an interest in the scope of our responsibilities involving earth’s mentally unstable, I have been attending to a certain group of incarnate brothers and sisters who have not understood their evangelical obligations as they should. In fact, they ask for our spiritual cooperation by saying nice words, but on practical grounds they are far from

any verbal expressions of consoling belief. They enjoy offensive arguments, foster sectarianism, and greatly value the inferior individualism that disregards other people's efforts no matter how ennobling they might be. They almost always yield to unending quarrels and spend their time studying means which will enable their own personal limitations to prevail. No matter how much we try to teach them humility – not using ourselves as examples but rather Christ's eternal example – the more they act as unsparing critics, not only of each other but also of areas and situations, people and things that are of no concern to them, thus inciting maliciousness and discord, jealousy and spiritual laxity. Nonetheless, they meet regularly and call us to help out with their work. So honorable guide, what are we to do so that even worse disturbances do not take hold?"

The messenger waited until Raimundo had finished his queries, and then he very calmly repeated the previous procedure. Once again we were presented with another parchment inscribed with I Timothy 6:11 by the apostle Paul:

"But you, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, charity, patience and meekness."

Raimundo remained in expectation, looking as though he had not fully understood the warning as he should have, but he did not have to wait very long for the visitor to provide him with a synthesized explanation:

"Disciples who follow the Master's virtues, applying them to themselves, flee from the futilities of the outer plane and take shelter in their inner sanctuary, assisting our disturbed, improvident, quarrelsome and ungrateful brothers and sisters without becoming contaminated themselves."

In registering Asclepios' wise words, Raimundo appeared to awaken to the truth and murmured with slight disappointment:

"I will take full advantage of the lesson."

Once again there was silence.

Sister Luciana, however, who was part of our small group, spoke up and asked:

"Enlightened mentor, this is the first time that I am going down to the earth on a clearly-defined spiritual aid mission. Could you perchance provide me with the guidance I need?"

The emissary, who seemed to have brought biblical answers that he had prepared beforehand, unfolded another sheet and, surprised, we read I Thessalonians 4:9 by the Apostle to the Gentiles:

“But as for fraternal charity, I have no need to write to you, since you have been taught by God that you are to love one another.”

Somewhat confused, Luciana respectfully remarked:

“I see, I see ...”

“Practically applied,” the messenger politely commented, “the Word teaches us to improvise resources of the good in the most difficult of situations.”

Once again, there was an acute stillness in the chamber. Perhaps due to our very bad habit of engaging in lengthy, pointless conversations – a habit that we had acquired while living on the earth – we were unable to find much enchantment in his forthright, direct answers, which in no way flattered our domineering individualism.

After a few heavy moments had passed, we witnessed the kindness and sensitivity of the director of the Sanctuary of Blessing. Noting that Sempronia, Raimundo and Luciana were targets of our indiscreet curiosity, Cornelio asked Asclepios a question as if he were a mere learner:

“What can we do to preserve joy in our work, perseverance in the good and devotion to the truth?”

Recognizing his act of fraternal love, the messenger studied him with an approving and sympathetic smile and displayed another parchment containing I Thessalonians 5:16:

“Rejoice always.”

Then, he cheerfully said:

“Trust in the Divine Power is the basis of the Christian joy that we should never lose.”

Instructor Cornelio pondered for a few moments, and humbly pleaded:

“Teach us evermore, venerable brother! ...”

Minutes passed without anyone else saying a word. Then, showing that he intended to leave, the sublime visitor remarked pleasantly:

“To the degree that we assimilate our own responsibilities, we realize that direct inspiration during times of difficulty and achievement along the way should be sought from earth’s Supreme Guide. Each spirit – heir and child of the Father Most High – is a world in itself with its own laws and characteristics. Only the Master has enough power to chart individual instructions for his disciples.”

Soon thereafter, he lovingly blessed us, wishing us godspeed.

Comforted and happy, we watched the messenger withdraw, leaving us enveloped in a wave of unexplicably sweet-smelling fragrance.

Both assistants, who had remained at their posts, removed their hands from the chamber, and after they had performed various magnetic operations, the mental picture disappeared and the crystalline chamber returned to its original appearance.

Once again able to converse freely, many questions were tormenting my mind. I could not contain myself. With Jeronimo’s permission, and leading some fellow spirits who were as curious and questioning as I myself, I approached Cornelio and poured forth a copious number of questions. He welcomed me benevolently and said:

“Asclepios belongs to redeemed communities of the Plane of the Immortals in the highest regions of earth’s spiritual realm. He lives far above our notions of form, and in conditions that are inconceivable to our current concept of life. He has already lost all direct contact with the earth per se, and could only make himself felt there through messengers and missionaries of great power. His sacrifice in coming to visit us is to be appreciated, despite our improved position in relation to incarnate humans. He rarely comes here. However, at times, other mentors of the same category visit us out of fraternal mercy.”

“Couldn’t we in turn go in search of Asclepio’s plane in order to know its grandeur and sublimity?” I asked.

“Due to natural work merit,” the Instructor assured us, “many of our fellow spirits are awarded wonderful trips, not just to the higher realms of the planet that serves as our dwelling, but also to the spheres of other worlds ...”

He smiled and added:

“We mustn’t forget, however, that most go on such excursions as mere travelers in a stimulating process of personal effort, similar to young students

passing quickly through technical and administrative institutes of great nations. There are still very few children from this planet who are worthy enough to represent it on other orbs and circles of life in our system.

I was not yet completely satisfied, and continued by asking:

“But won’t Asclepios reincarnate on earth ever again?”

The Instructor made a meaningful gesture and explained:

“If he so desired, he might reincarnate on an extremely beneficent mission, but at intervals of five to eight centuries between reincarnations.”

“Oh, my God!” I exclaimed. “How grand such a state of elevation must be!”

“It is a sacred motivation for all of us,” our mentor added attentively.

“Are we to believe,” I asked in amazement, “that that is the highest level of spiritual development in the universe?”

The director of the sanctuary smiled compassionately at my naiveté and considered:

“Not at all. Asclepios is associated with other self-denying mentors of terrestrial humankind; he is part of the highest echelon of the community to which he belongs, but in reality he is still a spirit of our planet, although working in the highest realms of life. We must travel for a long time in the evolutionary arena before we can follow in his footsteps. However, we believe that our sublime visitor longs to be part of the board of representatives of our orb in the glorious communities that inhabit Jupiter and Saturn, for example. In turn, the members of those orbs anxiously await the moment in which they will be summoned to the divine assemblies that govern our entire solar system. Among these latter are those who carefully and watchfully await the minute in which they will be called to work with those who maintain the constellation Hercules, to whose family we belong. Those who guide our group of stars naturally aspire one day to make up the crown of celestial spirits who support life and guide it in the galactic system through which we move. And did you know, my friend, that our Milky Way, a breeding ground and fount of millions of worlds, is just one single detail of the Divine Creation, a mere corner of the universe?! ...”

These notions about the infinite closed the enchanting meeting in the Sanctuary of Blessing. Cornelio shook our hands, wishing us peace and

happiness, and then we said goodbye, deeply impressed yet torn between feelings of nostalgia and gratitude.

4

“Casa Transitoria”

After a routine journey over ordinary pathways, we arrived at a foggy region, where a suffocating dismalness seemed to predominate. I had passed through similar places many times before, but it had taken only a few minutes. Now, however, I was being compelled to make a long, horizontal march. Having the imperatives of the mission in mind, Assistant Jeronimo was looking for a place known as Casa Transitoria de Fabiano.³

It was a large charity institution in an area where, in grueling suffering, recently discarnated souls huddled in the vicinity of the earth’s surface. According to what the head of the expedition explained to us, it had been founded by Fabiano de Cristo, a devout servant of charity, who had belonged to an old group of clerics from Rio de Janeiro, and who had discarnated many years earlier. Although founded by him, from time to time it was entrusted to other high order benefactors concerned with evangelical assistance duties involving spirits recently disconnected from the corporeal plane.

“At *Casa Transitoria*,” Jeronimo explained to us, “we will first render help to that organization to the best of our ability, and then we will help the brothers and sisters for whom we are responsible. If it were not for such resting places of love, our work would be much more difficult. We rarely find low order spirits capable of getting through a region like this one immediately after physical death. Almost all of them are completely bewildered for the first few days. If left to their own devices, they would inevitably be either attacked by evil spirits or skillfully dissuaded by them to leave the moral path leading to the gradual restoration of their inner energies; hence the need for these fraternal shelters, where heroic souls dedicated to the supreme good consecrate themselves to the sanctified duties of assistance and watch-care.”

After a short pause, he concluded:

“In addition, at *Casa Transitoria* we will find all of the equipment needed to carry out the work for which we are responsible.”

Although curious, I kept quiet and waited.

Before long, we were face to face with an enormously large structure shrouded in shadow. The building showed no artistic concern or good taste in its construction. There were neither trees nor gardens surrounding it. The simple, low building could barely be made out in the dense fog.

Detecting my surprise, Jeronimo explained:

“The name of the institute, Andre, speaks for itself. We are looking at a hospitable, transitory house, dedicated to providing emergency spiritual aid. Your surprise is natural; this is a mobile refuge, which assists spirits according to the conditions of the surroundings. It endures ongoing attacks by desperate and suffering spirits, who have been condemned by their own consciences to rebelliousness and pain. Its magnetic defenses require a large number of workers, and the compassionate and selfless friends who assist here spend day and night alongside torment. Even so, the work at this house is highly valuable and spiritually constructive. This building of Christian worthiness serves as the meeting point for numerous expeditions of devoted brothers and sisters who are on their way either to the earth’s surface or to the dark realms, where anguished and ignorant spirits struggle in pain as they make lengthy sojourns in dark abysses. Moreover, *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano*, like other redemptive institutions serving as veritable temples of spiritual aid in such regions, is also a valuable point of connection with spirit cities in the upper realms.”

At that moment, and before Jeronimo could continue his explanation, we reached the magnetic barriers a few yards away from the access gate to the inside of the building.

After being met by attentive workers, who did not hesitate to allow us to pass, we activated a small device that immediately connected us to the obliging gatekeeper.

Shortly thereafter, we were standing in the presence of a gracious figure. I would not have imagined that the institution would be managed by the sensitive hands of a woman. Sister Zenobia was a mature looking woman with a mane of black hair. Through eyes overflowing with light, she provided us with living information about her energy and admirable ability to work.

She greeted us politely and, without wasting a lot of words, went straight to the point of our visit:

“I was informed yesterday,” she said kindly, “that your mission would be arriving today, and we rejoice greatly at your visit.”

“At your service,” Jeronimo responded politely. “This shelter of love and peace will assist us by providing refuge for a few convalescing wards, and we in turn wish to be of some use to it.”

Zenobia enveloped us in a warm, inviting smile, and after a few quick moments of silence, stated:

“We accept your cooperation. I recognize the presence of a harmonious group, and since the end of last week I have been waiting for an opportunity not only to help the suffering community of a nearby abyss, but also to rescue a certain very unfortunate brother of ours. He is someone whom I once held particularly dear, and who only recently was discovered in a remote region of fallen spirits. After overcoming many obstacles, we brought him to an area near the house; however, the perilous state he is in at the moment does not authorize us to give him shelter but only indirect protection. We have already established measures to secure the transfer of this unfortunate friend to the earth’s surface, where, with divine assistance, he will soon be detained in expiatory reincarnation. However, I will personally require your fraternal collaboration on behalf of this wayward spirit ...”

“Of course,” Jeronimo offered gratefully, “it will be our pleasure.”

Pointing to the dedicated nurse who was accompanying us, he added:

“Sister Luciana will remain with us. She may be extremely helpful in this particular case due to her highly-developed clairvoyant faculties.”

The director of *Casa Transitoria* gazed serenely at our coworker, smiled lovingly and continued:

“Indeed! Some spirits, like the one I am referring to, have sunk to such morally brutish levels that they are barely able to detect our voices, and since they are unable to make us out by sight due to the vibratory barriers they have created for themselves, they doubt our friendship and our elevated purposes for helping them. Luciana’s cooperation will be extremely valuable to me in the present situation.”

I was unable to disguise my uneasiness at that detail. As the person in charge of such an institution, why would Sister Zenobia need our help, especially when it came to clairvoyance? Was she perchance unable to examine the problems of suffering and fallen souls herself?

Unable to suppress my question, I asked in surprise:

“Oh! So does that mean that the benefactors working here cannot see as well as they would like?”

Assistant Jeronimo was the one who answered me.

“Above all else, Andre,” he said compassionately, “one must realize that, despite her extensive spirit sight, Sister Zenobia has her own personal reasons for calling upon Providence. As for the rest, we mustn’t forget the imperatives of specialization.”

His answer hit me like a cold shower. I regretted having asked such an inconsiderate question. Nevertheless, to complete his lesson, Jeronimo continued:

“Let me explain further: Father Hipolito is currently fully devoted to interpreting the divine laws in his work of educating those spirits who are still unaware of them, whereas Sister Zonobia provides group assistance to sufferers in this house of Christian love. They could of course both use clairvoyance with widespread benefits for their fellow spirits, but it would clearly be detrimental to their immediate duties. That is not the case with Luciana who, because of her intensive one-on-one contact with patients over many years of beneficent activity, has specialized in delving into their mental world, bringing their ideas, past experiences and inner plans to light. If we were unexpectedly to come in contact with her clientele, we would see “something”, although not nearly as much or as well as could be seen by her due to her extensive experience. Luciana, in turn, would immediately be able to interpret the divine teachings and guide this house “somehow”, but not to the extent or as well as Father Hipolito and Sister Zenobia, considering their vast knowledge of the matter. All spiritual acquisition demands perseverance in study, observation and applied service. And we must realize that this does not annul the need to continue learning. An extraordinary musician could be a budding student of chemistry and one day excel in that area of science just as he did in the art of sound. However, he will not do so without spending time, effort and good will. Besides, the Master himself affirmed that humans will find what they are seeking.”

Smiling at my question, which had incited such rudimentary instruction, he concluded:

“Searching for spiritual gifts for the life eternal does not represent the same type of work as does searching for lost objects on the earth.”

Sister Zenobia interrupted to add kindly:

“That is right. We cannot spiritually build all of the noble qualities all at once. Each worker who is loyal to his or her duties is of specific, undeniable worth. The Divine Work is eternal.”

Then returning to the initial line of conversation, she continued:

“Under favorable conditions, when we have clairvoyants available for rescue work in the abyss, we can achieve extremely effective results. However, due to the wide array of tasks, there are very few workers of such nature, and they are rarely willing to serve in the dark terrain of infernal anguish.”

Luciana was asked personally to take part in the conversation and she said that she would be happy to lend a hand. She told us that she had sought to develop her faculties in the past in order to help the spirit of her father, who had discarnated during a civil war. He had played an important role in a public uprising, and was still in the lower zones, infatuated with political passions. After the patient help she had given him, he had amended his emotions, making it possible for him to reincarnate in a large Brazilian city. Luciana herself would follow her former father as soon as he was able to set up a new home so that they could rekindle their alliance of caring and love in accordance with the plans they had created together.

Zenobia listened attentively.

Perhaps realizing that the conversation had taken a personal turn and that the house’s director most likely had other commitments to attend to shortly, Jeronimo interrupted the conversation and addressed her politely:

“We are pleased at the prospect of some friendly cooperation in working alongside you. We understand the magnitude of your most-worthy mission, and if we are to depend so much on your generous shelter in this house, it is our obligation to cooperate with you in endeavors where our humble collaboration might be useful. We will head for the corporeal realm tomorrow, and as soon as we are able to help liberate the first brother into your care, Andre and I will remain for a while between the earth’s surface and

this blessed shelter, while Hipolito and Luciana will remain here with you, watching over convalescents and helping with pressing tasks.”

“I am greatly pleased at the prospect!” the director said, clearly satisfied.

At that moment, an unseen bell rang shrilly with a peculiar sound.

Not more than five seconds later, someone noisily entered the room. It was one of the guards, who announced hastily:

“Sister Zenobia, barbarous spirits are approaching. The warning needle is pointing northward. They should be approximately two miles away by now.”

The director turned slightly pale, but did not betray her emotion with any other gesture that might reveal weakness.

“Turn on the outside lights!” she ordered. “All the lights! And activate the electrical force fields to reinforce the repulsion zone to the north. The invaders will have to go around.”

The messenger hurriedly left the room while a heavy silence fell over us. Luciana was ashen. Jeronimo and Zenobia’s faces displayed alarming concern. Was I unaware of some of the facts? Could it be that recognizably evil spirits were also organizing expeditions similar to the ones we were organizing for the good? What kinds of spirits might these be to instill such concern in the enlightened and virtuous leaders of our work, and such great terror in the assistants of that house of Christian love? I had been stirred by the pained and uncertain expression on the face of the assistant who had delivered the news. Could the number of evildoers of darkness be so great as to warrant such fear? I felt that my power of reasoning was too limited to handle the immense array of questions flourishing in my mind.

Looking through a tiny opening, I noticed that enormous searchlights were being turned on outside, resembling the lights of a large ship being assaulted by dense fog in perilous waters.

We were able to make out the characteristic sounds informing us that the electric devices had been turned on.

“It is unfortunate,” Zenobia exclaimed, obviously trying to restore our peace of mind, “that, having strayed from the good to devote themselves to crime, so many human minds have dedicated themselves here to pursuing ruinous and destructive activities.”

None of us dared say a word.

The director, though, forced a smile and continued:

“The biblical tragedy of the fall of the radiant angels into the abysses of darkness is repeated daily, even though we cannot perceive it directly. So many philosophical and scientific minds are dedicated to oppression and tyranny! So many souls of profound intellectual worth hurl themselves off the cliff of blind and fatal forces! Cast into the abyss because they have intentionally strayed, these unfortunate beings rarely repent or attempt a beneficial withdrawal ... Most of the time, amidst the terrible dissatisfaction of selfishness and vanity, they rise up against the Creator himself, dishonoring themselves in a long-drawn-out war against his divine works. They gather in dark, appalling legions and engage in riotous actions that challenge the most astute human imagination and confirm the old mythological descriptions of hell.

Possibly noticing my inner distress at her remarks, Sister Zenobia added:

“But the day will come when all of these wicked, discarnate minds will be transformed into spirits enlightened by the divine good. All evil is temporary – even if it lasts for millennia. We are merely fighting for God’s immortal victory against the inferiority of the “self” in our lives. Every expression of ignorance is an illusion. Only wisdom is eternal.”

I would in turn like to have formulated a number of questions, but my concerns had become heavier.

“A few centuries of terrestrial reincarnations are hardly enough time to re-educate minds that have been twisted by crime,” continued the director. “It is for that reason that corrective work continues in force beyond the death of the physical body, obliging the servants of truth and goodness to endure their less-fortunate brothers and sisters until they repent and convert ...”

Just then, we heard indescribable noises. Zenobia turned very pale and fell silent. After a few seconds, the noises became clearer. They were terrifying screams as if hordes of angry wild animals were only a short distance away.

Of all of us, Luciana seemed the most terrified.

She nervously wrung her hands until she was unable to bear her anxiety any longer. She addressed the director of the house, pleading:

“Sister, wouldn’t it be fitting for us to address a fervent prayer to God? I know these monsters. They tried many times to abduct my father from the shelter that had taken him in! ...”

Zenobia smiled benevolently and responded:

“I have already performed my devotions in preparation for the possible events in store for the day. Furthermore, my friend, our apprehensive concern is in itself an ardent prayer. So let us make up our minds to overcome any problem with determination and trust both in our Father and in ourselves.”

At that moment, the commotion became overbearing. I was startled to make out the bellowing roars of lions and panthers, coupled with the howling of dogs, the hissing of snakes and the screeching of monkeys.

At one point, we heard deafening explosions. Almost at the same instant, an assistant entered the room and informed us:

“They’re attacking us with magnetic petards.”

The resolute director listened calmly and then ordered:

“Fire off the batteries of percussion rays!”

The electric shots must have been fired off without making a sound, because the explosions dwindled until they vanished completely. We could tell that the invading horde had been routed onto a different course because the noise was waning in the distance.

We all breathed a sigh of relief.

Zenobia was wearing a reassuring look, and satisfied, she said:

“Now, let us ask the Master to grant those unfortunate spirits the most fitting path for their particular needs.”

For a few minutes we lifted our thoughts of gratitude and joy to Christ our Savior.

Free once more to talk, I exclaimed:

“What unbelievable roars! It didn’t appear to be the grieving moans of suffering hearts, but the uproar of wild beasts set free. What an awful new experience! ...”

“But such hordes are age-old,” the director wisely remarked. “Among the gospel stories relating to the time our Lord walked human paths, we read

reports regarding legions of diabolical spirits.”

While we all silently agreed with her, she continued compassionately:

“Those poor spirits are so deeply rooted in their evil ideas and purposes, and they have created such animal-like masks for themselves due to the revolt and despair that consume their souls that they actually end up taking on the appearance of horrendous monsters, caught somewhere between humanness and madness.”

Before she could continue with her disheartening remarks, another assistant entered the room and addressed her:

“Sister Zenobia, both of the deranged patients who were admitted the day before yesterday have broken out of their cells and are trying to escape.”

The director cut his announcement short and ordered:

“Seize them right now with the help of the guards. They are our responsibility. The expedition that entrusted them to us will be back first thing tomorrow morning.”

The assistant was at the exit when a second one appeared.

“Sister,” he said respectfully, “we have just received news from down on the earth. The head of the Figueira mission – the one that began its work last week – has asked us to prepare accommodations for three recently-discarnated spirits for the day after tomorrow.”

“I will make the necessary arrangements,” Zenobia informed him, unmoved.

We were about to resume our conversation, but yet another young assistant entered the room and added:

“Sister Zenobia, the team of guards that have been on leave for three days are back at their posts.”

“Tell them to resume their positions,” she commanded, “and tell the other guards to take enough time off to rest.”

The expeditious emissary left the room, and when I was about to comment on the work going on in the house, another coworker appeared at the door and said:

“Sister, members of the Fabrino expedition working with the expiatory reincarnations under their charge have requested help down on the earth.

Their message indicates urgent work for tomorrow night. What should I tell them?”

The director reflected for a moment, and then ordered:

“Relay the request to Brothers Gotuzo and Hermes. They might be available. We will get back to the expedition later with an answer.”

We were meaning to resume our instructive discussion, but fell silent once again when still another assistant with a visibly altered appearance showed up at the door and stated:

“Sister Zenobia, the daily news bulletin from the upper realms wants to inform you that the ethereal disintegrators will be passing through here tomorrow.”

“Oh, the fire?!” the director replied, now displaying extreme emotion. “I well suspected it,” she pondered, and then added: “Our environment has been highly upset. Those monsters’ passage by here is a sign that a cleansing is urgently needed.”

And setting her piercing gaze on the assistant, she continued:

“Let us ask for assistance from our nearest counterparts. We need to appeal to *Oratorio de Anatilde* and *Fundacao Cristo*⁴. Try to call them. I myself will make the request.”

After the assistant had gone, Zenobia kindly turned back to us:

“Well, my friends, as you can see, at this time I must leave and get to work. Whenever the ethereal fire burns up the residues in the area, we are forced to relocate the institution to another region. Right now I need to take measures regarding a new location and seek help from other specialized centers.”

Addressing Jeronimo in particular, she emphasized:

“My brother, since this unexpected news has caught me off guard, I would like to visit the abyss yet today accompanied by your group. In addition to serving the suffering community – as I mentioned to you at the start of our conversation – I have a particular interest in a brother of ours, who is in a sorrowful state of spirit blindness; I have been authorized to perform intercessory work on his behalf.”

“I am in complete agreement,” our leader answered politely.

After performing certain summoning signals, the director of *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* entrusted us into the care of Heraclio, one of the institution's selfless coworkers, and then left the room.

We were then invited by our new friend to visit the interior of the house, and before long, huge bedrooms and narrow cubicles appeared, in which ailing and anguished spirits in various degrees of need were located. We also walked through long study rooms and complex laboratories, noting that space there was utilized to the utmost.

At a certain point in our conversation, the refined fellow spirit who had taken us under his wing noticed our curiosity as we studied the inside of the building, constructed of a uniquely light substance, and explained:

“This is a type of building made especially for aerial movement. It moves easily from one region to the next according to the circumstances.”

And smiling, he added:

“That is why it is called *Casa Transitoria*.”

After a few moments, Assistant Jeronimo was called by Sister Zenobia for a private talk.

Hipolito and Luciana requested permission to go into the Consecrated Room, where, according to Heraclio, administrators, assistants and patients at that shelter of love gathered regularly for divine prayer services. Since I had a particular interest in the institute's medical work, I asked about the possibility of finding a colleague who might provide me with new bits of educational information.

When I expressed my wishes to the attentive assistant, he immediately responded:

“I know what you mean. Brother Gotuzo is currently with us here in the house, and his information might satisfy your curiosity.”

³ Fabiano's Transitory House. A great beneficent institution in the spirit world founded by Fabiano de Cristo – a member of the Franciscan order. As the reader will discover later in this chapter, the house is literally capable of traveling from one place to another. – Tr.

⁴ Spirit colonies close to Casa Transitoria. – Tr.

5

Brother Gotuzo

When I was first introduced to Brother Gotuzo, satisfaction gladdened my spirit right away. I immediately realized that strong ties of kinship had drawn us together. He still retained an exceedingly strong affinity with the services of the corporeal realm. His speech, gestures and opinions revealed this condition. Since he was permeated with vivid memories of physical life, to which he felt magnetically drawn by an uncontrollable attraction, Brother Gotuzo had not yet reached our more-elevated spheres of work. He had only a few years of aroused awareness after having awakened in the true existence of the spirit world.

He began by providing me with a few facts to summarize his situation. He had discarnated before me and had wandered for a long time on purgatorial paths, and although he had tarried for many years of semi-consciousness between darkness and light, he appeared to be current on all the knowledge of human medicine per se.

“I always believed,” he confided in me good-naturedly when we were alone, “that after physical death there would be nothing more for us to do than to sing beatifically in heaven or gnash our teeth in hell, but the reality is actually quite different.”

He made a lengthy pause, and continued:

“I’m referring to old theological definitions of such places because I was never entirely capable of accepting such a negativistic theory. It’s impossible to believe that life is confined to the theater of the flesh, where people act out the most extravagant roles in multiple scenes from infancy to old age. Something must exist – I had always believed – beyond the morgue and the grave. I had to believe, however, that death was an amazing magical step that led souls either to a heaven of immortal peace or to a dark region of eternal punishment. But in reality, it was not like that at all. What I found was life

itself with the same hint of beauty, intensity and divine mystery as before. Purely and simply, we merely switch residences and bring with us both indispositions and illnesses to this new place, as well as our research and healing procedures. There are greater numbers of patients and doctors here. The astral body is a living organism, as alive as the physiological apparatus in which we lived on the corporeal plane.”

Then, perhaps detecting in my eyes the silent message that in higher spheres there would be new things to learn about the subject, he added:

“Well, at least on our current plane the situation is comparable.”

He continued, smiling:

“While on the earth, we were taught that humankind is simply a species in the order of primates, having the anatomical structure of the higher mammals, with an upright posture, a large skull and an articulated language. Scholars referred to fossils of pre-historic humans by putting dogmatic affirmations of official science into our heads as if they were fastening placards on the tops of streetcars. Religion, in its turn, told us that the human being is a soul created by God at the moment of maternal conception, and which, upon dying, returns to the divine bosom for final judgment for all eternity, provided the patient is not obliged to determined stays in the unpleasant stations of purgatory.”

He changed the tone of the conversation and offered:

“In fact, I believe there must be places much more delightful than the Eden imagined by human clerics, and with my own eyes I’ve seen flagellations and suffering that go beyond any of the infernal images dreamed up by the inquisitors. However – and it’s regrettable to admit it – neither science nor religion ever prepared us appropriately to face the problems of the discarnate human.”

There was a longer pause between us.

Glancing again around the large room, I noticed Gotuzo’s care in his area of specialization. Several charts of the human body were spread out on the walls like priceless decorations. Small sculptures of different organs loomed here and there. But what caught my attention the most was a particular model of the nervous system, made of an extremely delicate and somewhat incandescent material. Upright in position, the model was approximately the height of a man. The cerebrum, the cerebellum, the

medulla oblongata, the trunk nerves, the median nerve, the radial nerve, the sacral plexus, the cubital nerve and the large sciatic nerve stood out in extraordinary perfection.

Captivated by the masterpiece, I ran my fingers lightly over it, remarking:

“You’re absolutely right, my dear Gotuzo. If incarnate humans could only understand how important the study regarding the perispiritual body is! ...”

“Yes,” he confirmed with spontaneous kindness, cutting in on my thoughts, “the ignorance that follows us here is simply deplorable! Among all other earthly creatures, less is known about the human personality than about the Pacific Ocean. In my case as the staunch Catholic I was, I had always expected beatific serenity after death.”

He made a half comical face and added:

“I came here with all of the sacraments and politico-religious passports granted to me during my solemn funeral service. Even so, I discovered that the ‘diplomatic service’ of my church isn’t paid much attention to in heaven. I didn’t bring enough ‘documentation’ with me in order to be guaranteed peace in the transference. In vain, I demanded rights that no one knew anything about, and I pleaded for undeserved blessings. Since no one here knew who I was, I returned to my old church. No one there recognized me either. Utterly despondent, I immersed myself for many years in dolorous spiritual blindness. And to be honest, when I remember things that happened, I still laugh today about the naive trust in which I closed my eyes in my home for the last time. Father Gustavo had promised that I would dwell with the angels – mind you! – and had assured me that I would be led in triumph to the Lord’s feet, all because I had merely donated a little money to our aging parish. My weeping relatives attended our final conversation, in which my stifled words trickled out one syllable at a time during my body’s final moments. However, since it was nearly impossible for me to carry on an intelligent conversation under such circumstances, the priest spoke for both of us, explaining the happiness waiting for me in the Kingdom of God. Even though I had been a doctor for only a short time, I had always been a keen observer. My illness did not mislead me, but being inexperienced in matters of the soul, religious promises confused me entirely. When I passed through the entryway of the grave and didn’t find myself in the court of the saints, I

went back, imitating the dangerous behavior of certain somnambulists in order to formally question the priest who had entrusted my corpse to the celestial stations. Confused and blind, I wandered endlessly between affliction and insanity in the deceitful mental creations I had brought with me from the physical world.”

“But surely,” I remarked, taking advantage of a longer pause, “you must have had a number of good friends.”

“True,” he agreed, “but I spent years recovering the mental balance I needed. That’s the only state in which we’re able to appreciate and receive their help.”

“So, you must feel happy now.”

“No doubt about that!” Gotuzo said wittily. “I’ve readjusted myself to be as at peace as possible. At present, the biggest surprise for me has been the landscape of service that the spirit life reveals to us. Today, I have the deepest compassion for all incarnate men and women who insistently desire physical death, and who seek it out through various means by using indirect resources that are unperceived by those around them; that is, if they lack the nerve to carry out the dramatic act of suicide. So many complicated problems and activities await them that they’d be much better off living an existence completely devoid of allure, with harsh duties to inhibit them from any type of digression.”

Recalling the laborious position of the director of the house and in light of the comments I had just heard, I remarked:

“The volume of work we do would astound any ordinary person, and the kind of work done here in this institution must demand enormous sacrifice. From what I’ve just seen, I’m amazed at the amount of duties the Director is supposed to perform.”

“Absolutely!” Gotuzo agreed, changing his tone of voice. “Sister Zenobia is a dedicated guide with an inspirational heart and strong will, and she invariably provides us with outstanding examples of self-denial. The amount of work is so great at this shelter dedicated to various kinds of help that its two administrators alternate every year. This year, Sister Zenobia is in charge of its administration; next year, Brother Galba will be.”

“Each director is given one year off?” I asked in amazement.

“Yes. They make use of the period of rest in higher realms in order to undergo experiences and pursue studies that enrich the missionary’s spirit and benefit the general work of the institution with its future in mind. I’ve been told that Zenobia and Galba have taken turns for exactly twenty consecutive years in running this center. Various other directors, however, have passed through here in search of other paths to the higher planes ... From time to time, they come back to visit us, providing blessed motivation to this community of workers for the good.”

“And you?” I asked, perhaps somewhat tactlessly. “Where do you spend your recreation and leisure time?”

“In accordance with our by-laws, I also have time off. Even so” – and his voice was tainted with a faint touch of sadness – “I still cannot enjoy it on a higher plane. I spend it in earth’s countryside, breathing the pure, invigorating air of orchards and gardens of wild flowers. The oxygen there is lighter than what we breathe here in these stifling spheres of transition, where we have to deal with residues of human thought. The trees and waters, the flowers and fruit found in earthly nature, unspoiled by the pestilential auras of ignorant, petulant multitudes, linger full of divine substances that are offered to any of us who begin to effectively live the spirit life. Human cities are immense, blessed melting pots of purification for incarnate souls; they are where the true progress of humankind is forged. But the simple, inviting countryside is always the direct meeting place for God’s blessings, which ensure the foundation for the community’s preservation. So it’s not surprising that we reap abundant harvests of restorative, peaceful energies in such places.”

Although I knew very well how accurate his claims were, I remembered my own previous experiences and objected sincerely:

“Nonetheless, I’m sorry that you have not yet been able to visit higher realms. You would discover continents of dazzling surprises that would effectively reinvigorate your motivation and hopes.”

“They’ve promised that soon I will experience such elation,” he added resignedly.

“Listen, my friend,” I began to ask with kind interest, “why the delay? May I interject my humble influence in the matter?”

My companion, who from the start had distinguished himself by his healthy optimism, allowed his troubled emotions to show. With an unsettled look, his lively, sparkling eyes clouded over with hard-to-contain tears, and

perhaps fixing them on the inner pictures of his own memories, Gotuzo explained with a hint of bitterness:

“My heart and mind are still bound to the domestic nest I lost along with my physical body. I have readapted myself to work, and because of that I have somehow made myself useful in worthwhile activities. Nevertheless, I haven’t yet gotten used to death, so I’ve naturally suffered the consequences of this discord. I’m undergoing an advanced inner preparation course, in which I am making slow progress.”

Making an effort to adopt a calmer disposition in my presence, he continued after a short pause:

“Regaining my senses, after extensive years of partial consciousness, I recovered my thought, discernment and equilibrium. Oh, my friend! What torturous longing I have for my happy home! Marilia and my two sons – still young high school-aged boys at the time – were the only occupants of my small domestic paradise. Medicine, which from a young age I had practiced on a well-to-do clientele, provided me with generous financial resources. We lived completely carefree within the warm, protective walls of our home: no annoyances, not even the lightest cloud. Our first sadness arose with the diagnosis of the pneumonia that ultimately separated me from the material sphere. At the first hint of a symptom, we mobilized all of our money and all of our resources, but it was to no avail. All materialistically favorable possibilities crumbled like dust in the face of death. Marilia, however, promised me eternal faithfulness until the last of her days, sealing her vow with bitter, unforgettable tears. I was nearly fifty years old, while my dear wife hadn’t yet reached thirty-six. My heart ached at having to leave her almost alone in the world without a husband to shield her; nevertheless, trusting in the religious promises that had been made to me, I believed I would be able to watch over her and my children from heaven. The reality, however, was very different, and anxiously returning to my home after my purgatorial struggles, I found no trace of the loved ones I had left behind. Although I continued on in a painful somnambulistic-like state looking for help from my religious beliefs, I could never return to my family arena, because, before I could make the effort, I was snatched up by a violent, dark whirlwind that placed me in a terrible landscape of darkness and indescribable suffering. The moment I was freed, however, I was deaf to any kind of reasoning. I overcame every obstacle, and eager for affection, I found my family at long last ... But I was completely taken aback by the situation. My

cousin Carlos, who had always envied my wealth, had wormed his way into my home under the pretext of protecting my interests, had married my wife, had endangered my sons' future and had squandered my assets before getting involved in illicit business dealings. Upon witnessing all of these unexpected events, I nearly regressed to my previous unstable mental state. After mourning the condition of my boys – who had become shady business agents – I met Marilia just one day after the birth of the couple's second son. I knelt sobbing at the foot of the modest bed in which she was lying, and asked her what had become of the inheritance, which, before leaving this world, I had trustingly placed in her hands for her peace of mind. The unfortunate, disfigured woman couldn't perceive my presence or hear my voice, but she did have strong memories of me. She gazed at the baby sound asleep and burst into convulsive tears, causing Carlos to come into the room. She declared herself to be distressed and distraught ... When I saw the irascible, detestable intruder enter, I drew back, overcome with unbridled disgust. I had no more strength. Was this what was waiting for me after such a difficult struggle? Was I to resign myself to the facts and bless those who had hurt me? The picture was entirely too grim. To the detriment of my spirit, I had enjoyed a normal existence with all of my desires met. I had not been initiated into the mystery of tolerance, patience and pain. And as a result, my suffering grew to frightening proportions.”

Gotuzo wiped the tears that spilled copiously from his eyes, and due to the great impact his mourning was having on me, he wrapped it up:

“Almost ten years have passed, and my grief is still as painful as during that first hour.”

Leaving him to his outburst of feelings, we experienced a few tense minutes together.

“Gotuzo, listen to me,” I finally said to him. “Don't cling to such chains of darkness in your heart.”

Then, I briefly told him my own story. He listened to me attentively and felt somewhat comforted.

To summarize, I offered:

“Why should you condemn your wife, your companion-in-struggle? What if we had been the widowers? Who is to say that we would not have been fathers again? Don't be so caught up in yourself any longer. Age-old human selfishness is the creator of deep, dark dungeons.”

He perceived my sincerity and humbly became quiet. Because the atmosphere had become less pleasant in light of his display of inner tribulation, and in order to change his mental direction, I asked him:

“In the sector where you are currently working, is the assistance limited to helping ailing spirits?”

“I have other areas of activity,” he responded.

Gazing at me with a somewhat different expression, he asked:

“Have you ever helped with duties involving reincarnation?”

I remembered the time I had monitored such an event first hand⁵, and I told him what I knew about the subject.

Looking at me knowingly he replied:

“Yes, you know about an instance of reincarnation of a higher nature, a case in which the subject was the recipient of the kindness of many friends who devotedly helped him. Here, however, we monitor heartrending situations involving incidents that are exceedingly unpleasant emotionally. These are lower order reincarnation processes, which are more difficult and complex. You have no idea what they are like. There is a genuine mobilization of countless wise and compassionate benefactors from the higher planes, and they outline the guidance we need. At times, torturing problems arise from efforts to draw in and connect the subjects to the environment in which they will be received. These problems can be so deplorable that situations arising from them can be extremely distressful for us, requiring the aid of a large number of workers. Expiatory reincarnation involving unspeakable suffering follows due to the crushing vibrations of hatred and punishing humiliation. In the fortunate realm in which you reside, there are institutions that take into account suggestions involving a spirit’s personal choice. Free will – that guarantor of natural credit – may request changes and present fair demands, but here the conditions are different ... Uncivilized, indebted souls cannot be satisfied with regards to their preferences concerning their own future due to the deliberate ignorance in which they have taken pleasure for who knows how long. And in accordance with those who guide them from the upper realms, they are compelled to accept the itineraries set by the authorities responsible for their individual cases. We, in turn, are in charge of carrying out the respective measures, and it is our responsibility to overcome the greatest and darkest of obstacles. In these pain-filled scenarios,

we have seen mothers and fathers who, before their children are even born, instinctively decide against influencing them, thereby prompting indescribable conflicts, apparently unjustifiable antagonism, unspeakable illnesses and criminal abortions. While this is happening, and in compliance with the redeeming work planned out by altruistic mentors, reincarnating adversaries enter the psychological arena of their ex-enemies and future parents, imposing on them intense, nearly unbearable torment. These are macabre dramas and the characters come time and again to play out their roles on the stage of human existence.”

He cut short his comments, paused briefly, then immediately added:

“Notice that the dissimilarity between your information and mine is in fact quite substantial. Spirits who make an effort to acquire divine inspiration through persistent labor on behalf of their own spiritual enlightenment earn the right to direct interaction with more-enlightened guides. As a result, they improve themselves and through their meritorious acts they are able to choose their building blocks for a new life on the earth in the same way that a worthy worker who, based on the moral credits he has earned, may demand the tools he will use in his work. The servants of hatred and turmoil, intemperance and passion, however, must prepare themselves for the demands of life. For the former, reincarnation will be a truly blessed learning experience; for the latter, however, it will be a necessary and legitimate imposition of the destiny they themselves have created in their contempt for our Father’s gifts in space and time.”

In listening to his remarks with inexpressible joy and wonder, I was unable to repress the conclusion that optimistically and spontaneously left my lips:

“But, Gotuzo, how can you of all people, having so much experience regarding spiritual rescue-related problems, harbor such bitterness toward the home you left behind? How can you imprison yourself in despondency and delay such a great potential for freedom?”

My friend gazed at me with his wise, lucid eyes as if to silently say that he already knew all of this. He made an effort to look cheerful, and answered:

“Don’t worry about it. In light of the enormous difficulties I have in controlling myself, I’m currently studying the possibility of rejoining the domestic environment in order to face the difficult situation with the due blessing of temporary memory loss while in the body so that I can reconstruct

my love on a more solid foundation together with those whom I have not understood as well as I should have.”

At that moment, a nurse appeared in the doorway, asked to be excused for interrupting us, and advised us that a team of guards who were undergoing mental treatment was waiting in the next room.

Gotuzo told her that he would go there immediately. When we were alone again, he explained, smiling:

“In our role as doctors on the corporeal plane, our obligations consisted only of a detailed study of diseases, which entailed a clinical diagnosis or surgical operation and a supply of technical diagnoses, which other colleagues in turn confirmed in the spirit of solidarity present in our profession. But here the scenario is different. I’m expected to use my words as a chisel for the creation of new life. This house is full of coworkers who serve in its spiritual aid program, and who at the same time submit themselves to our care and medical guidance. Nonetheless, it’s not enough just to tell them what their problem is, as I did in the past. I must work more than anything else as a teacher of mental health in order to aid them in the creation and development of reforming and constructive ideas capable of raising the standard of their inner life. We distribute magnetic restorative resources to all those who need them, reanimating their overall organization with the healing elements within our reach, but not without teaching patients something new that can readjust their souls. On earth, we operated on physical cells. Here, though, our current field of action is the mental cell.”

Perceiving my friend’s lively mood, I thought about the long time I had spent before participating in medical services in the upper realm to which I had been led, and I asked myself why Gotuzo had been employed so quickly in the arena of providing aid to distressed souls. However, I noticed that my new friend had not read my thoughts, not even partially, showing himself to be less proficient in his faculties of penetration. Accompanying him to a room where a large number of patients were waiting for him, I noticed that the assistance there was administered en masse amidst denser, slower vibrations, which required the specialized collaboration of discarnate doctors who, as was the case with Gotuzo, were still in tune with the immediate interests of earth.

⁵ See *Missionaries of the Light*. – Spirit Author.

6

During the Night

The difference in atmosphere between day and night at Casa Transitoria de Fabiano was barely noticeable. I would not be able to make an accurate comparison, mainly because during our entire stay at the institute, artificial lights were always on. Thick fog smothered the landscape under a lead-colored sky, and according to what I was told, large machines created to fabricate pure air ran round the clock in the house to revitalize the general atmosphere. The sun looked fundamentally different in the twilight, like an antique gold disc that could not project any rays, because it was engulfed in an ocean of murky smoke. Comparing what we saw here with the vernal landscapes down on earth, the sunsets on the physical plane looked like true pictures of paradise.

We were in a realm where matter obeyed different laws as it was permeated by highly corrupted mental principles. There were long infernal precipices and vast purgatorial regions inhabited by guilty and repentant souls.

I had, in fact, crossed through places like these many times as I traveled between our happy colony and the earth's surface, but I had never before stayed for so long in such an unpleasant, dark sphere as this one. The lack of vegetation, combined with the heavy, suffocating fog, instilled a profound sense of barrenness and sadness.

Our friends, though, with Sister Zenobia in command, did everything they could to turn the outpost into a comforting oasis. Someone was even kind enough to remind us to take advantage of the scenery outside to turn within ourselves for fundamental spiritual gain.

“Yes,” Assistant Jeronimo agreed, “in a spirit aid shelter, it is of great importance not to facilitate distractions that might impair our duties.”

A candid smile spread across his lips, and he added:

“That is why that, while we were on the earth, we never heard descriptions of flowery hells or purgatories under welcoming trees. On this point, theological writers have been accurate and consistent. Mental escape is not fitting for guilty or obstinate confessors. For their own benefit, it is more reasonable for them to be kept in regions lacking enchantment so that they may be left alone with the inferior mental creations to which they have tied themselves so strongly.”

Conversation rich in interesting detail made up for the harsh conditions outside and increased the value of the time, about which it would have been impossible to make any guess or calculation were it not for the timepieces, which in that place were invaluable and crucial for our work.

When seven o'clock in the evening sounded, and led by the house's director, we prepared ourselves for the short journey to the abyss.

Zenobia called upon twenty coworkers to help with eventual and immediate tasks – three women and seventeen men, who, at first glance, did not seem very well-educated or possessed of particularly refined sensitivity, but who did show in their eyes serenity and determination, goodwill, loyal dedication and resolute character for the spirit of service. Later, I learned that the institute continuously provides shelter to various groups of spirits who are still replete with primitive human characteristics, but who display considerable virtue and worth, enabling them to cooperate in carrying out general tasks while at the same time educating and preparing themselves for reincarnations and experiences of a more elevated nature.

Addressing the subordinate who had been given the responsibility of second-in-command, Zenobia asked calmly:

“Ananias, has the material needed for our work been duly prepared? We cannot forget anything; particularly the rescue strips, the defense nets and the stun guns.”

“Everything is ready,” Ananias responded contently.

Then Zenobia turned to our guide and said good-naturedly:

“Brother Jeronimo, now would be a good time for us to set off.”

And stopping at our side, she added:

“I would like to apologize to all of you in advance for having to take the time to assist the unfortunate brother to whom I referred earlier, as I have a private interest in him. Luciana’s clairvoyant capabilities and the prayers of all you friends, however, will be decisive factors on behalf of his renewal so that he may accept redemptive measures for his future. This is something you are doing for me as a personal favor, and for which I will be indebted to you all.”

A light veil of inexplicable melancholy suddenly clouded her look, but quickly regaining her composure, she said:

“In addition, Father Hipolito will address Christian appeals to the unfortunate souls weeping in the abysmal zone. The purifying fire will pass by tomorrow and we can impart spiritually constructive words to them.”

The ex-priest commented, reassured:

“It will be our pleasure to help.”

Then, addressing a large group of fellow spirits and work subordinates, Sister Zenobia called everybody’s attention to the work schedule she had planned for this highly important night. The house would have to remain on alert to receive the contributions that similar institutions would be sending the next day in the morning. A few workers had made their way down to earth to offer support to the Fabrino expedition as it dealt with certain difficult cases of mandatory reincarnation. A number of departments would be open for visitation by incarnate spirits partially freed during physical sleep in order to receive magnetic benefits in accordance with previously-authorized requests. Certain rooms would be suitably prepared for the possible reception of missionaries of the good, who would be coming from higher realms. Beds would be prepared for some discarnate spirits about to be brought to the institution according to a previously received notice. Two nurses, directors from regeneration-type spirit colonies, would be bringing in twenty children who had been recently delivered from their material bonds. They would be meeting their mothers, who would be coming from the surface, and who would be aided by friends for this comforting temporary encounter. Several delegations of spirit workers linked to charitable institutions would be meeting at the shelter in order to come to an agreement regarding procedures. Two new aid missions would be arriving within a few hours and would be staying until morning, as previously advised. All of the preparatory moving tasks assigned for the next day were to be completed. Other less significant

steps were recommended, and, finally, the director stated that those in the prayer room were to wait for her, ready to immediately begin the nightly prayer of gratitude.

I was unable to disguise my astonishment at such a long list of duties, because, according to the calculations made only a few moments before, Sister Zenobia would be gone for only four hours.

Handing out final instructions, she beckoned us to follow her. Upon crossing the threshold, she carefully explained to us:

“It is best to keep any lighting equipment turned off along the way.” And gazing at us resolutely, she said: “Let us continue in silence on foot. It would not be reasonable for us to use volitation for such a short distance. It will be more appropriate for us to look like the poor souls who reside in these places, remembering that as we pass by we must remain completely silent. Any distraction may impair our objective.”

After a few moments, we crossed the magnetic defense barriers and started off on our way.

Under different circumstances and at another time, I would not have been able to control the dread inflicted by the dark, mysterious landscape ahead of us. Strange sounds drifted through the air. I could hear perfectly the cries of wild beings, and amongst them, sorrowful human moaning, coming perhaps from a long distance away ... Monstrous-looking birds, blacker than night, swerved from our path from time to time, frightened by our presence. And despite the thick darkness, I was able to make out part of the unending desolation around us.

After walking for a few minutes, the moon appeared before us like a bloody ball, spreading faint rays of light through the dense fog.

We could now identify a few details of the harsh landscape.

Sister Zenobia had placed ahead of us a skillful aide who specialized in crossing these narrow paths, and complying with her initial recommendation, we maintained strict silence while we walked single file along that inhospitable road.

We came to a swampy area in which there was a scanty trace of vegetation. Withered plants and gloomy bushes randomly emerged from the soil.

But in walking past the huge swamp, I was surprised to hear sobbing nearby. I had the clear impression that the noises were coming from individuals stuck in those nauseating substances, so unpleasant was the smell that wafted through the air. Ah! What energies were challenging us there! The heavy darkness did not allow us to make out minute details, but I was convinced there were victims close by, hoping for our providential help. Were we looking at the abyss mentioned by Casa Transitoria's director? I decided we were not, because the expedition did not stop at that distressing place.

Jeronimo followed close behind me, and I was unable to suppress the question that hastily escaped me:

“Are there any human souls here?”

He merely answered with a silent gesture, indicating that I should keep quiet.

My six short words, however, were enough to suddenly transform the random moaning into touching, noisy appeals:

“You there, passing by, help us for the love of God!”

“Save us, for pity's sake!”

“Help us, travelers! Help us! Help us!”

Then the unexpected happened. The beseeching souls undoubtedly remained stuck in the same place, but animal-like, creeping figures resembling exceptionally huge lizards came toward our caravan, emerging from the depths of the swamp. They came in great numbers, and were so terrifying that they could frighten the bravest heart. I tried instinctively to use my volition ability to quickly flee the scene. However, my companions' composure was contagious and I stood my ground. Just then, an almost imperceptible cracking noise came from Sister Zenobia's right hand, and about ten assistants utilized tiny devices that emitted electrical shock rays, causing small explosions. Despite the weakness of the explosion, the discharge of energy proved to be so powerful that the monstrous assailants hastily retreated, withdrawing back to the swamp and sinking dramatically into the thick mud.

The wails coming from the invisible prisoners of the slimy substance increased:

“Free us! Free us!”

“Help us! Help us!”

The poignantly baleful pleas tore at my heartstrings, but nobody stopped.

The expedition continued on its way, carefully and silently.

I understood that greater work interests were at stake, and I did not insist. My position was that of a subordinate called upon to help out.

Only a few more minutes and we had passed the swampy region. Entering a different type of terrain, my sympathetic heart was somehow lightened. Now, however, dark silhouettes of human spirits stole around us. They approached, clearly intending to attack, but then retreated unexpectedly. I supposed that the reason for their quick retreat was their realization of how large our group of twenty-five individuals was. They were undoubtedly scared by the number and hastily fled.

Continuing on, we entered a steep region, and responding to Sister Zenobia’s signal, the twenty aides following us took up posts at a certain position with orders to await our return.

Then *Casa Transitoria*’s director led four of us up a path, explaining that we would begin the first part of the work plan alone. In this rest area, the atmosphere was significantly lighter. The moon appeared less crimson, the grass fresher and the air more soothing.

“We are now at a tiny oasis of peace in the middle of a vast desert of suffering,” Sister Zenobia explained, breaking the long silence. “We can talk now and attend to the purpose of our journey.”

Immediately thereafter, showing concern in tranquilizing our inner being with regards to the nameless sufferers we had encountered along the way, she explained thoughtfully:

“We are not impervious to the pleas of our brothers and sisters who still wail and moan in the sorrowful marsh into which they have voluntarily hurled themselves. Our spirits are tormented by the appeals of those unfortunate creatures. Nevertheless, *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* has given them as much aid as possible, aid, which has to date been rejected by our ill-fated friends. We periodically free them from the monsters that enslave them and set them up in a wholesome shelter, but it is of no use. They flee from our rectifying influence and intentionally return to the swamp. It is essential that suffering solidify their will for the blessed battles to come.”

Having resolved the situation, which I perceived had been indirectly done on my behalf, Zenobia continued, somewhat emotionally:

“Now I must clarify a few points. At this moment, the brother to whom I alluded earlier should be waiting for us at the edge of the abyss. He was a devoted friend of mine in a previous existence, and is someone for whom I must work at the present time, making use of all of the legitimate means I have at my disposal. Unfortunately, the poor soul is imprisoned in the lowest of vibratory patterns. I believe that these preliminary explanations are necessary to facilitate your kind help this evening. Quite often, a painful experience compels us to put a halt to the work to be done; hence my just concern in offering you this vital information. It is Father Domenico, a spirit to whom I owe a great deal. He was an unfortunate clergyman, incapable of remaining faithful to the Lord to the end of his days. Early in life, he was initiated into the human struggle and touched by sublime hope. However, because the Father’s plans were different from the whims that fed the heart of this passionate and headstrong man, he soon fell into the chasms that are now responsible for his bitter suffering after the grave. He used places consecrated to the living faith to carry out disreputable purposes, soiling the peace of loving, sensitive hearts. He received all sorts of warnings and healthy notices aimed at changing his sinful, irrational behavior. Nevertheless, he dove deeper into the dark quagmire of his intentional error and scorned any type of redemptive assistance. I took part for many consecutive years in the services of guidance ministered to him, but due to the intense expression of human fragility still remaining in my soul, I too abandoned him to his fate because I felt overwhelmed by sentiments of horror. My decision established an extended break in our direct relationship. More than forty years have rolled by between us. But during that time, his suffering has increased so terribly that I have been forced to muster my modest abilities on his behalf. After discarnating quite some time ago, he returned from the surface in a heartrending condition. He had caused moral disasters that were very difficult to mend. Furthermore, he is still numb to our exhortations of peace and love, and keeps himself in a negative mental state. He plunged headlong into the fearful barrenness of his heart, surrounding himself by forces that have increasingly overpowered him and deadened his feelings. So that even worse things will not happen to him, I was authorized, at my own request, to include him on the list of our institution’s outpatients. In this manner, I was able to get some of our coworkers to hinder his freedom of movement in such a way that our fluidic-magnetic operations would not be noticed by him. He has

suffered greatly. Despite his debility, however, his mind remains unchanged, is still wallowing in heavy inner darkness and is systematically refusing any effort at the self-examination that would undoubtedly offer him some kind of spiritual rest. Besides this desperately needed relief, Father Domenico needs to return to the constructive experience of material life in order to recapitulate his past in expiatory service. However, his lingering mental condition is his greatest obstacle, and this makes our intervening action that much more difficult. Therefore, it is vital for him to reincarnate. Some kind, helpful friends of ours have aided me in my request on his behalf, and Domenico will return as the unfortunate son of one of his past victims – victim and torturer – because in a gesture of cruel revenge, the offended spirit punished the offender with death. In order to rejoin the priceless, purifying physical currents, our unfortunate friend must have at least acquired the virtue of resignation so as not to harm the body of the woman who, in performing the sublime task as his mother, will lovingly confer a new persona on him. But in order for this to happen, it is of vital importance that he improve inwardly. If we succeed in making one ray of light pierce his soul, if we could bring about some tears to cleanse his heart and if we could increase his understanding, he will see things differently, and will probably be able to recognize the woman who had been his loving mother during his last journey through the corporeal spheres. If we are successful at such measures, I believe that he will be easily led to accept both his situation and the initial steps of terrestrial recapitulation.”

Zenobia made a natural pause in her comments. None of us dared ask any questions. Nevertheless, she humbly continued:

“For the past few days, Domenico has heard our voices – like a blind man who is unable to see. I cannot make myself visible to him because that might impair our redemptive work, but I hope that tonight, through worthy prayer, we will be able to do much on his behalf. We also hope that the detailed and instructive information provided by means of Luciana’s clairvoyance will enable him to raise his *vibratory tonus*, and if that happens – as I hope in Our Lord – I will mentally call upon our sister Ernestina, who had been his dedicated, compassionate mother, to come and take him down to the earth, where all the appropriate measures will be taken. I am convinced that if he can see his mother, Domenico will become transformed in a matter of days, preparing himself for his upcoming reincarnation with the desired courage.”

Then pointing to a particular spot on the landscape, she informed us:

“In light of the work we are to accomplish, I have recommended that two assistants bring him to the appropriate place, where we can pray freely and help him with our words without unwanted interference.

Immediately thereafter, she pleaded emotionally:

“And now as we begin the work that is of such great importance to my soul, I beg you to forgive me for the personal nature of the task at hand. It is because it is not very common for five brothers and sisters who are so spiritually in tune with each other to meet in one place, and in light of the event scheduled for tomorrow, I feel I must not postpone it any longer, because the disintegration of inferior residues by the ethereal fire is always followed by a great renewal in these locations. If we waste this opportunity, Ernestina, Domenico and I will lose this sacred chance, which might not be offered again.”

She suddenly became quiet and assumed a position of silent meditation, turning her heart toward the Almighty. After a few moments, she continued by adding:

“You can be certain that I will be indebted to you for all eternity.”

Taking into account the high position Sister Zenobia held at the *Casa Transitoria*, we were moved by such a show of humility.

Feeling almost embarrassed by her Christian example, we followed her to a small, dimly lit patch of elevated ground, where two of our companions were watching over someone lying face up on the ground. Our benevolent mentor excused the two aides, telling them to rejoin the expedition, which had remained behind. Next, Zenobia approached maternally, and much to our surprise, sat down on the short grass and placed the unfortunate creature's head in her lap.

The man was wearing a ragged, black robe and had a horrific look to him. Despite the dim light, we were able to see his facial features, which could only inspire compassion. Hair disheveled, eyes sunken deeply into their sockets, mouth and nose swollen in an awful mask of hatred and apathy, he looked like a common criminal, whom illness alone had managed to immobilize long enough for him to pay his just debts. He displayed no emotion in that loving lap, nor did he perceive our friendly presence. Staring

into space in a mixture of despair and scorn, he looked like an unfeeling statue dressed in hideous rags.

“Domenico! Domenico!” Sister Zenobia beseeched him tenderly.

The unfortunate man must have been having a very difficult time hearing because it was only after she had repeated his name several times that he reacted like someone making out far-off sounds, exclaiming angrily:

“Who’s calling me? Who’s calling me? O unknown proud powers, leave me in hell! I won’t answer to anyone! I do not wish for a heaven reserved for the elect ... I belong to the demons of the abyss! Don’t bother me! ... I hate, and I shall hate forever! ...”

“Who is calling you?!” answered the director, delicately and affectionately. “It is only us and we mean you well.”

From what I could tell, however, the wretch did not seem to hear her comforting words, because he continued cursing callously:

“You devils! While you enjoy paradise, we suffer atrocious pain! You will pay for this! You gave me worldly rights and promised me heavenly peace. You granted me the privileges of priesthood but you have hurled me into darkness! Heartless creatures! Satan is more benevolent! ...”

However, instead of becoming angered, our venerable sister said patiently:

“We will ask Jesus to restore your gift of hearing if only for a few moments.”

Asking us to accompany her in her prayer, she invoked:

“O Lord, enable us to help your unfortunate ward. You hold the bread that suppresses the hunger for justice, the eternal water that quenches the thirst for peace, the medicine that heals, the balm that soothes, the word that enlightens, the love that sanctifies, the recourse that saves, the light that reveals the good, the providence that rectifies, the warm cloak that envelops hope in your mercy! ... Master, you, who send down the blessed light of your kingdom to those who still weep in the valley of shadow, grant that your wayward disciple may hear those who love him! ... Divine Shepherd, have mercy on this sheep that has strayed from the fold of your heart! Allow his ears to hear the sweet echoes of your infinite love! ... Grant us this joy, not

through any merit we have yet to earn, but through an addition of your inexhaustible kindness! ...”

Oh! Once again, I realized that prayer is perhaps the greatest power bestowed by the Creator upon his creatures!

After her prayer, I watched emotionally as shining energies radiated from all of us toward Zenobia’s chest as if to reinforce her own energies, and from her caring, loving hands illuminated with a soft, gentle light, dazzling diamond-like rays radiated outward. Our loving friend then placed her hands on the wretch’s forehead, assuring us that the wonderful energies had been bestowed for his benefit.

Again, Zenobia called him solemnly yet gently.

Domenico, now displaying a different ability to hear, made an immense effort to stand up, felt around him and cried out:

“Who’s there?”

“It’s us,” Zenobia answered cautiously. “We, who are working on your behalf so that you might obtain peace and light.”

“Chimeras!” cried the wretch, showing a few signs of inner transformation. “I was betrayed in my priestly ministry. I was denied the rights I’d been promised, and I was scorned and wounded! What do you want from me? To feel sorry for me? I don’t need anyone’s pity! To counsel me? Impossible. I’m blind and tormented in hell because of deliberate contempt on the part of the divine powers that have completely forsaken me!”

“Domenico!” Hipolito then said to him at Zenobia’s request, which she had made through a silent gesture, thereby giving us to understand that she did not want to use her own voice in this new conversation. “Do not rebel against the commands of Divine Justice!”

“Justice?” he cried, shaking emotionally. “Aren’t I hungry for justice? Didn’t I have privileges in the apostolate? Wasn’t I a priest who was faithful to the creed? I’ve suffered in darkness for many years and no one has remembered to give me justice!”

“Compose yourself,” our companion said firmly. “Our conscience is our judge. Perhaps you wore the cassock and were faithful to the creed, but you were disloyal to your duties. There is someone here who is fully capable of entering all the hidden corners of your mental life. Have hope! We are going

to pray silently for you to feel the Lord's blessing in your heart. Then we will help you so that you may calmly and accurately review the book of your personal actions and thereby understand your long stay in the deadly abysses.”

The wretch remained speechless for a few moments, and taken by a strong desire to help, we prayed fervently to the higher realms, pleading for the sufferer's relief and enough light for our sister Luciana to be able to see into his guilty conscience effectively and precisely.

7

A Mental Reading

After the silent prayer, Jeronimo indicated to Luciana that it was time for us to get started.

Displaying a great deal of tenderness, the clairvoyant nurse approached the poor wretch, and after gazing intently at his forehead for a long time, she began:

“Father Domenico, your mind reveals your distant past and this past speaks very loudly before God and your brothers in humanity! You doubt Divine Providence; you claim that your priesthood was not properly rewarded with salvation and you curse our Father of Infinite Mercy! ... Your pain is full of blasphemy and despair; you claim that the Heavenly Powers abandoned you at the horrifying bottom of the abyss! ...”

“Well, isn’t it so?” cried the poor soul, interrupting her. “Compelled by the circumstances of human life to serve a church that deceived me, am I to be denied the right to complain? The Gospel doesn’t have any honey-coated words for what Judas did. Should I, for my part, praise those who betrayed me?”

“No, Domenico. Your friends here do not intend to criticize any institutions. They only wish to help you. Wouldn’t you agree that you strayed from Christian conduct? As a priest, did you really faithfully serve the sacred vows you espoused? Did you expect a heaven of immediate reward beyond the grave merely because of the outward regalia that set you apart from other people? Did you ever think about the extent of the responsibilities you failed to shoulder?”

“Oh! What questions are these?” he asked with obvious bitterness. “The Church I served promised me definitive honors. Wasn’t I the director of a

large social community? Didn't I administer the Holy Sacraments? Wasn't I commended to Heaven? ...”

Despite such complaints, Father Domenico was already showing some signs of inner transformation. His voice became saddened, indicating that he was on the verge of surrender. The fact that he could sense us more closely through hearing also made our magnetic aid procedures easier.

Upon finishing her reticent questions, Luciana remarked:

“Churches, my friend, are always lofty and beautiful. They invariably consubstantiate the path to our divine reunion with our Father of Infinite Love. They teach universal kindness, forgiveness for others' wrongs, and common solidarity. But what about our crimes, weaknesses and desertions? Generally speaking, all of us who are affiliated with various streams of religious thought while on earth demand that justice be upheld, forgetting, however, that the notions of justice imply the existence of the Law. And how can we elude the Law, which is sovereign and steadfast, yet compassionate in its manifestations? Wouldn't you agree that it is absurd to demand of others a certain type of behavior while at the same time expecting for our imbalanced and tyrannical ego the rewards that are only deserving of those who observe the rules of purification, of which we are mere interpreters in the arena of enlightenment?”

“Oh! Oh! And what about confession?” Domenico replied, visibly moved by the words he had heard. “Monsignor Pardini listened to my confession before I died, and absolved me ...”

“And you had faith in such a measure? Your colleague in the priesthood might be able to instill you with enthusiasm and the necessary courage to face the future work of reparation, but he would not be able to erase from your conscience the black mental remnants of the acts you committed. Your heart, Father, is an open book to our eyes. Enveloped in darkness, you defame God's name and his justice, but the living descriptions of your memories are very easy to read ...”

Humiliated, Domenico had stopped talking. Zenobia's strong magnetic influence kept him in her arms as the clairvoyant continued:

“I can see you on your last night on earth. I can see you on a cold night, weathering strong gusts of wind under a moonless sky. You change direction, walking away from the busy town center, and you follow a darkened path in a suburban area. Not only do I see your physical body, but I can also feel your

emotional state at the time. Engrossed by the intoxicating vision of the senses, you enter an honest home. You are blinded by disrespectful sentiments toward someone who has inadvertently listened to your seductive, malicious words. You take off your black cassock in the same way that someone removes an uncomfortable cloak. Now, within the intimacy of a small green room, you are dressed in a perfumed, light grey cashmere outfit. Consumed by your smooth talk, which could only convey illicit propositions far removed from any type of edifying sentiment, a woman surrenders to your promises. But someone has been secretly spying on you. It is a man who has witnessed everything. He runs away, distraught, and you did not even notice his presence. It is the betrayed husband; he is in a painful passionate predicament. He leaves, heading toward a small, nearby town, wholly consumed by wild anguish. He enters a large liquor store and buys a bottle of expensive, aged wine. He leaves angst-ridden, and hiding in the shadow of protective trees, he pours a small amount of a deadly, fulminant poison into the bottle. Then, he awaits you from afar, cherishing the idea of murder. Late that night, you return to the rectory, and your adversary, like someone returning from a short trip, congenially greets you with false displays of esteem and trust. Your guest hovers over the comforting wine on that icy dawn as you open the door to the manse. You enter calmly. Enjoying the warmth inside and sitting at a well served table, you sip the expensive wine mixed with the deadly poison. You have had no time to find explanations. The murderer laughs in the face of your furious, hoarse moaning and your painful grimaces, and whispers vulgar words in your ears. When your breathing became heavier, the killer cries to the other rooms of the house for help after disposing of the evidence of the crime right in front of your astonished eyes. Your servants rush in vain to help you. An elderly priest approaches to hear you. He must be the Monsignor Pardini you mentioned previously. Aware that it would be nearly impossible to speak with you personally, he questions the criminal, who claims to be your close friend. He deceitfully explains that he had accompanied you back from his own house, where you had spent the evening in lengthy conversation with both him and his wife, and that you had tarried there at their insistence. The criminal, displaying ironic pity, says that as it was very late, he had decided to accompany you to the rectory and had accepted your invitation to join you in a glass of wine. In the middle of a friendly conversation, you fell to the floor stricken by a sudden stroke. In vain, you try to tell them the truth. You raise your right hand and point at the murderer. Monsignor Pardini comes close. The killer takes your near motionless hand and exclaims, 'We

must save Father Domenico! My wife and I could never resign ourselves to such a loss!’ The priest tending you is deeply moved. He believes the betrayed husband to be the victim’s dear friend, and he begins administering the last rites. You glare one last time in a look of expressionless despair at your enemy, and you realize that your body is dying. Your limbs become cold, and sticky sweat flows profusely down your face; in one final effort, you manage to utter a few almost incoherent words: ‘I, a sinner ... confess ...’ The priest, however, closes your lips to save your strength and replies, ‘Domenico! Rest in peace! A reputable priest does not need to confess before he dies; just today you administered Holy Communion! Pray to God for us from Heaven!’ Then, he grants you the forgiveness of all your sins, addressing your spiritual personality with all of his holy trust. Your colleague’s words, however, unsettle your conscience. Deep in your soul, you know that death is waiting for you in an abyss full of pain. In vain, you try to receive the peace Monsignor Pardini wishes you, and you attempt unsuccessfully to avoid the murderer’s eyes sarcastically observing you. Finally, your hands drop – motionless. Your priest friend holds the crucifix you can no longer feel. Your eyes stop moving to observe this final scene. The door of the large bedroom opens and some servants enter the room and kneel down weeping. Not far away, a funeral bell tolls. Dawn breaks. However, half-conscious, as you are flogged by pain and despair, I do not see you enjoying the light of the new day that dawns. Outside, there are large candles alight and increasing numbers of parishioners coming to pay their last respects to your mortal remains after a kind doctor, who, although he personally believes you committed suicide, states that the ‘cause of death’ was a massive heart attack, in order to avoid a scandal and an uproar in the ever-respected religious circles. There are people who are crying in earnest, and I hear words of praise about your priesthood. Nevertheless, within you, intense darkness still prevails. You scream like a man abandoned in the first moment of an unexpected blindness. But nobody hears you. You report the crime of which you have been the victim, and demand for measures to be taken against the murderer, but human ears are now in another dimension. You try to flee, but unbreakable fetters have chained you to your corpse. The funeral takes place at dusk. The church is opened, lavishly adorned with purple flowers. Sad hymns flow from the choir and the entire nave smells of incense. With great pomp in every minute detail of the funeral service, your body descends to its final resting place. You, however, remain secured to its decomposing innards ...”

The nurse's narrative had a profound impact on me. The unfortunate spirit appeared to be touched down to the hidden fibers of his being. After pausing briefly, Luciana continued:

“After your body is buried, endless suffering begins for your soul. You remain tormented by anxiety, hunger, thirst and pain ... I cannot tell you exactly how long you spend in such anguish. I sense, however, that the tormented spirit of a certain woman visits you in your grave. She reaches her ghastly arms out to you, and out of sheer terror you manage to release the final link still binding you to your deformed corpse and you run away cursing. Your base of consciousness shifts. You remember the story of the unfortunate woman who came begging to you. Oh! She was also a victim of your spellbinding power ... the mental reading of your memories tells us the details of the crazy woman's final experience. Poor, hopeful, trusting woman! I can see her arriving at the rectory on a stormy night. You experience the lower emotions of an undignified man who feels he has complete control over his prey ... but the poor creature cries and asks for your help. She uses words that would move even hearts of stone, displaying indescribable hopelessness. I can make out what she is saying ... she put too much trust in your promises and succumbed to your lewd whims. At first, she thought that no unpleasant consequences would come of it, and was certain that no one would notice. You were able to take advantage of her inexperience in matters of the heart, and you defended the innocence of such a relationship. But now a baby was on the way, and she is deeply worried. Who would help her now? Who would help restore her family peace? Wouldn't it be better to legalize existing ties? Shouldn't the family feel honored by the expectation of the gift of a child blessed by God? You listen to her pleas without showing any hint of moral concern. With the coolness of silver-tongued men, you bring up your priestly duty as a justification for such an impossibility; you comment on human conventions, and lastly, you propose a hasty and degrading marriage between your victim and the lowliest of your servants. The young woman sobs convulsively, expressing understandable repugnance. You continue your prudent and splendid argument, but displaying obvious signs of madness, the unfortunate girl leaves you hastily and runs to the street in torrential rain ... I follow her. She returns to her father's home, deeply disturbed by your merciless blow. Ah! What horror! The unfortunate creature takes advantage of the lonely, stormy night and swallows a large dose of ant poison in an attempt to perform the final act of her inner drama. Nobody hears her wild screams of suffering, because they are muffled by the booming noise of

thunder in the sky. At dawn, an afflicted father runs to your place of rest and tells you what happened. His daughter has died mysteriously. How to explain the situation? Hadn't he done the right thing in coming for priestly counsel? You receive the news, having trouble disguising your emotion, and repeat biblical texts in order to console the trusting friend. Concerned, you set out for the house of the mourning family. However, I can clearly sense your mental state. You are not at all afflicted by the loss of someone who might have endangered your peace of mind; you are thinking of a way to find a seeming noble recourse to help you remain above this unexpected occurrence. Speaking words of comfort, you stand over the body and call a doctor friend. Here he comes! Oh! It's the same doctor who examined you on your last day – the one who believed you had committed suicide. After a long, private conversation with you, the doctor declares that it was a case of natural death caused by the rupturing of the heart vessels. You immediately feel better, which shows in your facial expression. Your words of consolation become brighter and cleverer, and you calmly and contritely follow the funeral procession, even though the suicide's hateful, wild eyes glare at you from the bier while other black shadows from the plane invisible to ordinary mortals trail you in the procession! They are avenging souls who relentlessly follow after you! ...”

Luciana stopped, visibly shaken, and giving us to understand that Domenico's mental landscape had changed due to other memories that the narrative had evoked, she focused her reading on yet a different time.

“Ah, yes! Now I can see it well,” she continued uneasily. “A certain spirit who obviously loves you dearly stands out. He looks at you with a mixture of despair and tenderness. He looks very much like you. Now I understand. He was not merely your friend; he was your father. He is making an insistent demand for a certain document that you fail to present. What do I see now? Around him there are living images of painful memories. I can see his last night by your side. He stares at you in faithful tenderness. His dyspnoea has granted him an extended lull, and the dying man hands you a long will in which he has listed his last wishes. He affectionately and humbly tells you about his secret past. He was not merely the happy father of a priest and other children who honored his name, he states. He had been a daring young man who had gotten involved in various romantic affairs. He had had a few children out of wedlock, and he did not wish to die without first legitimatizing them. In addition, he wanted to guarantee that they would have a prosperous future. You listen to him with obvious interest. Then, at your

father's request, you read aloud the list of small items bequeathed to his wards. The dying man gazes at you intently. You now have beautiful words to say to him to justify his past mistakes. You know so well how to console him with such spoken niceties that he is filled with deep admiration. Lastly, you promise the fatherly heart that his last wishes will be seen to precisely. Uplifted, he confesses to you the wrongs he has committed and repents for his sins *in extremis*, telling you of his hopes of going to heaven, where Jesus will accept his sincere desire to make amends. With his words cut short from time to time in his agony, he reiterates his plea for continuous support of a certain woman surrounded by children who are expecting his financial assistance ... You help him to embrace the crucifix, which he gazes at with clouded eyes. You recite a lengthy, moving prayer while caressing his grey hair. A few more minutes pass, and after straining to look at you one last time, the dying man closes his eyes in his physical body's final act. You are now alone with the body. You press your right thumb and forefinger over the dead man's eyes in order to give the corpse a better appearance. But before any communication with the people in the household, you hide the document away in a heavy piece of furniture with obviously hostile intentions regarding the righteous purposes of the discarnate. From that moment on, it seems to me that he has been following you at a close distance, complaining, complaining ... He remains, distressed, on the mental screen of your living memories ...”

The clairvoyant stops once again, concentrating on particular details while the unfortunate Domenico shows irrepressible shock.

“Oh! Now,” continued Luciana, performing the task that she had been given, “here is another austere persecutor! He stands out to my sight. He is an elderly clergyman who left his physical body harboring intense hatred toward you. Your memories shed light on the truth. You covet this man's parish and would pay any price for it. Many personal interests hold your thoughts to the small town under the guidance of this former priest. You mean to accomplish your desire by trying to be persuasive. During a lengthy conversation with him, you propose to buy the parish from him in a private transaction. You allege that you have sufficient political influence to complete the transfer without any problems, and you tell him that he will be paid for his unconditional agreement to the plan. But the old man refuses and states why. He has been with his flock for many years now. Moreover, he is also old and sick. He had served the church to the best of his ability during his times of good physical health, and he hopes to be able to die there as well, breathing the agreeable air of his small orchard. He is aware of your superiority in the

matter because of your prestigious relationships in the clerical community and public administration, and he assures you that under different circumstances he would not hesitate to accept your proposal without any remuneration or reluctance. The doctors, however, recommend that he move to the coast so that the seaside climate might help improve his heart condition.

His plea would touch anyone's heart. You have listened to him, agreed and said goodbye, already devising a new plan. Without wasting any time and without having any second thoughts, you leave immediately for a one-on-one meeting with the bishop of the diocese, and explain to him with false humility the request that concerns you. Unaware of your intentions, the church dignitary listens attentively and approves what you have proposed, recommending, however, that he first have a hearing with his direct advisors. You have no doubts or comments of any kind. It is by bribing high ranking colleagues that you manage to have the elderly priest mandatorily removed to a remote mountain parish, where the old man dies shortly thereafter, hating you to the end. Intoxicated by rage and by strong desires for revenge, he is still blind to the manifestations of higher spirituality, imprisoning you in relentless wrath ...”

The clairvoyant pauses once again, but then continues her account, this time more distressed:

“Now, a woman appears. It looks as if she discarnated after a risky eye surgery. Your memory screen speaks loud and clear. She is yet another victim of your mesmerizing power. There she is, next to you during your last meeting together in the corporeal world. You have just finished a hearty breakfast, when you hear someone knocking at the parsonage door. It is a poor, prematurely aged and nearly-blind woman led by an anemic, nine or ten-year-old boy, who begs for your help. Greeted by your icy reception, the unfortunate woman emotionally brings up things from a reckless past and asks if you have forgotten the son you placed in her arms. She weeps, makes gestures and explains. She had worked hard to re-establish herself, but everywhere she went she was accused of prostitution and idleness. She had fought heroically to support her son with the money she earned from honest labor, but she had gotten ill, had no assistance, and there she was, nearly blind, asking for help ... If she could have, she would have spared her still-young son the humiliation of being introduced to his cruel-hearted father; however, the child is now at death's door. The ravages of tuberculosis have done him in and she has come to ask for financial support for the treatment he

needs. The child looks at you, sad and trusting. You listen indifferently and then give some odd response. You ring a private bell and a servant appears leading some savage dogs that threaten the poor beggars, forcing them to flee in fear of their lives. In the final stages of anemia, the child dies without treatment, and his unfortunate mother discarnates in a homeless shelter, with the sinister desire to avenge herself on you in any way possible.”

Luciana stopped once again as if to examine details which only she could see. Suddenly, she exclaims:

“Oh! How dreadful! I can see even more! ... A different woman with dark bags under her eyes and dressed in black ...”

She did not finish what she was going to say, however.

At that moment, the wretched spirit let out a terrifying scream, burst into tears and cried out in crazed mental anguish:

“Enough! Enough! ...”

Cruel and uninterrupted sobs erupted from his oppressed heart. Zenobia, who was still holding his head in her loving arms, reassured us discreetly:

“Domenico is getting better, thanks to our Heavenly Doctor. For guilty, tormented spirits, tears are like beneficent rain cooling their hearts.”

Immediately thereafter, she stopped talking while, out of compassion, we accompanied her with minds turned toward prayer.

After Domenico’s long sobbing outburst, the director of *Casa Transitoria* asked Father Hipolito to sow some new ideas on the sorrow-filled soil of his pain-plowed conscience, telling us that she would need a few moments to mentally call the old discarnate priest’s former mother so that the wretch could be led back to the earth for the first step in the process of his upcoming reincarnation.

Our guide entered into deep meditation while Hipolito spoke aloud to the spiritually needy beggar:

“Brother Domenico, the Merciful Lord has heard our prayer. Do you truly wish to be redeemed?”

As far as I could tell, the man completely ignored the question, and still strongly affected by everything he had heard, asked in turn:

“Ah! So there really is divine justice taking note of all our sins? Are there records so detailed that they can even register the spirit’s most secret deeds?”

“We bring with us in our own conscience the indelible record of all our errors,” Hipolito said mercifully, “just as the righteous carry with them inner notes that glorify them in the presence of the Father Most High. So, my friend, close the door to your *lower self* forever! Silence vanity, pride and impenitence! Do not curse! The church that bound us together in the corporeal realm is sacred in its fundamentals. We are the ones who were bad servants, straying from its basic principles for the satisfaction of our own domineering instincts. We looked for the fleeting kingdom of temporal power through unadulterated manifestations of outward worship allied with corrupting politics, deliberately forgetting God’s kingdom and justice. Are we by any chance to blame devoted mothers for the intentional crimes of their children? The universal church of Jesus Christ, which brings together all of his apostles, servants, disciples and learners, is a loving, faithful mother.”

Once again, the unfortunate spirit sobbed helplessly, appearing wounded down to the innermost fibers of his being, bringing us to tears of compassion.

“Do not condemn,” continued Hipolito. “How many of our old superiors are undergoing expiation in the regions of darkness! How many of them made the mistake of honoring themselves in the world, forgetting the Lord who ‘spent his time doing good!’ Many of the proud dignitaries who guided our actions with ulterior motives descended to their graves after solemn funeral processions replete with pomp and splendor, only to arrive here with their hearts painfully in need like miserable beggars! At the bottom of boggy swamps of destructive hatred, many of them await better days; others beg for help, anxious for peace and renewal. Why don’t we too renew ourselves in order to put in motion the necessary work of ever-redeeming love? Let us arise, my brother, so that we may be of use to our fellow spirits of another time, and lead them to the portal of salvation! Let us remember the One, in whose majestic name we swore loyalty to heaven while on earth. Does penance hurt you? Does humiliation wound you? What about him? Did he not perchance walk the *Via Dolorosa* like a common criminal? Did he not accept being scourged to death on the cross?”

“Yes,” agreed Domenico sadly, “all this is true! ...”

A meaningful gesture from Zenobia compelled Father Hipolito to suspend his comments.

Someone appeared before our small group and assured us that she was responding to Zenobia's silent call. She was a charming old lady, who immediately won us over with her beaming grace and generosity. She embraced Zenobia as if she were a beloved daughter, and greeted all of us warmly and graciously. No introductions were necessary. She was Ernestina, the dedicated mother. She knelt down next to her unfortunate son, and folding her hands, she prayed for heavenly protection.

Whether it was because of the profound renewal at that moment that had changed his vibratory pattern, or whether because invisible, higher powers were manipulating our combined energies on behalf of the unfortunate spirit, Domenico, who, although he could not see us, was able to make out the newly-arrived woman.

Heartrending cries reached our innermost being.

“Momma! Momma! ...”

That creature, who had seemed so stern and indifferent, the churchman who had scorned so many hearts on earth (according to Luciana's retrospection on his past) now called his mother as if he were a tearful child who had lost his way home. He anxiously opened his arms in search of her welcoming bosom, and Zenobia very carefully helped him get comfortable in his mother's lap. Then, Ernestina held him close against her chest and it seemed to me that the unfortunate soul felt his mother's touch as if he had reached absolute repose.

“Mother, my mother!” he cried out, gluing his head to her bosom. “Help me! Forgive me! Forgive me!” And perhaps remembering the clairvoyant's work that had so changed him, he added:

“Divine justice has found me. I am an unforgiven degenerate, an infernal vile wretch. My heinous past is alive within me. Oh, Momma! Can you accept me when all others despise me?”

Ernestina brought him closer to her heart, and deeply moved, said:

“I do not know if you were a criminal, my son. I only know that I love you with all my soul. I know that, in the immense desire to have you with me again, I have greatly missed your loving presence! What could be more beautiful for my heart than the sweet tenderness of this hour? Allow joyful

thoughts to arise in your heart, and acknowledge our Father of infinite kindness, who has mercifully brought us together again. Think for a moment about the divine greatness, Domenico, and you will see that no one is abandoned forever. Thoughts of gratitude to God from within the darkness of suffering are like a brilliant ray of dawn, a prelude to the complete victory of the sun over the thick darkness of night. Who among us has never had to face the torment of ignorance? All of us have experienced stones and thorns along the long path of redemption. Many times we have fallen; however, the invisible hand of the Lord has mercifully snatched us from wallowing in the mud or the caverns of the abyss! Be brave and arise within to the new day.”

The wretch stared at her, enraptured, as if before his eyes was the most beautiful vision he had ever seen in his life.

“But I’m a criminal, a defendant of unforgivable crimes!” he said sadly.

“No, my son,” said his mother. “You were ill like the rest of us. You listened to evil suggestions and cultivated painful wounds. You imbalanced your heart and fell into the chasm. But do not forget that Jesus is the Divine Doctor. Accept the fact that you need medication and send your sincere prayers to show him that you truly desire to be healed for the life eternal. We, the ones who are trying to help you, have not yet reached the level of those who can do all things and who possess a great deal of knowledge. We are workers interested in our own enlightenment through never-ending work in carrying out the will of the Most High. We develop our higher faculties without any type of commotion or miracle, acquiring new values at the cost of our own endeavors in the patient uplifting of our spirit to God. Did you by chance believe that your mother was in heaven, in beatific delight, having completely forgotten about her immense indebtedness to those who shared her love and struggle in the redeeming services of the earthly body? Would you perhaps presume that my motherly love alone would guarantee me an eternal place in the heavenly realm? No, Domenico. Different horizons open to our souls in the Infinite Universe ... Our lifetimes are days blessed with work, in which, under the sun of ennobling duty and the rain of constructive experience, new divine faculties flourish and grow for all eternity. It is true that deliberate errors stain our conscience, making us waste invaluable possibilities of time in the redemptive struggle, but the Lord never refuses corrective resources to those who beg for his help in the faithful purpose of gaining divine harmony once again. After crossing over the grave, we continue working and edifying, enlightening and redeeming ... So wouldn’t

you be interested in joining our work of spiritual awakening? Wouldn't you like to escape from the circle of darkness in order to gain the blessed pathways of light?"

The unfortunate man's look had taken on a different expression. Ernestina's insightful and tender words were transforming his mind little by little. Realizing the effect of her salutary words of advice, his dedicated benefactor continued:

"Do not allow the anguishing memory of days gone by to become an insurmountable obstacle to getting what you need at present. All those whom you have hurt have not disappeared forever. They are as alive as we are, and in the condition of a humble servant you may look for your creditors of times past, thereby on your own behalf attending to the demands of the redemption you need so much. Success, however, requires a heart that is aflame with living faith, along with an open mind that is ready to understand the good and put it to use. Without daring hope and without a spirit of service, it will be very difficult for you to settle the heavy debts that chain your soul to the dense lower spheres. In order for you to win such values, reflect upon eternity and God's infinite love. Do not imprison yourself in thoughts of a human nature, seeing sacrifices where there are only sublime opportunities for happiness and redemption. If your conscience accuses you, ask Jesus to bathe your soul with blessed hope! One drop of this divine dew is all it takes for the desert of your soul to flourish and bear fruit in blessings of peace and happiness for all eternity. Do not get discouraged, Domenico! God enables the light of day to follow the darkness of night. Why shouldn't we put all our trust in the Supreme Power? We are nothing, my child, but our Merciful Father is capable of all things."

The acknowledged presence of his mother was the final step to Domenico's change for the better. The poor creature, looking like a castaway who had finally found a friendly and welcoming harbor, had forgotten the hateful, blasphemous words he had spoken a few minutes before, and nestling against his mother's bosom, he prayed:

"My mother, misfortune has taken hold of my unhappy spirit! ... Do not forsake me! ... Do not forsake me! ..."

"Never," said the righteous discarnate woman, fighting back her tears. "But I ask you, my son, never again to abandon Jesus our Lord and Master! ..."

“Yes,” Domenico replied, sobbing heavily, “Jesus our Master, our Lord!”

There were long moments of silence among those of us present.

With tearful eyes and lost now in space – perhaps evoking distant landscapes – the ex-priest remarked:

“Oh, Momma! How I miss my prayers as a child! ... In those far-off days, you taught me to see the Creator of the Universe in all the gifts of nature. My soul bathed happily in the crystalline fount of trust, and the love of simplicity dwelled in my joyful soul! ... Then, caught up in the whirlwind of the world, I became wicked by my contact with ambitious, evil men. Instead of mercy, I cultivated apathy; instead of authentic and active brotherly love, I placed inexorable hatred on my fellow beings; I hid my heart and wore a mask; I fled from God’s truths and disguised myself in human illusions! Why could unusual weaknesses make a man undergo such change? Why slight the treasures of eternal life and dive into such sinister deceptions? Oh! You, who retained my sweet trust from the very first day, who never tasted the absinthian poison that intoxicated me while on earth, have mercy on me and enable me to forget the cruel man I was! ... I long to return to the innocent tranquility of the cradle. I’m tormented by the thirst to return to true faith! Help me to kneel once more and pray with folded hands so that the Father in Heaven may enable me to wait without affliction and forget evil without ignoring the good! ...”

Ernestina was extremely moved and helped him kneel down, supporting him, however, with extreme tenderness.

Then, copying the gesture of devoted, loving mothers when holding a young child, she joined his hands in prayer, and weeping within, she said to him:

“Repeat my words after me, my son.”

In a touching scene that I shall never forget, the dedicated mother prayed slowly, while Domenico accompanied her phrase by phrase:

“Lord Jesus!”

“Lord Jesus!”

“Here I am.”

“Here I am.”

“Ill and tired at your feet!”

“Ill and tired at your feet!”

“Have pity on me, Beloved Shepherd; on me, the sheep that has strayed from your flock ... I was dazzled by the false glimmer of human vanity; worldly delusion dulled my mind; selfishness hardened my heart, and I plunged over the precipice of ignorance like an emotional leper. Lord, I have wept and suffered bitterly for my spiritual defection. But I know that you are the Divine Doctor, dedicated to all those unfortunate ones who have strayed from the way ... For mercy’s sake, free me from my self-imprisonment; deliver me from the evil consequences of my own actions, and enable my eyes to open to the divine light! Nurture me with your sovereign truth and sustain my hope for regeneration! Lord, give me the strength to settle all my debts, heal all wounds, correct all the errors that are still very much alive in my soul ... Forgive me, granting me the means for my redemption. Do not allow me to fall victim to the vestiges of the passions that I myself thoughtlessly created, and help me profit from your silent reprimands in disciplinary situations, and above all, Sublime Benefactor, reward your servants who have helped me in this hour and grant them renewed blessings of strength and peace so that they may continue helping other hearts as exhausted and fallen as mine! Jesus, we will eternally trust in your compassion! Amen!”

Domenico had repeated the prayer, sentence by sentence, like a well-behaved child learning his lessons. From what we could tell, the prayer had done him overwhelming good. Much calmer now, he embraced Ernestina while the director of *Casa Transitoria* followed his smallest gestures, and without him realizing she was there, he suddenly asked:

“Mother mine, since your tenderness has come to meet me in the circle of darkness, tell me: Where is Zenobia? Has she abandoned me for all eternity?”

Deeply shocked, I noticed that the question was asked in a painful tone of longing and disenchantment.

“Undoubtedly, my son,” Ernestina said hastily, “our friend follows you from a higher realm, beseeching Jesus to bless your redeeming intentions.”

“Oh!” he replied sadly. “Had human existence brought us together, my destiny would have been different. But she married another man when my trust in the future was at its highest, compelling me to priestly celibacy, which

was followed by such deplorable consequences. If we had started a home together, I'm sure I would never have lost my faith in God and would have perhaps been a loving father, and my children would have been for me a sacred crown of responsibility and joy. Mother, Zenobia was the miraculous lens through which I could see the world differently. By her side, I would have acquired the gift of perceiving the divine opportunities surrounding my heart. But when evil fate snatched her away, all my dreams for a stable earthly existence vanished before my eyes ... Overcome by my pain at losing her, I believed that religion would offer me an invincible shelter against temptation. What a terrible mistake! Surrounded by a world of conventions that constricted my spirit, and far from the sublime influence of the only woman who, in my opinion, could save me, I plummeted into one abyss after another and became a demon with an insatiable need to destroy and corrupt ... Would she ever have understood how unhappy I was? Would she feel compassion for my pain, full of misery and ruin?"

Ernestina caressed his head in a motherly gesture and exclaimed:

"Hush, my son! Don't think you are the only one who had to make sacrifices. If you had accepted the Divine Will, the present would be less painful for us. Don't rely on natural and necessary human circumstances to try to justify the madness that hurled you into the deadly darkness! Zenobia was always a true angel in our midst. Don't bitterly comment upon past events that cost her an entire existence of blessed self-denial for her parents, her spouse, her children and us!"

"But," he interrupted, "we had a sublime commitment to each other from childhood, and our adolescence was a paradise of mutual promises ..."

His loving mother, however, did not let him finish. Placing her forefinger on his lips in a compassionate motherly gesture, Ernestina emphasized:

"Listen, Domenico! Who would have been the greater victim? The strong young man who voluntarily joined a religious organization that offered him a thousand different ways for doing good, or the poor girl who was forced by the circumstances of her worldly struggle to marry a widower, surrounded by children to whom she was to dedicate herself in the role of a mother? You intentionally sought priestly ordination, while Zenobia, constrained by a painful situation, accepted a path of self-denial that was completely different than the dreams of her youth. Entirely engulfed in your

own individualistic creations, you weren't faithful to the principles you espoused, while Zenobia persevered in sacrifice and living faith until the end of her days, despite having been crushed under the weight of daily humiliations of her womanly ideals. You erred for your own satisfaction, incapable of extinguishing the sinister passions that smoldered in your heart, while our venerable friend humbly accepted the circumstances that tormented her soul year in and year out on behalf of all of us. So think about it, Domenico! Who was the real victim? Can we truly compare self-denial with senselessness?"

One could then understand that Sister Zenobia was tied to both of them through the threads of a pain-filled romance about which we knew nothing. Domenico listened contritely to his mother's remarks, remained silent for a long time, imprisoned perhaps on the plain of distant memories, and concluded sadly:

"It's true! ..."

"It is now our turn," said Ernestina gently, "to progress spiritually in order to reach her."

At that moment Zenobia began to weep, though discretely. Gazing at his face, she bent over him, and undoubtedly heeding her strong wishes, Domenico felt that warm teardrops were falling onto his melancholic face. He looked into his mother's eyes with a questioning look, and realizing that the tears were not coming from her, asked her with great concern:

"Oh, mother, who's weeping over me?"

The kind benefactor, whose eyes unveiled all the details of the heartrending scene, answered emotionally:

"Angels shed tears of joy in the heavenly realms every time a suffering soul is lifted from the abyss ..."

The ex-priest was pensive for a long time, giving us the impression that he was greatly relieved.

Grasping the happy opportunity, Ernestina invited him:

"Let's go, my son. Moved by divine mercy, the clock of time has sounded for your spirit the blessed hour of redemption. The door of quittance opens once more to your oppressed soul. May heaven bless us!"

“I will go with you wherever you want, Mother,” responded the unfortunate spirit, without any hint of bitterness.

The happy mother looked at us with eyes full of gratitude, wrapped her arms around him as if he were a sick child, and left, carrying the precious burden toward the earth to joyfully face the dense darkness ahead ...

Alone once more, I noticed that Sister Zenobia remained transfigured and blissful. She wiped her tears, revealing unknown joy in her eyes. She extended her right hand in a display of gratitude and happiness, and perhaps contemplating the landscape of the future, she meditated for a few moments, undoubtedly sending an inner hymn of praise to the Almighty.

Then, she gazed at us serenely and said:

“My friends, may the Lord reward you for your fraternal help and impart to all of you the happiness I am feeling right now. Thanks to him and my dedicated friends, I have just won a great battle in the war of love against hatred, light against darkness, and good against evil that I have been fighting for many years.”

Immediately afterward we rejoined the various aides that had been waiting for us a ways back in order to follow the work plan that Zenobia had wisely drawn up, and which would enable us to communicate with the children of ignorance and misfortune, temporary inhabitants of the abyss.

8

Darkness and Suffering

With Zenobia's service mission completed, we started off again, drawing nearer to the valley of darkness and suffering.

The darkness had once again become very dense, and it was almost impossible to make out the deep recess. Nonetheless, heartrending cries still ascended to us: sorrowful moans, blasphemies and curses. I got the impression that a great number of unfortunate, miserable spirits were mired in the muck below. The course words filled me with dread; the moans echoed distressingly in my soul. My companions were obviously overcome by similar emotions, because sister Zenobia began explaining:

“All the suffering we can sense here does not occur in the absence of divine watch-care. Untiring workers of the truth and the good visit these sites often, calling the defiant prisoners to the spiritual redemption required of them; nevertheless, they withdraw, rebellious and hardened in evil. They grieve, beg and incite compassion. On rare occasions, a few of them heed our appeals. At other times, we try to impose the good on them. But when they are forcibly removed from the dark valley, they accuse us of being oppressors and ingrates, and then flee from our contact and influence.

Despite the sad content of the information Zenobia had given us, she was burning with the spirit of service, judging from the enthusiasm that was apparent in her gestures and words.

“But their denial,” continued our guide, “is not any reason for denial on our part. Let us remember that the power of nature can turn coal into a diamond ... Let us work on behalf of all those in need, seeking for our own spirits the divine gift of reflecting the Supreme Designs. May the deeds of life be done, not as we would want them done but as determined by the Lord; his generosity is great toward us. Let us share it in fraternal service and enlightenment for the benefit of all.”

On her command, ten coworkers turned on intense beams of light.

Then, in utter astonishment, we were able to observe a gruesome living scene. A vast legion of sufferers covered the bottom of the valley a short distance below where we were standing. There was not a steep incline separating us from them, but rather an enormous, thick quagmire.

Faced with the unexpected light, many voices started begging for help in tormenting phrases that bored into our souls. Others, however, could be heard uttering different phrases: they shouted blasphemies, sarcasms and condemnations.

For our work to be successful, Zenobia recommended that we all stay together as a group so as to instill respect and fear in the dangerous spirits who were mixed in with the unfortunate ones. Then she added:

“The adepts of rebellion and despair can also be found here, forcing us to adopt a strict defensive position. They are poor, disturbed spirits who try to induce all situations into the same discord in which they themselves live.”

Next, she asked Father Hipolito to make a general appeal in the name of the Lord to these victims of misfortune so that they may consider the need for inner transformation.

The ex-priest opened a small New Testament that he always carried with him and read from the account of the Apostle Luke the parable of the rich man who dressed in purple and lived a life of luxury, while the beggar covered in sores knocked in vain at the door of his conscience. He spoke all the verses of 16:19-31 loudly and slowly. Immediately thereafter and to fill the expressive silence, Hipolito emphasized the sentence, “Remember that you received your wealth in your lifetime,” from verse 25. He was about to start his commentary on it, when we heard threatening and sarcastic blasphemous screams coming to us from below:

“Away! Away! Down with the lies of the altar!”

“Let’s attack the priest right now!”

“We’re all fine and happy! We didn’t ask for any help and we don’t need any boring lectures!”

“Our heaven is here! You can all go to hell! ...”

The adversaries of our work did not stop with just a disturbing uproar. Balls made of a black substance started to fall around us, coming from

various points in the abyss of sorrow.

“The nets!” exclaimed Zenobia, addressing some of the helpers, “Unfurl the defense nets to protect the group from them!”

Her orders were quickly obeyed. Luminous nets were unfolded as we looked on. They were made of a material that was specific for the moment due to its high magnetic power; the balls and arrows that were fired at us got caught in the nets, paralyzed by a mysterious force.

Accustomed to dealing with such situations, the director of *Casa Transitoria* put on a superb display of determination and composure. After she had set up the defense, she made a sign to Father Hipolito to continue. The priest, prevailing over the noise and insults, began his commentary with renewed energy.

“Friends, our fraternal wish is for you to prepare yourselves to receive the Divine Light! Hundreds of unfortunate fellow spirits are gathered together here in perilous spiritual conditions. With souls shredded by pain, overcome with suffering, and bearing unspeakable anguish, you often surrender to despondency, rebellion and despair. Disturbed and ill-fated, your minds know only how to fabricate thoughts of destructive torment. You claim that the Divine Powers have forsaken you in the deep valley of darkness, and from one denial to the next you have gradually and naturally transformed yourselves into dangerous spirits of darkness and evil, personifying diabolical figures and indiscriminately attacking the edifying work of the Father’s messengers. Cruel inner perversions have changed your physical appearance. You do not even resemble the human creatures you used to be, full of divine gifts, but instead you are living images of hellish realms, instilling compassion in good spirits and fear in the more timid ones. In the lamentable mindset you have adopted, and in which many of you avidly remain, you are truly wicked and criminal demons, and not even the floggings of pain can change your misshapen appearance. Nonetheless, you are our most unfortunate brothers and sisters, crippled in sentiment and reasoning and lost in sorrowful deserts of ignorance, not for lack of love from Heavenly Providence, but because of your own want of foresight in the neglect with which you received on earth every opportunity to ascend to the upper realms of the eternal spirit. No matter how many times you expel us from your congregations of suffering, our sincere sympathy for you will never fade. We will visit the sinister landscapes of the abysses as many times as necessary. We will never tire of proclaiming our Father’s glorious mercy, and our

fraternal hand will never cease in the sublime service of sowing goodness and truth!”

The offensive words we had heard at first faded away little by little. Hipolito’s forthrightness had triumphed. The preacher was speaking with such blazing eloquence and was so possessed of angelic thoughts that his entire body was radiating light. Before the respectful silence that his impassioned words had caused, he continued with his touching sermon:

“You are prisoners of envy and spite, malice and sarcasm when you are not prostrated by supreme dread. You emit disturbed vibrations amidst choruses of mockery and tears ... Nearly all of you have received our loving help, but you have refused it unrepentantly. You believe that we are graced with undeserved favors, that we are heaven’s chosen ones, and you frivolously affirm that gratuitous privileges make our lives blessed. Oh, my friends! Don’t you perchance see the intelligence of the indefectible justice that governs our lives? We too are combatants who are far from the ultimate victory over ourselves. Like you, we are on the same path to redemption. We work, struggle, weep and suffer; our position differs from yours somewhat inasmuch as we, the ones who now address you with a peaceful and fraternal word, have already begun the radiant learning process of gratitude to God, our omnipotent, just and merciful Father, thanking Christ, the Divine Mediator, for the opportunity of work and accomplishment in the present. We too miss our earthly homes and the tender bonds of affection that are now distant memories, and we feel just like you the living desire to return to the past in order to correct the paths we have traveled. And with the intent of kissing their hands and asking them to forgive our weaknesses, we almost always search in vain for those who used to give us their love. However, we were fortunate enough to understand the extent of our debts and since then we have set out on our way toward our redemptive future.”

With direct insight into the interpretation of the parable, Hipolito changed his tone of voice, and continued:

“Which of us while on earth might not have been that ‘rich man dressed in purple and fine linen’ from the Master’s lesson? We wore the eye-catching, bright clothes of our egocentric ‘selves’, wounding our neighbors’ eyes as we ‘sumptuously and splendidly’ lived out the blessed opportunity of living in the corporeal realm. All of us who are now joined together in this landscape of sorrow have had beggars of affection and spiritual aid around us, showing us in vain the afflictions of their needs. They were called family members,

relatives, companions in struggle, distant brothers and sisters in humanity ... They were children hungry for guidance, parents in need of affection, wayfarers on the evolutionary path eager for help; they approached us unsuccessfully, begging for some kind of comfort and happiness. We usually remembered their inner wounds when it was too late, apathetic toward having disregarded the sublime opportunity that we had been granted to do them good. Then, at the exact moment when they were on their death-beds, we showered them with love and affection, after having wasted the sacred time of human life between insensitivity and thoughtless demands. Those poorer than us wished only for some scraps from our ongoing banquet of knowledge and abilities. They regularly followed us like children hungry for enlightenment and tenderness – even dogs turned toward them, overcome by natural sympathy ... We, on the other hand, conceited from our own personal conquests and incarcerated in clamorous apathy, built up our feelings of well-being, believing ourselves to be superior to all the other creatures making up the picture of our passage through the corporeal realm. Since we were prisoners of our own inferior creations, death plunged us headlong into the purgatorial abyss that resembled the dark hell of mythological theology. In our aged, tattered clothes of opportunity, and at the end of our spiritual development course in earth's school, we are at times poorer than the least of the unfortunate creatures who used to knock trustingly at the door to our hearts, and to whom we could have been worthy contributors of happiness. Like travelers crossing the sacred river of spiritual progression, we ran from all of our needy neighbors and set up an active watch-guard against suffering castaways. Above all, we enjoyed the good weather, the enchanted isles of pleasure and the camaraderie of the strongest, only to reach the other riverbank feeling humiliated and heavy-hearted, in terrible spiritual need, and incapable of continuing the journey to the divine continents of redemption ... Let us be reasonable, my brothers and sisters, and realize that this hell is a mental construction created in our own minds. Arriving at a standstill, after a damaging attempt, creates an atmosphere fitting for all types of phantasms that torture the mind that created them, leading it to experience merciless nightmares. We dig abysmal wells of torturous suffering in accordance with the intensity of the remorse of our inner miseries. We design gloomy prisons from our deliberate denial before the benefits of Providence. Scalding deserts of hatred and abhorrence unfurl at our feet as they continue on empty journeys of sadness and extreme disconsolation. We are like vagabond goblins of restlessness and despondency as a result of our bitterness toward

what we have been and the nearly unconquerable difficulty of acquiring the resources needed for what we are to become. On one hand, screaming failure; on the other, the challenge of life eternal. However, like the unfortunate rich man of the parable, we know that many of our victims from the past have risen to high posts in the hierarchical realm of eternity; that many of those beggars of affection from along the road of human existence have been led to the founts of Splendid Wisdom and Endless Love; thus, why not plead for the concourse of their intercessory prayers? Why not humbly bow our heads when reflecting upon our deviations of the past so that we may receive sublime and indispensable help for the present? We know, my friends, that many of you suffer; you are tormented by devouring thirst for the living water of the immortal spirit, and that, troubled and apathetic in this valley of darkness, you would like to break down all obstacles in order to receive one single drop of the precious liquid promised by Jesus to the thirsty ones who devoted themselves willingly to him! Ah! A confused plea of anguish is not enough, however, for the divine dew to refresh pain-ridden, dilacerated hearts! It is necessary to regenerate the receptive vessel of the infirm soul, ridding it of the poisonous dust of the earth so that the dew of heaven may be fresh and comforting! Cleansing suffering is vital. The mental absurdities to which we abandoned ourselves in the earthly realm are energies that currently manifest themselves with the intensity of powers set free after a long imprisonment, and from there, the inexpressible torment of hunger, thirst, affliction and infirmity that many of you still feel for having failed to conform to the laws established by the Eternal Father! ...”

Judging from the silence around us, it seemed to me that Father Hipolito was being listened to with respectful attention by the countless ranks of suffering spirits gathered before us in that place. After a short pause, the preacher continued with renewed inspiration:

“Although appealing for your regeneration, none of us here have yet found the dwelling place of the angels. We are your fellow spirits, in whose hearts humanity beats fully with all its faults and aspirations. We understand, however, your overwhelming torment and we are here to invite you to renounce all your selfish impulses; furthermore, we are urging you to the recognition owing to the Lord and to the repentance for your deliberate, criminal mistakes of the past. Let us thank Divine Mercy, and together let us also ask Christ for the understanding of his sublime and wise will with the necessary strength to carry it out wherever we might be. Unlike the rich man in the Gospel story, let us not beg for any type of advantage for our

individualism or for the personal realm of our private interests, but rather, for sufficient understanding regarding the duties impingent on us during these less-than-fortunate times according to the Lord's salvific directives. And full of renewed confidence, let us await times to come, in which the earth, our great mother, will generously offer us other fruitful opportunities to learn and expiate, to sanctify and redeem."

At that moment, the ex-priest interrupted his sermon with a long pause, enabling us to examine the external picture.

Long ranks of sufferers had gathered in every corner, staring at us in the light of the torches at a distance of approximately thirty yards. They extended out in a vast procession of silent, sad goblins, appearing with all the traits of the physical infirmities they had brought with them from the earth, and which they now retained in their astral bodies. Needs of all types were seen there: physical deformities, wounds and all kinds of miseries parading in front of us, pulling at our heartstrings. Many of them were kneeling, perhaps imagining that we were ambassadors of Celestial Power visiting this miserable purgatory. They maintained a position of utmost respect, although their faces could not disguise the marks of intolerable suffering. With anxious eyes, they spoke silently of their intense, secret desire to join us; however, something was preventing them. They looked like prisoners longing for freedom. Why weren't they running to meet us? Why weren't they kneeling next to us as a sign of sincere gratitude to God? Wishing to grasp the reason for such compulsory immobility, I understood what was going on without any further explanation. Between the dense crowd and us, a deep pit had been dug out, and at the points where it would be easiest to cross over it, small groups of spirits gathered with sinister looking faces. There could be no doubt as to who they were. Those aggressive, callous faces maintained strict watch over the area. What were such torturers doing there? Were they being directed by avenging forces with fleeting powers in the realm of darkness, or were they acting on their own accord in obedience to the delirious passions of an imbalanced mind? I remembered old tales about hell as outlined in Roman Catholic theology, and concluded that the blazing flames, where Satan took pleasure in torturing souls, had to be more attractive than the murky landscape of the dark and suffering scene before us now. However, I ceased my irrelevant train of thought because I understood that the situation demanded total, undistracted commitment to the task at hand.

As Hipolito was taking a prolonged pause, a creature with a face of criminal mien screamed at him making hateful, odious gestures:

“We didn’t ask for any armies of salvation! Get lost!”

One solitary outburst was all it took for other unpleasant expressions to gush forth.

“We don’t want to redeem anything at all! We owe nothing! We are interested in the systematic worship of hatred, the rebellion against insensitive gods, and the resistance movement against the repulsive spirit aristocracy!”

“Death to the preachers of false virtue! Down with the opportunists from beyond the grave! Long live our destructive movement against the ancient order of slaves and masters! On top of the ruins we shall build a new world!”

A huge, burley man, with all of the characteristics of a giant, strode toward the edge of the pit on the other side, made a wide gesture of defiance and roared:

“Has the priest’s hurdy-gurdy gone quiet?!”

He laughed fiendishly and continued:

“You’re wasting your time! You’ve got it all wrong! We too have a plan, and we too know what we want! Where is the God they promised us? Do you perchance have the map of heaven? Our idols are now broken. We are the children of despair, trying to sort out our lives in this desert before us. Will we ever return to our original naivety to the point of believing once more in religious lies? In what remote region is Divine Beneficence enjoying himself so much that he doesn’t feel compassion for our needs? You declare yourselves happy and proclaim the compassion of a Father we have never even met! Have you ever seen him?”

A cold burst of laughter dotted his last words. Seemingly overcome with intense emotion, Father Hipolito replied:

“The knowledge of the Divine One and the heavenly itinerary are to be found within each of us. By what kind of unnamable audacity would we commit the absurdity of expecting in such a short amount of time the full and immediate attunement of our nature with God’s sublime plenitude if we have just emerged from irrationality? How are we to compare a frog with the sun? In fact, the anthropomorphic religions of earth have poisoned our minds, instilling false conceptions about God in our reasoning. We cannot, however,

condemn them entirely, for we are all marked by spiritual stagnation. When disciples become truly integrated through a renewed mind and heart into the Master's Gospel, negative priestly intervention will be impossible. Dogma, when considered impartially, is both a challenge and a punishment. It is a challenge to investigative and constructive minds so that the idea of the Infinite Universe can be broadened, and it is a punishment to idle minds that thoughtlessly renounce the gift of thinking and decide for themselves the sacred matters of destiny. The Lord's active, invisible wisdom can be found far and wide, extending into all the tiniest facets of nature. So silence your wounded vanity and your humiliated pride, which convey such ungrateful, criminal remarks! Linger in the sanctuary of your conscience and you will not demand visions and revelations that you would not be able to bear. Hence, taken by compassion for your defiance and misfortune, we beseech the Lord to bless the hopes of all who hear us, and who, like us, are eager for supreme redemption before the inestimable grandeur of the life eternal!"

Had this been any other audience, the ex-priest's words would have been alive and convincing, but the hardened and wicked creatures to whom they had been addressed showed themselves to be cold and insensitive.

Other voices could be heard in a sinister chorus:

"Enough! Enough!"

"Be gone! Be gone! ..."

However, among those who had paid close attention to our work, we could see many grief-stricken faces displaying the terror that their companions caused them. Their numbers had grown. I noticed, however, that there was not one single child there; only adults, adolescents and elderly spirits of all kinds of appearances. One could tell that Hipolito's speech had done them a world of good. Many of them were shedding copious tears, but insulting words and curses crisscrossed through the air. The unrepentant criminals could not tolerate our presence, and each of them was more prolific than the next in their selected mocking remarks meant to stimulate sarcastic humor and contempt among the unfortunate audience.

At first, impulses of reaction blossomed in my shocked soul. Wouldn't it be appropriate for us to coordinate our efforts to face such a mob of criminals? Wouldn't it be better to jump over the apparent obstacle and snatch the helpless victims away from them? It would be easy for us to volitate in order to do so, and notions of charity strengthened my justified instinct to

react. A few yards ahead of us we could see women disfigured by pain, young and elderly men, squalid and enfeebled. No one escaped from the dolorous appearance of extreme misfortune. They looked like corpses that had unexpectedly come back to life after a long stay in the grave.

Rebellious thoughts crossed my mind.

Why didn't Father Hipolito respond accordingly? Why not punish those assassins of darkness, who displayed such refined intellectual culture and strong minds? Didn't we have sufficient power to repress them as necessary?

Assistant Jeronimo, perceiving the perilous state of my soul, approached me cautiously and said discreetly:

“Andre, extinguish the vibration of your unwarranted anger. No one can help by means of personal ire. Do not take on the role of a critic. We are here in the role of older siblings in divine knowledge, trying to help those who are younger and less fortunate than us. Let us cover ourselves with calmness and patience. Responding to unbecoming insults is a waste of valuable time in the work of fraternization before our Eternal Father. Hipolito cannot duel verbally, nor would Sister Zenobia authorize any violence against these unfortunate creatures at the risk of banishing into oblivion the sublime opportunity to practice true goodness. Change your mental discharges so that you do not lack constructive cooperation, and let us watch our voices so as not to condemn, but rather to inform and teach in a Christian way.”

I readjusted my field of emotions, pleading to Jesus to grant me the strength to forget the 'old man' still screaming inside me.

After having appealed to the higher realms through prayer, instant understanding bloomed in my awareness.

In fact, how were we to interpret attacks from creatures who are themselves so unfortunate? Above all else, they were most in need of assistance and compassion. They had yet to receive – as had happened with us – the blessing of living faith, of conformation to the designs of the eternal law, of the realizations of their own inner needs due to their spiritual incapability. They blasphemed and laughed sarcastically. They scorned the gifts of Providence. They slandered the Master. They forgot all considerations relating to divine order and human respect. Who were we to convert them all of a sudden if the Lord himself was patiently and kindly tolerating their abusive words without inflicting any type of personal reprisals on them? Wasn't the regrettable limitation to which they had abandoned themselves

enough for them? Within the restricted circle of suffering and punished by despair, they had not yet gone beyond the sphere of brute sensations and were trying futilely to fight against the good. The truth was that it hurt to see those oppressed miserable creatures kneeling in front of us, begging for help and deliverance; then again, there must have been appreciable reasons justifying the link between the torturers and their victims, but such reasons of course escaped me at that particular moment. My initial appraisal of the situation had changed. Overcome by sudden compassion, I noticed that when the mocking remarks coming from the evil spirits had quieted down, and perhaps realizing that we had not leapt over the obstacle to deliver them, the faces of the confessed sufferers displayed pungent despair.

A poor elderly woman, who seemed fearless in her faith in light of the terrible circumstances, reached out her skeletal arms, and in keeping with her old religious concepts, pleaded with us:

“Holy messengers of God our Father, have mercy and deliver us from purgatory! We are tortured by the flames of remorse and by the demons that surround us! For mercy’s sake, save us!”

Despite loud sobs which cut off her voice, the venerable old lady continued:

“Our wrongs, badly paid for while on earth, have bound us to the wicked spirits of the abyss! We are indeed sinners in need of purgation, but do not abandon us to our fate! Help us in the name of Jesus, through whom we beseech for you the grace of salvation! I erred greatly, it is true ... However, my repentant spirit pleads for protection ... I know I do not deserve heavenly repose, but O messengers from heaven, whoever you are, grant me the resources to redeem my debts. I am ready! I will seek out those whom I offended during my life on earth in order to humble myself before them and beg their forgiveness! ...”

With hands folded, and gazing at us in anguished expectancy, she concluded:

“Don’t forsake me! Don’t forsake me! ...”

Then, the picture changed somehow. The valorous beggar had encouraged the rest of her companions in adversity:

“By the merit of St. Geraldo de Majella,” cried out one of the poor souls, revealing that he was a former Roman Catholic, “get us out of here! Save us

from the infernal whirlwind! ... Help us, for the love of God!”

Amidst the many voices, the supplications revealed the presence of followers of a variety of familiar religious creeds – and there was no lack of Spiritists in that sad concert. A certain rather large lady with unkempt hair and deep wounds on her face beseeched us tearfully:

“Spirits of the Good, help me! I knew Bezerra de Menezes⁶ while on earth and I accepted Spiritism. But woe is me! My belief didn’t become a renewing faith. I dedicated myself to consoling people but I ran from responsibility! Death threw me here, where I have suffered a lot from the consequences of my spiritual neglect! Help me, in the name of Jesus!”

Heartrending appeals resounded from all corners.

I will never forget the inflection of the words I heard. Young and old, men and women in deplorable conditions, prostrate on the ground a short distance from us, respectful and trusting because of the lights we had lit in the sad night, were begging for divine help, treating us with the utmost veneration as if we were true models of saintliness. When from so many mouths the pleas increased, the torturers grasped their sinister whips and began applying lashes indiscriminately ... The majority of the kneeling creatures dispersed as quickly as they could, returning to the shadowed corners of the deep valley. A few of them, however, bravely withstood the blows and remained kneeling, gazing at us anxiously.

Pointing at us mockingly, one of the persecutors proclaimed in a loud voice:

“You see? They are benefactors in suits! They don’t throw themselves into the struggle on behalf of anyone! They teach with their lips, but deep down they are messengers of hell, cruel and insensitive like stone statues. None of them dare cross the barrier to lend you assistance and help! ...”

Such contemptuous outbursts of laughter followed that all my sentiments of human repulsion immediately came to the surface: Why did I not reprimand this insolent mocker? Why not punish him as he deserved? I was teetering on the edge of mental instability, when Sister Zenobia, perhaps fearing our reaction, turned to us serenely and recommended:

“My friends, let us keep ourselves calm so that we may work effectively. No one is kept in this pain-filled abyss without there being a very good reason for it.”

And possibly convinced of the need for a stronger argument in order to dissuade us, she added:

“What would have become of Christianity if Jesus had forsaken the wooden cross of testimony along the way in order to start a heated discussion with the crowd? We are here on a consoling, educative task; let us not forget this. The work of punishing the guilty will come from higher powers.”

Her reference instantly awakened us to the elevated nature of the task with which we had been invested. Truly high order souls have the gift of impelling our spirits into the sacred areas of life, reintegrating us into the inspirational current of the divine forces that uphold the universe.

Time did not allow for a lengthier speech regarding the duties we were there to perform. Without wasting any more time, and with the aides she had brought with her, the director of *Casa Transitoria* began unrolling a large amount of rescue material.

The measures were only halfway complete, when several groups of unfortunate creatures, anxious to join us, tried to surmount the obstacle; however, the torturers acted cunningly and beat them without mercy, engaged in a struggle to hurl them to the bottom of the dark, gloomy pit, from which the victims were trying to escape, overcome by visible dread.

Both enterprising and resourceful, Zenobia ordered luminous, lifesaving strips to be thrown to the other side for the purposes of rescuing as many sufferers as possible from their horrifying situation; however, the order was followed by hateful retaliation. The diabolical creatures became even more brutal. A large crowd of wretched souls ran toward the strips, trying to grab onto the resplendent ends as they fell on the opposite side like ends of a welcoming bridge of light; meanwhile, the beatings and blows increased. Large numbers of wicked spirits in a renewed display of malice held back the tormented prisoners, keeping them from their salvation. Our efforts continued for several minutes, at the end of which, realizing that they were useless and were only promoting an increase in the intensity of the torture, Sister Zenobia, maintaining her great sense of calm, ordered the life-saving material to be pulled back.

The victims' wailing pleas were joined with the torturers' offensive phrases, afflicting our hearts.

After regathering the material, which had been fruitlessly used, the devoted guide gestured to a coworker to bring her a tiny device used for

amplifying one's voice, and spoke slowly toward the abyss:

“Brothers and sisters in humanity, may divine peace reign over us!”

Her words had acquired an incredible repercussive power. It echoed faraway as if it were directed at souls who perchance were still sleeping at considerable distances away from where we were.

Without any display of impatience or displeasure, she continued:

“May you rejoice, O souls of goodwill! And above all else may you trust in the protection of our Lord Jesus. Your pain has tormented us; we are deeply moved by the incomprehension and suffering to which you have been subjected, estranged from divine law. And if we do not cross over the black pit in a supreme attempt of saving you temporarily from evil, it is because we are likewise your fellow spirits-in-struggle with no angel-like immunity. We are holders of limited abilities for helping our fellow spirits! Rejoice, however, and wait in confidence, for on your behalf consuming fire will manifest in this unfortunate region, where so many wicked minds gloat at the Father's commandments and scorn his blessings of light. In fact, tomorrow the Supreme Power will be revealed.”

She paused briefly, and then continued:

“For more than five years now, *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* has continued operating in these regions of darkness and suffering, calling upon lost souls to take advantage of the blessed opportunity of beginning once more through dignifying work, in whose blessings there is always recourse for erasing the stains of the past and regenerating oneself for the paths of tomorrow. For nearly two thousand years now, we have been teaching goodness and truth, preparing hearts for the redemptive future. If it is true that many brothers and sisters have made use of our humble offer to help by accepting the medicine of restoration, it is also true that the majority of you have always fled from our influence, rejecting our help, scorning our cooperation, despising our services, favoring discord and persecution, and creating all types of obstacles for us. However, my friends, Fabiano's shelter is still at your disposal during the first hours tomorrow morning.”

Faced with the serious tone of her voice, and perhaps taking into account the level of the warning, the wicked, imbalanced mouths fell silent. Even the most perverse began to contemplate us in a mixture of fear and questioning.

After a short interval, Zenobia continued, deeply emotional:

“We do not struggle hand-to-hand against audacious, unfortunate ignorance, because the task the Master has entrusted to us confers upon us duties of love and not of rivalry. We have been put in charge of administering the good, and we are sorry that a few horribly unfortunate brothers and sisters have resisted us, immersing themselves in the swamp of personal rebellion. Nevertheless, we do not have any words of condemnation. Those who try to escape the eternal laws are already unfortunate enough. Bitter will be the harvest of their sad sowing. They will spend a long time removing the poisoned thorns they plunged into their own hearts. Why should we fight them if they have been defeated ever since their first defiance of the Divine One? Why torture them if they continue to be persecuted by the ghosts created by their own rebelliousness and insensitivity? The Lord Almighty, however, who loves the just and corrects the unjust, will cause a renewing storm to appear in this sky tomorrow. Fabiano’s shelter will welcome individuals of goodwill for the next few hours; however, it will be useless to seek out its help without first having changed substantially for the good. Sufferers will not be taken in simply because they beg for shelter with their lips. Our house of Christian peace is also a church of Christian labor, and hypocrisy will be unable to change its sanctifying ministry. Our magnetic defenses will be operating at full capacity, and only those hearts who are sincerely interested in their own renewal in Jesus Christ will be given the password required for entry. Spirits hardened in crime and indifference will beg for assistance, but to no avail.”

The torturers stared at their victims with unmistakable hatred.

Sister Zenobia, however, continued bravely, addressing the unfortunate ones in particular:

“Endure your cruel torturers for a few more hours and make good use of prayer so that you will not be lacking in inner strength. We have no need for a physical fight or destructive defensive actions, but rather for the type of endurance exemplified by the Divine Master. Tolerate your unfounded enemies of the good, who are desperate and unhappy, and who persecute and mistreat us when we pray for them, because the Renewing Power will appear, inviting them through suffering to repent and be converted.”

Then, expressing optimism and happiness in her lucid eyes, our guide lifted a moving prayer for the inhabitants of the abyss, which we accompanied with tears of emotion.

Anguished faces observed us closely from the other side, while the impenitent adversaries of light remained silent. Meanwhile, those imprisoned in pain continued begging for help, but heeding Sister Zenobia's orders, we turned off all the lights and started off on our return journey.

In the past, at the end of such startling experiences, I always harbored a huge number of questions in my active and curious mind. Now, however, I was returning forlorn.

The extent of the struggle tore at my being. In fact, suffering caused by ignorance had no limits, and every abuse of individual free will was met with spontaneous punishment according to the universal laws. Of course, in different places there were other abysses like that one, full of persecutors and victims.

Ah! I also kept in the vessel of my heart all the bitter aftertastes of human vicissitudes! I too had suffered greatly and had made others suffer! Strong memories of my corporeal existence remained alive within me. With my soul turned silently toward God's Christ, I meditated on the greatness of his sublime sacrifice, and recalling the cruel persecutors and the unfortunate persecuted souls in the dark valley, I asked the Lord from the bottom of my fragile, heavy heart: For whom should I shed the most tears?

⁶ Adolfo Bezerra de Menezes Cavalcanti, 1831-1900, physician, author, journalist, politician and proponent of Spiritism in Brazil. In 1886 he publicly announced his acceptance of Spiritism and in 1889 was elected as president of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation. He did not believe in the accumulation of material wealth and was known affectionately as the "Doctor to the poor." – Tr.

9

Praise and Gratitude

Although the results of our visit to the abyss were seemingly minimal, we felt reassured and satisfied.

On the way back, bypassing swamps and maintaining the same strict attitude of watchfulness – considering the possible surprises along the way – we walked the entire distance in utter silence.

But when we neared the Institute after having crossed the perilous region, Sister Zenobia began thanking us all tenderly. After kind expressions of appreciation, she added joyfully:

“Fortunately, our work was blessed and profitable. Our new coworkers might perhaps find this statement a little strange, undoubtedly recalling that the saving lines came back empty. Nevertheless, something happened that was more important than the prospect of coercing a few of our unfortunate brothers and sisters to come along with us. I am referring to the sowing of eternal truths in those ignorant hearts and the ministering of hope to the downcast and sad. We are not apologists for violence, but rather sowers of the good, and the natural basis for a sure harvest is careful sowing. Spiritually constructive teachings scattered onto the soil of understanding open new and clear horizons into the mental study of the needy and suffering. Many of them this very night will intensively cultivate the regenerating principles they received in their inner field, and tomorrow they will most likely be in an appropriate vibratory state to be accepted at our shelter. For us, we want them to come of their own accord, so that in the future, when they are going through the work of regeneration, they do not claim to be victimized at having been coerced into coming here. Far and wide, we find God’s compassion and justice.

She smiled benevolently and added:

“Compassion, the daughter of Love, will always wish to extend her rescuing arms, but Justice, the daughter of Law, will never do so without corrective actions. There will be resources of mercy for the most deplorable cases. However, the lawful order of the universe will invariably prevail. So based on this reality, it is only fair that each of God’s children assumes responsibility and makes his or her own decisions.

Her explanation was logical and comforting. We would have liked for the lesson to continue, but we were approaching *Casa Transitoria*, now in view. We had reached the area surrounding the entryway and I marveled at the activity.

Numerous spirits were coming and going. Almost all of them were entering the aid institution or were leaving it in small groups. The elderly were looking after the younger ones, who seemed hesitant and timid. Children haloed in light were leading somber-faced adults like little, caring guides for the blind.

The scene was beautiful and heartwarming. Perhaps noticing how surprised I was at witnessing the unusual scene, the institution’s director approached me and explained politely:

“Partially freed from their physical bodies through sleep, our friends from the earth flock here every night; they are brought by spirit friends for the purpose of receiving help or needed advice. *Casa Transitoria* offers resources for these opportune meetings.”

I was unable to disguise my surprise before such a marvelous scene, enrapt as I contemplated the tender care given by the discarnate benefactors to all those who had come from the denser earthly spheres.

After crossing the magnetic defense zone, we mingled in with the passers-by. Not far from me, an interesting boy, who looked to be about nine or ten years old, adorned by a charming halo of light, was leading a lady who was having difficulty walking. She seemed to be infirm and unable to control her movements. The boy, however, held her right hand firmly, and after having respectfully greeted Sister Zenobia, he exclaimed to the hesitant lady:

“This way, Mommy! This way! Don’t be scared.”

Hearing his voice, the woman seemed to awaken in a pleasant dream and cried out, half-consciously:

“My son! My son! Don’t let me go back! I want you always, always! ...”

Her expressions of tenderness blended in with an ocean of tears. I gazed at her facial features. The poor mother couldn't see us. She followed her son awkwardly and unsure of herself. Her eyes, shedding big tears, remained glued on the child, displaying the profound tenderness of a mother exhausted from longing upon once again finding the object of her love, who had seemed to have been lost for all eternity.

"Mommy, keep walking! Don't give up now!" cried the boy, exulting in joy.

"I'm coming, my son! I'll follow you! Take me with you!" replied his mother, drowning in sublime emotion.

Perhaps because they had grown accustomed to such a spectacle a long time ago, my companions talked amongst themselves unawares. I, however, followed with tearful eyes the caring child who was helping his mother until they disappeared through one of the side doors.

I could not hide my overwhelming curiosity, and touched Father Hipolito's arm asking:

"My friend, where are the woman and the boy going?"

He made a gesture of surprise and remarked:

"I didn't see them."

I then told him about the scene that had so moved me, embellishing my story with sentimental observations.

The ex-priest smiled empathetically and added:

"Well, Andre, there are so many mothers and children passing through here! ... The boy, like so many others, was of course taking his mother to the aid chambers."

There was no more time for me to voice further thoughts on the matter.

Our group reached the main entrance and two friends approached us eagerly. One of them was Gotuzo and the other brother was someone I had never met before.

They greeted us courteously.

Gotuzo then addressed the Director and informed her that the work of helping the technicians who were arranging certain expiatory reincarnations had been satisfactorily carried out.

Zenobia thanked him and invited the two friends to take part in our prayers of praise and gratitude to the Almighty.

We entered the Room of Consecration, where the Director was informed about the measures taken during her short absence and was assured that all the residents had appeared for the general prayer and magnetic aid meeting a few minutes before.

Resounding signals were calling coworkers to thanksgiving.

Zenobia graciously and enthusiastically seated us around a large table, at the end of which a huge transparent screen had been set up.

The fellowship was wonderful! All the directors of the various sections into which the Institute's activities were divided were present for the service of gratitude.

The director kindly informed us that prayer services were offered to all the residents every evening and to the administrative personnel as well. She pointed out that, for the latter, she met in person with all the institution's sub-directors who were not prevented from coming because of work commitments. On this particular occasion, there were thirty-five individuals, captivated by the sweet magnetism of that woman who was so capable of performing her exalted instructional mission. At the head of the table encircled by two rows of comfortable armchairs, Zenobia sat radiantly in front of the screen made of translucent fabric resembling ethereal gauze. Thirty-five minds, engrossed in acquiring divine enlightenment, joined her for vibrations of gratitude and peace.

Gotuzo, sitting next to me, was lost in deep meditation.

Asking us to follow her words mentally, the director began a moving, sublime prayer:

“Lord of Life: our hearts, overflowing with joy, thank you for the blessings of each day!

“Allow us to gather in your name on this blessed night of happiness and hope in order to express our endless gratitude.

“We do not ask you, Lord, for benefits or privileges for ourselves, wealthy as we are with your light and mercy; instead, we beseech your majestic heart to grant us the gifts of balance and equity so that we may know how to distribute our divine inheritance, and not squander the glory of your

gifts needlessly. Strengthen our concept of harmony so that we may be faithful coworkers of your holy designs.

“We raised ourselves from the abyss of the past through your watchful kindness, and we are now here to serve you! Nevertheless, Father, bent under the burden of the human tendencies that we have cultivated for thousands of years of emotional imbalance, we can neither renounce your corrective actions nor your paternal strength. Provide us with a healthy atmosphere for freeing ourselves! Mesmerized by our memories from the past, very often we fail to understand your sovereign and judicious will. Erase our selfish individualism so that the consciousness of the universe may enlighten our hearts. Take our reasoning to a higher level of understanding; enable us to vibrate within the arena of your divine thoughts!

“You have placed constructive words in our mouths and have filled our souls with light and tranquility so that we may cooperate in your work. In this shelter of fraternal love, you have given us fellow spirits devoted to the good, and around our small task you have placed a multitude of the afflicted and suffering.

“O Lord! How happy we are to be able to administer solace and enlightenment in your name! However, we beg you for inspiration and direction in light of the responsibilities of those who have received your stewardship of salvation! Teach us to act dispassionately; instill in us respect for the authority you have given us; help us free our minds from individualistic ideas so that we may feel you nearer to us in the collective effort of our spiritual development! And every time our actions unduly reveal the interference of our freewill in fulfilling your laws, reprehend us severely so that we may not continue in thoughtless misguidance. We are your frail and trusting children! All of your resolutions regarding us are excellent and beautiful. Grant us, therefore, enough vision in order to behold our happiness in your intentions, whatever they might be!

“We are humble servants of your glorious wisdom!

“In a thousand different ways in this storehouse of consoling peace, we receive your indirect presence by which those who weep and suffer are cared for.

“O compassionate Father! What greater happiness could there be than to spread, with our Lord Jesus Christ, your loving and redemptive blessings?

What richer school than this place is there, where we can joyfully learn to practice the sublime gift of giving?”

The Director stopped, choked up in the emotion with which she was addressing God, and alluding to her personal accomplishment of that evening, she continued after a long pause, moving all of us:

“By increasing our joy, stimulating our courage and blessing our hope, you have, furthermore, enabled us, dear Lord, to attend to hearts interested in soothing and comforting beloved spirits, who have strayed from our company in the never-ending course of time!”

Zenobia paused once more. Then, impressing a gentle tone on her words, she concluded:

“With our souls turned toward your generosity, we are eternally grateful to you!

“May you be praised for millennia upon millennia, and be glorified by all the beings of creation! Your servants in this house of edification thank you for these invaluable opportunities to work, and they hope for the continuation of your blessings. May your eternal light be reflected throughout the infinite universe! Amen!”

The last sentences of her unforgettable prayer were imprinted with a mixture of profound emotion and joy. That prayer was one of the most beautiful acts of praise I had ever heard. Zenobia rejoiced in the opportunity to serve, in the chance to contribute to something useful and in the happiness of sharing in the good.

Those minutes of worship had uplifted us. A soft light radiated from our brows as we were attuned to one another by like thoughts.

After having ended her display of appreciation, the director advised us to pay close attention and remain silent. Not much time had passed before we saw the screen in front of us suddenly light up as if it were a device responding to our devotional efforts. It began emitting rays of marvelously brilliant blue light that rained down on the small group like tiny etherealized sapphires. They looked like divine energies falling down on us, piercing our souls and renewing our spirits.

After a few minutes, Zenobia movingly rendered thanks on behalf of everyone else’s sentiments.

A new sense of peacefulness hovered over the room. However, after a long period of eager anticipation, Luciana began speaking, and addressed Zenobia:

“Right now, I can see a respectable elderly man on the screen of blessing. He is surrounded by a silvery-green light. He raises his right hand to bless you, and asks me to tell you he is Bernardino.”

“Ah! I know him!” Zenobia answered happily. “He is a messenger from *Casa Redentora de Fabiano*. May Jesus reward him for all the happiness he brings us.”

“The enlightened visitor affirms,” the helpful clairvoyant replied, “that atmospheric vibrations are now being directed toward the lower realms, and that, notwithstanding his desire, not everyone will be able to see him. He adds that friends of the institution are keeping watch on behalf of the harmonious progress of its work, and that the fount of Divine Goodness will evermore furnish peace and resources to hearts of goodwill in their sowing of the good.”

Following a brief pause, which Luciana seemed to use for careful observation, she informed us movingly:

“The messenger contemplates us in silence, and raising his eyes toward heaven, he asks for us to receive the light of divine understanding.”

We saw a profuse discharge of brilliant rays of green light coming from the translucent material like a new shower of heavenly rain drops.

When the externalization of the sublime energy – the bearer of well-being – had ended, and after a few more minutes of silence, Luciana began to speak to Zenobia:

“Sister, the screen is lighting up once again. This time we are being visited by a blessed celestial figure. Oh! Her face is marvelous! She is holding on her lap a splendid bunch of pure white lilies that are giving off an enrapturing fragrance.”

Luciana had not yet finished describing the scene, when in the midst of the white light emerging from the screen, we smelled the characteristic fragrance of the flowers she had described, enveloping us in waves of indescribable peace and joy.

Luciana was also impressed by the scene, and continued:

“The messenger is dressed in a velvety cloak made of a delicate fabric similar to snowy gauze, and she appears to be saying a prayer of thanks ...

“Now, she gazes at us kindly,” she continued once more, “and in a display of immense tenderness, she throws toward us the flowers she has brought with her! She says something ... Oh! Yes, with the permission of our superiors, she would like to communicate with Brother Gotuzo, and she asks for our help!”

I was unable to hide my surprise in light of the way the events were unfolding in that room of gratitude and praise.

Sister Zenobia, obviously experienced in these types of informational exchange activities, intervened and added:

“Yes, Luciana, as far as you are able, surrender your vehicle of manifestation⁷ because the atmosphere tonight is still extremely heavy. Under different circumstances, such a measure would not be necessary, but the plane’s dense substances, charged with negative energies, are falling onto the device of blessing, forcing us to choose a more direct personal recourse. We are ready to welcome this devout messenger into this house of peace. Gotuzo and the rest of us will be at her disposal, awaiting her message of love.

The nurse, with the abilities of someone who could see more than we could, remarked emotionally:

“She says her name is Leticia and claims that she discarnated thirty-two years ago; she states that she was our friend Gotuzo’s mother.

With increased emotion, she added reverently:

“Ah! She has begun to leave the screen to join us. She moves forward. Rays of sublime light emanate from her hands. She embraces me! Oh! How kind you are, self-denying benefactress! ... Yes! I am ready. I will gladly surrender! ...”

At that moment, Luciana’s face became transformed. A beatific smile spread across her lips. A beautiful light radiated out from her brow. With an entirely different voice, the messenger began speaking through her medium.

“Brothers and sisters, may the peace of the Divine Lamb be with us! We do not wish to interrupt the meeting in which you are gathered in the impersonal service of the truth and the good; nevertheless, with the

permission of our Guides, I have come to see someone who is very dear to us, seeking to arouse his consciousness to higher horizons of life.”

She smiled kindly and proceeded:

“Forgive us, then, our devoted friends! Our most uplifting experiences are the result of a constant exchange of common values. The heart that loves in Christ is like a worker bee collecting the honey of wisdom from all the flowers of love and labor. I will happily collect from the fraternal soul of this gathering of coworkers of the Divine Will elements of tolerance and understanding, and will be happy if I can offer some of the motherly love that I hold in my heart, which is eager for a more evolved life.”

She paused slightly between her initial greeting and the reason for her being in our midst. Then, she addressed in particular the colleague who was the objective of her visit, expressing herself with an added tone of tenderness in her voice:

“Gotuzo, my son, I will be brief. Before coming here to give you counsel, I had already prayed to the Lord to continue to bless and inspire you. Listen dispassionately to what your mother and old friend has to say. Let go of old ideas for a better understanding. The inferior concepts of our ego also become crystallized, preventing light from penetrating our inner realm. Listen, my son! How can you scorn the holy opportunity for spiritual evolution? How can you remain at rest while facing the primordial needs of the spirit? The Master makes use of the utilizable qualities of the disciple in a particular area of learning, mercifully postponing the improvement and perfecting of certain dark regions of the personality. At times, the disciple tarries for months, years, centuries ... Jesus is not the lord of violence and never imposes drastic measures on the work of evolution. He is a cultivator of labor, of hope. Compassionately and kindly, he will await our decision to take part in the redemptive apostolate, and will repeatedly endure our wrongs. However, in our own interests we must pay close attention to his teachings with the sincere desire to practice them. Of course, he will not strike us down with thunderbolts if we delay forgiving someone; nevertheless, he said that we should forgive seventy times seven. Obviously, he will not persecute us because of our difficulty in sympathizing with brothers and sisters who are currently less fortunate than we are. However, he has striven so that we may love one another. He will not come in person to force us to adopt a certain evangelical attitude, but he has outlined all of the conditions needed to establish pathways for practicing the good. Your medical efforts in this house

are truly noteworthy. Noble fellow spirits follow you with friendship and admiration. The merits that surround you increase; you amass treasures and blessings as far as the area of friendship is concerned, but ... what about your own destiny? Notwithstanding the light that shines on their sanctified character, your friends cannot take your place in the accomplishments that await you. Your outward manifestations teach and console. Your innermost thoughts, however, greatly wound our hearts. How can you lead patients to a cure if you continue embittered toward those who have supposedly hurt you? How can you give lessons of enthusiasm to the sad if you have for so long lingered in the illusion of despondency? Oh, my beloved son, no one serves the Father's work with a mind clouded by the bitter wine of the passions! Open your mind to receive divine blessings! Do not harbor destructive worms in the garden of hope ... They would damage the most beautiful of flowers and destroy the promise of fruit ...”

The messenger stopped for a moment, seeming to organize her argument, and continued:

“It is understandable that you are lingering in this shelter of love, helping to heal mentally disturbed patients far from the denser realms. However, don't you aim to reach the higher ones? Do you happily accept the prison of remaining at a standstill in spite of the nature of the edifying work? Don't you wish to free yourself so that you can, in turn, effectively free the prisoners of ignorance? Won't you seek to reach a higher plane in order to be of more use to those trying to climb the revelatory stairway of immortal light? I am not talking to you now in the loving impertinence of a mother. At the moment, our ties with regards to the past are very different. We are both children of the Father Most High, and you can be sure that my devotion to you is no less. I will not abandon you to your ignoble tendencies, however justifiable they may be on the list of purely human conventions. Because of all this, I have come to hear you regarding your objectives. You have voluntarily and assiduously taken part in the tasks of the good. You are a worker who has the right to discover his own mistakes and correct the path he must follow. But listen, my son, and try to understand me: I have been interceding with the authorities who govern our destinies so that your conscience may awaken to the divine light. Our beloved and unforgettable domestic group awaits you for the preparation of future happiness! ...”

Her words expressed an enormous load of considerations that would remain to be said. Each concept was enveloped in a significant wave of

thought that indirectly testified to the sacred purposes of the maternal visit.

After a long pause, Leticia asked gently:

“What do you have to say, my son?”

There was a touching silence. We noticed that Gotuzo was weeping between heavy breathing and uncontrollable sobbing. After a few minutes, he responded meekly:

“Mother mine! My good mother! I’m ready! ...”

Leticia, whose presence we could feel but not see, replied, obviously moved:

“I render thanks to the Lord for your understanding. Yes, my son, we will make all the preparations needed. You will soon return to the family group. Prepare yourself, having in mind the struggle that is essential for enlightenment. The home, when duly considered, is a storehouse of supreme educative significance for those seeking divine interests over all human concerns. The earthly home is a blessed forge of redemption. You shall meet up once again with friends and foes from the past, offering you a wonderful opportunity for emotional readjustment. Mentally assess all the lessons you have learned; ask Jesus to inspire you, and be willing to go in peace. Do not become disheartened by the work to be done. We are millions of individuals fighting for the chance to purify our sentiments. In the past, we very rarely acted in obedience to the dictates of the Law. In demonstrating esteem, we would lose ourselves in the excesses of passion as squanderers of affection; in warning someone, we would give in to blind hatred as worshipers of our own personality. It is necessary to get back on course again in order to gain the spiritual balance needed for our evolution.”

Gotuzo, in tears, was unable to speak. His former mother, however, enabling us to perceive that she was receiving his innermost thoughts, added after a long pause:

“The dedicated wife you left behind will not be able to serve as your mother; however, she will be your loving and experienced grandmother. Your enemy, a poor man who took to destructive envy and ambition, will receive your childhood kisses, and with them, the aroma of your renewing forgiveness. What heart betrayed by evil sentiments would not bend amid the changes of life? Your former foe is now entering the decline of his illusions. His soul is presently crossing over the threshold that gives access to the old

age of the temporary body. Instead of sweet memories that nourish his spirit, he will suffer distressing ones. Your presence will minimize his sorrow. While the illnesses of disequilibrium flog his flesh, and while painful memories ravish his mind, you will be his consoling grandson, a messenger of peace in the form of a child. We will help you give him attention and affection. In the disenchantment of a weary body and in the tenderness of a child, the spirit achieves sublime accomplishments for the life eternal.”

The visitor paused once more, and then continued:

“Your future father in the fleeting human existence will be someone particularly close to your heart; he will receive the loving, decisive cooperation of a dear son, and will be uplifted to an ennobling moral position through the sacred motivation of your company. Your return will instill in him more respect for the world and humanity. He will desire to cultivate virtues and values so that you may bless him as your father. He will weep because of your pain and will laugh because of your joy. He will feel as if he were a new man when you touch him with your tiny hands. After the accomplishments he has achieved, his future endeavors will benefit the family group as a whole in a blessed task that he was not able to perform in his past situation. O my son! Could there be any greater happiness than to settle our debts and set off together for the joys of the immortal hymn of integration with the Divine One? Other more beautiful schools await us, and other glories will delight us for all eternity! Let us ascend toward God! ...”

At that point, she again stopped speaking, perhaps overcome by intense emotion.

Respectfully and humbly, Gotuzo asked Sister Zenobia to allow him to approach. After obtaining her consent, he went to the armchair where Luciana was translating the person of his mother and knelt down, kissing her hands.

Leticia kindly recommended:

“Stand up, my son ... I know you love me immensely. However, there are brothers and sisters of ours who are waiting for your affection and understanding. I have not come alone to this meeting. While I was preparing to visit you, I requested the presence of someone from the denser regions to reassure myself of your intent. For us to be completely happy, it is not enough for you merely to kiss and admire me. It is vital that you fraternally get close to those whom you do not yet know how to love. Someone will converse with

us in a few minutes. The doors of this house of blessing will be opened for the benefit of our family gathering. Wait.”

Gotuzo was in high hopes in light of her unusual remarks.

Taking us all by surprise, a few seconds later two women entered the room. The more elderly looking one manifested the high status of a guide – judging from the light encircling her – but the second displayed the darkened appearance of an incarnate soul temporarily absent from the body through physical sleep. She recognized Gotuzo, and demonstrating an undeniable lack of emotional discipline she held out her arms to him, and, uncontrolled and apprehensive, she cried out:

“Gotuzo! Gotuzo! How happy I am to see you again!”

However, seemingly upset by the impact of the memories relating to the altered circumstances that her first husband’s death had caused her, she added worriedly:

“Don’t be angry at me! Help me, for the love of God! ... Don’t forsake me! Don’t forsake me! ...”

Painful sobs racked her chest.

Gotuzo was speechless, concentrating perhaps on the inner anguish that was dominating him, but Leticia kindly came to his aid. Standing up resolutely, she embraced her daughter-in-law and soothed her:

“Come, Marilia, come to my heart. We know how much you have suffered in silent spiritual purification. We have never been deaf to your pleas, and we know first hand the bitter trials that your sensitive soul has endured.”

The visitor from the corporeal plane beheld Leticia with an enraptured and happy expression, feeling as though she were in the presence of a good angel, as she was incapable of gathering her thoughts to grasp the phenomenon. Through the glow in her eyes, we observed the bliss that bathed her spirit, which felt joyous for such beautiful understanding. After caressing Marilia with motherly tenderness, the venerable friend spoke to Gotuzo, emphasizing:

“My son, didn’t you want to embrace and kiss me? Do you believe your terrestrial wife deserves less than I? Do you still believe that the longing and devoted mother of your beloved children has been ungrateful for your

unveiled love? Will you continue oblivious to the good in order to worsen evil? On many occasions, a widow has to accept a second marriage as a necessary sacrifice out of deep respect for the husband who has departed. Remove the blindfold of selfishness that has been impairing your vision, and acknowledge the demands of earthly life more openly.”

In a conciliatory gesture, Leticia entrusted Marilia to Gotuzo and added:

“Help her so that you in turn may be helped. Do not refuse the lesson, for the future will clarify it completely.”

Magnetized, perhaps, by his mother’s loving warning, Gotuzo opened his arms and carefully embraced her in the attitude of a compassionate, devoted brother.

Marilia gazed at him spellbound.

“Oh! What a lovely dream!” she exclaimed in an indescribable expression of happiness.

And glancing around the light-filled room, she addressed us movingly:

“I’m afraid of my old house! Oh, please, divine messengers! Don’t let me go back there! Never! Never again! ...”

Realizing that her daughter-in-law, temporarily free of her body, was entering a vibratory realm detrimental to her mental stability because of the duties awaiting her in the material realm, Leticia thought for a moment and then resumed:

“Listen, my daughter: you mustn’t stay here any longer. You cannot stay with us before the Eternal Designs say so. So return to your home far away, assured of our untainted love. Our serenity will accompany you for the rest of your days. You will never be lacking in help. If you are unable to accompany your beloved husband because of the inappropriateness of such a desire, rejoice and trust in Divine Power, for Gotuzo will go to meet you. Very soon, Marilia, your kisses will besprinkle with love and joy a small face that will synthesize for your hopes as his grandmother a true world of redemptive happiness.”

Deeply moved with joy, the poor soul asked:

“Has Gotuzo forgiven me?”

“He has never suffered any wrongdoing from your devoted heart,” Leticia said kindly, “and he will always remember with affection and

tenderness the faithful companion who took care of his beloved children and honored his name through self-denial and overlooked sacrifice.”

“Oh! Oh! What happiness!” the woman repeated, overcome with sobs of joy and gratitude.

Caressing her son, who was also weeping, overcome by emotion, Leticia pleaded:

“Tell her, my son, how much we love her! Put her sensitive, loving soul at ease!”

Like a subdued child, our brother reassured his ex-wife:

“Marilia, I will never be able to repay my debt for your dedication. Go back, reassured, while I prepare for my own return. Very soon, with God’s help and that of our blessed mother, we will once again be reunited! In your prayers as a misconstrued servant, pray that God may grant me strength. You are about to finish a painful redemptive trial, while I am about to start a new one. So now I am the one who prays for help and protection! ... Wait for me! Don’t get discouraged! We will learn how to reconnect sentiments, purify ties of affection, sanctify impulses, and above all, bless those who might have harmed us, sustaining our supposed enemy so that we may become a true brother and sister toward each other ...”

Both of them wept movingly.

Then, Leticia placed her daughter-in-law back into the care of the guide, who, in the same attitude of silence, led her back to her physical body.

Gotuzo’s former mother suggested that he return to his previous place, and reestablishing the atmosphere, she asked for Zenobia’s help in her son’s future achievements.

The Director, perhaps remembering the efforts that had been made that night on behalf of a heart that was particularly dear to her, displayed intense emotion.

“In this institution, Gotuzo has many friends who are eternally grateful to him,” said Zenobia, touched. “He is a fellow spirit to whom we owe a great deal. We will all happily do anything within our reach so that his new experience may bring him knowledge and blessing. His happiness in another arena, my sister, will in the same way be the happiness of this house. We will be attentive and watchful as he repeats his material experience, not as a favor,

but in obedience to the gratitude we owe him for all the years he has so devotedly and tirelessly worked with us.”

Leticia thanked us all and departed, leaving us the precious sense of peace and enchantment.

After returning to her own persona, Luciana identified another enlightened mentor of the aid institute. He addressed uplifting and holy words of encouragement and motivation to us through Luciana, showered us with a generous rain of luminous rays through the screen of blessing, and requested that Zenobia close the prayer service in the peace of the Lord.

The Director said an affectionate prayer of appreciation and joy, and brought the session to a close.

Enlightened and pleased with the success of the hour, we watched as Sister Zenobia approached Gotuzo and embraced him with motherly affection:

“Oh! My venerable sister!” he stated affectionately, “how great is the gift of the Divine Mercy! ... I am not so deserving! Help me to express my gratitude to God! ...”

“Let us rejoice, Gotuzo!” Zenobia replied, “And let us praise the Father who ennoble our obscure tiny efforts. You were not the only one to benefit from today’s blessing. I also increased my enormous debt to the Almighty! ...”

With her voice stifled by emotion, she concluded:

“I too have received a divine bestowal on this splendid night!”

⁷ See Kardec, *The Mediums' Book*, Chap. XIV, section on Speaking Mediums, and Chap. XXXII (Spiritist Glossary), definition of Psychophony. During the errant state, mediums can also serve as intermediaries for discarnate spirits, as is the case here. – Tr.

10

Purifying Fire

The next morning, the administration of Casa Transitoria had already received the itinerary to follow.

The timepieces all showed it to be six o'clock; nevertheless, thick and gloomy darkness dominated the landscape.

The institute was receiving the concourse of many workers from other aid organizations of the same type, while Sister Zenobia, surrounded by a group of assistants, was absorbed in the pressing duties of the moment, directing activities relating to the institution's upcoming move.

Burning with a yearning to find out more about the work that was going on, I accompanied Father Hipolito, who invited me to check on what was happening in the courtyard.

I gladly followed after him.

The work there was demanding the attention and effort of a large number of coworkers.

Pressed by my insistent questions, my dear companion informed me:

“Aid institutions such as this one can fly great distances.”

And noticing my intense amazement, he continued:

“We reside in vibratory realms of a different sort, though we shouldn't be at all surprised. The laws that govern dense matter – the ones we used to experience down on the earth – are not the same ones that preside over the phenomena of the quintessential matter that serves as a basis for our transitory manifestations. Only now have incarnate humans begun to perceive certain problems inherent to the atomic energy present on the denser plane where their personality is temporarily located. As you may very well notice, the electric discharges of the ethereal atom in our sphere of action make things

possible that are nearly inconceivable to the human mind. In the corporeal realm, in order for us to respond to our evolutionary or redemptive enigmas, we must use the narrow window of our five senses to communicate with Infinite Life. Notwithstanding the progress of scientific investigation, ordinary humans can currently perceive only about one eighth of the plane where they spend their existence. Sight and hearing, the two doors that could expand their intellectual research, continue to be greatly restricted. For instance, let us consider sunlight, which compresses the basic colors that can be seen by corporeal eyes. We are only able to see colors that go from red to violet, and most people see nothing past the last five, which are blue, green, yellow, orange and red – they fail to detect indigo and violet. However, there are other colors in the spectrum that correspond to vibrations that the human eye is incapable of detecting. There are infrared and ultraviolet rays, which the human researcher is able to identify imperfectly but is unable to see visibly. The same thing occurs with our hearing potential. The ear of the incarnate mind registers only sounds ranging from 16 to 40,000 vibrations per second. Waves that are slower or faster escape it entirely. In the realm of dense matter, there must be obedience to the laws of gravity and physical form so that life may reach its divine spiritual objectives.”

The former priest paused briefly, smiled pleasantly, and stated:

“So work performed in our sphere of struggle cannot be viewed with the same deficient assessment that used to govern our observations in the past. Matter and laws here on our plane are highly different, even though they come from the same divine origin.”

Hipolito’s comments were of extreme interest to me at that juncture, even though I was no layman in the understanding of the use of electrical energy in the spirit colony in which I was living. His words were useful for soothing my mind, which was still packed full of corrupted memories of incarnate life.

Despite understanding how light ethereal matter is when compared with the thick fluids from which earthly bodies are made, my esteemed friend called my attention to the heroic efforts of the workers who were carrying out various tasks related to the upcoming move. Daunting even to the strongest heart, the task demanded determination and goodwill.

The use of resources in that house of merit insolated in such a dark landscape called for unprecedented sacrifices. The density of the region

undoubtedly had an influence on the outcome of the work, and the coworkers were involved in activities of massive proportions.

All available personnel had been called to man the engines, and while I looked on in complete amazement before the complex machinery – indescribable in human technical terms – Sister Zenobia, through Jeronimo, asked us to help with the magnetic defenses since she needed to use most of the coworkers in preparation for the flight.

We had no time to lose. The Assistant, who was giving us instructions and providing us with a beautiful example of fraternal self-denial, took the lead himself and walked in the direction of the defense bands.

The defense bands were not high and upright like the castle walls on earth. They lay horizontally, were made of a dark substance and were emitting a wave of electric repelling energies about sixteen feet wide around the entire house. Several light sources remained lit, and after a few minutes, a certain worker who was in charge of the task came to inform us about the work to be done.

We would be responsible for keeping some electromagnetic power generators up and running, whose purpose was to emit a continual stream of defensive energies. We would also keep careful watch over the area that had been entrusted to us in order to resolve any problem that might arise.

Finishing his instructions, the worker affirmed:

“We have been given orders to receive all the suffering souls who have spiritually renewed themselves and allow them entry to the inner courtyard. Over the next few hours, Sister Zenobia and the other administrators of the institution have ordered us to take in all the wayward spirits who approach us displaying genuine signs of moral transformation.”

Of course, Jeronimo would be informed as to what steps were to be taken; however, displaying my own ignorance, I could not help asking:

“But how can we be certain that their spiritual renewal is authentic?”

Jeronimo answered my question before the worker could respond:

“Wherever they might be, the sufferers who have already changed for the good will show characteristic luminous auras as soon as they concentrate their mental energies on making an effort toward their own correction. Even though they may speak soul-stirring words, the others – the unrepentant,

systematic liars – will remain imprisoned in the clouds of darkness surrounding their sin-hardened minds.”

The explanation was most noteworthy, and I gladly kept silent, understanding once again the significance of purifying the conscience as opposed to verbally protesting by cleverly playing with words.

We were peacefully at work when an indescribable atmospheric bolt lit up the dark sky. An intense light of awesome beauty ripped through the dense fog from top to bottom, for an instant offering a startling spectacle. It was not really like the lightning seen on earth during violent storms, since nature’s electric discharges onto the dense ground are not as accurate as far as invisible technical guidance is concerned. Here, we were witnessing exactly the opposite: the fire storm was about to begin methodically and mechanically.

I was overcome by tormenting fear, but Assistant Jeronimo appeared so calm that his serenity was instantly contagious.

“That is the first warning that the disintegrators are about to pass by,” he calmly explained.

Several miles away, we saw the bright light from the flames caused by the electrical bolts hitting that desolate region.

After a few minutes, new reinforcements arrived for the defense. All servants of the good passing by *Casa Transitoria* were called to help with the watch. The assistant who was dispatching them to various work areas informed us that the aid institute should be leaving within four hours, and that, by then, under present circumstances, there would be a great number of unfortunate spirits looking for its doors. He also told us that we did not have enough workers to man the courtyard.

Before he could say any more, more thunder rumbled in the sky. The fire crisscrossed in various directions, but it was still far away as if it were warning us of its impending arrival. However, this time I got the clear impression that the electrical discharge had not stopped at the surface; it had penetrated the substance beneath our feet, because a frightening rumble could be felt in the depths below.

Many times I had heard about travelers who had gone up against the dangers of the sea, and all of them unanimously confirmed the dreadful beauty of the great storms on the back of the equorean abyss. They also

affirmed the fact that none of them, no matter how disbelieving, were able to escape the mystic reflections of faith when facing the foaming vortex of the unknown. Here, though, the emotion was more somber and the factors were more complex, such was the commotion of the phenomenon.

Perhaps in an attempt to set my mind at ease, the Assistant explained:

“The work done by the ethereal disintegrators, which are invisible to us due to the density of the atmosphere, impedes the production of the magnetic storms that always arise when excess amounts of inferior residues of mental matter accumulate on the plane.”

Jeronimo, kind and experienced, was trying to soothe my soul. Nevertheless, even though I knew we were not yet facing the storm of chaotic forces unleashed without direction, I must confess that I was having some difficulty concentrating on my appointed duties because I was completely absorbed with what was going on outside.

After that second thundering blast from the heavens, *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* began an unusual phase of work.

Although doing so in perfect order, workers were hurriedly coming and going. Inside, the final measures were being planned without wasting one single minute of precious time. Communication devices were working at full speed to announce in all directions what was happening at the moment and to warn more spiritually evolved pilgrims not to come near the zone as it underwent the cleansing procedure. Three fourths of Zenobia’s direct assistants were taking care of matters relating to the upcoming flight, or were making room for the needy sufferers who would be arriving in great numbers.

In fact, the measures were completely justified because we could now hear the deafening roar of the approaching crowds.

More threatening thunder claps followed, spreading fire on top of the ground and rolling energies within the ground on which we were standing.

Massive waves of terrified sufferers had begun to reach the defenses. It was hearbreaking to witness the frightened, expectant mob. We tried to get as close to them as possible.

“Help us! Help us!” screamed the unfortunate creatures in tight groups.

Others were threatening us:

“Out of the way! One way or another, we’ll make it through the barrier! This shelter belongs to us! We’ll force our way in!”

And they did not stop at words. They advanced en masse over the horizontal bands, only to retreat horror-stricken.

“Help us, for the love of God!” beseeched the less audacious ones. “Give us shelter, for pity’s sake! The devouring fire is coming after us ...!”

However, all of these particular sufferers displayed an aura of darkness around them with greater or lesser intensity.

One of them managed to reach our work area, and I recognized him. There was no doubt about it. He was the torturer who had provoked so much outrage within me the night before. He got down on his knees not far from where we were, and implored:

“Have mercy on me! ... The flames are threatening me! I repent! I repent! I was a sinner, but I hope to have your help in order to rehabilitate myself!”

The pleas would have touched the heart of any less-informed worker, but forewarned about the luminous aura, we could see that the pleading spirit was enveloped in a genuine cloak of darkness. Luciana got as near to him as possible. She gazed at him intently, made a notable gesture and exclaimed in dismay, although quite discretely:

“Oh! What horrible mental activity this poor brother is displaying! He is projecting deplorable memories and destructive purposes in his aura. He may be frightened, but not converted. He plans to reach the edge of our work area in order to receive divine benefits without showing any respect. His aura is too telling ...”

She was going to say something else, but one look from the Assistant who was leading us was enough to make her become humbly silent, and she compliantly went back to the complex task at hand.

Enormous flames spread out in various directions, and blazing sparks were methodically released from the heavens.

A large dose of patience was employed by all of us to restrain the enraged crowd. We were all feeling alarmed by the monstrous, wretched figures dragging around their garments of darkness, when spirits with auras of light began to arrive. They wore rags and showed heartbreaking signs of

suffering. Giving us the impression that they wanted to insulate their minds from the hundreds of insurgents who were gathered there in outright insurrection, they gazed toward heaven and sang hymns of reverence to the Lord, rejoicing over their own renewal, but their songs were drowned out by the confusion of voices from the turbulent rebels. From the looks of those more enlightened spirits moving toward us, I noticed that they were making an effort to protect their thoughts from the harsh rebukes of the evil ones, perhaps fearing that the mental energies they were emitting would create an opportunity for new magnetic ties that would work on behalf of the torturers' control. So they tried to maintain the utmost indifference toward the mockeries hurled at them by the malevolent and unrepentant crowd. They made up strikingly beautiful groups; sublime pictures of heaven in a hell of atrocious suffering! They came hand in hand as if exchanging energies so that their strength might be increased for their salvation at the final moment of a battle that had most likely begun many years before. This instinctive magnetic exchange process instilled in them a prodigious renewal of power because they levitated, superimposed above the crazed mob. Their heads were adorned with beautiful auras of light, all glowing with about the same intensity. While the evil-looking figures were hurling insults at them, they were singing hosannas to Christ, intoning words of adoration that reminded us of the exultations of the first Christians, who were persecuted and flogged in the arenas after being led out under the jeers of the devilish spectators.

However, to be taken in by Fabiano's shelter, they needed to land nearby for us gladly to allow them passage. In the meantime, for them to make it to the courtyard of the institution, they had to break the current of reciprocal magnetic energies by letting go of each other's hand. By doing so unwillingly, the majority of the newcomers collapsed in weakness immediately after having set foot inside *Casa Transitoria*. Thus, they resembled exhausted birds that had finally reached the end of their toilsome journey after weathering long distances and storms.

As a beginning apprentice, I was distressed at the sight. Nevertheless, everything had already been foreseen by the institute administrators.

Great numbers of nurses and stretchers were stationed not far from us, providing immediate aid.

Small, admirable cordons of spirits, transformed within by the painful cleansing of sanctifying tears, were now arriving from all directions. Similarly, surrounded by darkness, enraged, sarcastic mobs were also

increasing to form dense crowds, burning our ears with their blasphemies and injurious insults. Among the ingrates and rebels, however, there were creatures displaying affliction. Kneeling before us, they touched our fraternal hearts with their cries for help and their bitter complaints, which we were unable to mitigate with any immediate benefit due to their perilous mental state, a condition that was inflicting them with reparatory suffering.

Nearly four grueling hours had passed, calling for our careful attention to the task at hand. By now, the environment was even more overpowering, more terrifying ... Serpents of fire uncoiled in the heavens and pierced the soil, which began to tremble beneath our feet. The heat was stifling. Feeling the unsteady elements flanking us on all sides, I remembered the ancient description of the Messina seaquake, during which, in the depths of despair before nature's fury, the victims did not know where to go to save themselves, as all around them the earth, sea and sky were coming together in one gigantic and synchronous scene of destruction.

Through all its administrators and helpers, the institution was working with indescribable heroism. Frankly, on my part I was anxiously awaiting the signal for us to go back inside, such was the disagreeable feelings I was experiencing. Burning shreds repeatedly fell from the heavens in the midst of formidable explosions originating from the disintegration of ethereal elements ...

When everything led us to believe there were no more spirits nearby capable of being helped, a flourish of trumpets sounded to signal the cutoff point.

Finally! I breathed a sigh of relief.

In accordance with instructions we had received, we abandoned the electromagnetic defense devices to function on automatic, and we hurriedly left.

Vortexes of flames arose nearby and the uproar around us was so loud that we were witnessing the perfect picture of a huge forest ablaze, driving beasts and monsters from their unknown caves.

We crossed the threshold of the shelter followed by all our companions who were still outside. Now we could hear the muffled sound of the engines. Outside, dense masses of evil spirits were still trying to break through the barriers in order to invade the shelter as it was just about to take off. An afflictive apprehension took hold of me.

What would become of us if the mob were to attack the place? On the other hand, the continual rain of flaming sparks put the shelter at risk, in my opinion. So why not take flight immediately?”

One must bear in mind that absolute order reigned inside the institute despite the hurried work pace. Simple but comfortable accommodations welcomed the exhausted sufferers. And as calmly as ever, as if she had gotten used to the disturbances outside, Sister Zenobia took charge of the situation, giving final orders.

All of the easily accessible doors to the inside were sealed tight.

Soon afterward, the Director called us to the enormous room dedicated to prayer and informed us that in order for *Casa Transitoria* to move successfully, it would require not just electrical energy – based on simple phenomena of differentiated matter – but also our mental-magnetic emissions, which would act as a backup during initial liftoff.

Zenobia had been brief, given the circumstances of the moment. We all remained gathered in the prayer chamber in apprehensive anticipation, except for the fellow spirits who were busy giving immediate assistance to patients who had been taken in during the final moments, in addition to those who remained on guard by the machinery in use.

Intense emotion could be seen on all faces.

Outside, the elements roared in attrition.

After inviting us to fuse our mental energies into a single act of gratitude to the Lord, Zenobia picked up a beautiful book. I immediately recognized it. It was the Bible, which we had known for so long. Carefully opening it, the Director began to read Psalm 104 out loud, deliberately and solemnly:

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

O Lord, my God, you are great

In majesty and splendor!

Clothed in light as a shroud,

You stretched out the heavens like a sacred curtain of life ...

You built the sublime chambers of the waters

You make the clouds your chariot

*And you shed your creative breath on the wings of the wind.
You have filled the universe with your messengers,
And at times you take the devouring fire to be your minister.
You set the terrestrial house on sure foundations,
Ensuring us life for centuries and centuries ...
You provided it with abysses and peaks as a garment
You sanctified the waters so that they rose above the mountains.
But at your voice of command, all the elements are transformed
Because, if you send the music of the morning, you also send the
destroying thunder ...*

*The mountains rise; the valleys descend
To the place that you appointed for them,
Without them passing their limits.
Lord, you make the springs of the valleys go forth,
Fertilizing the mountains ...*

*You give drink to the animals in the field
And you satiate the thirst of the wild planted ground,
Where the birds of the heavens guard their nests,
Praising you day and night ...*

*You water the tops of the mountains, pouring forth waters from heaven
So that the earth may be plenteous with fruit.*

Her reading of the psalm was half way through when the institute, like a powerful airplane taking off, began to rise into the air.

The devoted guide was not simply reading a psalm: she was pronouncing the words of praise written so many centuries ago, feeling them intensely. Oh! Marvel of marvels! The emotion with which she was humbly and reverently addressing the Lord of the universe was so magnificent that her chest looked like a mysteriously glowing source of light.

Infected by her burning faith, we joined her in the same feeling.

The small chapel became filled with intense brightness. Radiant light reached into the adjacent rooms and must have overflowed into the area of thick darkness outside.

Eminently impressed, I noticed that *Casa Transitoria*, which had moved more slowly at first, was now traveling very fast.

I did not get a chance to study particular details of the phenomenon. Zenobia's attitude of vigilant prayer compelled us to maintain the same environmental vibratory tonus. I did notice, though, that the aid institution continued moving upward.

After almost an hour of vertical flight, we reached a clear, radiant region. We were all relieved to see the sun's warm smile.

The Director stood up and we followed her, understanding that the perilous phase had ended.

From that moment on, the shelter moved horizontally as it traveled over the elements of the plain. From the small windows, we were able to see the colored auras of the consuming fire.

Different groups began conversing and observing.

Surrounded by assistants, Sister Zenobia was commenting on the next steps regarding the work of readjustment.

Approaching Assistant Jeronimo and Father Hipolito, who were exchanging ideas, we began to analyze the magnitude of the work being done right before our eyes.

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "If only incarnate humans could understand the supreme beauty of life! If they could learn in advance about the sublime horizons that are shown to us after the death of the body, they would show greater interest in valuing time, existence and learning!"

Jeronimo smiled and remarked:

"Yes, Andre. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the transient realm in which humans walk is still full of mystery and enchantment. For those who love God's glory, the planetary surface offers awe-inspiring discoveries, from the study of the infinitesimal all the way up to the observation of the huge planetary systems suspended in the vast expanse of space!"

Reflecting on the unforgettable hours we had spent since our descent to the abyss, I listened to both companions exchanging ideas about the transcendental problems of life such as the perfecting of the spirit and the form, the planning of the destinies of orbs and beings, the mystical government of the earth in its various spheres of activity and evolution, the different kinds of creatures comprising humankind, the laws of progress and reincarnation, the extent of the energies concentrated in the ethereal atom, the energy of the chemical elements in the physical arena of planetary manifestations, and the creative power of the great mentors of knowledge.”

I listened to them in the midst of silence and humility like an elated apprentice in the presence of benevolent, experienced masters.

Soon, after absorbing lessons that I shall never forget, we noticed that *Casa Transitoria* was gently descending. We were returning to the realm of dense substance, although less heavy and less dark than the previous one. Within a few minutes, we observed that Fabiano’s shelter was in another realm of fraternal service.

A vast legion of spiritual servants had been awaiting our arrival in order to help us with re-adaptation efforts. We had spent three hours and thirty-five minutes on the journey.

Complex activities awaited the dedicated workers.

Sister Zenobia looked radiant as she gathered us in the joyful prayer of thanksgiving, after which Jeronimo invited us to leave. Five brothers and sisters faithful to the good, and who were already on the eve of being freed from their bodies, were awaiting our help down on earth, and it was time for us to depart.

11

New Friends

Carrying the equipment essential for our work, we bid farewell to the aid institution and set off toward the earth's surface.

Jeronimo was quick to sound out the various environments in which we would be working.

He coordinated the task simply and logically. We would not be distracted by any investigations other than the mission outlined beforehand, and we would stay in continuous contact with *Casa Transitoria* in order to carry out the task at hand more effectively.

“Obviously,” he explained, “we will be forced to carry out a number of activities to help our friends who are on the verge of freeing themselves of their corporal ties to the dense plane, and Fabiano’s foundation will be the main point of reference for our work. While they are asleep, we will lead them there so that they can slowly get used to the idea of permanently leaving their bodies.”

Intrigued by such caution, I asked:

“My dear Assistant, are all deaths accompanied by aid missions? Does every individual who leaves the earth require a center of direct aid?”

My friend smiled indulgently in the true spiritual ascendancy of those who teach wisely, and clarified:

“Absolutely not. Reincarnations and discarnations, generally speaking, simply obey the law. There are biogenetic principles guiding the world of living forms when physical rebirth occurs, and transformational principles that govern incidents of death, fulfilling vital energy cycles in all areas of manifestation. In numerous evolutionary circles, there are workers for the overall tasks according to the Eternal One’s wise designs. However, just as

there are workers who put forth intense efforts in building human progress, there are spirit missions for attending to these workers' needs on an individual basis."

Sensing my surprise, Jeronimo continued:

"We are not dealing with unjustified concessions or special treatment. This kind of mission actually reveals an ordering of services and the use of values. If certain workers demonstrate valuable attributes when fulfilling their duties, they will of course be deserving of the consideration of those who are supervising them when they analyze the extent of future work. Therefore, on the spirit plane we devote a great deal of care to faithful workers in order to protect their dedicated spirits from the evil influence of destructive elements, such as despondency and lack of motivational resources, while at the same time allowing them to begin to analyze the importance of our ministry in truth and goodness in light of the infinite universe."

Listening to his explanation, I instinctively remembered the apostolic types I had met during my human experience. Mightn't there be a contradiction in his explanation, then? The virtuous priests, with whom I had kept contact while in the world, were individuals who were persecuted on all sides. I noted that the individuals who exhibited the highest of moral values were precisely those chosen for the assault of unremitting defamation. Not to mention only those examples from my own personal experience, I also recalled the history of Christianity itself. Wasn't it, by chance, full of such examples too? Those individuals, who for many years had lived zealously in the faith, had been the fodder for wild beasts. The Master's followers had been victims of dreadful ordeals, and he himself had reached Calvary in steps of pain ...

The Assistant perceived the play on reasoning that was developing within me, and explained:

"Your mental objections are unfounded. The human notion of divine help has been tarnished for many centuries now. People have assumed God's protection to be found in worldly rulers. They expect materialistic favors, unwarrantable distinction among the less fortunate, and eternal power and praise. They are used to expecting service, appreciation and understanding, but they despise rendering service, appreciation and understanding unless it is in return for a previous act. Heavenly assistance translates into blessed opportunities for work and renewal; many times it manifests in the human

realms in the form of glorious wounds, magnificent suffering or blessed agony. As long as primitive animalistic impulses reign on the planet, those favored by divine blessings will be for the most part representatives of the divine power, and in no way will they be exempt from difficult testimony. This happens not because the Lord means to turn his disciples into guinea pigs, but because there are inherent demands for educative work, in which the attentive and faithful student's lesson must be of interest to the whole class. What almost always appears to be suffering and temptation is actually blessedness, transforming situations for the good and eternal happiness."

His line of reasoning was logical and direct. And because the Assistant had become silent, reflecting perhaps on the main purpose that had led us to the work at hand, I tried to suppress my desire to ask questions.

Led by Jeronimo, we reached a small community and headed for a certain modest house, where, after a few minutes, he introduced us to an incarnate fellow spirit in dire straits, suffering from hypertrophic cirrhosis.

"This is Dimas," he said, pointing to the patient. "He has been a diligent coworker in our assistance work for many years now. He came from our spirit colony a little over half a century ago to devote himself to an obscure task in order to carry out the divine plans better. He developed valuable mediumistic capabilities and offered his services to the needy and suffering."

The modest bedroom was bathed in subtle radiant energies, indicating the constant visitation of high order spirits.

"Our friend," continued the Assistant, "has become the happy creditor of countless dedications for the self-denial with which he always conducted himself in his ministry. Now his time has come for constructive rest."

I was pleasantly surprised to notice that the patient was aware of our presence. He closed his physical eyes, saw us with his soul sight, and smiled cheerfully ...

The physical weakening had reached its peak, and Dimas managed to free himself to some extent from his material body with remarkable ease.

Seeing us close to his bed, he began to pray fervently, asking for our assistance. He was exhausted, he said; nonetheless, he remained calm and trusting.

Heeding Jeronimo's advice, I came closer to the patient, applying magnetic passes⁸ of relief over the vascular conjunctive tissue. His abdomen

was bulky and heavy. However, he displayed immediate signs of relief.

After my humble help, Jeronimo offered him a few words of encouragement and promised to return later.

In a state of exaltation, Dimas addressed a moving prayer of gratitude to heaven.

After a couple of minutes, two of his spirit friends entered the room, greeting us respectfully.

Our director asked for us to leave the room, and explained to us afterward:

“After briefly visiting the relevant individuals, we will join them for an explanatory session at *Casa Transitoria* in order to prepare them for the upcoming event of final deliverance. We’ll wait until nighttime to do this.”

From the small town where our first friend lived, we headed for Rio de Janeiro.

We used volitation and were filled with joy and happiness.

It is very difficult to describe the feeling of joy and lightness inherent to traveling in such a state after having been in the dark region from which we had just come. Incarnates very often discuss the possibility of inventing an apparatus for individual flight. However, even if such a new invention appeared on the scene, the weight of the physical body, the technical care required by the propulsion mechanism, and the risks involved in traveling will never be able to replace the safety and peace of mind that fills us with such a feeling of well-being. After the routine journey between *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* and the earth, we were enjoying harmonious conditions, felt rested and refreshed and used volitation quite easily, despite the atmospheric density.

The spectacle of the terrestrial landscape had rarely seemed so beautiful. Hills and valleys, rivers and streams marking towns and villages under the resplendent mirror of the sun spoke to my heart of the mercy of the Most High, bringing creatures together in floral dwellings of peaceful activity.

Thoughts of praise to the Eternal Father filled my spirit with happiness.

We could now make out the dense rows of houses of Rio.

It was not long before we entered a simple home in a less densely inhabited neighborhood, and witnessed a touching domestic scene.

An elderly gentleman was lying on a small divan. He was displaying all the horrible symptoms of advanced tuberculosis; he was talking emotionally to two young boys who appeared to be about six and eight years old, respectively. A beautiful expression of light haloed the sick man's head while he rested his lucid gaze on the children and spoke to them in a fatherly manner.

Even Jeronimo stopped at our side and listened to him, pleasantly surprised.

"But Daddy, do you really believe no one ever dies?" asked the older son.

"No, Carlindo, no one disappears forever, and that is why I want to give you my fatherly advice."

His gaze became even warmer, and in light of the boys' keen interest, he continued:

"I believe it won't be long before I leave ..."

"Where to, Daddy?" the younger son interrupted.

"To a world better than this one. To a place, my son, where your father will be able to help you both in a healthy yet different body."

The children, their eyes wet with tears, protested lovingly.

The father made an obvious effort to control himself, and continued:

"You mustn't be afraid. I've already put my business in order and your momma will work in my place until you grow up and become men. If I could, I'd stay home, but what would you do with me as useless as I am right now? That's why God will give me another body and I'll be with you, even though you won't be able to see me."

He smiled resignedly and added:

"We might be even happier ... For many days, I've been meaning to talk to you as I'm doing now so that you can be sure of my undying love for you. Soon after I leave, I already know that many people will try to discourage you. They will say that I have left never to return, that the grave has destroyed me. But I'm forewarning you that this isn't true. We will live forever and will love each other more and more ..."

I noticed that the ailing father desperately wanted to caress the young boys, but restrained by the threat of infecting them, he kept his longing hands still by his side.

The boys wiped their silent tears, and after a long pause, the patient spoke to his older son:

“Tell me, Carlindo, do you believe that your father will cease to exist? Do you perchance believe that our love and unity at home, that our affection and understanding are mere ashes and nothing more?”

The boy controlled himself in order to appear brave, and responded:

“I believe, just like you, that there is no death.”

“When I depart,” the loving father added, “if you show courage and trust in God, your father will also feel braver and more trusting, and in a short while, he’ll regain his strength ...”

There was a moving pause, which Assistant Jeronimo did not want to interrupt due to the great moral significance of the affectionate scene.

Gazing at the boys, the dying father continued:

“About three years ago, we began our home Gospel worship. And you now know that our Master didn’t die. Led to torture and death, he returned from the grave to guide his friends and disciples. So he’ll help us continue together. When I set off on my journey of renewal, remain calm and optimistic. Don’t cry or become weak. Your tears will be of no use to your mother, who will obviously need all the help we can give her. God expects us to be happy in our daily toils in order to be faithful children of his divine love.”

At that moment, the man’s wife appeared, making the conversation take a different course.

Jeronimo made use of the opportunity to interrupt and introduce the man to us.

“Our friend Fabio is on the brink of deliverance. He has always worked with great dedication to the works of the good. He is not a medium with a task in the usual sense of the word. He is, however, a balanced man, a devotee of meditation and higher spirituality. Because of this, he has been an excellent giver of magnetic energies ever since his youth, helping us in our work of unseen assistance. Several mentors in our colony hold his work in very high

esteem. For many years now, he has dedicated himself to the study of the transcendent questions of the soul, and he graduated from the academy of self-effort in order to be useful to us. Free from sectarianism, an adversary of the passions and a lover of duty, our brother Fabio, from the very beginning of his marriage, implemented the living faith home worship practice, enlightening his wife, children and other relatives regarding the essential problems related to the eternal life. Due to his perseverance in the good that has always characterized his actions, his deliverance will be pleasant and natural for him. He knew how to live well in order to die well.”

I drew closer to the patient to examine his physical condition.

The tuberculosis had ravaged his lungs, and I was alarmed by the shapes of the cavities as well as the other classic symptoms of the dreadful disease.

Fabio, however, did not need any support for the faith he nurtured. He showed himself to be calm and confident, and despite the weakness that was natural for his condition, he continued teaching his family unforgettable lessons of courage and moral worth.

“Let’s go!” the Assistant called to us. “Our friend is doing just fine and does not need our help.”

We left the house in wonder at the example we had witnessed.

A few moments later, Jeronimo led us to a comfortable apartment in a modern high-rise in one of the city’s elegant neighborhoods.

We went inside.

A respectable elderly lady was lying in bed, showing apparent signs of heart disease. She was flanked by two younger women, who were watching over her with discrete care.

“This is our sister Albina,” he said. “She belongs to the higher organizations of our spirit colony. She has many admirers in our realm of action because of everything she has been doing in the sphere of the Gospel. At the moment, she is working in the Protestant evangelical circles. She made a profession of faith in the Presbyterian Church, and after becoming a widow when she was still young, she dedicated herself to educational endeavors, molding children and youths in the Christian ideal.”

I was once again awestruck at the greatness of true fraternity that reigns in the more-evolved life. It did not seek earthly labels, nor did it pay special

attention to religious or social titles. It sought out the hearts that were faithful to God, and it administered comforting help without any exclusivist concerns.

Assistant Jeronimo approached and touched her forehead with his right hand. Albina looked radiant and happy at the touch of that kind and caressing hand, and exclaimed to one of the women helping her:

“Eunice, hand me the Bible. I’d like to meditate a bit.”

“Oh, Mom!” her daughter responded, “Wouldn’t it be better for you to rest? Thanks be to Jesus, your shortness of breath has stopped and you seem to be yourself again!”

“The Word of the Lord lifts one’s spirit, my daughter!”

She made her request with so much tenderness in her voice that Eunice gave in, fetched the book from the large dresser and gave it to her.

The respectable old lady got comfortable to read, reclining on high pillows. Putting on her glasses, she held the Divine Testament firmly in her hands, while Assistant Jeronimo helped her open it to a certain place without her even realizing it. She had opened it to the passage in John, chapter 11, describing the resurrection of Lazarus.

The kindly old lady read it slowly out loud. When she had finished, she exclaimed with great emotion:

“I thank our Divine Master for the encouraging reading he has sent us. I pray to heaven that we might all find eternal life in Christ Jesus! Amen.”

Her daughters respectfully accompanied her.

Jeronimo asked me to apply comforting passes to the patient.

After performing the magnetic operation, I noticed that her cardiac deficiency originated from a threatening aneurism.

The Assistant was about to start telling us about Albina’s beautiful qualities, when someone from our realm appeared at the door. She was one of Albina’s devoted friends who had come to keep watch at her bedstead. She greeted us kindly, with charming simplicity.

Jeronimo explained our mission to her. She smiled and said:

“We are very grateful for the help you are giving our sister. However, I believe there is a strong appeal for postponement on her behalf. We are all of the opinion that she should be called to our realm immediately to receive the

honor due her, but there are weighty reasons for her to be helped appropriately in order for her to remain with her family for a few more months.”

“We’ll be pleased to offer our fraternal service,” Jeronimo said politely. “We’ll pass by here every day until the task is complete. We’ll be informed of any other changes that might occur.”

Albina’s kind-hearted visitor thanked us and we left.

What we had just heard was very significant, but noting that the Assistant was now engrossed in the work still at hand, I refrained from asking any questions.

Before long, we had made our way through the large door of a busy hospital, which was watched over by large groups of spirit workers. There was a great deal of activity going on there on the part of both incarnates and discarnates. But as we had to follow our guide, we did not pay much attention to those we did not know.

After we had gone down hallways and passed rooms, we finally reached a large ward that offered services at no charge. On most of the beds, we could see patients and the spirits who surrounded them: some in the role of defensive assistance; others bent on persecution.

The most varied of scenes were unfurling before us.

Perhaps more as a warning to me than to the rest of my companions, Jeronimo recommended:

“Do not lose your focus.”

After a couple of moments we found ourselves before an elderly gentleman with a deeply wrinkled face and a head of white hair. At the headboard a wonderful fellow spirit was watching over him.

Jeronimo introduced us to him. It was Brother Bonifacio.

Then, he pointed at the man immersed in snowy white sheets and explained:

“This is our old Cavalcante. He is a virtuous Roman Catholic, a self-denying and active soul dedicated to helping his neighbor. He came from our colony over sixty years ago, and he has a large circle of friends because of his moral endowments. His life, full of wonderful sacrifice, speaks to the heart. He is here among the children of misery, abandoned by his relatives because

of his ideas of renouncing material riches. But he has not been forsaken by Divine Mercy.”

After a brief pause, Bonifacio approached us and added:

“The surgery on his duodenum has been scheduled for tomorrow.”

Showing us that he already knew about the case, our director stated:

“We will assist him when the time is right.”

Heeding Jeronimo’s advice, I applied magnetic passes, lingering most particularly over his digestive tract, from the parotid gland to the rectum. I noticed that in addition to the duodenal ulceration, the appendix was also in an advanced state of inflammation and was close to rupturing.

I also noticed that Cavalcante was completely unaware of our influence. He perceived nothing of our presence. This proved that despite the advanced moral qualities that embellished his character, he did not possess enough religious education for the proper exchange.

Of all the scenes we had observed that day, this one was, without a doubt, the saddest. In addition to the vibrations of the disturbed environment, this patient, awaiting surgery, did not make our job very easy.

“It has been hard for me to keep him settled,” said Bonifacio, inclining toward the Assistant, “because of the discarnate relatives who are constantly harassing him. Despite the protection ensured at this hospital, many manage to gain access and bother him. The poor soul has not prepared himself sufficiently to break free from the yoke of flesh and he suffers greatly due to his extreme sensitivity. Although he has been forsaken by his family, he still feels deep attachment to those he loves. A situation like this makes our efforts extremely difficult.”

“Yes,” agreed Jeronimo, “we can understand this kind of struggle. The lack of spiritual education, even in the most admirable individuals, creates deplorable imbalances of the soul in circumstances like this one. However, we will remain watchful here as payment to our devoted friend for the many favors we have received from him.”

When we said goodbye, Bonifacio appeared moved and grateful.

Scarcely a few minutes passed before we arrived at the entrance to a distinguished yet simple and comfortable building, in which a number of small children were sheltered in the name of Jesus. It was a commendable

Christian Spiritist institution, where a small legion of workers from our plane was stationed.

A kind elderly man greeted us warmly. I recognized him joyfully. His name was Bezerra de Menezes, the dedicated brother of those who suffer.

He embraced us one by one with spontaneous joviality.

He listened to Jeronimo's explanations with great interest, and then replied smilingly:

"We have been waiting for your group. Fortunately, however, our dear Adelaide will be no trouble. Her mediumistic ministry, her tireless service to help patients, her motherly support for the orphans in this house of peace, combined with the sea of troubles and harsh insults that make up its blessed burden of work for the good, have prepared her soul for this moment ..."

He walked ahead of us, leading the way to a simple room where the medium was resting.

Once inside the solitary room, we did not see any incarnate brothers or sisters. There were, however, two young girls surrounded by a silvery light. They were caressing her.

We respectfully gathered around the patient. Her white hair looked like beautiful strands of snow. Pointing to her, Bezerra said contently:

"Adelaide has always been a loyal disciple of the Master of Masters. Despite hardships, thorns and afflictions, she has persevered until the very end."

After slowly gazing at the delicate bunches of roses that adorned her room, the noble lady began to pray. Brilliant rays radiated from her serene mind. She did not see us at her side, except for the devoted Bezerra de Menezes, to whom she was joined by sublime ties of the heart. He kindly and gently greeted her, speaking to her with comforting, caring words.

"I know this is the end of the journey, my honorable friend," said the medium in a moving tone, "and I am ready. For many years now, I have asked the Divine Lord to show me the way. I have not wished to follow any other paths than the one belonging to him, our Savior. But ..."

She was unable to continue. Overwhelming emotion choked her voice, and immediately after a painful pause, copious tears began to well up in her sunken eyes.

Bezerra settled next to her in paternal intimacy, caressed the woman's forehead with his radiant right hand, and said optimistically:

"I know. You think about your relatives, friends, the little orphans and the work you will be leaving behind. Oh Adelaide! I understand your motherly devotion to this labor of love that has consumed your entire life. However, you are tired, very tired, and Jesus, the Divine Doctor of our soul, has authorized your rest. Entrust to him the suffering that oppresses your loving heart. Entrust the precious burden of your responsibilities to other hands; empty the chalice of your soul, casting out any bitterness and worries. Convert your yearnings into hopes and loosen the strongest of bonds in obedience to the divine order of things."

Adelaide rested her crystal clear eyes on her benefactor, appearing comforted, and after a brief pause, Bezerra continued:

"Your great battle is nearing its end. You are fortunate, my friend, very fortunate, because your spirit will have been decorated with the scars from years of fighting evil as a faithful sentry at the fortress of living faith ... You have taught those who surrounded your path all the lessons of goodness and truth possible ... Turn your relatives and affections over to Jesus and reflect now upon humankind, our blessed and abundant family. As for the services which for some time now have been entrusted to your care, they are fundamentally dedicated to Christ, who will make all the changes he deems appropriate and necessary. All you need to do is to rejoice in a job well done. So gather your strength and do not feel sad, for your heart has arrived at its final battle ... Be brave, very brave and have faith!"

The kind sister smiled, almost feeling happy.

Immediately afterward, one of the institution's little assistants broke the spiritual conversation, opening the door unexpectedly and announcing the arrival of visitors.

In light of the circumstances, Dona Adelaide concentrated her mind on the realm of incarnates and lost sight of her benefactor.

The venerable doctor of unfortunate souls began talking with Jeronimo about a number of problems relating to our mission, while we discretely left the room in order to leave them to exchange ideas more freely.

§ " ...Passes are the transmission of spiritual and psychic energies." (Francisco Candido Xavier, Question #99, *O Consolador*, Brazilian Spiritist Federation, 1993). – Tr.

12

A Training Expedition

Our guide had planned out our work while at Casa Transitoria de Fabiano. He had decided, however, that our activities on the earth would use as a point of reference Adelaide's community home, where the spiritual factors were truly more favorable.

"Here," he explained to us to begin with, "we will feel at home. This organization is the perfect arena for the best spiritual sowings and it will provide us with the peace and safety we need. We will remain in constant communication with Fabiano's shelter, to which we will lead our newly discarnated spirits, and we will concentrate all the activities possible relating to the other friends in this loving foundation."

In fact, that refuge of true fraternity was, without a doubt, an immense storehouse of blessings.

Many spirit friends worked at the center, offering aid and care. I had come across one of the few buildings on the earth that was devoid of evil creatures from the invisible realm.

Like *Casa Transitoria*, security was also very tight.

We met numerous sufferers, well-intentioned individuals who had been granted prior authorization to enter the shelter.

While the Assistant took his time in conversation with the devoted Bezerra, we were allowed to visit the living quarters.

Father Hipolito, Luciana and I, accompanied by Irene, a young spirit coworker at the house, set out to take a look around.

There was light coming from our plane in all the rooms, indicating the abundance of healthy, constructive thoughts held by all the minds that were interlaced by the same sharing of ideals.

When we arrived at the public meeting room, our new friend explained:

“This is the part of the shelter that compels us to perform the most arduous work, a receptacle for the mental emanations and silent requests of all of the people who visit us during public gatherings; thus, we are obliged after each session to clean the environment meticulously. As you well know, thoughts are highly contagious and it is crucial for us to insulate helpful coworkers, freeing them from any destructive or harmful elements.”

Trying to broaden our informative conversation, I remarked:

“I can imagine the extent of your duties ... Are there enough persons to help you with them?”

“Yes,” she responded, “the legion of coworkers is by no means small. We are led to serve both day and night on alternating shifts. We have departments to assist adults and small children.”

But I caught sight of such a large number of workers from our plane that, at times, important considerations came to mind. Why were there so many individuals working just to provide assistance to a few dozen unfortunate children in the material realm? I was drawing parallels between Adelaide’s foundation and *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano*, and noticed one difference in particular. At the latter, the strict guard duties, the stern measures, and the service of the personnel occurred due to the urgent needs of a certain number of unfortunate discarnates, for whom its services of charity were a light that was indispensable for their inner transformation. Here, at the former, on the other hand, one saw only tender little creatures who were in immediate need of milk and bread, reading and writing, and good counseling more than any other measures. Thus, was it really worth spending so much energy from our realm?

Even so, the tactful coworker, perceiving the questions I was asking myself, reflected:

“We must realize, however, that this work is not exclusively devoted to serving the needs of the stomachs and minds of forsaken children. Here, the imperatives of evangelization outweigh all others. In order to impress higher spirituality on the human mind, it is essential that we make use of situations like this one, since it is otherwise very difficult to receive voluntary renewal from the realm of the sentiments. We avail ourselves of this center – regarded reverently for its principles of Christian solidarity – as a place for spreading healthy ideas. The foundation concentrates much more on souls than on

physical bodies, much more on eternal thoughts than on transitory matters. By receiving the responsibilities inherent to Jesus' plan, its director, workers and residents are instinctively transformed into living instruments of the Light of the Most High. By satisfying bodily needs, we solve spiritual problems. By combining duties and sharing them with our incarnate brothers and sisters in the area of assistance, we are able to create more stalwart bases for sowing immortal truths. Actually, other schools of religion have not neglected materializing goodness in works of brick and mortar. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, makes available institutions that are quite advanced from the materialistic point of view, and which provide shelter to unfortunate children. Nonetheless, spiritual concepts in such places do not evolve because they have become constricted by the tyrannical molds of outdated dogmas. Hence, most of the time their work is limited to the mere furnishing of ephemeral bread. The Protestant churches, in turn, have large schools and congregations, spreading educational values to the youth; however, their organizations are nearly always based more on the form than on the word ...”

Irene smiled, paused briefly and continued:

“We do not mean to belittle the admirable work of disciples of the Gospel in various religious arenas. They are all respectable if performed with a devoted heart. We merely wish to stress enlightening values. At the beginning of Christianity, Roman imperial policies took important measures to assure that all those who were ragged and starving received wheat and clothing, as did even the select teachers who were affiliated with the famous Greek and Egyptian cultural centers. However, for the purpose of stimulating the work of true spiritual enlightenment, Simon Peter and his apostolic companions dedicated themselves to the extended program of helping all types of unfortunate souls. Not all of those who followed the Gospel came from the upper echelons of Judaism such as Gamaliel, the revered Rabbi, whose evolved mind found the Master. The majority of needy individuals came into contact with Jesus through a humble bowl of soup or a sheltering roof. Washing lepers, healing the insane or assisting orphans and the forsaken elderly, Christ's followers created work for themselves and dedicated themselves to unfortunate souls, enlightening their minds and offering lessons of substantial interest to laymen of the living faith. As you can see, we are making evangelical Spiritism the recapitulation of early Christianity.”

Father Hipolito agreed kindheartedly:

“Yes, absolutely. We need to stimulate the creation of services that liberate thought so that it might take flight to higher realms.”

“Among our duties,” Irene continued openly, “our primary obligation is the enlightenment of the human spirit set on eternity. However, it is vital for us to understand that in order to reach this goal we must “do something.” When everyone simply analyzes, admires or discusses things, useful works are not raised to attest to higher ideals. That is why our Mentors of Divine Life have such high regard for workers who demonstrate dedication to their responsibilities. Needy spirits, beneficiaries, believers and researchers will continue to come to centers that teach the doctrine. And every time they perform Christian deeds through active mediumship, fraternal assistance, tasks of regular solidarity – whatever they might be – they present characters that are more open to renewal because responsibility that is willingly accepted in performing good deeds transforms them into living traits between two worlds – one that gives and one that receives. As you can see, the divine light prevails over human beneficence since the latter, without the former, may very often degenerate into destructive individualism. At all times, however, one must understand that faith without works is the sister of works without faith.”

Irene continued along her skillful line of reasoning, enthusiastically teaching us about the science of fraternity and constructive understanding. In listening to her, I realized that, above any type of individualistic concern, the spreading of spiritual light across the earth is not a miraculous event, but rather patient and gradual edification.

The beneficent social centers located on the heavy waters of human thought function as big supply ships for the masses that are hungry for light and in need of renewing principles. I had begun to see the stomachs of the little ones as secondary because it was the positive light of the Gospel that was now flooding my soul, inviting me to blissfully behold a greater future.

Night had fallen and we were still in the company of the esteemed sister who was showing us around the institution, commenting in an opportune and wise manner about its beneficial program.

We observed preparations for the spiritual work that would take place that evening.

Here, there were watchful discarnate instructors who would be gathering the children while physically asleep for beneficial lessons; yonder, there were

various benefactors in search of brothers and sisters for valuable experiences and benefits in the spirit realms in which we serve.

I reconsidered my first impression, and once again saw that institute as a blessed school of higher spirituality because of the opportunity of divine sowing it was providing to missionaries the of the light.

After a long time had passed and night had already settled in, Assistant Jeronimo called us to work.

Irene accompanied us to Adelaide's room, where our director was talking with other friends.

He was very brief in his instructions.

After listening to our new friend, who had made herself available to us for any type of fraternal aid, Jeronimo recommended that Luciana and Irene bring sister Albina, while Father Hipolito and I should bring Dimas, Fabio and Cavalcante to the room, from where we would proceed to *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* on a learning and training expedition.

Both groups left in opposite directions.

Making skillful use of volitation, Hipolito asked me lightheartedly:

“Have you ever taken part in work similar to this?”

I confessed that I had not, and asked him to explain.

“It's easy,” he replied. “Those who are close to discarnating after having suffered a prolonged illness frequently leave their bodies in an almost mechanical way. Their earth relatives, in turn, tired from keeping watch over them, do everything they can to surround them with silence and care. In this way, it is not hard to take them for the job of preparation. They are usually hesitant, weak and half-unconscious, but our magnetic treatment will help to solve that problem. We will remain at their side, holding their hands; driven by our energy, they will volitate with us without much difficulty.”

I listened to his explanation with great interest, and we soon were inside Dimas' humble abode. Under the relieving effects of a sedative, we had no trouble in removing him from the attention of his family members.

Noting our presence, he probed us with a fraternal disposition and asked:

“Oh, my friends! Is today the end? How I have longed for freedom! ...”

“No, my dear Dimas,” said Hipolito, smiling. “You must endure a little while longer. Rest, however, will not be long in coming. Come with us. There is no time to waste.”

The ex-priest instructed me to go in front, and with all three of us holding hands, we set off for Rio in search of Fabio’s abode.

We met no obstacles and in no time we had him under our protection.

Our companion cheerfully joined our small group.

I was about to head for the hospital in order to seek out the third patient, when Hipolito said:

“It is better not to escort all of them at the same time. Cavalcante is still in a seriously unbalanced state, requiring a more extensive type of assistance. In light of this, we will make a second trip for him.”

In recalling his delirium, I had no other recourse but to agree.

Back in Adelaide’s room, we found the others awaiting our arrival. Irene and Luciana had brought Albina to undergo preparation.

Without wasting any time, we went looking for the large hospital in search of Cavalcante.

Hipolito’s prediction was correct.

The sick man appeared to be greatly troubled. At his side, Bonifacio worked devotedly with us in order to temporarily detach him from his oppressed body. The patient, however, had succumbed to horrible emotions of fear, making our best efforts more painstaking.

After extensive work at magnetizing the vagus nerve, and then administering certain anesthetic agents to enable him to gently fall asleep, we removed him from his body, which would remain under Bonifacio’s care.

After a few short minutes, we were on our way back.

With Jeronimo’s consent, a few of the patients’ friends would accompany us to *Casa Transitoria*. Of the five patients, Adelaide and Fabio were the only ones who appeared to be most clearly aware of the situation. The others wavered, weak and completely unaware of what was happening.

Taking the lead position, the Assistant established a magnetic current amongst us. Each incarnate friend was placed between two of us, since we were souls who had already been freed from the physical plane and were

more experienced in the spirit realm. Holding hands in order to exchange energies for mutual assistance, we made extensive use of volitation to soar higher. Adelaide and Fabio, who were somewhat used to the phenomenon, assumed a discrete attitude of silent observation. The rest, however, commented on the experience in loud cries.

“God Almighty!” cried out Albina, recalling passages from the bible, “could it be that we are in the glorious chariot of Elijah?”

“Give me strength, O Merciful Father!” uttered Cavalcante with a heavy soul. “I haven’t made my last confession yet! I haven’t yet received the Last Rites! Oh! Don’t let me face your judges with my conscience still swimming in sin! ...”

His pleas touched our hearts.

Dimas, in turn, was babbling on unintelligibly between fear and distress.

Having crossed the stratosphere, the ionosphere appeared all around us, and it looked very different due to the intense influx of cosmic rays combined with lunar emanations.

In amazement, Dimas asked out loud:

“What river is this? Ah! I’m afraid! I can’t cross it, I can’t, I can’t! ...”

However, the initial magnetic impulse provided by Jeronimo was too strong to be broken by such weak resistance, and the group moved ever onward until much further ahead we reached Fabiano’s shelter, where Sister Zenobia welcomed us with open arms.

All the members of the aid mission gathered there: the patients plus six of their friends, all of whom possessed higher knowledge.

In a small room that had been set aside for us, Gotuzo kindly applied strong fluidic resources to our wards, who received them like small children incapable of immediately assessing the situation – except for Adelaide and Fabio, who understood the phenomenon.

Then, the always helpful Jeronimo addressed them:

“My friends, the help you have received this evening is not meant to heal your material body, which has been set aside due to the needs of the moment. We will try to reinvigorate your perispirit in preparation for your final disengagement so that it will occur without any hallucinatory pain. But I must tell you that upon returning to your physical vessel, you will experience a

natural deterioration of sensation, making your torture even worse because remedies for the soul in situations like this intensify the ills of the flesh. But I can assure you that the preventive measures taken tonight comprise effective help for your deliverance. When you return to your old homes after having finished this first training excursion, you will find greater sadness back on earth, greater anguish in your physical cells and greater uneasiness in your heart because, by processing instinctive memories, your mind will have focused with greater or lesser intensity on the sublime happiness of this moment. So prepare yourselves to come to us. Resolve the last of your worldly problems and trust in Divine Protection!”

Immediately after he had finished speaking, there was a short break during which we were able to relax.

Jeronimo had been very brief in his explanations, telling us that he was condensing matters into short sentences in order to attend to the mental incapacity of the beneficiaries, who were still incapable of grasping long explanations. In fact, our fellow spirits had only partially understood the encouraging warning. They were affected by the positive magnetic aid, but their individual thoughts about what was happening were quite different.

With the naïve expression of a young boy, Cavalcante called on me in particular to ask if we were in heaven. He felt relieved and happy. Enormous joy washed over his heart. Feeling content and consoled, he remarked:

“Isn’t this heaven?”

I was unable to make him see otherwise.

Albina was recalling biblical scenes in her literal interpretations of the sacred text. After studying the mist outside, she discretely asked Luciana if we were in the house of the Lord, mentioned in I Kings 8, due to the cloud of dense matter that surrounded the landscape.

Among the Spiritists, Adelaide and Fabio surrendered themselves to the happy moment of prayer, whereas Dimas, enraptured by the happiness of temporary relief, curiously approached Father Hipolito and asked if the region represented some kind of blessed accommodations on Mars. The ex-priest smiled broadly and responded complacently:

“No, my friend, this is still the earth. We are very far from the rest of the planets ...”

Hipolito and I exchanged knowing, good-humored glances. Before we could say anything uncalled-for, Jeronimo interrupted by adding:

“The impressive plane of the mind records the images of prejudices and religious dogmas with remarkable consistency. Compulsory transformation through death will reintegrate individuals into the patrimony of their higher faculties. This work, though, cannot be sudden; otherwise, it might cause emotional disasters with serious consequences. It is crucial to consider the need for moderation, that is to say, for a gradual transition.”

And looking at us more intensely, he continued:

“There is, however, an important observation to point out. As we can see, it is not the outer labeling that helps believers during the most critical moments of their evolution. Actually, it is the sowing of one’s own efforts in services of wisdom and love that bear fruit at the appropriate time through intercessory measures or spontaneous compensation according to the law that tells us to deliver answers from heaven ‘to all according to their deeds.’ Every place in the universe, therefore, may be converted into a sanctuary of eternal light provided the carrying out of the divine designs becomes the joy of our wills.”

Having reaped priceless instruction, it was time for us to return, thus ending our happy expedition.

After returning the patients to their beds, we observed each one’s reactions. Fabio displayed immense inner peace. Cavalcante awoke in his material body, thinking about going to the Eucharist first thing in the morning, and Dimas, upon awaking and still in our presence, called his wife and stated in a weak voice:

“Oh! what a wonderful dream I just had! I saw myself on the banks of a bounteous, sparkling river, which I crossed with the help of invisible benefactors. I then arrived at a large house full of light!”

He placed his emaciated hand on his damp forehead and exclaimed:

“Ah! How I wish I could remember everything! I get the impression that I visited a happy world and received highly important lessons, but ... my memory fails me!”

His wife calmed him, encouraging him to go back to sleep.

The first training expedition with our friends had ended. Very soon, they would come to be with us.

Once again gathered at Adelaide's blessed institution, Jeronimo ordered our return to *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* in order to rest and to serve in other areas whenever the chance to perform useful work might inspire us with its blessing.

13

A Liberated Fellow Spirit

After making a number of arrangements concerning Cavalcante, who had taken a turn for the worse after surgery, Jeronimo communicated measures regarding the discarnation of Dimas, whose present state was the most precarious.

At dawn, after having worked out all the details with Sister Zenobia about harboring the first friend to be delivered from his physical ties, the Assistant invited us to join him at work.

Once again, I understood that there is a certain time to die just as there is a time to be born. Dimas had reached his time for renewal, and for that reason he would be removed from his crude physical form in order to undergo the transformation to his new learning experience. An exact date had not been set, although the right time had arrived. However, recalling my own particular case and eager for constructive explanations, I ventured to question our guide while we were making the journey back to the corporeal realm that morning.

“My dear Assistant,” I began to ask, “forgive my desire to know the specific details about this task ... but could you tell me if Dimas will be discarnating at the right time? Has he lived out the full quota of the time his spirit was given to utilize while on the earth? Did he complete the list of obligations that had brought about his rebirth?”

“No,” Jeronimo answered firmly. “He did not manage to make use of all of the time he was allotted.”

“Oh!” I reflected imprudently, “Was he like me, an unknowing suicide? I entered our colony in that condition and before achieving the blessing of regenerating refuge, I experienced bitter suffering.”

In expressing such an analysis, I was contemplating the specific task of aiding him. Obviously, there must have been telling reasons for the effort that

was being made, but my guide's information had disconcerted me. If our brother had not completed the foreseen amount of time for the obligations that had been outlined for him, why was he receiving such consideration? Did he deserve such special, individualized care? What motive would impel the upper realms to render him such attention?

Jeronimo undoubtedly understood the poisonous concern that dominated my thoughts, but he refrained from providing me any lengthy explanation, simply confirming:

“No, Andre, our friend is not a suicide.”

It would have been best to silence such suspicious thoughts, but my inveterate instinct for intellectual research was too strong for me to control myself.

Gazing at him somewhat confused, I asked again:

“But if Dimas didn't make use of all the time allotted to him, wouldn't he have wasted the opportunity, as happened in my own particular case?”

Jeronimo smiled slightly and stated compassionately:

“I know nothing of your past, Andre, but I believe that the best of intentions would have guided what you did in the past. This particular friend's situation, however, is very clear. Dimas was unable to fulfill the entire quota of time that he had been allotted due to the sacrificial environment that controlled his days to the end. Having been accustomed from early childhood to struggle without any type of pampering, he developed his body in the midst of incessant work and self-denial. Lacking any material advantage to begin with, he endured harsh obligations to understand the simplest readings. Given to hard work early in his youth, he started a family, dripping sweat in daily sacrifice. He spent his life dutifully obeying regulations, earning a living with an enormous expenditure of energy. Even so, he found enough resources to dedicate himself to those who were moaning and suffering on planes lower than his own. Having received the gift of mediumship, he put it to work for the collective good. He lived amongst all kinds of forsaken and afflicted souls. And because his sensitive spirit found pleasure in being useful, and since the needy rarely harbored the notion of balance, his life became a refuge for those who were infirm in body and soul. He almost completely lost the comfort of social life, deprived himself of constructive studies that would enable him to accomplish much more according to his ideals as a man of the good, and harmed his physical cells by undertaking hurried and excessive

amounts of work for the cause of human suffering. Because of mandatory vigils night after night, the resistance of his nerves weakened; because of the inevitable irregularity of meals, he deprived himself of a well-balanced healthy stomach; because of the unfounded persecutions he suffered, he used up excessive amounts of phosphate, and because of the repeated impacts of others' pain – which always reverberated bitterly in his heart – he harbored destructive vibrations in his liver, causing mental affections that incapacitated the regenerative functions of the blood. It is true that we cannot praise workers who lose any organ vital to their physical life due to attrition from disturbances that incarnates create and encourage in themselves. Nonetheless, it is necessary to consider the circumstances at play. Dimas could have received such destructive emissions naturally, maintaining the intangible serenity of an authentic disciple of the Gospel. However, the psychic defense against the bombardment of disturbing rays from the minds of others cannot be organized from one day to the next, in the same way that it is not easy to improvise a safe dock to stand up against the tides of the ocean. Surrounded by emotional demands, malnourished and unable to sleep properly, he experienced repeated hepatic congestions that turned into hypertrophic cirrhosis, which led to the disintegration of the body.”

My guide stopped talking, and as I felt profound shame at having made the inadvertent comparison between Dimas and myself, Jeronimo added:

“From what we have seen, there are existences that may lose in terms of duration, but succeed in terms of intensity. The imperfect vision of incarnates demands a precise examination of effects, but divine vision would never disregard detailed investigations of causes ...”

I fell silent, humiliated. My habit of analyzing people and events unilaterally had once again imposed a profitable disappointment on me. The Assistant of course knew about my former situation and would have been informed about the deviations of my past, but he deigned to save me even greater disappointment with comparative references. Clearer and more enlightening memories from the past emerged. I had undoubtedly led my last experience as I best saw fit. I had had relaxing, generous meals at set times; I had devoted myself to my favorite studies; I had made use of my time with strict independence in my decision-making; I had closed my door to antipathetic patients when I did not feel like dealing with them; I had never caused harm to my liver on account of somebody else's suffering, because it was in itself too small to contain the destructive vibrations of my own

irritations when I felt that somebody did not agree with my personal opinion. And I had especially ruined my gastrointestinal system due to the excess of food and drink linked to the syphilis to which I had thoughtlessly given shelter. So there were many differences between Dimas' case and my own. The dedicated servant of the good had made use of the abilities that heaven had bestowed on him for the benefit of others. As for me – self-centered as I was – I had enjoyed my abilities to the utmost, losing myself in abusive satiety.

Jeronimo, however, was kind enough not to comment on such hard truths. Reaffirming the spontaneous generosity that was his nature, he broke my unpleasant train of thought by touching upon new subjects.

We soon arrived at the patient's house; his physical condition was extremely grave.

Some discarnate friends were attentively keeping watch over him.

A radiant spirit, who was showing a great deal of interest in the dying man, approached Jeronimo and asked whether his death had been scheduled for that day.

“Yes,” Jeronimo confirmed, “his body's resistance has come to an end. We have been authorized to relieve him today by ridding him of the heavy burden of dense matter.”

The spirit also asked him about the possibility of admitting a few beneficiaries of the dying man's mission, as they wanted to express their fond appreciation for him on his final corporeal day.

“My friend, you are aware of the difficulties inherent to the matter,” responded our director kindly. “If Dimas were in control of his emotions, there would be no problem whatsoever. However, he is still experiencing very strong mental disturbances. He is aware that the end of his physical body is at hand, but he cannot suddenly escape from his domestic chains. He is afraid for the future of his family; he is in complete lack of control of his nerves, and he gets caught up in his wife and children's emissions of distress. We believe that such a short visit would be untimely during the course of the discarnation process, even though they are the patient's best friends. We do not want to worsen his lack of mental control. Nevertheless, Dimas can be helped by those who have held him in affection as soon as he becomes free of his dense body. Additionally, I would suggest that this deserved and just display of affection on the part of all those who hold him in high esteem be offered to

him on the day in which we depart from *Casa Transitoria de Fabiano* to the higher realms. Our brother and coworker will rest there under watchful care, along with other friends in similar conditions. We will not fail to warn you in advance about his departure so that all his friends may gather with us in the prayer of recognition that we will raise to the Almighty.”

The consulting spirit expressed sincere gratitude and stated:

“Well said! We will await your contact at the appropriate time.”

Immediately afterward, she said goodbye and departed in the company of the other visitors from our realm, which now left us with a free playing field for what we had to do.

The crisis was, without a doubt, very delicate.

Despite the lengthy vigils and tiring sacrifices that her facial expression revealed, the medium’s wife remained steadfast by his side, her eyes red from weeping. She was emitting energies of loving restraint that kept the dying man imprisoned in a vast tangled web of grey threads, making him look like a fish caught in a loving net.

Jeronimo pointed at her sympathetically and explained:

“Dimas’ poor wife is the first obstacle to be removed. We will simulate temporary improvement for the dying man in order to calm her troubled mind. It will only be after such a measure that we will be able to remove him without any greater hindrance. The energy currents exteriorized by her instill apparent life into the vital energy centers, which are already in an advanced process of disintegration.”

The Assistant suggested that Luciana and Hipolito stay by the wife’s side in order to alter her mental vibrations, and he instructed me to assist in their influence as necessary.

While he kept his hands placed on Dimas’ brain in order to provide him with the renewal of his overall strength, Jeronimo applied lengthwise passes, unfastening the magnetic threads that crisscrossed his spent body.

I could see that the dying man was already in a critical state. In complete disarray, his liver had begun to stop functioning. His stomach, pancreas and duodenum displayed strange abnormalities. His kidneys appeared to be practically dead. The glomeruli were attached to the arterial branches like tiny

purple buds; the hardened collector tubes foretold the end of the body. Clear signs of gangrene weighed on the entire organic environment.

But what impressed me most was the activity of microscopic fauna. All kinds of corpuscles were swimming in the liquids that had built up in his abdomen, accumulating mainly in the hepatic angle as if they were eagerly looking for something around his bladder.

The heart was barely pumping. At last, his weakness had reached its peak.

“We must provide him with false improvement,” the director declared solemnly, “in order to calm his grieving relatives. The room is full of harmful mental substances.”

The Assistant then began to exert his influence intensively.

His mind overclouded by pain, Dimas was unable to sense our presence. The cellular attrition caused by the rapid spreading of the coma-inducing viruses prevented him from clearly perceiving what was happening to him. His mediumistic faculties had disappeared temporarily due to the impact of his suffering. He was, however, highly sensitive to the magnetic applications.

Little by little, with Jeronimo’s help, our friend relaxed, began breathing almost normally, opened his sunken eyes, and exclaimed with relief:

“Thanks be to God! May God be praised!”

One of his sons, gazing at him with beseeching eyes, heard his words and anxiously asked him in a sign of relief:

“Are you feeling better, Dad?”

“Oh! Yes, my son. I’m breathing more easily ...”

“Do you sense your spirit friends at your side?” the boy asked, full of faith.

The patient smiled somewhat sadly and replied:

“No. I believe that my physical suffering has closed the door that I used to use to communicate with the invisible realm. Even so, I am still very confident. Jesus never abandons us.”

He gazed at his wife in tears and said:

“We all experience loneliness at the important moments of appraising our spiritual values. I’m convinced that our Guides from the Upper Realm will not forget about my needs ... However ... I shouldn’t expect them to take non-stop care of me ...”

He was speaking in an almost imperceptible voice due to his weak condition, and his words were choppy because of his oppressed breathing.

Dimas’ hesitant wife was fully supported by Luciana, who was embracing her affectionately. She showed the signs of the fatigue of grief. Heavy teardrops were streaming from her swollen eyes.

Jeronimo was now resting his right hand on the dying man’s forehead, giving him strength, inspiration and positive thoughts so that we could do our work. Dimas displayed a new sparkle in his eye, looked at his wife, and trying hard to appear calm, pleaded:

“Honey, go get some rest! ... I beg of you ... So many sleepless nights keeping watch over me will end up destroying you. What will become of me, sick and exhausted, if discouragement overcomes all of us?”

He paused even longer and then continued:

“I’m asking you please to get some rest. It would make me so happy to see you looking stronger ... Go on now. I’m feeling much better and I know that today will be peaceful and comforting.”

Giving in to her husband’s insistence, and gently compelled by Hipolito and Luciana’s influence, the woman left the room.

In light of the improvement in Dimas’ condition, the family was overcome with gladness. They called for the doctor. Radiant, he verified that the prognosis was much brighter than he had previously thought. He changed his mind, did away with the anesthetics and recommended to the household that the patient be left to absolute rest. Dimas was showing a surprising improvement. It was only reasonable, therefore, that the room be left in silence in order for him to get some comforting sleep.

The physician was doing what we wanted.

Within a few minutes, the room had become empty, making our work easier.

The Assistant gave each of us a task.

After weaving a fluidic defense net around the bed in order to absorb inferior mental vibrations, Hipolito and Luciana remained in prayer by the patient's side while I kept my right hand on the dying man's solar plexus.

"We will now begin the final procedures," stated Jeronimo resolutely. "First, however, let's give our friend the chance to offer a final prayer."

The Assistant slowly touched him on the back of his head. We could see that the dying man began to emit radiant, beautiful thoughts. He could neither see nor hear us directly, but his intuition was still clear and intact. Under Jeronimo's guidance, he felt an urgent need to pray, and although his tired lips remained motionless, we could perceive the mental prayer he was addressing to the Divine Master:

"My Lord Jesus Christ, I believe I have reached the end of my body, the body you gave me for some time as a precious and blessed gift. I do not know, Lord, how many times I wounded the physiological instrument you entrusted to me. I unknowingly broke its parts with my carelessness, belittling the sacred inheritance whose worth I am now realizing after more than twelve months of relentless corporeal suffering. I cannot implore you for the blessing of a peaceful death, for I have done nothing so good or useful to deserve it. But if it is possible, Beloved Doctor, come to my aid with your compassionate and zealous love! You healed cripples, blind men and lepers ... Why would you not feel pity for me, a miserable pilgrim here on earth?"

His eyes were shedding copious tears.

After a few minutes, we noticed the dying man was recalling his distant childhood. On the miraculous screen of his memory, he could see his mother's lap and longed for her motherly love. "Oh! If only I could be helped by that blessed old lady whom death snatched away so many years ago!" he thought. Pressed by such sweet memories, he changed the scene of his prayer and recalled the scene of Jesus' crucifixion; he mentally held to the sublime image of Mary, and feeling himself kneeling before her, he prayed:

"Mother of heaven, mother of all human mothers, refuge of all the orphans of the earth, I am now a fragile boy also, eager for maternal affection during this hour of need! O Divine Lady! Mother of my Master and Lord, deign to bless me! Remember that your divine son was able to see you during his final moments, and intercede for me, a wretched servant, so that I might have my saintly mother by my side when it is my time to depart! ... Help

me! ... Do not forsake me, O protective angel of humankind, blessed amongst women!”

Oh, wondrous gift from heaven! The dying man’s heart had become a radiant point of light, and through the door a venerable old lady entered, crowned with light resembling luminous snow. She approached Jeronimo, and after wishing us divine peace, informed us:

“I’m his mother ...”

Jeronimo commented on the importance of the task that awaited us and entrusted the precious pledge to her.

Within moments, we began witnessing an unforgettably moving scene. The old lady sat down on the bed, laid the dying man’s head in her welcoming lap, and began caressing him with her loving hands.

In virtue of this valuable support, our director asked Hipolito and Luciana to watch over Dimas’ wife while she slept so that her mental emissions would not impair our efforts.

Only three of us remained in the room.

Experiencing an indescribable sense of well-being in his mother’s lap, Dimas seemed to have forgotten all his sorrows for now, feeling protected like a half-conscious, almost happy child. Jeronimo instructed me to remain watchful, with my hands on the patient’s forehead. He then began the silent, complex work of magnetization. First, he entirely desensitized the vagus nerve in order to facilitate disengagement in the entrails. Next, using lengthwise passes, he insulated the entire sympathetic nervous system before neutralizing the inhibiting fibers in the brain. After resting for a few seconds, Jeronimo then stated:

“It would not be wise for Dimas to talk to his relatives for the time being. He might make inappropriate requests.”

He pointed at the dying man and said with a smile:

“In the past, Andre, the ancients believed that mythological entities cut the threads of human life. We are true Parcae, carrying out the same process ...”

And because I asked timidly where we were to begin, the guide explained:

“As you know, there are three main regions in the body that demand extreme care when we are working to free the soul: the vegetative⁹ center, connected to the abdomen, and which is the source of physiological manifestations; the emotional center, which is the region of sentiments and desires located in the thorax; and the mental center, the most important of all, located in the brain.”

My intellectual curiosity was enormous. Nevertheless, I understood that it was not the appropriate time for lengthy explanations. So I refrained from asking any questions.

Jeronimo, however, kind as ever, noticed my desire to learn and added:

“On another occasion, Andre, you will have a chance to study the transcendent problem of the various vital zones of our individuality.”

Advising me to be cautious while administering magnetic energies to the dying man’s brain, he began working on his solar plexus, undoing ties displaying physical energies. To my surprise, I noticed that a certain amount of a milky substance had begun pouring from his navel and floating all around him. The patient’s legs stretched out, displaying symptoms of cooling.

Dimas moaned out loud, half-conscious.

Startled, some friends came running. They put hot water bottles on his feet. But before his relatives returned, Jeronimo concentrated the passes on Dimas’ thorax and managed to relax the bonds that were maintaining the cellular cohesion in his emotional center, operating on a certain point in his heart, which began to function like an unregulated mechanical pump. Another amount of the white substance was released from the body, from the epigastria to the throat, but I noticed that all his muscles were working in strong opposition to the departure of his soul, opposing the liberation of the motive powers in a desperate effort. This caused a lot of agony in the patient. The physical realm was offering us resistance, insisting on holding onto the spirit.

When his pulse dwindled, his relatives and the doctor were called and they came running into the room. In his mother’s lap, however, and under our direct influence, Dimas was unable to utter a word or pull his thoughts together.

We had achieved a coma state in good order.

The Assistant told the rest of us to take a short break, but he himself returned to work on Dimas' brain. This was the final step. Concentrating all his energies on the rhomboid cavity, Jeronimo snapped something that I could not identify in detail, and a brilliant, golden-violet flame detached itself from the cranial area, immediately absorbing the large portion of the already-externalized milky white substance. I wanted to gaze at the brilliant light, but I must confess that it was hard to focus on it. Within a few moments, however, I noticed that these energies were endowed with a plasticized movement. The flame turned into a beautiful head, identical to that of our discarnating friend. Then, the flame recomposed the entire perispiritual body, piece by piece, stroke by stroke. And to the degree that the new body appeared before us, the golden-violet light ablaze on the head gradually began to fade away until it disappeared entirely as if it represented all of his personality's higher principles, which were momentarily collected at one single point, and which then overflowed throughout all of the hidden corners of the perispiritual organism, thereby ensuring the cohesion of the various atoms of the new vibratory dimension.

Dimas-discarnate was now hovering a few inches above Dimas-corpse, attached to his body only by a thin, silvery cord similar to a delicate elastic thread between the abandoned brain of dense matter and the brain of rarefied matter of the liberated organism.

Dimas' mother quickly left the material body and gathered up the new form, wrapping it in a pure white tunic that she had brought with her.

To our incarnate friends, Dimas was completely dead. To us, though, the operation was not yet complete. The Assistant determined that the fluidic cord should remain intact until the following day, taking into account the needs of the "dead man", who was not yet fully prepared for a quicker disengagement.

And while the doctor was providing technical explanations to the sobbing relatives, Jeronimo invited us to leave, while entrusting the newly discarnate soul to the care of the woman who had been his devoted mother in the physical world:

"My sister, you may remain with your son as you please until tomorrow, when we will cut the final thread holding him to his remains, before guiding him to the appropriate shelter. For the time being, he will rest while reflecting upon his past, which will be unveiled to him in a panoramic vision in his inner field. Moreover, he is very tired from the efforts of the last few hours.

For this reason, he will only be able to leave in our company after the burial of his corpse, to which he is still joined by the last residues.”

The elderly lady thanked him warmly, and making it understood that he was responding to her mental questions, the Assistant concluded:

“It is best for you to be alert and keep watch here so that impassioned friends or unfounded enemies do not disturb his imposed rest of a few hours.”

Dimas’ mother appeared to be very grateful, and as a group we left for Fabiano’s shelter, from where our aid expedition would return to the earth the following day.

⁹ Noting or pertaining to unconscious or involuntary bodily functions. (*Websters College Dictionary*, 1991) – Tr.

14

Rendering Assistance

My fellow spirits, including Jeronimo, displayed little interest in following Dimas' case during the night, reserving their energies for continuing their efforts the following day, when we would have to take him to Fabiano's blessed shelter.

The same did not apply to me, however.

At the time when I myself was disengaging from my physical ties, I had not been able to make educational observations for my archives of knowledge. The sensorial jolt of death for my still unmindful self regarding matters of the eternal spirit had kept me from making a detailed analysis of the subject. Now, however, this opportunity might shed greater light on my soul as to the state of the newly-discarnated spirit before the burial of the dense envelope.

In expressing to the Assistant my desire to learn, I received his unconditional permission. I could visit Dimas' house at will and stay there as long as I wanted.

Jeronimo's acquiescence filled me with great happiness, not only for the chance to enrich myself in the practical sphere, but also for the gesture itself, which held great significance for me. For the first time, a coworker with sufficient authority had agreed to my wish as a humble servant. Thus, his permission represented a valuable gain. It meant educational freedom with the responsibility of my conscience and the trust of my hierarchical superiors.

Setting off from *Casa Transitoria* in the middle of the night, I was soon in the home environment where our friend had unbound himself from the denser ties of matter.

I went inside. The house was full of friends and acquaintances, both incarnate and discarnate. There were no defenses in place whatsoever. I could

see various groups of various origins coming and going freely.

In a remote corner, still linked to his lifeless viscera by the silvery fluidic cord, Dimas remained in his mother's lap at the foot of two friends, who were carefully assisting him.

Touched at my appearance, the noble matron recognized me and introduced me to her two companions.

One of them, Fabriciano, was extremely helpful and welcomed me, expressing his interest in informing me regarding the disengagement. I gave him a report on all the work in greatest detail. He then, Fabriciano began to explain:

"I have always had a sincere admiration for Dimas because of the beneficial help he was able to offer us. I am a member of the spirit service commission, which, through his intermediation for the past six years, has been attending to those in need. Always very diligent in his obligations, he was a good colleague and a loyal brother."

Surprised by this information, I asked:

"So are there permanent assistance commissions for mediums in general?"

"I'm not alluding to generality," Fabriciano refuted, "because mediumship is a service label like any other. There are persons who fight to earn labels but they do not appreciate the obligations that go along with them. They would no doubt like to interact with our realm, but they do not take objectives and responsibilities into consideration. In light of this, cooperative groups are not created for mediums in general, but only for those who are willing to do active work. Many learning mediums do not even get past the boundary of attempting and observing. They would like to have a smoothed-out path, demanding the exclusive company of truly benevolent spirits. They experience constructive struggle through superficial probing, and when the first obstacle appears, they abandon their commitments. The acquisition of moral strength is not without perilous and pain-filled trials. Nonetheless, faced with the natural demands of the learning process, they claim their personal dignity has been wounded. They cannot stand the presence of unfortunate incarnates or discarnates, and they give up at the first twinge of pain. For experimenters like these, it would be extremely difficult to form effective teams representing our realm. You never know when they are willing to serve. If they receive intuitive faculties, they ask for

incorporation¹⁰; if they have clairvoyant capabilities, they want the ability to externalize vital fluids for the phenomena of materialization.”

I listened to the logical comments of my new friend, and taking note of the goodness of his soul, I switched to inner thoughts regarding the task that had brought us there.

Why had an expedition been created that was intended to help this servant who had friends of such high moral competency at his disposal? Fabriciano displayed elevated knowledge and a highly evolved status. This kind friend, however, displayed extreme perceptive acuity, and before I had time to ask any type of inappropriate question, he added:

“Despite our feelings of friendship toward this medium, we were unable to accompany him in death. We have work assignments, but on this particular matter the authority of our superiors came into play. They decided to provide him with rest, which we would not have been able to offer him if he had been directly under our care.”

His talk was leading to interesting perspectives on the subject of death. Enthused by his remarks, I asked about what I already knew – more or less – in order to delve into more important details:

“So not all discarnation processes of upright individuals receive the help of aid groups?”

“Not all of them,” he confirmed, and added: “All the phenomena surrounding death involve the charitable, caring support of organizations that offer aid indiscriminately. However, a specialized mission cannot be granted to those who have not distinguished themselves by persevering in endeavors for the good.”

“But,” I objected curiously, touching upon the cord that was of greatest interest to me on the matter, “aren’t there cases of individuals who are essentially kind, who are to some degree attuned to spiritual service commissions of a higher nature, and who become freed of their physical ties without there being previously-assigned rescue missions to assist them?”

After pausing briefly, I added in order to make myself clearer:

“Let’s suppose that Dimas had been in recent contact with his commission and had discarnated without the care of an aid group. Would he have been left to the mercy of the circumstances?”

Fabriciano laughed openly and replied:

“That might have happened. There have been precedents for it. Generally speaking, though, cases like this occur with afflicted workers who wish to discarnate at any cost, alleging their need for rest. Quite often, they are kind individuals deep down, but are not very logical or intelligent. Last week, for instance, we witnessed a case like this. A reputable woman, who was still young and actively engaged in the area of social beneficence, was connected to a spirit service group organized by friends of ours. However, after a few small quarrels with her husband, and having an understanding of the immortality of life after the grave, the poor soul nourished a burning desire to die. All it took was a few foolish acts on the part of her husband to make her curse the world and humankind. She was unable to break the shell of self-centeredness and continue on the path toward the greater life. Through anger and mental intemperance, she created the *idée fixe* of freeing herself of her body in any way possible, but without resorting to outright suicide. She knew the spirit friends to whom she was connected, but rather than wisely assimilating their advice, she rejected their fraternal warnings to accept only the words of consolation that she found to be pleasing amongst the healthy reprimands that they directed at her. She so requested death – insisting on it amidst persistent sorrow and anger – that she ended up discarnating due to having developed jaundice complicated by a simple bout of the flu. It was actually an unconscious suicide, but deep down the woman was extraordinarily charitable and naïve. Her spirit friends did not receive any type of permission to grant her rest, much less any special help. Despite effective intercession on behalf of the poor soul, the benefactors on our plane were only able to separate her from her decomposing body two days ago under heartrending and sad conditions. Since there were no instructions from the higher authorities to give her any type of special assistance, and since it would not be advisable to leave her to her own fate in light of her potential virtues, the director of the commission, to which our imprudent friend had belonged, rescued her out of a spirit of compassion due to her difficult condition and she hastily went to work here and there in a more serious and complicated state.”

I was deeply touched by the explanation.

I had found out what I wanted to know. The divine law, perfect in its fundamentals, is in fact equally as harmonious in its applications.

With a beautiful smile, Fabriciano added:

“True peace does not bear fruit without proper sowing. In order to enjoy rest, one must above all deserve it. Restless souls easily yield to despair, which causes them cruel suffering.”

Immediately afterward, contemplating our recently discarnated friend as if to indicate that we should concentrate all our efforts on his well-being at that time, Fabriciano stroked Dimas’ brow and considered:

“Our friend is resting now as the torment of relentless trials has ended. The poor soul is very weak. His sensitivity, which he put to use in fulfilling his obligation as best he could, tortured his soul to the end of his days; nevertheless, he planted faith, serenity, optimism and joy in thousands of hearts, thus providing him with solid reasons for future happiness. For the time being, he will remain like a fragile bird that is incapable of flying far from its nest.”

“Fortunately,” said Dimas’ mother happily, “his condition is visibly improving. The residues that still bind him to his corpse have almost dissipated.”

She glanced around the corners of the modest home and added:

“If it were possible for him to receive greater cooperation from his incarnate friends, his full recovery would be much easier. However, every time his relatives lean weeping over his remains, he’s called back to his corpse, thus hindering a speedier recovery.”

“Unfortunately, though,” Fabriciano replied, “our incarnate friends do not have the key to true knowledge in order to behave appropriately at this time.”

“That being the case,” the mother responded resignedly, “I insist that Dimas sleep, although his sleep, which could otherwise be calm and sweet, might be full of nightmares.”

Met with my overwhelming surprise, my companion hurried to explain:

“The images contained in the evocations of people’s conversations fall upon Dimas’ mind as he is kept in a state of sleep after he has delved briefly into reflecting on the events relating to his past life. Our friends can be so creative in their idle conversations and can so feverishly unearth the recollection of certain incidents that they attract certain discarnate characters.”

These explanations aroused my curiosity. Fabriciano, however, wishing to lavish a direct experience on me, remarked:

“Wait a few minutes in the next room, where the body is being viewed.”

I obeyed his instructions.

The wake looked normal, complete with fragrant flowers, somber faces and muffled conversations.

At the foot of the coffin, his friends were reserved and circumspect, but a few steps away there were people giving free reign to making colorful jokes about the friend who was on his way to the “other side”. Insignificant and important incidents from the “dead” man’s life were remembered with humor and animation.

I approached a small group of people who were talking about him.

A certain young man addressed an elderly gentleman:

“Colonel, did you ever get your money back?”

“Not yet,” answered the old man while rolling a cigarette the old-fashioned way, “but I’m not worried about the delay. Dimas was always a good buddy of mine and I’m sure his sons won’t forget their father’s debt. It’s just a matter of time ...”

Interested in pointing out the numerous qualities of the “deceased”, and revealing his abilities as a local story-teller, he continued:

“Dimas was an exceptional and interesting man. I always envied his composure. On matters of prudence, I have met very few people like him. It’s true that I never took an interest in Spiritist studies, but I must confess that in observing his behavior, I always had a desire to learn more about the doctrine that shaped his character.”

Up to that point, everything had been just fine. Despite having recalled the “decedent’s” debts, his creditor had spoken only words of encouragement and peace.

However, in the current state of human education, it is very hard to maintain a dignified and pure conversation for more than five minutes in a group of more than three incarnate souls.

The commentator changed his tone of voice, looked over at the body and said discreetly:

“Few men were as tight-lipped as he was. I met Dimas many years ago, and I’m positive he was an eye witness to a dreadful crime that was never revealed to the authorities.”

After pausing briefly, he lit his cigarette and asked, appealing to his listeners’ curiosity:

“You never heard anything about it?”

They shook their heads.

“It happened about thirty years ago,” continued the narrator. “Dimas used to live next door to a respected family, who watched over valuable patrimonies of the feudal community. From this household – held in high regard by the general public – were issued orders and benefits of the highest importance for the well-being of all. As you well know, three decades ago life in the interior part of the country still preserved the expressive flavor of imperial Brazil. The centralized economy maintained the symbolic “casa grande”¹¹, where rules and regulations for the common good used to be drawn up. Even though he lived near a feudal residence similar to that one, our friend led the humble life of a laborer, making plans for his future as a moral man.”

The gentleman, unaware of spirit-related problems, mentioned names, listed dates, jokingly recalled certain details, and then continued his tale with malicious joviality:

“One night, sometime before daybreak, a well-known political head was leaving the residential palace through the back door in the company of a woman who was displaying an obvious lack of concern in keeping her identity a secret by saying goodbye with an untimely display of affection. When this strange adieu had ended, and finding himself alone, “Don Juan” walked a few steps away, cautiously looking around. But as he was about to continue walking, he realized that someone had observed the intimate scene involving the wife of a respected friend. It was an extremely humble worker, who perhaps was there due to inappreciable circumstances. The politician reached him with one leap. A man of strong build and violent passions, he approached the unexpected witness and questioned him brutally, to which the miserable soul responded meekly:

‘Sir, I’m not spying, I swear!’

‘But you shall die all the same,’ the formidable aggressor forewarned in a voice consumed by rage.

“He grabbed the poor man by his jacket and exclaimed between clenched teeth:

‘Annoying worms must die!’

‘Please don’t kill me, Sir! Don’t kill me!’ pleaded the unfortunate creature. ‘I have a wife and children at home! I’ll keep my mouth shut! ...’

“The victim fell on his knees and begged for mercy but to no avail, because the terrible man, blind with fury, pulled out his gun and fired off a well-aimed shot at his heart before hastening away.

“Dimas had witnessed the incident a short distance away and yelled, making himself heard by the murderer, who recognized him by his shouts. Then, he ran over to help the wounded man, who hadn’t even managed a moan. Dimas had just gotten close to the victim, when other persons in white clothes also came rushing in order to see what had happened. Being the gentleman he was, Dimas was above suspicion. However, when he was questioned by the authorities, he revealed nothing, even though he knew everything. He looked after the dead man during the funeral procedures, was a great help to the family and behaved like a faithful Christian, but he avoided providing any evidence so that the criminal might be caught, alleging he was unaware of the least detail that might provide a clue to the murder. So the case was closed in the belief that it had been a robbery. As the only witness, Dimas thought that silence was preferable to a scandal that would cause a great deal of domestic and social strife.”

The narrator gazed at the body and exclaimed:

“Tight-lipped! I never met a more discreet man ...”

One of his listeners asked jokingly:

“But Colonel, how did you find out about all these details if Dimas never talked?”

The man made a gesture of open satisfaction and added:

“That’s the advantage of being good friends with priests. My old friend, Father F. – may God rest his soul – told me all about the incident because he had been greatly affected by it. He had listened to the murderer at confession before he died and had received all the details of the obscure event. The

murderer, very careful in confessing his sins, didn't forget to name Dimas as the only witness to the mortal sin. The priest, however, was a very good friend who had a lot of worldly experience, and he didn't make the case public knowledge. The persons involved in the drama had left honest descendants, and it would have been cruel to bring such a tragedy back to life."

The narrator wore an odd expression on his face and concluded, stubbing out his cigarette:

"It's all done with ... They're all dead: the victim, the adulteress, the murderer, the priest and now the witness. I'm sure that somewhere beyond this world justice will be served."

At that moment, a horrendous figure followed by others no less monstrous, appeared unexpectedly. The figure approached the thoughtless commentator, and upon hearing his last words, shook him, crying out:

"I'm the murderer! What do you want from me? Why have you called me? Are you a judge?!"

The narrator was unable to see what I could, but his body was shaken by an involuntary shudder, which drew muffled laughter from all those present.

Soon thereafter, the discarnate murderer, attracted perhaps by the strong smell of the flowers, became perfectly aware of the wake. He was visibly shaken when he saw the dead man.

He recognized him, made a gesture of deep surprise, fell down on his knees and cried out:

"Dimas, Dimas! Have you also come to the truth?! Where are you, my dear friend? You, who hid my sin beneath the veil of infinite charity? Help me! I'm desperate! Where might I find my victim in order to beg for the forgiveness I so need? I am still in need of your help! Have mercy on me! You must know what I do not! Help me! Help me!"

Beside the unfortunate, pleading soul, there were several suffering and hysterical spirits.

But Fabriciano appeared unexpectedly and ordered the invaders to leave immediately.

When the room had been cleared, my new friend addressed me, saying:

"I bet that group entered this house by direct invocation."

Still overwhelmed, I told Fabriciano what I had seen.

He listened to me calmly and commented:

“Done of our own accord, observation is always highly valuable. Dimas, however dedicated he was to doing good and compelled as he was to the great effort of cooperating for the benefit of all, he neglected to encourage the habit of family prayer at home. That is why he has personal protection, but his home is at the mercy of visits by all types of spirits.”

The explanation was most noteworthy. I began to understand the reason for the unaccepting family’s harmful sentimentalism. Wishing, however, to focus my lesson for that evening on the topic of discarnation, I asked:

“Could our recently liberated friend have heard his unfortunate brother’s plea?”

“He is suffering a horrible nightmare in his mother’s arms in recalling that event,” explained Fabriciano sympathetically. “We have been monitoring his agitation for a few minutes now, noticing that he has been receiving unpleasant shocks through the final cord.”

“Did he hear and see the scenes?” I questioned insistently.

“He did not get to actually see or hear anything entirely due to his voluntary state of confusion, but he caught glimpses of the images, and felt oppressed and tormented, which was prejudicial to his being able to regain his self-awareness. Our mental energies are clothed with tremendous power.”

Indicating the groups of people that continued talking, he remarked without resentment:

“Our friends from the corporeal sphere are still too ignorant to handle death. Instead of bringing pleasant and comforting thoughts, prayers for help, and fraternal mental vibrations, they cast the stones and thorns the recently discarnated left behind on their journey. That is why that, for now, the dead who deliver their remains to the lonely morgues for the indigent are much happier.”

We had not yet entirely finished our conversation, when Dimas’ wife, in a fit of tears, got up from the bed where she was resting and walked over to the body, repeating his name touchingly:

“Dimas! Dimas! Where does this leave me now? Are we to be apart for all eternity? ...”

Fabriciano quickly went to the modest room where Dimas was and I followed him. The medium's mother was trying her hardest to contain him, but to no avail. A strong contact had been made through the silvery thread between Dimas and his wife because he got up and staggered around, despite his mother's affectionate support. He was pale and half crazed. He headed toward the mortuary room, begging for peace, but before he could get too close to his remains, Fabriciano applied fatiguing energies on the imprudent wife, who was led once again back to her bed, this time unconsciously, while Dimas, feeling less distressed, returned to his mother's lap.

My friend explained calmly:

“There are certain situations when drastic measures have to be taken immediately. During his life, our brother did a great deal to help others, and he deserves a peaceful deliverance. So I feel it is my responsibility to ensure that he achieves it by helping him untangle the final residues that still incline him toward dense matter.”

Other friends and loved ones of the medium arrived at the home, interested in helping him, and since it was very late at night, I bid farewell to my fellow spirits and set off in the direction of Fabiano's shelter.

The next day, I met up with Assistant Jeronimo, and after his initial greeting, he said to me:

“I hope that you learned useful and instructive lessons from the wake, Andre.”

Yes, the esteemed Assistant was absolutely right. I had learned a great deal that night. I had learned that mortuary rooms should not be viewed as social meeting points, but rather as sacred sanctuaries for prayer and silence.

¹⁰ See footnote 1, chap. IX. – Tr.

¹¹ Casa grande was the house of the plantation owner of the large rural estate in colonial Brazil (1500-1832). It was similar to the manor house in feudal Europe - Tr.

15

Continuing to Learn

Two hours before the funeral procession was to be organized, we were back at our posts.

Dimas' home was becoming crowded with well-wishers in addition to a sizeable gathering of spirits.

Jeronimo entered the house resolutely and we followed. He headed for the room where the newly-discarnate remained in an exhausted and drowsy state under the loving care of his mother. I noticed that the liberated medium's perispiritual body was now more improved, more solid. I got the clear impression that the discarnate soul was absorbing all the vital principles left over from the physiological field through the fluidic cord from the dead brain to the live one. Our director looked at Dimas affectionately and asked his mother for information. She answered happily:

“Thanks be to Jesus he has improved a lot. The result of our restoring influence is obvious, and I believe that detaching the final thread will be all it takes for him to regain his self-awareness.”

Jeronimo examined him like an experienced clinician. Then, he cut the last thread and we watched as the discarnate Dimas now made the efforts of a bewildered convalescent upon awakening after a long period of sleep.

It was only then that I noticed that, if his perispiritual body had been receiving the final energies from his inanimate body, the inanimate body had in turn been absorbing some energy from the other, which had kept the inanimate one from changing noticeably. The silvery appendage had been a veritable fluidic artery, sustaining the ebb and flow of the vital principles as they underwent re-adaptation. When the final exchange channel had been removed, the corpse almost immediately displayed signs of advanced decomposition.

My examination of Dimas' corpse saddened me.

Countless microscopic germs were entering like voracious armies in open combat, liberating hidden gases, revealing the overall rotting state of the tissues and fluids. The facial features of the deceased looked different, and the structure of his limbs was also degenerating. His autonomous organs, in turn, were also losing their characteristic appearance, already appearing swollen and lifeless.

In contrast, Dimas-free, Dimas-spirit was awakening. Helped by his mother, he opened his eyes, looked around like a startled child and, forlorn, called for his wife. He had slept far too long but had improved considerably. He could tell the house was full of people and he wanted to know something about it. His mother, however, caressed him tenderly, soothed him and explained:

“Listen to me, Dimas. The door through which you used to communicate with the somatic, corporeal realm has closed with your physical eyes. Be at peace and have faith, for your life in your physical body has come to an end.”

The discarnate soul was unable to disguise a painful shock of anguish and stared at her in bitter alarm, vaguely recognizing her by her voice.

“Don't you recognize me, my son?”

All it took was that kind question, spoken with such a certain tone of tenderness, to cause the discarnate to embrace the old lady, crying out in a mixture of joy and sorrow:

“Mother! My mother! ... Is it possible?”

The old woman held him lovingly in her arms and said:

“Listen to me! Keep your emotions in check or else they will do you a great deal of harm. Stay focused in light of this consummate fact: we are together now in a much happier life. Don't worry about those you've left behind. Everything will be resolved appropriately at the right time. Above any thought that might bend you toward the prison of the realm from which you have just escaped, rely on your steadfast and sincere trust in our Heavenly Father.”

“Oh, mother mine! What about my wife and kids? ...”

His wise benefactress, however, interrupted him in consolation:

“The worldly bonds between you and them have been broken. Give them back to God, certain that the Eternal Lord of Life – to whom we in fact belong – will continue to enable us to love one another.”

Dimas contemplated her through a thick veil of tears, and before he could ask any other questions, his caring mother introduced him to Jeronimo, who had been observing the scene, visibly moved:

“This is the friend who freed you from your temporary chains. Soon, you will leave with him in search of the effective help you need.”

Taken aback, her son made a silent gesture of resistance at the prospect of being separated from his mother again, but the old woman interrupted him and added:

“I came here because you called me by turning to the Divine Mother; however, I’m unable to grant you access to where I work for the time being. Brother Jeronimo is the dedicated guide who will be in charge of your recovery. Have faith. I’ll come to visit you as often as possible until the day we can once again live together in another happy home without the tears of separation or the shadows of death.”

Then, she whispered a few words that only Dimas could hear, and I was deeply impressed as he disentangled himself from her maternal arms and walked unsteadily toward Jeronimo, respectfully kissing his hands. The Assistant thanked him for the moving display of gratitude and love, and with tear-filled eyes, explained:

“We have done nothing here except the duty that brought us. Reserve your thanks for Jesus, our Divine Benefactor.”

The recently delivered worker’s gaze was clouded with tears, caught between happiness and heartache, yearning and hope.

His devoted mother once again supported him, and said encouragingly:

“Dimas, many of your friends have come in an initial display of joy at your arrival. Nonetheless, your status for now is that of a convalescent full of scars demanding care. Speak very little and pray a lot. Don’t worry and don’t grieve. For today, don’t ask for anything else, my son. Above all, be obedient so that our aid may not be interpreted wrongly by the imperfect vision you have brought with you from the dark realm. We will accompany your remains to their last dwelling place in order for you to take your first step on the great journey that you will begin in a short time, upheld by our friends on the way

to full recovery. Do not fear, for you have already prepared yourself to receive our help by sowing the good over many long years of Spiritist efforts. Do not harbor fear, for it always creates harmful vibrations of failure during transitional situations like the one you are in right now.”

Then, leading him to the mortuary chamber, where his body lay lifeless ready to be carried away, the old woman added under Jeronimo’s look of approval:

“Come and see the instrument that served you faithfully for so many years. Behold it with gratitude and respect. It was your best friend, your companion in your long battle for redemption.”

And because his widow and children were weeping in grief, she warned:

“I sincerely regret the negative sentiments enveloping your loved ones as they are completely oblivious to the realities of the spirit. Dimas, don’t dwell on the tears they are shedding. They are wrapped up in a devastating lack of understanding. Their weeping and anguished exclamations do not depict the truth of the matter. You now know, more than ever, that immortality is sublime. There has never been an eternal farewell in the endless symphony of life. So for the time being, refrain from responding to the questions your wife and children are directing at your corpse. When you are fully recovered, you will come back to help them, devoting your invaluable love to them then and always.”

Dimas tried hard to contain himself before the general disorder of the home environment, and he hesitatingly stooped over the coffin, shedding heavy tears. One could see that he was making a silent effort to stay composed. Close by, his wife uttered phrases of intense bitterness. But obeying his mother’s advice, he maintained a discrete attitude of sadness and compassion.

I noticed that Dimas was having difficulty in correlating his thoughts, because he tried in vain to say a prayer out loud. Perceiving this strong desire, Jeronimo then approached a sensitive incarnate brother present at the funeral and touched his forehead with his luminous right hand; stating that he felt inspired, the man stood up and asked for permission to say a short prayer, which was granted and then accompanied by all.

Under the influence of the spirit guide, the man said a heartfelt prayer. I could see that Dimas was feeling immense comfort, thanks to Jeronimo’s friendly gesture.

Soon thereafter, before the grievous cries of his family members, the coffin was closed and the silent procession began.

At the rear of the funeral procession we formed a group of more than 20 discarnates, including our recently liberated brother.

Holding on to his mother and taking uncertain and slow steps, Dimas was listening to her discreet exhortations and wise counsels.

A deep sense of disconcertedness reined amongst the numerous incarnate friends, while amongst us, a sense of affective and spontaneous tranquility reigned supreme.

We were proceeding with the greatest sense of calm, when we finally reached the holy grounds of the cemetery.

A strange surprise suddenly caught hold of me. None of my fellow spirits – except for Dimas, who was visibly making an effort to compose himself – were displaying any emotion before the scene in front of us. But I was unable to repress the fear that swept over my heart. The cemetery's iron grid fence was crowded by people from the invisible realm; it was a deafening uproar. A veritable gathering of bodiless vagrants was huddled around the gate. They were scoffing at the deceased's long line of friends and making jokes about them. However, when they became aware of our presence, they grimaced with scowling faces and after staring at us in disappointment, the most daring one yelled at the rest:

“It's no use! He's protected ...”

Concerned, I turned to Father Hipolito and asked him what it all meant.

The ex-priest did not hesitate to answer:

“Our task of escorting the remains,” he explained kindly, “does not entail only helping the discarnate take the first steps of liberation. It also has to do with protecting him. Usually, cemeteries attract great numbers of malefactors who come to attack the bodies' innards in order to extract the vital residues.”

Noticing that I found this to be rather strange, Hipolito reflected:

“You should not be at all surprised. In describing the meeting between Jesus and a demon-possessed man, the Gospel refers to the disturbed spirits who reside among the tombs.”

Realizing my inexperience with regard to religious matters, Hipolito continued:

“As you well know, the dogmatic churches of earth have incorrect ideas about demons, but of course, demons do in fact exist. We ourselves are demons, when, straying from the divine plane, we pervert our hearts and minds to satisfy our sinful whims ...”

“Oh, but what a sickening sight!” I exclaimed in surprise, interrupting Jeronimo’s informative explanation.

“True,” Jeronimo agreed, “it is indeed a loathsome picture; however, it is a reflection of the world, where we ourselves were not always faithful children of God.”

This comment satisfied me completely.

We went in.

Immediately, before my astonished eyes, Jeronimo bent mercifully over the corpse in the coffin that had been briefly opened before the burial, and using length-wise magnetic passes he extracted all the residues of vitality; then he scattered them into the atmosphere (using a process that is indescribable in human language due to the absence of a similar comparison) so that unscrupulous little-evolved spirits would not be able to take possession of them.

When this curious operation was complete, my attention was immediately drawn to the harrowing wailing arising from the various areas of that respectable abode, which now resembled a vast morgue of souls.

Jeronimo had begun a conversation with various colleagues while the majority of our incarnate fellow spirits, respecting tradition, cast the classic shovelful of lime or dirt on top of the casket, which had been lowered into the hole.

Touched by sobs coming from a nearby grave, I was irresistibly led to get a closer look.

Sitting on a pile of soft earth, I saw an unfortunate discarnate woman who looked to be about thirty-six years old, burying her head in her hands and crying desperately in a heartrending manner.

Overcome with compassion, I touched her shoulder and asked:

“What are you feeling, my sister?”

“What am I feeling?” she shouted, staring at me with eyes wide with madness. “Don’t you know? Oh! You call me sister ... Are you perhaps

someone who can help me get my mind back? If you can, then help me for mercy's sake! I can't tell the difference between what's real and what's illusion any more ... They took me to a hospital, and that's where I got caught up in this nightmare that you see."

She tried in vain to get up and holding out her hands, she begged:

"Sir, I have to go back! Please take me back home! I need to return to my husband and my little one! ... If this nightmare persists, I will surely die! ... Wake me up! Wake me up! ..."

"Poor creature!" I exclaimed to myself, forgetting all about my curiosity in light of the compassion the sad scene was causing me. "She is unaware that her body has returned to the bed of ashes! She cannot be of any use to her husband and child while she is in such a desperate state."

She looked at me woefully as if she were about to come undone in an attack of useless revolt. But before she could burst into bellows of grief, I added:

"Have you tried praying, my friend? Have you remembered Divine Providence?"

"I want a doctor right now! I've only heard priests!" she shouted angrily. "I can't die ... Wake me up! Wake me up! ..."

"Jesus is our infallible doctor," I responded, "and I suggest you use prayer as your divine medicine so that he may assist and heal you."

The wretched woman, however, appeared to be far removed from any notion of spirituality. She tried to grab me with her hands. They were covered with strange splotches, and although she was unable to reach me, she cried out in an extremely loud voice:

"Call my husband! I can't stand it any more! I'm rotting away! ... Oh! Who will wake me up?!"

From afflicted rage, she switched to meek whimpering, wounding my emotions. It was then that I understood that the wretched woman was experiencing all the phenomena of bodily decomposition. Upon examining her in greater detail, I noticed that the peculiar thread – but without the silvery light like Dimas' – was dangling from her head, piercing the ground.

I was about to exhort her once again, reminding her about the sublime resources of prayer, when the kind figure of a worker approached and

informed me with spontaneous compassion:

“My friend, don’t worry about her.”

This advice did not ring well in my ears. How was I not to worry about the unfortunate woman who had stated that she was a wife and mother? How could I not try to help her escape her perilous illusion? Wouldn’t it be right to console her, enlighten her? I was unable to contain the series of questions that were streaming from mind to mouth.

Far from being upset, the man answered me calmly:

“I can understand your surprise. This must be your first visit to a cemetery like this one. You are inexperienced in the matter. As for me, I am from the post that provides spirit assistance to this cemetery.

Disarmed by his composure, I took a second look at my first impressions. I realized that the place, despite being full of vagrant spirits, was not completely lacking in servants of the good.

“There are only four of us here,” the informant continued, “and we are, in fact, unable to attend to all the apparent needs of our work here. But please believe me when I say that we seek to resolve all the fundamental problems. Despite our extreme care, however, we cannot ignore the imperative of beneficial suffering for all those who end up here after having deliberately despised all the sublime treasures of human life.”

I grasped the hidden meaning of his explanation. What this worker wanted to say, of course, was that the presence there of so many discarnate idlers and wrongdoers was justified considering the large number of idlers and wrongdoers that leave the earth on a daily basis. It was *similia similibus*¹² in action, fulfilling the dictates of the law of progress. By punishing and tormenting each other, lost souls would one day discover the true path of salvation.

I gazed at the poor woman and expressed my desire to help her.

“It’s useless,” clarified the helpful guard, who proved to be well-balanced in his knowledge of justice and self-confident in its practice due to his daily contact with pain. “Our poor sister still remains under a high level of emotional turmoil. She’s completely insane. She lived for thirty some-odd years in the flesh, fully oblivious to the spiritual problems that concern us. She drank her fill from the cup of the physical life. After a happy wedding – performed without any type of moral preparation – she got pregnant, a

situation that she held in complete disdain. She treated her physical state as if it were an everyday event, and increasing her extravagances in a display of false superiority, she plunged headlong into a fatal lifestyle. Having been called to the spiritually constructive task of a worker bee in the hive of her home, she preferred the role of a fickle butterfly eager for fleeting fancies. The results were disastrous. After a difficult delivery, infections and malignant fever overcame her and destroyed her physical body. We have been told that at the last minute the screams of her newborn son awoke her maternal instincts and the poor woman fought fiercely against death, but it was too late. Enslaved to her remains by her own doing, she stands out here because of her rebellious nature. Many visiting spirits, who come to this cemetery with the difficult task of helping recently discarnated individuals, have tried to free her. But the poor woman, after having lived a life of unyielding materialism, doesn't know how to assume the least attitude favorable to receiving help from the higher realms. She demands that her corpse be revived, and she believes she is having a horrible nightmare, which does nothing more than worsen her sense of despair. The benefactors are thus inclined to wait for her to display an inner improvement because it would be dangerous to force her liberation due to the likelihood of the unfortunate soul falling into the hands of discarnate evildoers."

I then pointed at the fluidic cord that still bound her to her buried remains and commented:

"Nevertheless, you can see that the wretched creature is suffering greatly as she experiences the deterioration of her material body because she is holding onto the notion of still being attached to rotting matter. Don't we have any recourse to relieve her?"

I adopted the intentional attitude of someone wanting to give the liberating measure a try, and asked:

"Maybe now is the right time. Wouldn't it be appropriate to cut the bond?"

"What?" he objected in surprise. "No, no we can't! We have our orders."

"Why such a requirement?" I persisted.

"If we were to unfasten her beneficial chains, she would return inopportunely in a rage to the home she abandoned in order to destroy anything she might find there. As a mother who was unfaithful to her duties, she has no right to punish her son's tender little body with her misdirected

passion, and as a wife who neglected her obligations, she cannot disturb the mental recomposing process of her honest companion, who offered her the best he had in the world. Natural law says that laborers shall reap what they sow. When she manages to control the explosive passions that consume her soul, when she learns to humble her capricious heart so that she respects the peace of the loved ones she left behind in the world, she will then be freed and will lie in restorative sleep in an abode of peace that never fails the needy who acknowledge God's blessings."

The lesson was hard, but made perfect sense.

Completely unaware of our conversation, the unfortunate creature kept shouting and screaming like a demented patient hospitalized in a pain-filled prison.

I tried to expand upon my remarks, but the servant called me to go to another area from where piercing cries could be heard.

"These are several unfortunate spirits in a vigil of madness," he said calmly.

And pointing at an old discarnate man squatting on his tomb, he added:

"Come and listen to him."

Following my new friend, I saw that this suffering spirit was also still connected to the ground.

"Oh, my God!" he kept saying. "who'll look after my money? Who'll look after my money?"

When he saw us approach, he begged in desperation:

"Who are you? They want to rob me! Help me! Help me! ..."

I spoke words of encouragement and consolation to him, but it was useless.

"He cannot hear you," the guard kindly informed me. "His mind is full of images of coins, promissory notes, paper bills and dollar signs. He will remain in his current situation for quite some time, and as you can see, we cannot in our right mind facilitate his escape, because he would go and punish his heirs and maltreat them every moment of the day."

Since I was unable to hide my overwhelming amazement, the optimistic servant added:

“There is no reason for you to be so surprised. We are looking at unfortunate spirits who are lacking neither protection nor hope, because there are others who are so furious and wicked that, from the dark depths of the grave, they hurl themselves into the terrifying abysses of the realms of the underworld; the state of their consciences is so deplorable that they are attracted to the thickest darkness.”

Without digressing from the typical serenity of a worker who is aware of the task at hand, he added:

“From what we may conclude, if there is happiness for every taste, there is also suffering for every kind of need.”

At that moment, Jeronimo called me back to my post.

I thanked the amiable informant, deeply affected by what I had just seen, and immediately bid him farewell. All of Dimas’ incarnate friends had already left the cemetery, and the grave-digger himself was on his way out.

The farewell between Dimas and his mother was very touching, and she promised to visit him whenever possible.

After mutual thanks and reciprocal wishes of peace, we finally felt that we too were ready to leave.

But before we did, my inquiring curiosity wanted to come into play. How would Dimas be feeling now? Wouldn’t it be interesting to ask for his opinion and whatever he could tell us? His priceless testimony could prepare me for any future opportunity to enlighten someone else.

In my personal sphere of observation, I had not been able to gather much information, since death had come upon me when I was totally ignorant about the eternal life, and at the moment of the final transition, my unawareness had been complete.

Our director understood my purpose and said good-heartedly:

“You can ask Dimas anything you wish to know.”

I thanked him while the newly-freed Dimas kindly acquiesced to my desires.

“Are you still experiencing any physical pain?” I began.

“I still have a clear impression of the body I have just left behind,” he responded politely. “But I have noticed that, in wishing to remain close to my

own loved ones and to continue on where I had been for so many years, I relive all the suffering that I endured. However, when I resign myself to accepting the higher designs, I immediately feel lighter and comforted. Despite the short amount of time that I have been awake, I have already been able to make such an observation.”

“And what about the five senses?” I continued.

“They are in perfect working order.”

“Do you feel hunger?”

“I actually can tell that my stomach is empty and I would be glad if I had something to eat, but this physical desire is neither uncomfortable nor torturing.”

“And thirst?”

“Yes, although I do not suffer because of it.”

I was going to continue my inquiry of curiosity, but smiling, Jeronimo broke off my research and asserted:

“You can expand upon this impressions report whenever you wish since you have an interest in taking part in creating a technical description of death. You can be certain, however, that no two discarnation processes are exactly the same. What each spirit experiences at death depends on its spiritual condition.”

We all smiled at my childlike impulse to learn, and caringly supporting Dimas, we started off on our return journey.

¹² A homeopathic axiom expressing the law of similars, meaning “like things are cured by like.” In this sense, evil is cured by evil. – Tr.

16

A Christian Example

Following the work schedule outlined by the Assistant, Hipolito and Luciana would stay at Casa Transitoria, seeing to the urgent needs of the newly-liberated Dimas, while Assistant Jeronimo and I would accompany Fabio during his discarnation process.

“Fabio is still in excellent shape,” our guide explained, “and the assistance process will not be difficult. He was able to prepare not only himself for the event but his family also, who, instead of being a cause of concern for us as frequently happens, will be valuable coworkers for our task.”

Jeronimo was absolutely right because Dimas did in fact appear to be deplorably weak. In spite of the faith that warmed his spirit, his homesickness filled him with indescribable anguish. At times, in ending a quiet conversation in which he appeared to be calm and sure of his words, he would begin to moan in sorrow, calling for his wife and children. It was at times like these, when he would turn to the symptoms of the disease that had victimized his physical body, that we had a hard time freeing him from this strange psychosis to enable him to return to his normal state. He would try to disengage from our friendly influence in order to escape to some unknown place as if he had suddenly gone mad. He would yell, flail about and torment himself like an unconscious somnambulist.

I was unable to hide the surprise that overcame me. If we had been dealing with an individual who was unfamiliar with the works of higher spirituality, it would have been easy to understand the picture unfolding before us; but Dimas had been an instrument devoted to evangelical Spiritism and had consecrated his life to fulfilling the blessings of the consoling doctrine that trades the empty tomb for the life eternal. While still in the corporeal realm, he had known ahead of time that he would be subjected to the lessons

of death and that he would have plenty of valuable opportunities to be near his family, from whom he had seemingly been separated from a purely materialistic point of view. Why such troubles? Hadn't he deserved the special attention of our hierarchical superiors?

I availed myself of the opportunity to ask our leader all the questions that were absorbing my mind. Without any hint of surprise, Jeronimo answered me good-naturedly:

“You must know, Andre, that each of us is in ourselves an entire world. Enlightenment and consolation are gifts from God our Father, but convictions and achievements are of our own doing. Each worker has his or her own scale of spiritual improvement on the table of immortal values. Generally speaking, a group of learners will receive the same baggage of spiritual teachings prepared for all the individuals that make up the group. Students vary, however, in the course of individual learning. Merit is not a collective asset, although it is the glory of the summit, challenging all climbers of life to reach the highest point. Dimas was a distinguished disciple of the Gospel, mainly in the areas of aid and evangelization, but as far as he himself was concerned, he did not make full use of the lessons he received. He spread the seeds of light and truth, and dedicated himself extensively to the cause of the good, thereby deserving a very special kind of assistance. However, with regard to his personal realm, he failed to prepare himself adequately. As is the case with so many men, he became entangled in the domestic web, without a great deal of understanding. He conferred too much affection on his direct family, but without any notion of equity on the worldly path. Of course, from a human point of view, he dedicated himself to his wife and offspring at home as he should have; however, if he lavished love and tenderness on them, he did not pass on to them all of his knowledge, which could have freed them from the heavy sphere of incomprehension. And now he obviously suffers from their emotional attacks. His family's anxieties are affecting him through the invisible threads of magnetic attunement.”

He smiled benevolently and continued:

“Of course, our brother did everything to deserve help from our realm because he managed to make prestigious friends who have dedicated important intercessory services to him, but he did not fully prepare himself inwardly with regards to the need for constructive detachment. That is why it will take him a few days to build up his strength.”

This lesson was of great significance to me as I observed such a dedicated servant, surrounded by the most honorable respect on the part of the authorities from our plane as he eagerly struggled inwardly to restore his equilibrium. And I once again concluded that love can provide countless resources of assistance and caring, awakening the spirit's higher faculties, but that the divine law is the same for all. Benevolence is the sublime duty in the active celebration of fraternal cooperation; however, each of us will rise to heaven or descend to temporary hells according to the mental attitudes to which we are attached.

Having engaged in a short period of useful observations, and the liberation of our new friend having been set, Jeronimo and I returned to earth in order to fulfill our duties.

We approached the poor neighborhood where Fabio's home was located. The small, modest house was enchanting. Enclosed by greenery and flowers, one could tell that the entire area had merited the care of its inhabitants.

From a distance, the noise from the huge city reached our ears. Vagrant spirits were slowly walking by in pathetic promiscuity. In the surrounding neighborhood, some new bungalows were being built, which offered them free access, making us speculate on the sad influences of which they were the object. In that small, humble residence, however, peace and silence, harmony and well-being reigned. To us, it looked like a wonderful oasis in the middle of a vast desert.

We went inside.

Three spirit friends welcomed us. One of them, Aristeu Fraga, a personal acquaintance of Jeronimo, embraced us happily and told us they had come to visit the patient now living out the last few hours of his corporeal matter. He thanked us for our interest in the discarnating man and introduced us to brother Silveira – Fabio's father while on earth – who wanted to work with us on behalf of his dear son. He was pleased, he told us. His son had arranged all the measures related to his upcoming deliverance and had willingly resigned himself to God's higher designs. He had lived a modest life; he had curbed his noblest ambitions in his celebration of redemptive spirituality; he had made sufficient efforts to uphold the peace of his family; he had been persecuted by all kinds of difficulties during the life which was now coming to an end; he was leaving behind a wife and two small children sustained in the living faith, and although he was not bequeathing any financial ease to them, he was

abandoning his physical body, happy and comforted, with the glory of having used all the resources the higher realms had granted him. In addition to having developed a deep affection for the Gospel of Christ, living out its renewing principles whenever he had the chance, Fabio had managed to enlighten his wife's mind and had constructed solid bases in his children's spirits, guiding them toward the future.

Everyone was praising Fabio so much that, admitted to the conversation, I dared to ask a question:

“Will Fabio discarnate as scheduled?”

“Yes,” Jeronimo remarked kindly. “We have our instructions. Our friend will discarnate at the right time.”

“That's right,” his father affirmed emotionally. “He took advantage of all the resources he had been granted, in spite of his body having been frail and ill since early childhood.”

Betraying my condition of a doctor ever interested in studying, I offered:

“It's a pity that someone who knows how to so appreciably serve the cause of the good had to be reincarnated in such a body ...”

His father felt it necessary to clarify matters, because he continued calmly:

“That is, in fact, one of the weightiest human arguments. When I was still in the flesh, I was frequently alarmed by Fabio's fragile health when he was a child. Early on, I noticed his innate virtues, his penchant for righteousness and justice, and his inborn inclination for works of living faith. I spent many long nights in a father's just concern in light of his uncertain future. How could such a sensitive and pure soul like him be born in such an imperfect vessel? When he was twelve, he fell prey to double pneumonia, which nearly stole him away from us. A doctor friend of ours called my attention to the boy's debility. However, we were too poor to try expensive treatments at health retreats. Before he turned fourteen, and having completed elementary school, he was forced to start working due to the urgent need of earning a living. As his father, I knew that Fabio wanted to continue studying in order to perfect his intellectual faculties due to his fondness for drawing and literature. I had often surprised him courting the school near our house, vexed with envy at seeing the happy groups of school children. Our way of life nonetheless required great sacrifices on our part, and my son, tossed into

the throes of struggle at an early age, found no chance for the artistic tendencies he idealized. Locking himself away in a mechanic's shop in an environment that was too harsh for his physical make up, he was unable to tolerate it for very long and fell easy prey to pulmonary tuberculosis."

"But did you manage to find out the determining cause for Fabio's physical condition upon your return to the spirit realm?" I asked.

"That was one of the first problems I tried to resolve. After some time had passed, I was duly enlightened. My son and I had been prominent farmers as part of the old rural aristocracy of the state of Rio de Janeiro. At that time – not too long ago – Fabio, with a different name and a different body, was also my son. I raised him with all my zealous care, and on more than one occasion I sent him to Europe, anxious to advance his intellectual standard and zealous for our financial superiority. Both of us, however, made serious mistakes, mainly with regard to the direct treatment of descendants of the African slaves. My son was sensitive and generous, but too severe with those servants responsible for the hardest labor. They were all strictly kept in slave quarters, and we lost a great number of workers due to the foul air in those deficient buildings, which Fabio kept unaltered simply in keeping with his personal point of view."

The storyteller's eyes shone more intensely. He appeared visibly affected by these memories, and added with a touch of melancholy:

"The story is quite long, and I would ask for your permission to cut it short."

I regretted having caused problems, but Jeronimo came to my rescue:

"Let's not think about such things any more," exclaimed the Assistant good-naturedly. "I have never enjoyed the exhumation of dead bodies ..."

And while happiness returned to the room, my guide added:

"Let's lend the patient all the help we can. Tonight, we shall free him for good from his material body."

We got up and entered Fabio's room.

Fabio, deeply exhausted, was having difficulty breathing and was displaying an indefinable uneasiness. His wife was watching over him closely.

Through the open window, the patient saw that the lights of the city had come on. He raised his sad eyes to his wife and remarked:

“It’s interesting to note how the pain worsens at nighttime ...”

“Of course it’ll pass, Fabio,” his wife affirmed, trying hard to smile.

Amongst us, however, the first steps were being taken to provide immediate help. The patient’s father addressed Jeronimo:

“I know that Fabio’s liberation will require a great deal of effort. However, I would like to help him with the last home worship in which he will physically participate at his family’s side. As a general rule, a dying person’s last words are more affectionately recorded in the memory of those who remain behind. For that reason, I would really like to help him say a few words of advice and encouragement to his wife.”

“By all means,” agreed the Assistant. “We will also work with you to do it. It is best that the family be alone.”

“Absolutely!” the father said appreciatively.

I saw that Jeronimo and Aristeu had begun applying length-wise passes over the patient, and I noticed that they were leaving the harmful substances on the surface of the skin, taking great care not to remove them completely. When they had finished, I asked them what had led them to take such a measure.

“He is extremely weak, almost at his end,” my guide informed me, “and we must do our best to help him without adding to his exhaustion. The substances retained on the skin will be absorbed by the magnetized bath water, which will be used in a few minutes.”

In fact, responding to the influence of his spirit friends, who were indirectly providing him with intuitive thoughts, Fabio addressed his wife and expressed his desire to take a warm bath, which was promptly attended to.

Jeronimo and Aristeu dispensed some absorbing agents to the pure water and supported the dedicated woman, who in turn helped her husband to bathe, as if she were satisfying the request of a child.

I was amazed to see that the procedure had offered extremely positive results, causing me once again to wonder at the absorbing capacity of ordinary water. The harmful fluidic matter had been entirely removed through the sweat glands.

Having finished his bath, the patient returned to bed, wearing pajamas and appearing comforted and in good spirits. A little rubbing with alcohol completed the fictitious recovery of the patient.

The clock showed it to be a few minutes past 7 p.m.

Silveira, who had been out for some time, came back quickly and spoke with Jeronimo in private, who then stated:

“Everything is ready. We will be able to arrange a private family meeting.”

The Assistant appeared satisfied and emphasized the need to accelerate the work pace. The kind discarnate father got busy. The right moment for us to act came when Fabio addressed his wife, saying:

“I don’t believe we should postpone the prayer service. I feel mysteriously better and would like to take advantage of this period of rest.”

Dona¹³ Mercedes, Fabio’s selfless wife, brought both children into the room, where they sat in the respectful position of listeners. And while Mercedes was settling in next to the little ones, Fabio, helped by his father, opened the New Testament to Paul of Tarsus’ First Epistle to the Corinthians and read chapter fifteen, verse forty-four:

“It is sown a mortal body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a mortal body and there is a spiritual body.”

There was a brief silence, which the patient broke by starting to pray emotionally:

“I pray to God our Eternal Father to inspire me this evening so that we may talk intimately, and I hope that Divine Providence, through his blessed messengers, will help me to say what I wish to say as easily as possible. While we are in perfect physical health, while the days and nights go serenely by, we believe that our body is our property. We believe that everything revolves around the orbit of our desires, but ... when illness sets in, we realize that health is a treasure that God lends us in trust.”

He smiled, calmly and resignedly. Up to that point, we could see that the words had come exclusively from Fabio. He was expressing himself coherently, but without much enthusiasm due to his extremely weak physical state.

After a longer break, his father rested his right hand on Fabio's forehead, maintaining the stance of someone praying with deep devotion. I was surprised to notice that a luminous current had been established within the fragile body from the encephalic mass up to the heart, inflaming the nerve cells, which now looked like minute points of condensed radiant light. Fabio's eyes gradually began to shine and his voice could be heard again, but with a different tone to it. Gazing at his wife and kids tenderly, he began to say with inspiration:

"I'm happy to have this opportunity to exchange ideas with you alone according to the faith that we share. Significant is the absence of our old friends, who, for so many years, have accompanied us in our family prayers. There is a reason for that. We must talk about our needs, full of courage but never forgetting about the upcoming farewell. These words of the Apostle to the Gentiles are symbolic for our current situation. Just as there are mortal bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. And we cannot ignore the fact that my mortal body will soon be returned to the welcoming earth, the common mother of the perishable forms in which we move about on the face of the globe. Something deep down tells me that this will perhaps be the last night that I will meet with you in this material body ... At times when sleep blesses me, I feel that I am on the verge of the great deliverance ... I can see that enlightened friends have been preparing my soul, and I am sure I will leave at the first opportunity. I believe all the necessary measures have already been taken to ensure our tranquility during these moments before the separation. In fact, I'm not leaving you any money but I find comfort in knowing that we have built the spiritual home of our sublime union, and it will be an indelible source of reference for our everlasting happiness' ..."

He gazed in particular at his wife, and overcome with strong emotion, he continued:

"Mercedes, you mustn't fear the obstacles of the darkness. Honest work will always be a blessed source of accomplishment. Trust that I will always long for you in spirit, wherever I may be, a longing for your companionship, your loving dedication. This separation, however, will not be a heavy shackle, because both of us have learned in the school of simplicity and balance that true and purified love cannot dispense with blessed understanding. Of course, I will need a lot of peace so that I can readapt to a different life, which is why I intend to leave you with enough peace of mind so that we may all adjust to God's designs. I recognize your heroic nobility as a woman who grew

accustomed to working very early on in life, and I understand the pureness of your ideals as a wife and mother. Nevertheless, Mercedes, forgive me for being so frank at this crucial moment of my life: I know that my absence will be followed by problems that might be painful for your sensitive spirit. Loneliness can become dreadful for a young woman who doesn't have parents or siblings nearby, whom we no longer have with us here in this world, when it is not possible to preserve the same vibration of faith throughout the various circumstances of our spiritual journey ... I cannot demand from you absolute fidelity to the material bonds that join us, because it would be exerting cruel oppression under the pretext of love. Besides, nothing can break our spiritual alliance, for it is definitive and eternal."

I noticed that Fabio was gasping for air, deeply overwhelmed by the situation.

After a few seconds' pause, he continued with his eyes radiating true affection and loyal sincerity:

"For this reason, Mercedes, although we have taken steps with regard to your honest work in the future, I wish to tell you that I will be very happy if Jesus sends you a worthy and loyal brother as a companion. If that happens, my dear, do not reject him. Happily for us, we have cultivated an everlasting bond of the soul without allowing the monster of jealousy to keep watch over our castle of love ... We don't know how many years you still have on your pilgrimage through this world. It is likely that the Divine Plan means to extend your stay on earth and, if I am able, I will help in any way possible so that you will not be alone. Our still-fragile children need friendly support to guide them in their daily lives."

Dona Mercedes, wiping her teary eyes, made a gesture like someone who was going to protest, but Fabio did not let her and added:

"I already know what you're going to say. I have never doubted your unadulterated integrity and your zealous love, nor am I interested in abandoning the self-denying companion given to me by the Lord to share my earthly struggles. You must realize, however, that we have lived in deep spiritual communion and we must sincerely and rationally contend with my upcoming departure. If you manage to overcome all the necessities of human life, keeping yourself above the natural demands of existence on earth, Jesus will no doubt compensate your efforts with the laurel of the blessed. Nevertheless, don't try to scale the glorious peak of full spiritual victory in

just one flight. Our hearts, Mercedes, are like birds: some have already gained the prodigious strength of the eagle, while others still display the frailty of the hummingbird. I would certainly suffer if I were to see you tackling the redemptive mountain with false strength. Don't be afraid. Evil creatures cannot frighten prudent souls. The Lord has granted us enough spiritual light to tell the difference. You will never fall victim to unconscionable exploiters, because the Gospel of Jesus is right before your eyes to light your chosen path. Therefore, observation and reason, spiritual exercise and inspiration from the higher realms will be there to help you with your emotional decisions. And please believe that I will do everything I can in spirit to assist you in that respect."

He made an effort to smile while his wife wept quietly. After a long pause, he emphasized:

"If I can, I will bring stars from the firmament to decorate your hopes. You will live in my heart forever; I will also love all those to whom you choose to give your ennobling affection."

Then, after gazing at his children for a long time, he added:

"The apostolic text in the New Testament comforts and enlightens us as to what is essential now. Soon, I will rejoin our loved ones in the Greater Life. I will lose my mortal body but I will achieve resurrection in my spiritual body so that I can wait for you in joy."

One could see that the patient had spent a great deal of strength. He was exhausted.

His father took his right hand off of Fabio's forehead, causing the loss of the luminous fluidic current that had helped him deliver such an eloquent allocation of pure love.

Displaying sublime serenity in his shining eyes, Fabio reclined on the over-sized pillows, thoroughly exhausted.

Dona Mercedes regained her composure while drying some remaining tears, and told her older son:

"Carlindo, you will say the final prayer."

Fabio looked very happy as the boy stood to do what his mother had told him. He effortlessly recited a short prayer that he had learned from his mother's lips:

“Almighty Father in Heaven, bless us and grant us the strength needed to carry out your Law, brought into the world through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Enable us to be better today so that we may meet you tomorrow. If you so allow it, O my God! we would ask for our father’s health according to your supreme will. Amen! ...”

Having finished the prayer, and as the children were kissing their mother before going to bed, Fabio humbly asked his wife:

“Mercedes, if you agree, I would like to kiss the boys goodnight ...”

Mercedes agreed, visibly moved.

“Bring me a new handkerchief,” her husband asked tenderly.

Within a few minutes, his wife handed him a piece of pure white linen. Moved by the scene, I watched as the Christian father placed the snow white cloth on the children’s heads and kissed the linen instead of their hair. Even so, that gesture carried such soul, such loving fervor, that I noticed a ray of light coming from Fabio’s mouth and piercing the children’s minds. The kiss was saturated with sanctifying magnetism. Jeronimo, feeling as touched as I was, whispered in my ear:

“Others may see bacteria; we see love ...”

Immediately afterward, the small family went to bed. Fabio felt much better and in good spirits.

In our group, there was a common feeling of satisfaction.

The children fell asleep right away, and Aristeu guided their spirits away from their physical bodies to a place of joy where they could play to their hearts’ content ...

Now alone with Fabio and Mercedes, who were trying to sleep, we began the liberation process.

While Silveira was supporting his son with unsurpassable tenderness, Jeronimo applied anesthetizing passes. Fabio felt comforted by wonderful sensations of restfulness. Next, the Assistant started a complicated magnetic process on the vital respiratory organs and I observed the rupture of an important artery. The patient coughed, and in an instant, blood flowed into his mouth in spurts.

Dona Mercedes rose in fright, but her husband, speaking with difficulty, managed to calm her down:

“You can call the doctor ... but Mercedes ... don’t worry about it ... it is rightly the end ...”

While Jeronimo continued separating the perispiritual body from the weak, physical one, Dona Mercedes asked the help of a neighbor, who kindly left in search of the specialist.

The doctor came at once by car, but the adrenalin solution, the bleeding of the arm, the mustard plaster to the feet and the dry cupping glasses on the chest were useless. The blood continued to gush ruby-red ... flowing and flowing ...

I noticed that Jeronimo was repeating the same liberating process that had been used on Dimas, but with amazing ease this time. After the operation on the solar plexus, the heart and the brain, and once the *vital knot* had been untied, Fabio was entirely separated from his physical body. Finally, the silvery fluidic cord shone with a beautiful light. Supported by his father, the newly delivered spirit rested drowsily, without completely understanding the situation.

I had assumed that Dimas’ case would repeat itself in each minute detail; however, one hour after Fabio’s discarnation, Jeronimo cut the luminous appendage.

“He’s completely free,” my guide declared with great satisfaction.

While his discarnate son slept peacefully, the tender father planted a loving kiss on his forehead and turned him over to Jeronimo:

“I do not want him to recognize me right away. It would not be beneficial to lead him to memories from the past. I will meet with him later, when it is time for him to leave the first aid institution to move on to higher realms. You can guide him now without wasting any time. I will take charge of watching over his body, nullifying the final vital residues against the abuse of any unconscionable and wicked spirits.”

The Assistant thanked him emotionally and we left, guiding the sacred parcel that had been entrusted to our care.

While we were traveling upward, I respectfully contemplated the first announcement of the dawn, and observing our sleeping Fabio, I got the impression that the glorious gates of heaven had been lit up by the sun to greet that man of sublime Christian exemplification as he rose victoriously from the earth ...

13 In Brazilian society, Dona is a term of respect used with the woman's first name. – Tr.

An Unusual Request

While Dimas was showing slow signs of recovery, Fabio was regaining his strength at an amazing rate. The long, difficult exercises of higher spirituality while on the earth were now bearing fruit in blessings of serenity and understanding. They were both resting at Casa Transitoria, supported by the overall affection of the institution headed by Sister Zenobia. At the same time, we maintained a constant watch over the other friends in the group, especially Cavalcante, whose physical condition continued to worsen as he neared the end.

Following Fabio's example, Dimas, had regained his spirits. He was reacting more strongly against the demands of his terrestrial family, and was consolidating his own peace of mind with precise efficiency. On the other hand, the former tuberculosis patient was now radiant and happy as he saw new horizons opening up to his sensitive and kind spirit. He was able to get up whenever he felt like it, move around the various areas into which the work of the institution was divided, and it was a pleasure to see him so interested in studies relating to the higher realms of the infinite universe. He was experiencing peace. He was not a genius by any means; he had not completed his need for wisdom and love; however, he was a distinguished worker in an enviable position due to the debts he had paid and the fortunate chance of continuing on his journey toward the glorious lofty peaks of knowledge. Sister Zenobia greatly enjoyed listening to him during her few moments of spare time, and she often expressed to Jeronimo her favorable impressions about him.

The devoted disciple aroused so much joy with his strong display of emotional discipline that our Assistant took the initiative to bring his wife for a brief visit. I remember Mercedes' emotion when she came through the entrance to the institute on our mentor's friendly arm. She was amazed,

dazzled, ecstatic. She was not entirely aware of what was going on, but she displayed a deep sense of gratitude. Led to the room where her husband was waiting, she knelt down instinctively. We were all moved by her gesture of spontaneous humility.

Smiling to disguise his strong emotions, Fabio addressed her exclaiming:

“Get up, Mercedes! We are now partaking of immortal happiness!”

Mercedes, however, giddy with happiness, had shut herself off in understandable silence. Fabio helped her to stand up and embraced her with infinite tenderness.

“Don’t be afraid of widowhood, my dear!” he continued. “We will always be together. Do you remember our final agreement?”

Mercedes half-opened her lips to respond and nodded.

“Tell me about the kids!” asked her smiling discarnate consort. “You haven’t said anything about them yet ... Why not? Tell me, Mercedes, tell me! Show me your victorious joy!”

His wife fixed her soft and shining eyes on him and said, weeping with joy:

“Fabio, I thank Jesus for the blessing he has granted me ... How happy I am to see you again! ...”

Copious tears ran down both sides of her face.

Then after a brief pause she told him:

“Our little ones are just fine. We think about you all the time ... Every night, we come together in prayer and beseech God our Father to grant you joy and peace in this new life you have been called to experience.”

The brave woman paused again to try to contain her weeping.

“I want you to know,” she continued, “that I am already working. Our old friend Frederico gave me a job. Carlindo looks after his brother when I’m out, and I believe we have everything we need materially. We just ...”

And the dedicated wife stopped short, perhaps afraid of offending him.

“Go on!” said Fabio, moved with her concern.

“Won’t you get angry,” said Mercedes with renewed enthusiasm, “if I complain about how much we miss you? During our meals and prayers, there

is always an empty seat for you. But you must believe that I do my very best not to harm you. In my mind, I see Jesus, our invisible Master, where you always were. So your absence at home is filled with our deep faith in that True Friend whom you taught me to find ...”

I noticed that Fabio, despite his elevated spiritual level, appeared to be trying hard not to weep. In an attempt to sound optimistic, he remarked:

“Don’t snuff out the flame of hope. I could never be angry to know that you miss me, because I too miss your presence, your tenderness and our children’s affection, but I would be unhappy if I knew that sadness had invaded our happy home. Be brave and don’t falter. As soon as possible, I will return to my place in spirit. I will be with you while you work; I will help you in saying your prayers and I will breathe the air of your love. For that to happen – at least for now – I need to rely upon your will power, and I cannot do without your loving help. I feel that I am surrounded by good friends who never forget us. Who knows? We might even be together side by side once again in the not too distant future. I have been told that Divine Goodness has granted me access to a colony of sanctifying work so that I may continue on my journey of spiritual progression. I might be able to build you a different, more beautiful home. I have heard, Mercedes, that the sun is much more beautiful on that landscape of enchanting light, and that at night the flowery trees look like beautiful chandeliers because the wonderful flowers retain the divine moonlight ...”

At that moment, a particular question sprang to mind. If from past existences Fabio had made so many friends in our service group to the point of deserving their special consideration, how was it that he appeared to be so foreign to news from our realm? Synthesizing my rather long questions into one tiny one for Assistant Jeronimo, he responded to me in two short sentences:

“Death does not perform miracles. To regain one’s memory is a task that also happens gradually like any other that involves the divine activities of nature.”

I kept quiet, attentive.

Tenderly gazing at the visitor, the newly liberated husband considered:

“Don’t you think it is worth suffering in some way in order to achieve such a sacred heritage? Our sons will soon grow up; struggles will be brief

and material situations will be temporary. So don't get discouraged. Providence is never depleted and we will be enriched by its blessings."

His wife now displayed a lovely expression of comfort on her happy face, and mobilizing the innermost energies of her humble soul, she remained with her hands together for a few moments as if she were thanking God for the immense joy of that hour.

Jeronimo signaled to us, silently warning us that time for the visit had run out.

Sister Zenobia, who had emotionally witnessed the scene with us, picked a flower resembling a large, golden camellia, and gave it to Fabio so that he could present it to his wife.

Mercedes received the gift, pressing it to her heart.

Our director approached me and said:

"Andre, come with us down to earth. Our friend has lost a great deal of strength with all the emotion, and your help will be useful on her return journey."

The widow said goodbye and soon we led her back home. Even now, in retelling this experience, I can remember the strange sensation of happiness that Mercedes felt upon awaking in her bed with the vivid impression of holding the delicate flower between her fingers.

Hence, everything was running smoothly in the area of work entrusted to us, when our mentor was called by one of the higher-ranking authorities from our colony. I impatiently awaited Jeronimo's return because, obeying the instructions he had received, he would have to leave immediately for a pressing engagement.

He instructed us to wait for him and to keep working at *Casa Transitoria*, stressing the fact that he would not be long.

In fact, he was not gone for more than one day, and upon his return he told us the news. Sister Albina had been authorized to stay down on earth a little longer, which was why her discarnation had been postponed *sine die*¹⁴. A certain request had had a decisive impact on the matter. An urgent requirement had come into play, and our colony had examined it with due consideration. In light of that fact, the mission program we were following had been altered. Instead of helping to liberate Albina, the elderly teacher

would receive strength to remain on the earth. We were to go and look for her at her home without wasting any time in order to provide her body all the possible magnetic resources within our capabilities.

I wanted to ask a question to find out all the details. However, Jeronimo usually told us everything we needed to know, so I did not bother him for any information in advance. But why had such an important decision been changed? After all, who had that much prayer power to affect orders from our spirit colony? Would such a postponement be just? Why should a certain plea impose an alteration on the schedule to be followed?

The Assistant detected the number of conflicting questions filling up my mind and said:

“Don’t torture yourself, Andre. You will understand everything when the time is right.”

And outlining a condensed work plan, he added:

“Let’s go. Hipolito and Luciana will watch over our convalescents.”

On the way, however, I could not resist. I asked for his permission to hear a summary about the new decision, and Jeronimo acquiesced:

“The measure should not cause any surprise. No one, other than God, has supreme power. All of us, when performing the tasks entrusted to our responsibility, will experience limitations or an increase of our duties according to superior purposes. The future can be calculated along general lines, but we are unable to predetermine anything with regards to the area of divine interference. The Father carries out the organization of the universe with unlimited independence in the area of Infallible Wisdom. We cooperate with a certain amount of freedom in tasks on our world, and are subject to necessary and enlightening interdependence due to our own individual imperfections. God knows, while we cannot even come close to knowing.”

With a good-natured expression, he continued:

“So there is no such news per se. Moreover, it is worth considering the fact that Albina’s discarnation cannot be postponed for very long. The material body that has served her until now is worn out and the new decision is only intended to remedy a difficult situation so as to bring benefits to many people. Prayer, on any occasion, improves, corrects, uplifts and sanctifies. But it is only when it results in a change in the agenda, similar to what has happened today, that the collective interest overrides normal circumstances.

Even so, the measure will only last for a short while; that is, only as long as the cause that has motivated it lasts.

I remembered a previous experience¹⁵, during which I had observed a certain brother who had been given a few additional days in his material body in order to be able to resolve a few personal problems, and this change made perfect sense to me. At any rate, however, my surprise was not completely unwarranted, because we were part of a commission with a defined purpose, and with specific activities that had been outlined by hierarchical superiors. In the aforementioned case, friends from our sphere had come to intervene along with other friends on behalf of a third. However, in the case in question, we were dealing with a request from the earth that would have a direct effect on our remote spirit colony.

Thus, still holding on to my frustrated curiosity, I followed the Assistant to the comfortable apartment where the party in interest lived.

The prognosis regarding the patient's physical condition was very discouraging. Her spirit, however, remained calm and confident in spite of the severe physical illness.

It was not just her heart and arteries that exhibited grave symptoms, but also her liver, kidneys and gastrointestinal system. She was also being scourged by dyspnoea.

We arrived at the exact moment in which a gracious group of young people – fourteen in all – were performing the home Gospel worship service around the sick woman's bed. While they were praying, and before they began their constructive comments with their souls turned toward the sublime fount of living faith, we got to work under the close supervision of other friends from our plane associated with the noble educator's mission.

The environment, balanced by prayer and morally uplifting thoughts, effectively contributed to our carrying out our purpose.

The precarious area of her exhausted body was precisely where the aneurism was located, which was the likely key to her liberation. The tumor had caused the degeneration of the cardiac muscle and was threatening to rupture at any moment. Jeronimo, however, once again showed himself to be an experienced and competent doctor from our spiritual realm of action. He began by applying restorative passes to the nerve conduction system, carefully lingering over the tonus nerves. Next, he furnished a certain amount

of pressure to the pericardium as well as to the tendinous tissue, thus ensuring the strength of the organ. Immediately afterward, my mentor performed a lengthy magnetic procedure on the region where the fairly advanced tumor had grown, insulating certain cell groups, explaining:

“We can be confident that she will show signs of significant improvement, which will last for a few months.”

In fact, after the complex magnetic operation had been completed, I noticed that her ailing heart was working at a different pace. The cardiac valves had begun to open and close normally. The pain had stopped, which was due – and rightly so – to the effect of prayer.

Albina felt relieved and more at ease. Deeply moved, she gazed at the students who had come to pay their loving respects, and said contently:

“I feel so much better! James the Apostle had very good reason to recommend prayer for the sick!”

Her students and daughters laughed happily, and then lifted up a lovely prayer of gratitude, which touched our hearts.

Contrary to what would normally be expected, the patient accepted the offer of some comforting broth.

In light of the joy overwhelming all those present, I suddenly asked Jeronimo:

“Might it have been the students’ appeals that caused the change in plans? Who knows? Perhaps they still needed their revered teacher ...”

“No, that’s not exactly the case,” my mentor explained. “The girls’ intercession brought her the normal share of ordinary benefits; however, it is worth remembering that Albina has already fulfilled her duties toward them. She gave them everything she could and devoted herself to them as much as she was supposed to. In virtue of the patient’s selflessness, the students now have minds full of good seeds ... Now it is up to them to provide the favorable conditions for the healthy growth of the spiritual treasures they bear within them.”

Still curious, I risked one more question:

“By any chance, could it be that we are looking at the result of the emotional appeals of her daughters?”

Jeronimo gazed at both women looking after the patient with watchful tenderness, shook his head and replied:

“Once again, the answer is no. The present situation is not a response to such a request. While performing her sacred duties as a mother, Albina did everything she could for her daughters’ well-being. She watched over them as much as possible. She spent many sleepless nights keeping watch and filled her arduous days with consuming and redemptive concern. She lovingly educated them, guided them along the road of sanctification, and, above all, prepared them for life by surrendering them to the Eternal Father without a trace of destructive selfishness. She fully completed her maternal duties. From now on, it is her daughters’ responsibility to follow her example by imitating her Christian behavior. Loide and Eunice’s good thoughts have enveloped her in a peaceful atmosphere of love. However, in circumstances like this, it would not have been her daughters’ requests that would have changed the plan of the higher authorities regarding the fulfillment of the divine laws. The prayers of both have come from realms of spiritual service that have been perfectly attended to by the missionary in process of liberation, and in no way would her daughters be able to hold her back.

At that moment, feeling comforted by her unexpected improvement, the patient addressed her older daughter and asked:

“Loide, do you think it would be possible to bring Joaozinho here?”

Her daughter fully approved of the loving request.

The telephone dial made a clicking noise as she called someone. While the woman was speaking long distance with her husband, Jeronimo announced good-naturedly:

“In a few moments, you will have the key to the riddle.”

We continued treating the patient’s physiological condition, noticing the students’ sincere happiness as they cheerfully left the room. We were alone again with mother and daughters, along with some spirit friends who were dedicated to sharing in the task at hand, including the kind sister who had greeted us on our initial visit, and who had spoken to us about the likelihood of postponing Albina’s discarnation.

Our assistance was progressing with extreme care, when a well-dressed gentleman entered the room, leading a small boy of about eight years old.

As he came through the door, the boy appeared to be aware of where he was. He greeted the women respectfully and turned to Albina with an anxious look, kissing her right hand with indescribable tenderness.

Albina asked God to bless him, and the boy asked:

“How are you, Grandma?”

Pointing to the young boy, the Assistant explained:

“It was this child’s plea that reached our spirit colony and changed the itinerary.”

“What? ...” I answered in extreme surprise.

Jeronimo, continued:

“He is not Albina’s blood grandson, although he considers himself to be. He was an orphan who was left on her doorstep after he was born. Loide has been looking after him at her house ever since Albina became bedridden. In spite of the ordeal, Joaozinho is a noble and unselfish servant of Jesus, and has reincarnated on an evangelical mission. He has extensive credit from the past. He has been connected to Albina’s family for a few centuries, and has returned to the bosom of dearly loved individuals on his way to future apostolic service.”

I was going to ask more questions, but my guide pointed to the patient who had embraced the child and advised me thoughtfully:

“See for yourself ...”

The dialogue between Albina and the boy was full of captivating tenderness.

“I have been very ill, my son,” the respectable woman said, opening her heart.

“Oh, Grandma!” the young lad replied, his eyes radiant with faith. “I’ve been praying for your quick recovery.”

“Do you have faith?”

“I trust in Jesus. The last time I was in church, I asked everyone to help me pray to heaven for your health.”

“And what if God calls me?”

His eyes became damp with tears, but he emphasized in a firm voice:

“We need you here in this world.”

Albina hugged and kissed him with motherly tenderness and continued:

“Joao, I have so missed your hymns at school. Have you been praising the Lord like you should?”

“Yes.”

“Sing for me, my son.”

The boy smiled happily at having found something to bring joy to the beloved patient, and asked instinctively:

“What should I sing?”

Albina thought for a while and then said:

“Jesus is Mine.”

The boy changed his facial expression, immediately saddened. But standing next to her bed in the posture of a submissive believer, he raised his eyes to heaven and began to sing the old, delicate hymn sung in evangelical churches:

“Jesus is mine,

I am so happy.

I am going to heaven,

My beautiful country ...”

The boy sang with such great affliction in his voice that the hymn sounded like a bitter lament. After the first verse, he tried hard to continue but could not. Overwhelming emotion stifled his throat and tears welled up spontaneously. He tried in vain to gaze at Loide in order to work up the courage, but seeing that his emotion had affected the entire family, he threw himself into Albina’s arms and shouted:

“No, Grandma, no! You can’t go to heaven now! You just can’t! God won’t let you! ...”

Albina held him close to her in loving joy.

“Why are you being like this, Joao?” she said, trying to smile.

It was then that I realized that I too was weeping ...

Jeronimo, however, remained firm and laughing kindly, reaffirmed:

“The boy is right. Albina really will not go this time ...”

To answer my curiosity, he began his final explanation:

“What have you noticed in particular about Loide?”

Referring back to what I had already observed, I answered with no hesitation:

“I can tell she is expecting someone: a little girl, whom we have already caught a glimpse of ... When we first met her, I saw she was pregnant and close to delivering.”

“That’s right,” Jeronimo confirmed. “Joao’s prayer is important because it is clothed in profound significance for the future. The girl now reincarnating has been his beloved companion for many centuries. Both of them have an admirable past of service to the planet, and they have chosen a new task, fully aware of the duties they must fulfill. They have been associated with Albina on several missions, and will very soon be her successors in the work of evangelical education. They are not purified, redeemed spirits, but rather valuable workers with sufficient moral credit to obtain more important opportunities. Despite still being a child, and due to his rich insight outside the physical realm, this reincarnate servant has been forewarned about the imminent death of our venerable sister. He has understood in advance that her death would have a distressing impact on Loide’s body, perhaps causing her pregnancy to fail. The burden of the mental pain would ultimately lead to miscarriage, thereby producing significant changes in the course of service to which Joao is happily committed. So he asked for the help of all intercessory channels during the moments in which his lucid soul was able to operate outside his material body, and through his insistent pleas, he succeeded in obtaining a short postponement of Albina’s discarnation.”

Always moderate in providing information, Jeronimo stopped talking in preparation for our departure.

The unusual incident had filled me with enchantment and surprise. And contemplating with extreme delight the small family in blessed domestic happiness, I came to the conclusion that even there, in a room of serious illness, prayer, the daughter of loving work, had defeated the strong power of death.

¹⁴ Latin for “no definite date”. – Tr.

15 See Chapter 7 of *Missionaries of the Light*. – Spirit Auth.

18

A Difficult Disengagement

We were now faced with the final stages of Cavalcante's case.

Our poor friend was still attached to his body by his strong desire to remain yoked to the flesh. The operation on his swollen appendix, while at the same time trying to resolve the situation of his duodenum, had been too late. Suppuration had spread to the peritoneum, and efforts to fight the quickly-spreading and frightening infection were all in vain.

The patient was becoming increasingly weaker, and because he was unable to eat as he should, he had no resources to make up for the large energy loss.

His intestines provoked both repugnance and compassion. Like a strange vase to be used for fermentation, the cecum contained trillions of various kinds of bacilli. A severe imbalance was affecting the functions of the blood and lymphatic vessels in the small intestine. The transverse and descending colon looked like small tunnels full of the most varied of microbial colonies. The villus was still full of putrid blood, and from time to time, the more fragile veins burst open, causing profuse hemorrhaging. Throughout the entire intestinal apparatus, the gradual disappearance of fiber tonus could be seen. The pancreas could no longer handle any work in the breakdown of food, and the stomach appeared to be in an advanced stage of incapacity. The gastric glands were nearly motionless. Destructive disturbances were assembling in the liver, where voracious micro-organisms were taking advantage of the progressive lack of mental control, and were manifesting aimlessly like microscopic bandits in festive fury.

In short, the patient was unable to bear any kind of nourishment. His stomach even rejected pure water, leaving him exhausted due to the tremendous effort spent on repeated spells of vomiting.

The central nervous and abdominal systems, as well as the autonomous systems, were displaying increasing discord.

However, in that dying man, who was determined to live in that physical body at any cost, one could recognize the enormous power of the mind, which, by an admirable decree of the will, was establishing all the control possible over his utterly decaying organs and vital centers.

After having taken special care of the dying man for more than four days, Jeronimo decided to cut the ties that were holding him to the material realm.

Bonifacio, kind and gentle, was helping us with our work.

Vaguely aware of our intentions through his intuitive channels, the patient called the chaplain first thing in the morning in order to listen to him. After a brief confession, which the priest made as short as possible because of the unpleasant odor coming from the patient's decaying body, poor Cavalcante, hardly imagining the peace that awaited him in death, tried to detain the cleric by starting up a sad conversation:

"Father," he said in a pleading voice, "I know I'm dying and that this is the end for me ..."

"Give yourself to God, my friend. Only he can know for sure what is going to happen. Who knows if perhaps you might not even have many long years ahead of you? Anything can happen ..."

The priest talked quickly, shortening the conversation and trying to disguise his offended olfactory impressions, but the dying man continued unawares:

"I'm scared, very scared of dying ..."

"Well," the priest replied mildly, not hiding a touch of impatience which went by undetected by the believer, "we must prepare our spirit for whatever might come."

"Listen, father! ... Do you believe I'll be saved?"

"Of course. You've always been a good Catholic ..."

"But ... listen to me!" And the patient's voice became sadder, more tearful and muffled. "I wish I were dying under different circumstances. As I confessed to you, my wife left me many years ago ... You know that she traded me for another man and left for good ... I always believed that I

experienced such a trial because of a lack of understanding on her part, but now, Father ... staring at death face to face, I can think more clearly ... Who knows if I was not in fact the guilty one? Maybe I went too far in my determination to live for religion and neglected to give her the help she needed ... I remember that sometimes she used to call me “a priest without a cassock.” Perhaps my thoughtless attitude gave my wife a motive for going astray ...”

After gazing at the cleric for a long time, he begged:

“Would you be so kind as to continue trying to find her? I must see her in order to ease my conscience ... I lost track of her eleven years ago ...”

The priest, however, did not seem particularly interested in satisfying Cavalcante’s request and repeated impatiently:

“Rest, rest ... I must carry on with my duties. Be brave, Cavalcante! It’s possible that in time we will all have our wishes granted.”

In a voice broken off by exhaustion, the dying man whispered:

“Thank you, Father, thank you!”

The priest tried to leave but Cavalcante was frightened and asked further:

“Do you think I’ll have to spend a long time in purgatory?”

“What a silly question!” grumbled the bored cleric. “Where’s your faith in God’s power?”

He pronounced these last words with such irritation that the patient realized his annoyance, smiled humbly and became silent.

Upon leaving, the relieved priest ran into a doctor and asked:

“What’s going on with Cavalcante after all? Is he going to die or not? I’m tired of so many long, drawn-out cases.”

“He has fought hard,” replied the doctor good naturedly. “But in considering his incurable illness, I have been examining the possibility of euthanasia.”

“That seems charitable to me,” replied the priest, “because the poor man is rotting alive ...”

The physician suppressed a candid smile and they said goodbye to each other.

The scene shocked me due to their lack of respect. Both professionals, one of religion and the other of science, were only able to see merely superficial situations and were incapable of grasping the sacred mysteries of the soul. However, in order to compensate for such a spiteful lack of understanding, Cavalcante was the object of our utmost care. On my part, I would not know how to help him, given my inexperience in these cases, but Jeronimo and Bonifacio were surrounding him with particular care, looking after him as though he were a beloved child.

When the priest was far enough away, the Assistant commented:

“The poor priest still does not have ‘eyes to see’. Cavalcante was, above all else, an unrelenting worker for the good.”

In the meantime, the patient was trying to wipe his abundant tears. The chaplain’s attitude had made him aware of the deplorable state of his physical body. He began to smell the unpleasant odor of his own entrails, which caused him to feel much worse. Under irrepressible anguish, he called for one of the many nuns who worked at the hospital. He felt a deep yearning for consolation; he craved outside sources of courage. He would likely find in a female heart the comfort that the confessor had been unable to give him. However, the ‘sister of charity’ was not in the best of moods either. She made a point of holding a strong disinfectant to her nose while she listened to him, instilling him with even more dolorous surprise. Cavalcante wept and complained. He needed to live a few more days, he said humbly. He did not wish to die before making up with his wife. He pled for more effective medical measures and promised to pay for all expenses involved as soon as he could return to regular work. He intended to resort to rich relatives who lived far away. He would pay back the debt down to the very last cent.

After listening to him with cool indifference, the ‘sister of charity’ was even more succinct:

“My friend,” she said roughly, “have faith. The hospital is full of patients, some of them in a far worse condition than you.”

And as the patient kept on insisting, she concluded dryly and sharply:

“I’m too busy.”

The dying man wept silently. With his soul oppressed in anguished longing, he remembered his childhood and youth. He had walked the terrestrial roads with his heart open to practicing the good. He could not

understand Jesus enclosed in churches of stone, away from the hungry and suffering souls who wept outside. The doctrine he had embraced had not given him the chance to make broader use of the evangelical example. He had been forced to satisfy conventional obligations and to waste a great amount of time on displays of outward worship. He had, however, taken every opportunity to bear witness to his Christian understanding. Because he had been steadfast and loyal in his love of doing good deeds, he annoyed priests and family in general. His relatives, including his wife, considered him a useless, mentally unstable fanatic. Even so, he had persevered. In spite of the spiritually advanced condition in which he had developed his faith, he was unaware of the lessons from beyond the grave and was afraid of death. He would love to be certain about his coming fate. The mental picture of hell, according to Catholic notions, caused his exhausted spirit to tremble in fear. The likelihood of purgatorial suffering filled him with terror. He longed for something better, more beautiful than the old world where he had lived up to that point ... He longed to be part of a different community where he might find hearts that beat to the same rhythm as his. He hungered and thirsted for understanding – profound understanding – but biased by the dogmatic principles of the religious school to which he had belonged, he was rejecting our help.

Making use of magnetic resources, the Assistant tried to provide him with gentle sleep so that we could eliminate his fear by acting directly on his spirit outside his physical body. However, the dying man fought to remain awake. He was afraid of falling asleep and never waking up again. He wanted to see his wife before the end. Wasn't that in fact likely? Wouldn't it be fair to die in peace? Oh! If only she would show up! He toyed with the possibility; he would repent for his past mistakes, and would ask for her forgiveness. His entire being was so humbled at that time of great distress that he would not be embittered if she were to visit him in the company of 'the other'. Why hate him? Hadn't he perchance learned Jesus' lesson that fraternity always comprised a blessing from the Most High? Who would be guiltier? He, who had kept a strong indifference toward his wife's demands for affection due to his deep-rooted devotion to his faith, or the other man, unconcerned with any responsibility, who had taken her in perhaps in her desperation? If he had always struggled to practice charity, for what reason had he, Cavalcante, failed to demonstrate it behind closed doors in his own home? Actually, the sublime suggestions of religious faith had inflamed his spirit of universal love. He could not tolerate any attempt to suffocate his burning idealism.

Nobody could condemn him. But if that was the path he had chosen, what had led him to marry a poor creature who was incapable of understanding his yearning for the light? Why had he made resolute promises to a female soul, knowing that he would be unable to keep them? Pain draws on the screen of logic at the back of one's mind more clearly than all of the books in the world. Eminent death filled that pure soul with sublime thoughts. However, fear had lodged inside it like an invisible murderer.

Cavalcante, who was able to see the landscape of human sentiments so clearly, remained blind to the "other side of life", from where we were trying to help him in vain.

Jeronimo could have used more drastic resources on him, but decided to wait. When I asked him about his continuing care, he explained calmly:

"No one should cut where one could simply untie ..."

The answer silenced me deeply.

In vain, however, we tried to bestow upon the patient the respite of preparatory and comforting sleep. Cavalcante resisted adamantly. Sensing us near him and our light attempts to help him, he started moving his lips quickly, reciting prayers in which he begged for the grace to see his wife again before dying.

"What an unfortunate brother!" Bonifacio said, deeply moved. "He does not know that his ex-wife discarnated over a year ago on a makeshift bed, the victim of a syphilitic infection."

Jeronimo did not move, but I had to fight against my desire to fire off more questions left and right in search of more details. Luckily, though, I contained myself. That moment was not the right time for needless questions. As if the information he had just received was nothing out of the ordinary, the Assistant addressed Bonifacio, suggesting:

"Bonifacio, our friend can no longer bear to remain in his material body. The machine has given up. Within a few hours, necrosis will have gained ground and we must free him. He is stubbornly holding on to his rotting flesh and pathetically begs for his wife to come. We have already tried to help him disengage, loosening the ties of incarnation located in the solar plexus, but he has been reacting with surprising strength. So I have decided to open small vessels in his intestines so that the hemorrhaging will continue until this evening when we will finally be able to free him. I would ask that you bring

his discarnate wife here just for a moment. Physical deterioration will increase very quickly from this point on, and within the span of a few hours, Cavalcante's perceptions as a spirit will come into play. He will thus be able to see his wife before his impending death, and he will sleep more soundly."

Bonifacio immediately prepared to comply with the order and confirmed his full cooperation.

Soon thereafter, the Assistant carefully operated on the intestinal region, bursting certain less important veins, thereby weakening the patient's ability to resist.

We would be away for a few hours, considering that the clock showed a few minutes past noon. But before we left, observing the emotional scene of the infirmary for non-paying patients, where Cavalcante was staying, I asked Jeronimo in alarm:

"Since our ward will become so weakened that he will be able to observe what is happening in the realm invisible to mortal eyes, will he also be able to catch glimpses of the scenes of vampirism that are so shocking to me here?"

"Yes," the guide informed me voluntarily.

"Oh! But will he be strong enough to observe it all and not become disturbed by it?"

"I can't guarantee that," he answered, smiling. "Of course, any incarnate spirit facing such a scene could fall victim to madness and might possibly go through a few hours of obvious mental imbalance, given the novelty of the spectacle. When the light appears on a given plane, where the individual is 'ready to see', he or she will see both the swamp and the sky. It is merely a question of enlightenment and attunement."

The news made me shudder with compassion.

The infirmary was full of deplorable scenes. Little-evolved spirits, retained by the patients themselves through a decadent mental connection, were posted at various beds and were inflicting atrocious afflictions on the patients by sucking out their precious energies like vampires in addition to torturing and harassing them.

Ever since the beginning of Cavalcante's treatment, I had been disgusted by such displays in that ward of charitable aid, and I even asked Jeronimo about the possibility of improving the situation, but he of course informed me

that any exceptional effort would be useless because, due to their lack of mental education, the patients would take it upon themselves to call their torturers back again, luring them toward their physical illnesses. The only thing we could do would be to send them our goodwill and do them as much good as possible, but without violating each one's individual circumstance.

I must admit it was becoming increasingly difficult to perform the duties that were keeping me there, because the unfortunate discarnates' interpellations reached me continuously. They were demanding all kinds of favors, requesting improvements in their conditions and bursting into endless fits of wailing. Serene and firm, my guide was able to work with his mind focused on the task at hand and was completely untouched by outside intrusions. I, however, had not attained such power and ability. The requests, the complaints and the insults were a big distraction and kept me from maintaining my inner peace.

Thus, when I left the room I could not help thinking about the bitter surprise the dying man would experience upon the opening of the curtain that used to veil his spirit sight.

Curious, I awaited nightfall, when, accompanied by Jeronimo, I went back through the main entrance to the hospital.

Cavalcante was in a near-coma condition. The blood soaked the bedclothes, which were constantly being changed. His overall weakening was progressing rapidly.

The dying man inspired deep compassion. Some of his psychic centers had opened due to the advanced weakening of his body, and the unfortunate soul began to notice the nearby discarnate spirits who were at his level of evolution. He was still unable to see us, as we would have liked, but he was observing in dismay what was happening around him. The other patients were now looking at him in fear. To them, their suffering colleague was delirious, unconscious.

“Am I in hell or are we living in a madhouse?” he shouted in horrifying mental torment. “Oh! The demons! The demons! ... Look at that evil spirit gnawing on his wounds! ...”

With a contorted face he pointed at a miserable old man whose legs were full of varicose veins.

“Oh! What is he saying?” he continued, visibly distressed. “He says he is not the Devil; he insists that the patient owes him ...”

Listening attentively, Cavalcante stopped speaking, as he was anxious to hear the thoughtless criminal words of the discarnate tormenter, but when he heard nothing, he let out heartrending screams that inspired profound compassion. If it had not been for his overwhelming weakness, he would have sprung out of bed like a madman. Alarmed patients and nurses decided to remove the dying man. They were scared of him. Cavalcante was delirious. They were consoled, however, by the prospect that his severe hemorrhaging foretold of a quick end.

Then, Jeronimo compassionately applied anesthetizing energies to him, and the dying man gradually quieted down ...

It was not long before Bonifacio entered bringing with him a true ghost. The ex-spouse, who had been called to the scene, looked in all aspects like a wraith. She was unable to see Bonifacio, but she was obeying his orders. She came in, almost dragging herself. Unconsciously following her guide’s command, she approached Cavalcante’s bed. She stared at him with an indescribable expression of horror on her face and let out a long scream, disturbing his moment of relief.

The dying man turned over and saw her. A joyful smile spread across on his corpse-like face.

“Is that you, Bela? Thank God, I won’t die before asking for your forgiveness! ...”

The tenderness with which he addressed such a pitiful creature caused compassion.

His wife neared the bed and tried to kneel down. She was amazed at hearing what he said and retorted in affliction:

“Joaquim, forgive me! You must forgive me! ...”

“Forgive you for what?” he replied, trying in vain to caress her. I was very unfair to you, abandoning you to the winds of fate ... Please, don’t wish me ill. I was unable to understand you in the past and I made it easy for you to go wrong. I thoughtlessly helped you to fall into the dark abyss. I didn’t understand our domestic situation as well as I should have ... Today, however, now that death has come for me, I want peace of mind. I confess my guilt and beg you to forgive me ... I’m sorry ...”

He made an enormous effort to speak. However, we noticed that the visit had done him a great deal of good. His mind was now calm. He was contemplating his wife, full of gratitude and almost happy.

“Oh, Joaquim!” begged the unfortunate woman. “Please forgive me! I hold nothing against you. Time has shown me the truth. You were always my loyal friend and devoted husband!”

As the dying man listened to her, an expression of immense happiness spread across his face. He gazed at her in ecstasy, completely changed, and murmured:

“Now I’m happy. Thanks be to God! ...”

At that exact instant, the same doctor we had seen in the morning came by Cavalcante’s bed as part of his evening rounds. He was accompanied by an attentive nurse.

When the doctor called his name, Cavalcante turned around, and using all the strength he still had, informed the doctor happily:

“You see, doctor, my wife has arrived at long last!”

And interested in getting some of the doctor’s attention, he continued:

“I’m happy, resigned ... But my poor Bela looks ill, worn out ... Please help her, for the love of God!”

Then, glancing around the large infirmary and staring at the sad scenes among incarnate and discarnate souls, he asked:

“Why are there so many crazy people here? Look, look at that one! It looks like he’s strangling that unfortunate man ...”

He was referring to an especially heartrending incident in which a particular spirit was provoking a poor patient who suffered from cardiac asthma.

The doctor, however, looked at him sympathetically and said to the nurse:

“It’s the delirium before the end ...”

Meanwhile, Jeronimo recommended that Bonifacio remove the dark figure of Cavalcante’s ex-wife, stressing:

“It’s not proper for such a creature to stay here for the remainder of our task. She has fulfilled the obligations that brought her here, and she still has many creditors waiting for her.”

The unfortunate woman resisted and tried to stay, but Bonifacio used a strong magnetic force to achieve his purpose.

Noting, however, that his ex-wife was being led away screaming, the dying man began to shout feverishly:

“Come back, Bela! Come back!”

The doctor did his best to bring him back to his senses, but to no avail. Cavalcante continued summoning his wife’s presence in a raspy, oppressed, fading voice.

The doctor shook his head and said in a near whisper:

“He can’t go on like this. He is to be put out of his misery.”

Jeronimo read his inner thoughts. He suddenly displayed a look of extreme concern and told me solemnly:

“We will have to use drastic measures to help him. His doctor plans to give him a lethal dose of anesthesia.”

Responding to Jeronimo’s command, I held the suffering man’s forehead while the Assistant applied lengthwise passes, preparing him for disengagement. Nevertheless, our stubborn friend continued to resist.

“No!” he exclaimed mentally. “I can’t die! I’m afraid! I’m afraid to die!”

The physician, however, was not long and since the patient was fighting frantically against our help, it was impossible for us to deliver the final blow. Completely unaware of the spiritual problems involved, the doctor administered the so-called “injection of compassion” before my guide’s expression of profound disapproval.

In a few seconds, the dying man went quiet. His limbs slowly stiffened. His facial expression went still, and his eyes became glassy.

To any normal person, Cavalcante was dead. Not to us, though. The discarnate was still held prisoner by his motionless body, fully unconscious and incapable of reacting in any way.

Without losing his optimistic serenity, the guide explained to me:

“By acting directly on the entire nervous system, the cruel dose of anesthesia has affected the centers of the perispiritual body. Cavalcante now remains glued to trillions of neutralized, dormant cells and he has been invaded by a strange numbness that makes it impossible for him to respond in any way to our efforts. We will probably only be able to free him in another twelve hours or more.”

When Bonifacio returned, Jeronimo told him exactly what had happened and entrusted him with our poor friend, whose body was taken immediately to the morgue.

And as Jeronimo had rightly predicted, we were only able to free the newly-discarnate soul after some twenty hours had gone by and after a great effort on our part. Even so, Cavalcante was not taken under favorable and encouraging conditions. Apathetic, sleepy and suffering from memory loss, he was led by us to Fabiano’s shelter, showing signs that he required special care.

19

The Loyal Servant

Now that he was liberated, Cavalcante offered me a great opportunity for my untiring research. The injection contained a high dosage of anesthesia and had affected his perispiritual body like an electric shock. As a result, he remained almost lifeless and unaware of himself. I tried several times to ask him questions, but he was unable to string together coherent thoughts successfully in order to respond to even the most rudimentary questions regarding his own identity.

In noting my interest regarding the case, and after administering Cavalcante the first magnetic aid at *Casa Transitoria*, Jeronimo offered me the following explanation:

“Within the infinitesimal field of cellular nuclei, any drug is felt according to its specific electrical properties. Combining chemical applications with true physiological needs will in fact comprise the scope of medicine in the future. Doctors will discover that all medicines are saturated with electromagnetic energies in their area of action. That is why poison destroys the viscera and narcotics modify the nature of the cells themselves, forcing them to become temporarily incapacitated. Each drop of medicine has electrical principles, as do the atomic combinations that are going to absorb it. To our knowledge, on no plane does nature progress in leaps and bounds. The perispirit, made up of rarefied matter, likewise activates trillions of unicellular units from our realm of action. These abandon the physical field saturated with the vitality that is unique to them; hence the suffering and anguish experienced by certain individuals after their physical death. Suicides usually feel for a long time the affliction of the cells that were violently annihilated, while drug addicts experience terrible anxiety due to their unsatisfied craving.”

The explanation was perfectly logical and civilized. On my part, I was slowly beginning to understand how important it is for incarnate men and women to erase the lower emotions. Matter and spirit, container and content, form and essence, merged before my eyes like a candle flame and flammable material. In coming together, they produce the light that is needed to fulfill the objectives of life.

Studying cases of death had greatly enriched my knowledge in the field of mental science. The spirit, (eternal in essence) makes use of matter (transitory in its associations) as didactic material that evolves more and more in the spirit's never-ending course of experience toward integration with the Supreme Divinity. When we harm matter, we will in turn have complicated the service schedule that is so vital to our spiritual progress, and in any situation we will remain at a standstill in order to restore the sublime heritage that has been placed at our disposal by the Imperishable Goodness. We will be compelled to regenerative work both during incarnation and discarnation, both in our corporeal existence and in the death of our body, both in the present and in the future. No one will successfully reach the peak of life eternal without first having learned the balance required to do so. Hence the reason for the complex activities of the evolutionary road, the countless diversities, the multiplicity of social positions, the degrees of abilities and the levels of intelligence on the various planes of life.

In order to take care of Cavalcante's immediate problems, our guide appointed Father Hipolito to watch after him more closely and to provide him with guidance regarding his renewal. The 'convalescent' stared at us in fear, believing that he was the victim of a terrible nightmare at a different hospital. He stated that he was interested in continuing in his physical body, insistently called for his wife and repeated descriptions of his latest life in an amazing expression of emotion. More than once he angrily rejected Jeronimo's help. By Hipolito's side, however, he calmed down in meek reverence. He was influenced by the respect and trust that he used to devote to other priests. Hipolito possessed an important spiritual ascendancy over the newly-liberated spirit and could help him much more easily and in less time. Despite all this, however, the Assistant regularly administered magnetic energies to him in order to raise his level of spiritual health.

The discarnate spirit continued to come around slowly, taking a long time to regain his senses. His conversations with Father Hipolito were, however, particularly impressive and he bombarded the ex-priest with

untimely questions. As his mental condition improved, he began to press for answers. He wanted to know where he could find heaven and hell. He asked for news about saints as he intended to visit the ones for whom he held the most deeply rooted devotion. He begged for information about limbo and demanded to meet the relatives who had gone before him to the grave. He requested explanations about the merit of the Catholic Church's sacraments. He commented on the nature of the various dogmas until one day he was actually foolish enough to ask if it would be possible to obtain a hearing with God in the heavenly court. Hipolito had to use infinite goodwill to deal respectfully and beneficially with such a display of good-faith.

Sister Zenobia came frequently to observe the course of these unusual discussions, and once when we were all together a short distance from the patient, she commented jovially:

“Our old Roman Church, held in such high esteem because of its tradition of culture and service to human progress, is, in fact, nowadays a great specialist in raising ‘spiritual children’ ...”

In analyzing the natural difficulties of the work of enlightening Calvalcante, Jeronimo instructed Hipolito and Luciana to offer the newly liberated spirit all the resources possible due to our lack of time.

Twenty-five days had already passed since we first began our task.

“We need to return,” the Assistant informed us. “We must go back as soon as Adelaide's arrival is confirmed, and she will not stay here at this institution for more than one day. So it is our responsibility to prepare Cavalcante as quickly as possible using all the resources within our reach.”

And our fellow spirits took loving care of him. Down deep, we all missed our distant home, which used to bring us together in blessings of light and peace. Even Fabio, now mentally balanced and feeling his best, was working with us to resolve the matter at hand, longing to enter the sanctuaries of the Most High.

In keeping with the way the work was divided up, Jeronimo and I continued working at the evangelical institute, where Jesus' loyal servant would receive her notice of liberation. Adelaide, however, did not seem to depend on physical shackles. On my part, I was unable to examine her dense material body, because, due to her advanced state of physical weakness, the noble missionary abandoned it at the first sign of our presence and joined us for a healthy conversation.

It was common for fellow spirits from outside our realm to join us in these fraternal charity sessions.

Two days before Adelaide's disengagement, I had the chance to observe the extreme simplicity of the self-denying Bezerra de Menezes, who happened to be paying a consoling visit to the faithful servant.

"I do not wish to complicate the work of my benefactors," she said, somewhat sadly, "which is why I would like to preserve a good spirit form during my body's final moments."

"Come now, Adelaide," reflected the apostle of charity, "dying is much easier than being born. The majority of times when we want to arrange something, the utmost of care is required; to disarrange something, however, all it takes is a slight nudge. On occasions like this one, determination is half the battle. Help yourself by freeing your mind from the bonds that chain you to the persons, events, things and situations of earthly life. Do not delay. When you are summoned, do not look back."

And he added, smiling:

"Remember that Lot's wife, changed into a pillar of salt, is a highly significant symbol. There are individuals who, at the exact moment they are about to abandon their sometimes ill and useless bodies, turn their thoughts to the path they have taken and relive less constructive memories ... They trip over their own apprehensions as if they were stones randomly scattered on the path, and they spend long days caught in the snare of inconsistent and unsatisfied desire, without having enough energy to relinquish it."

"I just hope," Adelaide said in a serious tone, "that my friends come to my aid. I feel helped and supported but ... I am scared of myself."

"Are you that worried, my friend?" replied the former doctor, satisfied. "It's not worth it. But I do understand your anxiety. I also went through it. Believe me, though, when I tell you that remembering Jesus at Lazarus' feet was my sure help in the same trouble. I tried to isolate myself, to close my ears to the beseeching of my relatives, to close my eyes to the sight of earthly interests, and liberation finally occurred in just a few seconds. I thought about the lesson of the Master when he called Lazarus back to life, and I remembered his words: 'Lazarus, come out!' Concentrating my thoughts on that Gospel passage, I separated from my physical body without any difficulty whatsoever."

The narrator's simplicity was charming.

Adelaide smiled, but was unable to disguise her hidden concern.

Taking advantage of the pause, Jeronimo said:

“By the way, we must point out the exceptional conditions under which our friend will be leaving. Under such circumstances, I feel very sorry for those who get too attached to material whims. For them, it is true that the situation is not at all pleasant, because those who sow thorns cannot expect to reap flowers. On the other hand, those who dedicate themselves to preparing for the future – for the life eternal – through manifestations of higher spirituality, instinctively learn to die daily to the lower life.”

I could see that our self-denying sister appeared calmer and more comfortable by now.

The conversation was cut short because sister Adelaide was required to return immediately to her body in order to receive the last dose of her nightly medicine. When she returned to our realm, Jeronimo offered her a helping hand for a quick trip to Fabiano's shelter.

Sister Zenobia wanted to see her before her disengagement. The great leader of the mobile shelter had admired Adelaide's earthly work, and more than once made use of her fraternal help with activities involving regeneration and enlightenment.

Adelaide happily followed after us.

Within a few minutes, we were welcomed by the administrator and we listened to a speech similar to what we had heard a few minutes earlier, with the only difference now being that Zenobia had taken over the motivating position of the devoted Bezerra.

The kind disciple of Jesus about to leave the earth was the object of everyone's affections.

After some convincing remarks by Zenobia, who was doing her best to contribute to Adelaide's good spirits, Adelaide humbly exposed her most recent difficulties.

She had been heavily involved with the work she had begun in corporeal circles and felt a strong attachment not just to the work there but also to her friends and assistants. Due to imperious circumstances, she had taken on various functions in the overall work routine. She had a complete team of

highly dedicated sisters, who helped her out with true unselfishness and high moral values in supporting abandoned children. She held these workers in the highest esteem, as she was likewise greatly loved by all of them. How were they to face future problems that might arise? Inwardly, she was prepared; however, she was fully aware of the extent and complexity of her mental obstacles. Her bedroom at home resembled a glass dome of restraining thoughts that prevented her departure. The less attached she felt to her body, the more the demands of family and friends increased ... What was she to do in this situation? How was she to make them understand her present reality? She had been involved in serious commitments and had unintentionally become a spiritual support for many. However, she herself acknowledged the uselessness of her physical body. The physiological machine had finally reached its end. She would be unable to stay on in her present state even if prayers brought her a brief postponement.

The guide listened to her attentively like an experienced doctor when dealing with an afflicted patient, and finally remarked:

“I can see the problems, but don’t you worry. Death is the best cure for idolization. Upon your return, there will be a necessary decentralization of the work because each person will naturally be forced to make new efforts. Rejoice, my friend, because of the transformation that will occur shortly. Above all, stay in good spirits so that your situation is readjusted naturally without any doubts at the end of your current existence.”

Zenobia became silent for a few minutes, and then said:

“We still have tomorrow night. I will make use of it to talk to your coworkers to request their general understanding. Some friends of ours will help to assemble them in a group as needed.”

The visitor thanked her sincerely.

We continued in the same cordial vibration until Zenobia changed the course of the conversation.

Putting aside matters of death and suffering, she commented on the edifying tasks she was working on now entailing a particular first aid expedition, whose members were doing wonderful things at the institute on days when they were not required for urgent work down on the earth. Zenobia gave such a superb talk about their work that Adelaide briefly forgot about her own particular situation and became deeply interested in what Zenobia was saying. Zenobia’s strategy was crowned with heartening results because

this new line of conversation had greatly helped to ease Adelaide's mind temporarily.

The discarnating spirit returned to her physical body feeling well and revitalized.

Throughout the course of the day, Jeronimo and the Director of *Casa Transitoria* agreed on measures regarding that evening's meeting. The Assistant would do his best to ensure that Adelaide's physical body would be in the best condition possible, while two of Zenobia's assistants would be responsible for bringing Adelaide's workers to the meeting.

Thus, the day was full of chores regarding that evening's gathering.

Through repeated magnetic passes over her circulatory organs – in which my help was deemed unnecessary due to the patient's extreme passivity – Adelaide entered into a phase of unexpected calm, thus tranquillizing her earthly affections.

All of a sudden, there was a renewed sense of hope. She experienced a sudden organic rejuvenation, which improved her overall prognosis. Vibrations of peace and prayers of gratitude increased.

Consequently, soon after midnight it was very easy to begin the work of preparing for the big meeting.

Assistants from our plane brought Adelaide's coworkers. They were found in different locales and were temporarily unswaddled from their material bodies while they slept.

As part of the team of workers who were organizing the environment, I noticed that, curiously enough, the majority of those who had recently arrived were women, and I should add that it was wonderful to witness their respect and affection. All of them had their mind focused on prayer on behalf of their ailing benefactress, who was the object of their admiration and tenderness. They were respectfully and shyly looking at us, sending us thoughts of supplication, but without any needless or harmful memories. The few men present were affected by the collective display of veneration and maintained the same emotional posture.

The uplifting environment was spreading harmonious fluids, producing pleasant sensations of faith and peace.

At Jeronimo's suggestion, the meeting would take place in the big room used for study and public prayer sessions, and which would be duly prepared. We spared no efforts. Working efficiently together, we thoroughly cleaned the enormous room. The members of the group could rest at ease without interference from inferior mental currents. Lights and flowers from our realm spread accents of rare enchantment. It was for this reason that it was so lovely to watch the continuous arrival of the women, who, in prayer and far removed from their material bodies, radiated from within themselves magnificent expressions of light, clearly different from each other.

We were all together in a posture of watchfulness in order to maintain the necessary pattern of mental vibrations, when, after about an hour, Sister Zenobia entered the room, accompanied by her distinguished friends from *Casa Transitoria* and an extremely exhausted Adelaide.

Casa Transitoria's director took her position as leader, and before bringing up the foremost issue that had brought her there, she raised her right hand and asked for the divine blessing of the community that was attentively and reverently gathered.

I then had the chance once again to verify the prodigious power of that sanctified woman. Her hand discharged such a profusion of sapphire rays that it seemed as if we were in communication with a vast, hidden reservoir of light.

After greeting us with a beautiful inflection of tenderness, she changed her tone of voice and addressed her listeners with visible energy:

“My sisters and my friends, I shall be brief. I have come here solely to make a small appeal to all of you. You are aware that our Adelaide needs free passage on the path to higher spirituality. Even though she has been ill for a long time, she has worked with us year after year to the best of her ability. Submissive to the influences of the good, she has been an invaluable instrument in the organization of this house of evangelical love. She has administered her work with care, and many times at our aid institute outside corporeal circles we have received the priceless help of her tireless efforts and goodwill.”

She gazed resolutely at her listeners and considered:

“Why are you holding her back? For many days now, the bedroom of this patient, who is so dearly loved by all of us, has been interlaced with anguishing thoughts. They are energies obviously coming from you, zealous

work companions, but you have forgotten about the 'Thy will be done' that we should address to the Almighty Lord every day of our lives. I regret the circumstances that have compelled me to address you all with such frankness. However, we are left with no other alternative. Do you believe in the victory of death instead of the glorious eternality of life? Adelaide will only be giving back her worn out physical apparatus to the laboratory of nature. She will continue, nevertheless, contributing to the services of truth and love with her undying courage. As for all of you, do not forget the need for individual action in the arena of the good. What can be said about the viticulturist who assesses the worth of his vineyard based solely on the work of others? How could we appreciate a flower lover who has never stooped to cultivate his own garden? Do not praise idleness, which keeps you from developing your infinite potential. Of course, cooperation and affection are sublime motivations in the work of the good, but we must keep selfish tendencies from tyrannizing our sentiments. We cannot assert that you are deliberately hindering the process of liberation of your incarcerated friend. Life in the flesh is a learning experience that is too sublime for us merely to reduce to a common prison. No, my friends, we would not dare make such a statement. We are referring only to the powerful idolizing impulse to which you have thoughtlessly surrendered through imbalanced acts of misunderstood affection. Your affliction, with which you intend to hold back this missionary of the good, is the child of selfishness and fear. On behalf of your undesirable state of mind, you allege that Adelaide has been entrusted with special duties as if it were not necessary for you to develop your own spiritual faculties, thereby creating a positive trust in God and in yourselves in the pressing work of self-fulfillment. You use spiritual orphanhood as a pretext merely because of your fear to face your own pain and risk, the adversities and witness inherent to enlightenment on the path to eternal life. You are making use of this blessed opportunity to repeat the ancient habit of unjustified idolatry. You convert fellow spirits of goodwill – but who are in need of renewal and enlightenment as much as you are – into oracles set up on pedestals of brittle clay. You create demigods and you burn the incense of unending personal references, creating difficult problems that diminish your work capabilities and forgetting the divine seeds, of which you are the bearers. You embody the idol on the altar of your mind, instilling it with ephemeral life, and, indifferent to the glorious destiny that the universe has designated for you, you place much value on the little amount of effort that has imprisoned you in mechanical actions and repetitive behavior. If the idol does not meet your

expectations, you fuel discord, irritation and demands. If it fails you after having set off on the journey toward higher knowledge, you feel bewildered. If it topples from its wax pedestal, you feel the cold terror of the unknown because of your lax attitude regarding your spiritual renewal. Why erect such statues to behold if you inevitably shatter them on your journey of spiritual ascension? Are you not yet tired of treading on these shattered relics? Understanding our mental deficiencies in conquest of the life eternal, the will of the Supreme Lord placed at the gates of ancient law the ‘You shall have no other gods before me.’ The Father recognizes our millenary addiction to affective tendencies and was warning our spirits against false gods. We resort to figures like these in the limited sphere of our present thoughts in order to guide your understanding toward the higher realms so that you may free yourselves of our dedicated sister and worthy servant, who is to precede you on the great journey of deliverance.”

Zenobia’s speech had a profound impact on the listeners. The many women and few men present, deeply touched by her intense guiding light and captivated by her wise and sublime words, displayed overt emotion on their faces. The speaker made a subtle gesture of benevolence and continued:

“We have nothing against displays of affection. Longing and appreciation go hand in hand. However, within the ambit of amicable relationships, any imprudence ends in disaster. What would have become of us if Jesus had remained in continued contact with our organizations and needs? We would perhaps be nothing more than pretty greenhouse flowers lacking in essential life. Because of our excessive advice-seeking and abuse of trust, we would not develop the ability either to manage or obey. Devoid of self-worth, we would wander from place to place in close-knit flocks of helpless creatures in search of the Divine Oracle. It was perhaps because of this that the Wise Master kept to a minimum his personal and direct apostolate on the earth, outlining in the span of just a few days our centuries-long ennobling work. In this manner, he enabled us to understand that the human being is the sacred pillar of the Kingdom of God, and that each individual’s heart must be enlightened as a Divine Sanctuary in order to reflect God’s magnificent and compassionate grandeur. Do not forget, my friends, that all of us, individually considered, are fortunate heirs of wisdom and light.”

Zenobia paused, and at that moment, as if her silent appeals were being answered from On High, rays of soothing light began to strike us, adding to

our feeling of happiness and joy.

After a long period of silence, during which the director of Fabiano's institute seemed to be consulting the innermost feelings of the audience, she began again in a meaningful tone:

“You are stating in your minds that Adelaide is the cornerstone of this resting place of love, and that it will be almost impossible to find a replacement for her as the head of overall guidance. However, you know that your sister, notwithstanding the unquestionable values that adorn her personality, has been nothing more than a worthy and faithful instrument of this creation of charity, but she was not its founder. She molded herself to the Christian spirit, to which we will also conform in turn, and was used by the Donor of Blessings in the work of disseminating the Purifying Gospel. Do not place upon her brow a crown of total responsibility, whose ‘weight of glory’ should be shared with all sincere doers of good deeds as should all the benefits resulting from them. Adelaide understands her place as a loyal coworker, and does not desire the glory to which she is entitled in one way or another. She only wants her companions-in-struggle to turn her patrimony of acknowledgment over to Christ, and she asks merely for their affection, sympathy and understanding regarding her needs in her new life. So let us free her by offering her thoughts of peace and joy, and sharing in her hopes for the higher realms.”

Soon afterward, the director finished by praying intensely and requesting the divine blessing of our Almighty and Good Father for all of us.

Most listeners did not stay long in the room, returning to their normal surroundings in custody of vigilant friends. A few women, however, approached the speaker and addressed her with words of joy and gratitude.

A few more minutes passed and the last of the gathering left peacefully. Finally, Sister Zenobia and the other fellow spirits bid each other farewell.

Upon returning to her material body, Adelaide breathed, radiant. Nonetheless, because of the supreme joy of that hour, she had gained so much energy in her perispiritual body that returning to her corporeal cells was difficult and painful. She was overcome by a sudden unpleasant feeling upon coming into contact with her weakened physical centers.

She entered her body and abandoned it several times like a bird experiencing the smallness of its nest.

Surprised, she asked Jeronimo, who explained it to her:

“After Zenobia’s enlightening speech,” the mentor said kindly, “the mental currents that had been restraining you have disappeared due to the fraternal understanding of your grateful community of friends. Your corporeal body was deprived of continuous magnetic help, which the influx of these currents had been nourishing, thus weakening its resistance and speeding up the decline of your vital tonus. Furthermore, the contentment of that hour strengthened you greatly, especially your perispiritual centers. All these factors have made it impossible for you to avoid an unpleasant sensation upon coming into contact with your diseased organs.”

With a benevolent expression, Jeronimo gently stroked the patient’s hair and said to her after a brief pause:

“Don’t be upset, my friend! The cocoon has become smaller, but your wings have grown ... Think now about the flight ahead of you.”

Adelaide tried hard to show happiness on her again-tired face, and shyly asked to be granted the chance to try the discarnation of the strongest bonds by herself using her own personal, willful efforts.

Jeronimo happily acquiesced.

And keeping watch in the next room, we left her to herself for the long hours she spent at the complex and difficult work.

I had no idea that someone could perform such a task without the help of somebody else, but my guide came in help of my perplexity, explaining:

“Cooperation from our realm is vital during the final act of liberation; however, the preliminary work of disengagement at the solar plexus – and even the heart – can in many cases be performed by the person him or herself, provided this person has acquired during the terrestrial experience precise training on more advanced levels of spiritual life. Thus, there is no reason for surprise. Everything depends only on adequate preparation in the arena of realization.”

My director had given a very sensible explanation. In fact, it was only at the very last moment that Jeronimo intervened to cut the silvery appendage.

The dying woman was free at last! ...

Casa Transitoria was now opened for general visitation.

Having been evangelized by Zenobia's constructive speech – although they did not remember much of it – the incarnate coworkers maintained a discreet attitude of respect, serenity and conformity.

The now-liberated dauntless warrior gently declined the invitation for an immediate departure. She waited for the burial of her remains, consoling friends and being consoled as well.

After praying fervently at the final resting place for her worn out cells, she thanked them for their precious help during the blessed years she had spent on the earth. Then, serene, confident and surrounded by many friends, she left in our company en route to *Casa Transitoria*, the sentimental reference point for our large, loving caravan ...

20

Giving Thanks

Now that we were all gathered at Fabiano's first aid institute, we began preparing for our happy return journey.

In fact, yearnings for our beautiful and harmonious life in the higher spirit realms were overwhelming our hearts. It is true that our service in the lower regions had provided us with experience and wisdom, increased our spiritual balance and enriched our collection of eternal acquisitions. Nonetheless, acknowledging such benefits did not impede our desire for the peace that awaited us far away in the warm and tender home of our purest affinities.

We were all pondering the joyous outcome of our exemplary mission, but displaying a calm and good-natured expression on his smiling face, even Jeronimo was unable to conceal how content he was at returning home.

After our sincere efforts, we basked in the tranquility of a job well-done.

The final meeting at *Casa Transitoria* had been scheduled and the newly liberated spirits were surrounded by a number of friends, who brought them happy news and comforting well-wishes. Renewed in spirit, Dimas and Cavalcante were unable to express the gratitude that was resounding in their souls, while Adelaide and Fabio, more evolved on the path of divine light, spoke of transcendent problems regarding destiny and existence through lovely and surprising observations gathered in the vast realm of personal experience. Hints of joy and optimism shone through in all the conversations, plans and recollections.

Sister Zenobia asked us to wait for her in the prayer room, where she would embrace us and bid us farewell.

Joined in a heartfelt sentiment of joy, we awaited the director amid sincere displays of fraternal understanding.

A few minutes later, Zenobia entered the room, followed by a large number of assistants, and as usual, approached us in a kind and welcoming manner. She held our expedition in high regard, and had devoted herself caringly to the newly delivered spirits. Because of this, she surrounded us with her personal and direct attention at that moment of awe-inspiring adieus.

Assuming her position as the head of the work, she emotionally exhorted us to faithfully carry out the Divine Will, mentioning the beauty of our fraternal responsibilities that interlace with the universe, thereby strengthening the greatness of life. Finally, greeting the recently discarnated spirits one by one, she asked Adelaide to say a prayer of thanks, which would be accompanied by a hymn of recognition that Zenobia herself would offer us as a token of her affectionate appreciation.

Adelaide stood up in the midst of profound silence and prayed fervently with deep emotion:

“To you, O Lord, we offer our thanks for this moment of indescribable peace and infinite light. Now that our opportunity to work in the corporeal realms has ended, we thank you for the benefits we have reaped, the acquisitions we have gained and the tasks we have completed ... More than ever, we recognize today your indescribable generosity in having used us as imperfect instruments with which to materialize your sublime purposes! Unsteady and fragile like birds that have just left on their first flight far from the nest, we find ourselves here today, happy and confident, at the feet of your dedicated messengers, who have supported us to the very end! ... How are we to thank you for the priceless treasure of heavenly blessings? Your sanctifying kindness has followed us step by step during each minute of our stay in the valley of darkness, and as if that were not enough, your inextinguishable love still follows us even now on our departure from the ancient Babylon of our bitter and millenary passions.”

Almost choking with emotion, the missionary kept silent briefly, fighting back her tears, and continued:

“We have done nothing to deserve your blessed assistance. We have no merit but our constructive goodwill. We have gone astray countless times, feeding the poisonous whims that have darkened our conscience. We have failed often, giving in to unworthy suggestions. However, beloved Jesus, you have changed our humble work into a fount of happiness that feeds our hearts, now raised toward the higher realms. Forgive us, Master, for our imperfection

as disciples, a dominant trait of our liberated personalities. We have nothing beautiful to offer you, O Divine Benefactor, apart from our sincere and humble heart, now empty of the blessed concerns that used to nourish it on the earth ... Accept it, Master, as a token of your lowly disciples' trust, and fill it again with your sacred determinations! Acknowledging your inexhaustible mercy, we thank you for the tenderness of your blessings. However, in offering us protection and consolation, do not leave us without work and the desire to serve you. Lead us to your 'other dwellings' and mercifully renew the blessing of our being useful for your cause. Full of joy, we bless the priceless sweat you have given us in the purifying corporeal realm, where, due to your great benevolence, we have righted the old errors of the heart ... We bless the rocky path that has taught us how to uncover your hidden gifts; we kiss the cross of suffering, testimony and death, from whose arms we have been able to contemplate the greatness and extent of your eternal blessings! ...”

Before continuing, Adelaide paused again, wiping her tears of emotion while we listened, deeply moved:

“And now, O Lord, we would like to express our gratitude to your messengers who have opened their friendly arms to us in the final stages of purifying illness. We would also ask for your loving aid for all those who, less fortunate than us, still moan and suffer on the narrow paths of disbelief. Inspire your enlightened disciples so that they may represent your sublime will alongside those who are ignorant, criminal, wayward and evil. Strike the chord of fraternal charity in your faithful followers so that they may continue to reveal the benefit and light of your law. And in closing this act of sincere gratitude, we send our thoughts of joy and praise to all our companions-in-struggle in the many arenas of planetary life, and invite them in spirit to glorify your name, your will and your deeds for ever. Amen!”

After she had finished her moving prayer, Sister Zenobia came over to embrace Adelaide, who was deeply touched, and immediately thereafter, she went back to her place and asked her assistants to join her in singing a beautiful hymn of thanks to the terrestrial sphere that our liberated friends had just left. Immersing us in a downpour of caressing vibrations that made our eyes fill with tears of sweet emotion, Zenobia began to sing the hymn of indescribable beauty:

O Earth – devoted mother,

*To you our eternal homage
Of gratitude and respect
In the spiritual life!
May the Father of Infinite Grace
Sanctify your greatness
And bless the nature
Of your maternal breast!*

*When we were wandering, afflicted,
In the abyss of dense darkness,
You restored our faith
On the day of our rebirth.
You gently swaddled us
In your fluids of protection,
You reserved work for us
In the divine law of love.*

*You willingly endured
Our thoughtless contempt,
In your sublime apostolate
Of tender and infinite goodness.
In response to our crimes,
You opened the door to our future,
From the darkness of the hard ground
To the temples of light in the Hereafter.*

*In your fields of work,
Over the course of a thousand lives,*

*We have healed dark wounds,
We have learned supreme lessons.
In your holy currents
Of love and rebirth,
Our dark thoughts
Have been adorned in bright sunshine.*

*We thank you for the blessing
Of life that you have lent us;
Your rivers, your forests,
Your indigo horizons,
Your majestic trees,
Your busy cities,
Your innocent flowers
In the springtime field! ...*

*We thank you for the pain
That you have generously given us,
For the celestial journey
On the mountain of ascension.
For the bitter tears,
For the piercing thorns,
For the stones on our path:
Our love and gratitude!*

*In exchange for the suffering,
The worries and the nightmares,
We have received from you the devotion*

Of a mother of believers and disbelievers.

May you be blessed forever

With your wounds and crosses!

The afflictions you produce

Are joys in heaven!

O Earth - devoted mother.

To you our eternal homage

Of gratitude and respect

In the spirit life!

May the Father of Infinite Grace

Sanctify your greatness

And bless the nature

Of your maternal breast!

When the final note of the hymn steeped in mysterious enchantment had resounded, with our eyes clouded over in tears, we exchanged loving farewell embraces with Zenobia.

Those of us from our aid expedition took our newly liberated friends by the hands and imparted energy upon them for the prodigious ascent, surrounded by friends that joyfully followed after us on the path to the higher regions.

A strange and indescribable joy resounded in our hearts, overcome by a powerful feeling of hope, and after crossing the spheres of lower mental vibrations, in which Fabiano's institute was located, we reached a beautiful, radiant region under a sky sparkling with stars! ... Greeting us from afar, the night star appeared in all its breathtaking fullness, emitting beams of sweet and evanescent light, which, after illuminating our way in a dreamlike beauty, descended swiftly down to the earth, spreading among men and women the silent invitation to meditate on God's glorious work."

Publishing Committee:

Jorge Godinho Barreto Nery – President
Geraldo Campetti Sobrinho – Publishing Coordinator
Edna Maria Fabro
Evandro Noleto Bezerra
Maria de Lourdes Pereira de Oliveira
Marta Antunes de Oliveira de Moura
Miriam Lúcia Herrera Masotti Dusi

Publishing Producer:

Fernando César Quaglia
Luciano Carneiro Holanda

Translated by:

Tonia L. Wind, Darrel W. Kimble and Marcia M. Saiz

Cover:

Evelyn Yuri Furuta

Graphic Design and Layout:

Luciano Carneiro Holanda

Photo of Chico Xavier:

Grupo Espírita Emmanuel (GEEM)

Cover Photo:

<http://www.istockphoto.com / da-kuk>
<http://www.dreamstime.com / Harlanov>

Technical Standardization:

Library of Rare Works and Book's Patrimonial Documents

E-book:

Luciano Carneiro Holanda