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## [The Plumed Serpent](#)

[D. H. Lawrence](#)

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### Chapter 22 - The Living Huitzilopochtli

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They buried Doña Carlota in Sayula, and Kate, though a woman, went also to the funeral. Don Ramón followed the coffin, in his white clothes and big hat with the Quetzalcoatl sign. His boys went with him; and there were many strangers, men, in black.

The boys looked odd young shoots, in their black suits with short breeches and bare knees. They were both round-faced and creamy brown in complexion, both had a touch of fairness. The elder, Pedro, was more like Don Ramón; but his hair was softer, more fluffy than his father's, with a hint of brown. He was sulky and awkward, and kept his head ducked. The younger boy, Cyprian, had the fluffy, upstanding brown hair and the startled, hazel eyes of his mother.

They had come in a motor-car with their aunt, from Guadalajara, and were returning straight to town. In her will, the mother had named guardians in place of the father, stating that the father would consent. And her considerable fortune she had left in trust for the boys. But the father was one of the trustees.

Ramón sat in his room in the hotel, overlooking the lake, and his two boys sat on the cane settee opposite him.

'What do you want to do, my sons?' said Ramón. 'To go back with your Aunt Margarita, and return to school in the United States?'

The boys remained a while in sulky silence.

'Yes!' said Cyprian at last, his brown hair seeming to fluff up with indignation. 'That is what our mother wished us to do. So, of course, we shall do it.'

'Very well!' said Ramón quietly. 'But remember I am your father, and my door, and my arms, and my heart will always be open to you, when you come.'

The elder boy shuffled with his feet, and muttered, without looking up:

'We cannot come, papa!'

'Why not, child?'

The boy looked up at him with brown eyes as challenging as his own.

'You, papa, you call yourself The Living Quetzalcoatl?'

'Yes.'

'But, papa, our father is called Ramón Carrasco.'

'It is also true,' said Ramón, smiling.

'We,' said Pedro, rather heavily, 'are not the children of the Living Quetzalcoatl, papa. We are Carrasco y de Lara.'

'Good names both,' said Ramón.

'Never,' said the young Cyprian, his eyes flashing, 'never can we love you, papa. You are our enemy. You killed our mother.'

'No, no!' said Ramón. 'That you must not say. Your mother sought her own death.'

'Mama loved you much, much, much!' cried Cyprian, the tears rising to his eyes. 'Always she loved you and prayed for you - ' He began to cry.

'And I, my son?' said Ramón.

'You hated her and killed her! Oh, mama! Mama! Oh, mama! I want my mother!' he wept.

'Come to me, little one!' said Ramón softly, holding out his hands.

'No!' cried Cyprian, stamping his foot and flashing his eyes through his tears. 'No! No!'

The elder boy hung his head and was crying too. Ramón had the little, perplexed frown of pain on his brow. He looked from side to side, as if for some issue. Then he gathered himself together.

'Listen, my sons,' he said. 'You also will be men; it will not be long. While you are little boys, you are neither men nor women. But soon, the change will come, and you will have to be men. And then you will know that a man must be a man. When his soul tells him to do a thing, he must do it. When you are men, you must listen carefully to your own souls, and be sure to be true. Be true to your own souls; there is nothing else for a man to do.'

'Je m'en fiche de ton âme, mon père!' said Cyprian, with one of his flashes into French. It was a language he often spoke with his mother.

'That you may, my boy,' said Ramón. 'But I may not.'

'Papa!' put in the elder boy. 'Is your soul different from mama's soul?'

'Who knows?' said Ramón. 'I understand it differently.'

'Because mama always prayed for your soul.'

'And I, in my way, pray for hers, child. If her soul comes back to me, I will take it into my heart.'

'Mama's soul,' said Cyprian, 'will go straight into Paradise.'

'Who knows, child! Perhaps the Paradise for the souls of the dead is the hearts of the living.'

'I don't understand what you say.'

'It is possible,' said Ramón, 'that even now the only Paradise for the soul of your mother is in my heart.'

The two boys stared at him with open eyes.

'Never will I believe that,' said Cyprian.

'Or it may be in THY heart,' said Ramón. 'Hast thou a place in THY heart for the soul of thy mother?'

The young Cyprian stared with bewildered hazel eyes.

'The soul of my mother goes direct to Paradise, because she is a saint,' he asserted flatly.

'Which Paradise, my son?'

'The only one. Where God is.'

'And where is that?'

There was a pause.

'In the sky,' said Cyprian, stubbornly.

'It is very far and very empty. But I believe, my son, that the hearts of living men are the very middle of the sky. And there God is; and Paradise; inside the hearts of living men and women. And there the souls of the dead come to rest, there, at the very centre, where the blood turns and returns; that is where the dead sleep best.'

There was a very blank pause.

'And wilt thou go on saying thou art the Living Quetzalcoatli?' said Cyprian.

'Surely! And when you are a little older, perhaps you will come to me and say it too.'

'Never! Thou hast killed our mother, and we shall hate thee. When we are men we ought to kill thee.'

'Nay, that is bombast, child! Why wilt thou listen only to servants and priests and people of that sort? Are they not thy inferiors, since thou art my son, and thy mother's son? Why dost thou take the talk of servants and inferiors into thy mouth? Hast thou no room for the speech of brave men? Thou wilt not kill me, neither will thy brother. For I would not allow you, even if you wished it. And you do not wish it. Talk no more of this empty lackey-talk to me, Cyprian, for I will not hear it. Art thou already a little lackey, or a priest? Come, thou art vulgar. Thou art a little vulgarian. We had better speak English; or thy French. Castilian is too good a language to turn into this currish talk.'

Ramón rose and went to the window to look out at the lake. The drums on the church were sounding for midday, when every man should glance at the sun, and stand silent with a little prayer.

'The sun has climbed the hill, the day is on the downward slope.  
Between the morning and the afternoon, stand I here with my soul,  
and lift it up.  
My soul is heavy with sunshine, and steeped with strength.  
The sunbeams have filled me like a honeycomb,  
It is the moment of fulness,  
And the top of the morning.'

Ramón turned and repeated the Mid-day verse to his boys. They listened in confused silence.

'Come!' he said. 'Why are you confused? If I talked to you about your new boots, or ten pesos, you would not be confused. But if I speak of the sun and your own souls filled from the sun like honeycombs, you sulk. You had better go back to your school in America, to learn to be business men. You had better say to everybody: Oh, no! we have no father! Our mother died, but we never had a father. We are children of an immaculate conception, so we should make excellent business men.'

'I shall be a priest,' said Cyprian.

'And I a doctor,' said Pedro.

'Very good! Very good! SHALL-BE is far from AM, and tomorrow is another day. Come to me when your heart tells you to come. You are my little boys, whatever you say, and I shall stroke your hair and laugh at you. Come! Come here!'

He looked at them, and they dared not refuse to obey, his power was so much greater than theirs.

He took his eldest son in his arms and stroked his head.

'There!' he said. 'Thou art my eldest son, and I am thy father, who calls himself The Living Quetzalcoatl. When they say: "Is it thy father who calls himself The Living Quetzalcoatl?" - say to them: "Yes, he is my father." And when they ask you what you think of such a father, say: "I am young, and I do not understand him yet. But I do not judge my father without understanding him." Wilt thou say that, my boy, Pedro, my son?' And Ramón stroked the boy's hair with the gentleness and tenderness which filled the child with a sort of awe.

'Yes, papa! I will say that,' said the boy, relieved.

'It is well,' said Ramón, laying his hand on the child's head for a moment, like a blessing.

Then he turned to the younger son.

'Come then,' he said, 'and let me stroke thy upstanding hair.'

'If I love thee, I cannot love mama!' said Cyprian.

'Nay, is thy heart so narrow? Love not at all, if it makes thee petty.'

'But I do not want to come to thee, papa.'

'Then stay away, my son, and come when thou dost want it.'

'I do not think thou lovest me, papa.'

'Nay, when thou art an obstinate monkey, I love thee not. But when thy real manhood comes upon thee, and thou art brave and daring, rather than rash and impudent, then thou wilt be lovable. How can I love thee if thou art not lovable?'

'Mama always loved me.'

'She called thee her own. I do not call thee mine own. Thou art thyself. When thou art lovable, I can love thee. When thou art rash and impudent, nay, I cannot. The mill will not spin when the wind does not blow.'

The boys went away. Ramón watched them as they stood in their black clothes and bare knees upon the jetty, and his heart yearned over them.

'Ah, the poor little devils!' he said to himself. And then:

'But I can do no more than keep my soul like a castle for them, to be a stronghold to them when they need it - if ever they do.'

These days Kate often sat by the lake shore, in the early light of the morning. Between the rains, the day came very clear, she could see every wrinkle in the great hills opposite, and the fold, or pass, through which a river came, away at Tuliapan, was so vivid to her she felt she had walked it. The red birds looked as if rains had freshened even their poppy-buds, and in the morning frogs were whirring.

But the world was somehow different; all different. No jingle of bells from the church, no striking of the clock. The clock was taken away.

And instead, the drums. At dawn, the heavy drum rolling its sound on the air. Then the sound of the Dawn-Verse chanted from the tower, in a strong man's voice:

'The dark is dividing, the sun is coming past the wall.  
Day is at hand.  
Lift your hand, say Farewell! say Welcome!  
Then be silent.  
Let the darkness leave you, let the light come into you,  
Man in the twilight.'

The voice and the great drum ceased. And in the dawn the men who had risen stood silent, with arm uplifted, in the moment of change, the women covered their faces and bent their heads. All was changeless still for the moment of change.

Then the light drum rattled swiftly, as the first sparkle of the bright sun flashed in sheer light from the crest of the great hills. The day had begun. People of the world moved on their way.

At about nine o'clock the light drum rattled quickly, and the voice in the tower cried:

'Half-way! Half-way up the slope of the morning!'

There was the heavy drum at noon, the light drum again at about three o'clock, with the cry:

'Half-way! Half-way down the slope of afternoon.'

And at sunset again, the great drum rolling, and the voice crying:

'Leave off! Leave off! Leave off!  
Lift your hand, say Farewell! say Welcome!  
Man in the twilight.  
The sun is in the outer porch, cry to him: Thanks! Oh,  
Thanks!  
Then be silent.  
You belong to the night.'

And again in the sunset everywhere men stood with lifted faces and hands, and women covered their faces and stood with bowed heads; all was changeless still for the moment of change.

Then the lighter drums suddenly beat, and people moved on into the night.

The world was different, different. The drums seemed to leave the air soft and vulnerable, as if it were alive. Above all, no clang of metal on metal, during the moments of change.

'Metal for resistance.  
Drums for the beating heart.  
The heart ceases not.'

This was one of Ramón's little verses.

Strange, the change that was taking place in the world. Always the air had a softer, more velvety silence, it seemed alive. And there were no hours. Dawn and noon and sunset, mid-morning, or the up-slope middle, and mid-afternoon, or the down-slope middle, this was the day, with the watches of the night. They began to call the four watches of the day the watch of the rabbit, the watch of the hawk, the watch of the turkey-buzzard and the watch of the deer. And the four quarters of the night were the watch of the frog, the watch of the fire-fly, the watch of the fish, the watch of the squirrel.

'I shall come for you,' wrote Cipriano to her, 'when the deer is thrusting his last foot towards the forest.'

That meant, she knew, in the last quarter of the hours of the deer; something after five o'clock.

It was as if, from Ramón and Cipriano, from Jamiltepec and the lake region, a new world was unfolding, unrolling, as softly and subtly as twilight falling and removing the clutter of day. It was a soft, twilight newness slowly spreading and penetrating the world, even into the cities. Now, even in the cities the blue serapes of Quetzalcoatl were seen, and the drums were heard at the Hours, casting a strange mesh of twilight over the clash of bells and the clash of traffic. Even in the capital the big drum rolled again, and men, even men in city clothes, would stand still with uplifted faces and arm upstretched, listening for the noon-verse, which they knew in their hearts, and trying not to hear the clash of metal.

'Metal for resistance.  
Drums for the beating heart.'

But it was a world of metal, and a world of resistance. Cipriano, strangely powerful with the soldiers, in spite of the hatred he aroused in other officials, was for meeting metal with metal. For getting Montes to declare: The Religion of Quetzalcoatl is the religion of Mexico, official and declared. - Then backing up the declaration with the army.

But no! no! said Ramón. Let it spread of itself. And wait awhile, till you can be declared the living Huitzilopochtli, and your men can have the red and black blanket, with the snake-curve. Then perhaps we can have the open wedding with Caterina, and she will be a mother among the gods.

All the time, Ramón tried as far as possible to avoid arousing resistance and hate. He wrote open letters to the clergy, saying:

'Who am I, that I should be enemy of the One Church? I am catholic of catholics. I would have One Church of all the world, with Rome for the Central City, if Rome wish.

'But different peoples must have different Saviours, as they have different speech and different colour. The final mystery is one mystery. But the manifestations are many.

'God must come to Mexico in a blanket and in huaraches, else He is no God of the Mexicans, they cannot know Him. Naked, all men are but men. But the touch, the look, the word that goes from one naked man to another is the mystery of living. We live by manifestations.

'And men are fragile, and fragments, and strangely grouped in their fragmentariness. The invisible God has done it to us, darkened some faces and whitened others, and grouped us in groups, even as the zopilote is a bird, and the parrot of the hot lands is a bird, and the little oriole is a bird. But the angel of the zopilotes must be a zopilote, and the angel of the parrots a parrot. And to one, the dead carcass will ever smell good; to the other, the fruit.

'Priests who will come to me do not forsake either faith or God. They change their manner of speech and vestments, as the peon calls with one cry to the oxen, and with another cry to the mules. Each responds to its own call in its own way - '

To the socialists and agitators he wrote:

'What do you want? Would you make all men as you are? And when every peon in Mexico wears an American suit of clothes and shiny black shoes, and looks for life in the newspaper and for his manhood to the government, will you be satisfied? Did the government, then, give you your manhood, that you expect it to give it to these others?

'It is time to forget. It is time to put away the grudge and the pity. No man was ever the better for being pitied, and every man is the worse for a grudge.

'We can do nothing with life, except live it.

'Let us seek life where it is to be found. And, having found it, life will solve the problems. But every time we deny the living life, in order to solve a problem, we cause ten problems to spring up where was one before. Solving the problems of the people, we lose the people in a poisonous forest of problems.

'Life makes, and moulds, and changes the problem. The problem will always be there, and will always be different. So nothing can be solved, even by life and living, for life dissolves and resolves, solving it leaves alone.

'Therefore we turn to life; and from the clock to the sun and from metal to membrane.

'This way we hope the problem will dissolve, since it can never be solved. When men seek life first, they will not seek land nor gold. The land will lie on the lap of the gods, where men lie. And if the old communal system comes back, and the village and the land are one, it will be very good. For truly, no man can possess lands.

'But when we are deep in a bog, it is no use attempting to gallop. We can only wade out with toil. And in our haste to have a child, it is no good tearing the babe from the womb.

'Seek life, and life will bring the change.

'Seek life itself, even pause at dawn and at sunset, and life will come back into us and prompt us through the transitions.

'Lay forcible hands on nothing, only be ready to resist, if forcible hands should be laid on you. For the new shoots of life are tender, and better ten deaths than that they should be torn or trampled down by the bullies of the world. When it comes to fighting for the tender shoots of life, fight as the jaguar fights for her young, as the she-bear for her cubs.

'That which is life is vulnerable, only metal is invulnerable. Fight for the vulnerable unfolding of life. But for that, fight never to yield.'

Cipriano, too, was always speaking to his soldiers, always with the same cry:

'We are men! We are fighters!

'But what can we do?

'Shall we march to simple death?

'No! No! We must march to life.

'The gringos are here. We have let them come. We must let them stay, for we cannot drive them out. With guns and swords and bayonets we can never drive them out, for they have a thousand where we have one. And if they come in peace, let them stay in peace.

'But we have not lost Mexico yet. We have not lost each other.

'We are the blood of America. We are the blood of Montezuma.

'What is my hand for? Is it to turn the handle of a machine alone?

'My hand is to salute the God of Mexicans, beyond the sky.

'My hand is to touch the hand of a brave man.

'My hand is to hold a gun.

'My hand is to make the corn grow out of the ground.

'What are my knees for?

'My knees are to hold me proud and erect.

'My knees are for marching on my way.

'My knees are the knees of a man.

'Our god is Quetzalcoatl of the blue sky, and Huitzilopochtli red at the gates, watching.

'Our gods hate a kneeling man. They shout Ho! Erect!

'Then what can we do?

'Wait!

'I am a man, naked inside my clothes as you are.

'Am I a big man? Am I a tall and powerful man, from Tlascala, for example.

'I am not. I am little. I am from the south. I am small -

'Yet am I not your general?

'Why?

'Why am I a general, and you only soldiers?

'I will tell you.

'I found the other strength.

'There are two strengths; the strength which is the strength of oxen and mules and iron, of machines and guns, and of men who cannot get the second strength.

'Then there is the second strength. It is the strength you want. And you can get it, whether you are small or big. It is the strength that comes from behind the sun. And you can get it; you can get it here!' - he struck his breast - 'and here!' - he struck his belly - 'and here!' - he struck his loins. 'The strength that comes from back of the sun.

When Cipriano was roused, his eyes flashed, and it was as if dark feathers, like pinions, were starting out of him, out of his shoulders and back, as if these dark pinions clashed and flashed like a roused eagle. His men seemed to see him, as by second sight, with the demonish clashing and dashing of wings, like an old god. And they murmured, their eyes flashing:

'It is Cipriano! It is he! We are Ciprianistos, we are his children.'

'We are men! We are men!' cried Cipriano.

'But listen. There are two kinds of men. There are men with the second strength, and men without it.

'When the first gringos came, we lost our second strength. And the padres taught us: Submit! Submit!

'The gringos had got the second strength!

'How?

'Like cunning ones, they stole it on the sly. They kept very still, like a tarantula in his hole. Then when neither sun nor moon nor stars knew he was there, Biff! - the tarantula sprang across, and bit, and left the poison and sucked the secret.

'So they got the secrets of the air and the water, and they got the secrets out of the earth. So the metals were theirs, and they made guns and machines and ships, and they made trains and telegrams and radio.

'Why? Why did they make all these things? How could they do it?

'Because, by cunning, they had got the secret of the second strength, which comes from behind the sun.

'And we had to be slaves, because we had only got the first strength, we had lost the second strength.

'Now we are getting it back. We have found our way again to the secret sun behind the sun. There sat Quetzalcoatl, and at last Don Ramón found him. There sits the red Huitzilopochtli, and I have found him. For I have found the second strength.

'When he comes, all you who strive shall find the second strength.

'And when you have it, where will you feel it?

'Not here!' - and he struck his forehead. 'Not where the cunning gringos have it, in the head, and in their books. Not we. We are men, we are not spiders.

'We shall have it here!' - he struck his breast - 'and here!' - he struck his belly - 'and here!' - he struck his loins.

'Are we men? Can we not get the second strength? Can we not? Have we lost it forever?

'I say no! Quetzalcoatl is among us. I have found the red Huitzilopochtli. The second strength!

'When you walk or sit, when you work or lie down, when you eat or sleep, think of the second strength, that you must have it.

'Be very quiet. It is shy as a bird in a dark tree.

'Be very clean, clean in your bodies and your clothes. It is like a star, that will not shine in dirt.

'Be very brave, and do not drink till you are drunk, nor soil yourself with bad women, nor steal. Because a drunken man has lost his second strength, and a man loses his strength in bad women, and a thief is a coward, and the red Huitzilopochtli hates a coward.

'Try! Try for the second strength. When we have it, the others will lose it.'

Cipriano struggled hard with his army. The curse of any army is the having nothing to do. Cipriano made all his men cook and wash for themselves, clean and paint the barracks, make a great garden to grow vegetables, and plant trees wherever there was water. And he himself took a passionate interest in what they did. A dirty tunic, a sore foot, a badly-made huarache did not escape him. But even when they cooked their meals he went among them.

'Give me something to eat,' he would say. 'Give me an enchilada!'

Then he praised the cooking, or said it was bad.

Like all savages, they liked doing small things. And, like most Mexicans, once they were a little sure of what they were doing, they loved doing it well.

Cipriano was determined to get some discipline into them. Discipline is what Mexico needs, and what the whole world needs. But it is the discipline from the inside that matters. The machine discipline, from the outside, breaks down.

He had the wild Indians from the north beat their drums in the barrack-yard, and start the old dances again. The dance, the dance which has meaning, is a deep discipline in itself. The old Indians of the north still have the secret of animistic dancing. They dance to gain power; power over the LIVING forces or potencies of the earth. And these dances need intense dark concentration, and immense endurance.

Cipriano encouraged the dances more than anything. He learned them himself, with curious passion. The shield and spear dance, the knife dance, the dance of ambush, and the surprise dance, he learned them in the savage villages of the north, and he danced them in the barrack-yard, by the bonfire, at night, when the great doors were shut.

Then, naked save for a black breech-cloth, his body smeared with oil and red earth-powder, he would face some heavy naked Indian and with shield and spear dance the dance of the two warriors, champions in the midst of the dense ring of soldiers. And the silent, rhythmic concentration of this duel in subtlety and rapidity kept the feet softly beating with the drum, the naked body suave and subtle, circling with suave, primitive stealth, then crouching and leaping like a panther, with the spear poised, to a clash of shields, parting again with the crowing yell of defiance and exultance.

In this dance, no one was more suave and sudden than Cipriano. He could swerve along the ground with bent, naked back, as invisible as a lynx, circling round his opponent, his feet beating and his suave body subtly lilting to the drum. Then in a flash he was in the air, his spear pointing down at the collarbone of his enemy and gliding over his shoulder, as the opponent swerved under, and the war-yell resounded. The soldiers in the deep circle watched, fascinated, uttering the old low cries.

And as the dance went on, Cipriano felt his strength increase and surge inside him. When all his limbs were glistening with sweat, and his spirit was at last satisfied, he was at once tired and surcharged with extraordinary power. Then he would throw his scarlet and dark serape around him, and motion other men to fight, giving his spear and shield to another officer or soldier, going himself to sit down on the ground and watch, by the firelight. And then he felt his limbs and his whole body immense with power, he felt the black mystery of power go out of him over all his soldiers. And he sat there imperturbable, in silence, holding all those black-eyed men in the splendour of his own, silent self. His own dark consciousness seemed to radiate through their flesh and their bones; they were conscious, not through themselves but through him. And as a man's instinct is to shield his own head, so that instinct was to shield Cipriano, for he was the most precious part of themselves to them. It was in him they were supreme. They got their splendour from his power and their greatest consciousness was his consciousness diffusing them.

'I am not of myself,' he would say to them. 'I am of the red Huitzilopochtli and the power from behind the sun. And you are not of yourselves. Of yourselves you are nothing. You are of me, my men.'

He encouraged them to dance naked, with the breech-cloth, to rub themselves with the red earth-powder, over the oil.

'This is the oil of the stars. Rub it well into your limbs and you will be strong as the starry sky. This is the red blood of volcanoes. Rub yourselves with it, you will have the power of the fire of the volcanoes, from the centre of the earth.'

He encouraged them to dance the silent, concentrated dances to the drum, to dance for hours, gathering power and strength.

'If you know how to tread the dance, you can tread deeper and deeper, till you touch the middle of the earth with your foot. And when you touch the middle of the earth, you will have such power in your belly and your breast, no man will be able to overcome you. Get the second strength. Get it, get it out of the earth, get it from behind the sun. Get the second strength.'

He made long, rapid marches across the wild Mexican country, and through the mountains, moving light and swift. He liked to have his men camping in the open, with no tents: but the watch set, and the stars overhead. He pursued the bandits with swift movements. He stripped his captives, and tied them up. But if it seemed a brave man, he would swear him in. If it seemed to him a knave, a treacherous cur, he stabbed him to the heart, saying:

'I am the red Huitzilopochtli, of the knife.'

Already he had got his own small, picked body of men out of the ignominious drab uniform, dressed in white with the scarlet sash and the scarlet ankle cords, and carrying the good, red and black serape. And his men must be clean. On the march they would stop by some river, with the order for every man to strip and wash, and wash his clothing. Then the men, dark and ruddy, moved about naked, while the white clothing of strong white cotton dried on the earth. They moved on again, glittering with the peculiar whiteness of cotton clothes in Mexico, gun at their backs, serape and small pack on their backs, wearing the heavy straw hats with the scarlet crowns on their heads.

'They must move!' he said to his officers. 'They must learn again to move swiftly and untiringly, with the old power. They must not lie about. In the sleep hours, let them sleep. In the waking, let them work, or march, or drill, or dance.'

He divided his regiment up into little companies of a hundred each, with a centurion and a sergeant in command. Each company of a hundred must learn to act in perfect unison, freely and flexibly. 'Perfect your hundred,' Cipriano insisted, 'and I will perfect your thousands and your tens of thousands.'

'Listen!' he said. 'For us, no trench and cannon warfare. My men are no cannon-fodder, nor trench-dung. Where cannon are, we move away. Our hundreds break up, and we attack where the cannon are not. That we are swift, that we are silent, that we have no burdens, and that the second strength is in us: that is all. We intend to put up no battle-front, but to attack at our own moment, and at a thousand points.'

And always he reiterated:

'If you can get the power from the heart of the earth, and the power from behind the sun; if you can summon the power of the red Huitzilopochtli into you, nobody can conquer you. Get the second strength.'

Ramón was pressing Cipriano now openly to assume the living Huitzilopochtli.

'Come!' he said. 'It is time you let General Viedma be swallowed up in the red Huitzilopochtli. Don't you think?'

'If I know what it means,' said Cipriano.

They were sitting on the mats in Ramón's room, in the heat before the rain came, towards the end of the rainy season.

'Stand up!' said Ramón.

Cipriano stood up at once, with that soft, startling alertness in his movement.

Ramón came quickly to him, placed one of his hands over Cipriano's eyes, closing them. Ramón stood behind Cipriano, who remained motionless in the warm dark, his consciousness reeling in strange concentric waves, towards a centre where it suddenly plunges into the bottomless deeps, like sleep.

'Cipriano?' - the voice sounded so far off.

'Yes.'

'Is it dark?'

'It is dark.'

'Is it alive? Is the darkness alive?'

'Surely it is alive.'

'Who lives?'

'I.'

'Where?'

'I know not. In the living darkness.'

Ramón then bound Cipriano's eyes and head with a strip of black fur. Then again, with a warm, soft pressure, he pressed one naked hand over Cipriano's naked breast, and one between his shoulders. Cipriano stood in profound darkness, erect and silent.

'Cipriano?'

'Yes.'

'Is it dark in your heart?'

'It is coming dark.'

Ramón felt the thud of the man's heart slowly slackening. In Cipriano, another circle of darkness had started slowly to revolve, from his heart. It swung in widening rounds, like a greater sleep.

'Is it dark?'

'It is dark.'

'Who lives?'

'I.'

Ramón bound Cipriano's arms at his sides, with a belt of fur round the breast. Then he put his one hand over the navel, his other hand in the small of the other man's back, pressing with slow, warm, powerful pressure.

'Cipriano?'

'Yes.'

The voice and the answer going farther and farther away.

'Is it dark?'

'No, my Lord.'

Ramón knelt and pressed his arms close round Cipriano's waist, pressing his black head against his side. And Cipriano began to feel as if his mind, his head were melting away in the darkness; like a pearl in black wine, the other circle of sleep began to swing, vast. And he was a man without a head, moving like a dark wind over the face of the dark waters.

'Is it perfect?'

'It is perfect.'

'Who lives?'

'Who - !'

Cipriano no longer knew.

Ramón bound him fast round the middle, then, pressing his head against the hip, folded the arms round Cipriano's loins, closing with his hands the secret places.

'Cipriano?'

'Yes.'

'Is it all dark?'

But Cipriano could not answer. The last circle was sweeping round, and the breath upon the waters was sinking into the waters, there was no more utterance. Ramón knelt with pressed head and arms and hands, for some moments still. Then he bound the loins, binding the wrists to the hips.

Cipriano stood rigid and motionless. Ramón clasped the two knees with his hands, till they were warm, and he felt them dark and asleep like two living stones, or two eggs. Then swiftly he bound them together, and grasped the ankles, as one might grasp the base of a young tree, as it emerges from the earth. Crouching on the earth, he gripped them in an intense grip, resting his head on the feet. The moments passed, and both men were unconscious.

Then Ramón bound the ankles, lifted Cipriano suddenly, with a sleep-moving softness, laid him on the skin of a big mountain-lion, which was spread upon the blankets, threw over him the red and black serape of Huitzilopochtli, and lay down at his feet, holding Cipriano's feet to his own abdomen.

And both men passed into perfect unconsciousness, Cipriano within the womb of undisturbed creation, Ramón in the death sleep.

How long they were both dark, they never knew. It was twilight. Ramón was suddenly aroused by the jerking of Cipriano's feet. He sat up, and took the blanket off Cipriano's face.



'Is it night?' said Cipriano.

'Almost night,' said Ramón.

Silence followed, while Ramón unfastened the bonds, beginning at the feet. Before he unbound the eyes, he closed the window, so the room was almost dark. Then he unfastened the last binding, and Cipriano sat up, looking, then suddenly covering his eyes.

'Make it quite dark!' he said.

Ramón closed the shutters, and the room was complete night. Then he returned and sat on the mat by Cipriano. Cipriano was asleep again. After a while, Ramón left him.

He did not see him again till dawn. Then Ramón found him going down to the lake, to swim. The two men swam together, while the sun rose. With the rain, the lake was colder. They went to the house to rub oil in their limbs.

Cipriano looked at Ramón with black eyes which seemed to be looking at all space.

'I went far,' he said.

'To where there is no beyond?' said Ramón.

'Yes, there.'

And in a moment or two, Cipriano was wrapped in his blanket again, and asleep.

He did not wake till the afternoon. Then he ate, and took a boat, and rowed down the lake to Kate. He found her at home. She was surprised to see him, in his white clothes and with his serape of Huitzilopochtli.

'I am going to be the living Huitzilopochtli,' he said.

'Are you? When? Does it feel queer?' - Kate was afraid of his eyes; they seemed inhuman.

'On Thursday. The day of Huitzilopochtli is to be Thursday. Won't you sit beside me, and be wife of me when I am a god?'

'But do you feel you ARE a god?' she asked, querulous.

He turned his eyes on her strangely.

'I have been,' he said. 'And I have come back. But I belong there, where I went.'

'Where?'

'Where there is no beyond, and the darkness sinks into the water, and waking and sleeping are one thing.'

'No,' said Kate, afraid. 'I never understood mystical things. They make me uneasy.'

'Is it mystical when I come in to you?'

'No,' said Kate. 'Surely, that is physical.'

'So is the other, only further. Won't you be the bride of Huitzilopochtli?' he asked again.

'Not so soon,' said Kate.

'Not so soon!' he re-echoed.

There was a pause.

'Will you come back with me to Jamiltepec now?' he asked.

'Not now,' she said.

'Why not now?'

'Oh, I don't know. - You treat me as if I had no life of my own,' she said. 'But I have.'

'A life of your own? Who gave it you? Where did you get it?'

'I don't know. But I have got it. And I must live it. I can't be just swallowed up.'

'Why, Malintzi?' he said, giving her a name. 'Why can't you?'

'Be just swallowed up?' she said. 'Well, I just can't.'

'I am the living Huitzilopochtli,' he said. 'And I am swallowed up. I thought, so could you be, Malintzi.'

'No! Not quite!' she said.

'Not quite! Not quite! Not now! Not just now! How often you say Not, to-day! - I must go back to Ramón.'

'Yes. Go back to him. You only care about him, and your living Quetzalcoatl and your living Huitzilopochtli. - I am only a woman.'

'No, Malintzi, you are more. You are more than Kate, you are Malintzi.'

'I am not! I am only Kate, and I am only a woman. I mistrust all that other stuff.'

'I am more than just a man, Malintzi. - Don't you see that?'

'No!' said Kate. 'I don't see it. Why SHOULD you be more than just a man?'

'Because I am the living Huitzilopochtli. Didn't I tell you? You've got dust in your mouth to-day, Malintzi.'

He went away, leaving her rocking in anger on her terrace, in love again with her old self, and hostile to the new thing. She was thinking of London and Paris and New York, and all the people there.

'Oh!' she cried to herself, stifling. 'For heaven's sake let me get out of this, and back to simple human people. I loathe the very sound of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli. I would die rather than be mixed up in it any more. Horrible, really, both Ramón and Cipriano. And they want to put it over me, with their high-flown bunk, and their Malintzi. Malintzi! I am Kate Forrester, really. I am neither Kate Leslie nor Kate Tylor. I am sick of these men putting names over me. I was born Kate Forrester, and I shall die Kate Forrester. I want to go home. Loathsome, really, to be called Malintzi. - I've had it put over me.'