

Literature.org:
[Authors](#)
[Contact](#)

[The Plumed Serpent](#)

[D. H. Lawrence](#)

This Book:

[Contents](#)
[Previous Chapter](#)
[Next Chapter](#)

Chapter 24 - Malintzi

When the women were shut out of the church, Kate went home gloomy and uneasy. The executions shocked and depressed her. She knew that Ramón and Cipriano did deliberately what they did: they believed in their deeds, they acted with all their conscience. And as men, probably they were right.

But they seemed nothing but men. When Cipriano said: Man that is man is more than a man, he seemed to be driving the male significance to its utmost, and beyond, with a sort of demonism. It seemed to her all terrible WILL, the exertion of pure, awful will.

And deep in her soul came a revulsion against this manifestation of pure will. It was fascinating also. There was something dark and lustrous and fascinating to her in Cipriano, and in Ramón. The black, relentless power, even passion of the will in men! The strange, sombre, lustrous beauty of it! She knew herself under the spell.

At the same time, as is so often the case with any spell, it did not bind her completely. She was spellbound, but not utterly acquiescent. In one corner of her soul was revulsion and a touch of nausea.

Ramón and Cipriano no doubt were right for themselves, for their people and country. But for herself, ultimately, ultimately she belonged elsewhere. Not to this terrible, natural WILL which seemed to beat its wings in the very air of the American continent. Always will, will, will, without remorse or relenting. This was America to her: all the Americas. Sheer will!

The Will of God! She began to understand that once fearsome phrase. At the centre of all things, a dark, momentous Will sending out its terrific rays and vibrations, like some vast octopus. And at the other end of the vibration, men, created men, erect in the dark potency, answering Will with will, like gods or demons.

It was wonderful too. But where was woman, in this terrible interchange of will? Truly only a subservient, instrumental thing: the soft stone on which the man sharpened the knife of his relentless volition: the soft lode-stone to magnetize his blade of steel and keep all its molecules alive in the electric flow.

Ah, yes, it was wonderful. It was, as Ramón said, a manifestation, a manifestation of the Godhead. But to the Godhead as a sheer and awful Will she could not respond.

Joachim, letting himself be bled to death for people who would profit nothing by his sacrifice, he was the other extreme. The black and magnificent pride of will which comes out of the volcanic earth of Mexico had been unknown to him. He was one of the white, self-sacrificing gods. Hence her bitterness. And hence, naturally, the spell of beauty and lustrous satisfaction which Cipriano could cast over her. She was in love with him, when he was with her; in his arms, she was quite gone in his spell. She was the deep, slumbrous lodestone which set all his bones glittering with the energy of relentless pride. And she herself derived a great gratification in the embrace, a sense of passive, downward-sinking power, profound.

Yet she could not be purely this, this thing of sheer reciprocity. Surely, though her woman's nature was reciprocal to his male, surely it was more than that! Surely he and she were not two potent and reciprocal currents between which the Morning Star flashed like a spark out of nowhere. Surely this was not it? Surely she had one tiny Morning Star inside her, which was herself, her own very soul and star-self!

But he would never admit this. The tiny star of her very self he would never see. To him she was but the answer to his call, the sheath for his blade, the cloud to his lightning, the earth to his rain, the fuel to his fire.

Alone, she was nothing. Only as the pure female corresponding to his pure male, did she signify.

As an isolated individual, she had little or no significance. As a woman on her own, she was repulsive, and even evil, to him. She was not real till she was reciprocal.

To a great extent this was true, and she knew it. To a great extent, the same was true of him, and without her to give him the power, he too would not achieve his own manhood and meaning. With her or without her, he would be beyond ordinary men, because the power was in him. But failing her, he would never make his ultimate achievement, he would never be whole. He would be chiefly an instrument.

He knew this too: though perhaps not well enough. He would strive to keep her, to have her, for his own fulfilment. He would not let her go.

But that little star of her own single self, would he ever recognize that? Nay, did he even recognize any single star of his own being? Did he not conceive of himself as a power and a potency on the face of the earth, an embodied will, like a rushing dark wind? And hence, inevitably, she was but the stone of rest to his potency, his bed of sleep, the cave and lair of his male will.

What else? To him there was nothing else. The star! Don Ramón's Morning Star was something that sprang between him and her and hung shining, the strange third thing that was both of them and neither of them, between his night and her day.

Was it true? Was she nothing, nothing, by herself? And he, alone, failing his last manhood, without her was he nothing, or next to nothing? As a fig tree which grows up, but never comes to flower.

Was this thing true, the same of both of them? - that alone, they were next to nothing? Each of them, separate, next to nothing. Apart in a sort of grey, mechanical twilight, without a star?

And together, in strange reciprocity, flashing darkly till the Morning Star rose between them?

He would say to her, as Ramón had said of Carlota: 'Soul! No, you have no soul of your own. You have at best only half a soul. It takes a man and a woman together to make a soul. The soul is the Morning Star, emerging from the two. One alone cannot have a soul.'

This Ramón said. And she knew it conveyed what Cipriano really felt. Cipriano could not see Kate as a being by herself. And if he lived a thousand more years, he would never see her as such. He would see her only as reciprocal to himself. As the balance of him, and the correspondence on the other side of heaven.

'Let the Morning Star rise between us,' he would say. 'Alone you are nothing, and I am manqué. But together we are the wings of the Morning.'

Was it true? Was this the final answer to man's assertion of individuality?

Was it true? And was it her sacred duty to sit beside him in the green dress of Malintzi, in the church, the goddess admitting her halfness? Her halfness! Was there no star of the single soul? Was that all an illusion?

Was the individual an illusion? Man, any man, every man, by himself just a fragment, knowing no Morning Star? And every woman the same: by herself, starless and fragmentary. Even in the relation to the innermost God, still fragmentary and unblest.

Was it true, that the gate was the Morning Star, the only entrance to the Innermost? And the Morning Star rises between the two, and between the many, but never from one alone.

And was a man but a dark and arrowy will, and woman the bow from which the arrow is shot? The bow without the arrow was as nothing, and the arrow without the bow only a short-range dart, ineffectual?

Poor Kate, it was hard to have to reflect this. It meant a submission she had never made. It meant the death of her individual self. It meant abandoning so much, even her own very foundations. For she had believed truly that every man and every woman alike was founded on the individual.

Now, must she admit that the individual was an illusion and a falsification? There was no such animal. Except in the mechanical world. In the world of machines, the individual machine is effectual. The individual, like the perfect being, does not and cannot exist, in the vivid world. We are all fragments. And at the best, halves. The only whole thing is the Morning Star. Which can only rise between two: or between many.

And men can meet only in the light of the Morning Star.

She thought again of Cipriano and the executions, and she covered her hands over her face. Was this the knife to which she must be sheath? Was it such a star of power and relentlessness that must rise between her and him? Him naked and painted, with his soldiers, dancing and sweating and shouting among them. Herself unseen and nowhere!

As she sat rocking in her terrible loneliness and misgiving, she heard the drums on the towers, and the sound of rockets. She went to the gate. Over the church, in the night sky, hung a spangling cloud of red and blue fire, the colours of Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl. The night of Huitzilopochtli would be over. The sky was dark again, and there were all the stars, beyond, far, far beyond where the spangling had been.

She went indoors again, to retire. The servants had all run out to see the rockets. Ezequiel would be in with the men in church.

She heard footsteps on the gravel walk, and suddenly Cipriano stood in the doorway, in his white clothes. He took off his hat, quickly. His black eyes were sparkling, almost blazing to her, with a flashing of light such as she had never seen. There were still smears of paint on his face. In the blazing of his eyes he seemed to be smiling to her, but in a dazzling, childish way.

'Malintzi,' he said to her in Spanish. 'Oh, come! Come and put on the green dress. I cannot be the Living Huitzilopochtli without a bride. I cannot be it, Malintzi!'

He stood before her, flickering and flashing and strangely young, vulnerable, as young and boyish as flame. She saw that when the fire came free in him, he would be like this always, flickering, flashing with a flame of virgin youth. Now, not will at all. Sensitive as a boy. And calling her only with his boyish flame. The living, flickering, fiery Wish. This was first. The Will she had seen was subsidiary and instrumental, the Wish in armour.

She had been so used to fighting for her own soul with individualistic men, that for a moment she felt old, and uncertain. The strange, flashing vulnerability in him, the nakedness of the living Wish, disconcerted her. She was used to men who had themselves well in hand, and were seeking their own ends as individuals.

'Where do you want me to come?' she said.

'To the church,' he said. 'It is mine to-night. I am Huitzilopochtli: but I cannot be it alone,' he added with quick, wistful, watchful smile, as if all his flesh were flickering with delicate fire.

Kate wrapped herself in a dark tartan shawl and went with him. He stepped quickly, in the short, Indian way. The night was very dark. Down on the beach some fireworks were flaming, and the people were all watching.

They entered the yard of the church from the back, by the priest's little gate. Soldiers were already rolled up in their blankets, sleeping under the wall. Cipriano opened the little vestry door. Kate passed into the darkness. He followed, lighting a candle.

'My soldiers know I am watching to-night in the church,' he said. 'They will keep guard.'

The body of the church was quite dark, but the bluish white light burned above the statue of Quetzalcoatl, giving not much light.

Cipriano lifted his candle to the black statue of Huitzilopochtli. Then he turned to Kate, his black eyes flashing.

'I am Huitzilopochtli, Malintzi,' he said in his low, Indian Spanish. 'But I cannot be it without you. Stay with me, Malintzi. Say you are the bride of the Living Huitzilopochtli.'

'Yes!' she replied, 'I say it.'

Convulsive flames of joy and triumph seemed to go over his face. He lit two candles in front of Huitzilopochtli.

'Come!' he said. 'Put on the green dress.'

He took her to the vestry, where were many folded serapes, and the silver bowl and other implements of the church, and left her while she put on the dress of Malintzi she had worn when Ramón married them.

When she stepped out she found Cipriano naked and in his paint, before the statue of Huitzilopochtli, on a rug of jaguar skins.

'I am the living Huitzilopochtli,' he murmured to her in a sort of ecstasy.

'You are Malintzi,' he said. 'The bride of Huitzilopochtli.'

The convulsion of exultance went over his face. He took her hand in his left hand, and they stood facing the bluish light.

'Cover your face!' he said to her.

They covered their faces in the salute.

'Now salute Quetzalcoatl.' And he flung up his arm. She held out her left hand, in the woman's salute.

Then they turned to the statue of Huitzilopochtli.

'Salute Huitzilopochtli!' he said, bringing his right fist down with a smash in the palm of his left hand. But this was the male salute. He taught her to press her hands together in front of her breast, then shoot them out towards the idol.

Then he put a little lamp of earthenware between the feet of Huitzilopochtli. From the right knee of the idol he took a little black vessel of oil, making her take a little white vessel from the god's left knee.

'Now,' he said, 'together we fill the lamp.'

And together they poured the oil from their little pitchers, into the saucer-shaped lamp.

'Now together we light it,' he said.

He took one of the two candles burning before the black idol, she took the other, and with the flames dripping and leaping together, they kindled the floating wick of the lamp. It burned in a round blue bud, then rose higher.

'Blow out your candle,' he said. 'It is our Morning Star.'

They blew out the two candles. It was almost dark now, with the slow light, like a snow-drop, of their united lives floating between the feet of Huitzilopochtli, and the everlasting-light burning small and bluish beyond the statue of Quetzalcoatl.

At the foot of the altar, beside the chair of Huitzilopochtli, a third chair was placed.

'Sit in your throne of Malintzi,' he said to her.

They sat side by side, his hand holding her hand, in complete silence, looking down the dark church. He had placed tufts of greenish flowers, like thin, greenish lilac, above her chair, and their perfume was like a dream, strong, overpoweringly sweet on the darkness.

Strange how naive he was! He was not like Ramón, rather ponderous and deliberate in his ceremonials. Cipriano in his own little deeds to-night with her, was naive like a child. She could hardly look at that bud of light which he said meant their united lives, without a catch at her heart. It burned so soft and round, and he had such an implicit, childish satisfaction in its symbol. It all gave him a certain wild, childish joy. The strange convulsions like flames of joy and gratification went over his face!

'Ah, God!' she thought. 'There are more ways than one of becoming like a little child.'

The flaminess and the magnificence of the beginning: this was what Cipriano wanted to bring to his marriage. The reeling, powerful perfume of those invisible green flowers, that the peons call buena de noche: good by night.

Strange - that which he brought to marriage was something flamey and unabashed, forever virginal. Not, as she had always known in men, yearning and seeking his own ends. Naively bringing his flame to her flame.

As she sat in that darkened church in the intense perfume of flowers, in the seat of Malintzi, watching the bud of her life united with his, between the feet of the idol, and feeling his dark hand softly holding her own, with the soft, deep Indian heat, she felt her own childhood coming back on her. The years seemed to be reeling away in great circles, falling away from her.

Leaving her sitting there like a girl in her first adolescence. The Living Huitzilopochtli! Ah, easily he was the living Huitzilopochtli. More than anything. More than Cipriano, more than a male man, he was the living Huitzilopochtli. And she was the goddess bride, Malintzi of the green dress.

Ah, yes, it was childish. But it was actually so. She was perhaps fourteen years old, and he was fifteen. And he was the young Huitzilopochtli, and she was the bride Malintzi, the bride-girl. She had seen it. When the flame came up in him and licked him all over, he was young and vulnerable as a boy of fifteen, and he would always be so, even when he was seventy.

And this was her bridegroom. Here at last he was not a WILL. When he came clothed in his own free flame, it was not WILL that clothed him. Let him be a general, an executioner, what he liked, in the world. The flame of their united lives was a naked bud of flame. Their marriage was a young, vulnerable flame.

So he sat in silence on his throne, holding her hand in silence till the years reeled away from her in fleeing circles, and she sat, as every real woman can sit, no matter at what age, a girl again, and for him, a virgin. He held her hand in silence, till she was Malintzi, and virgin for him, and when they looked at one another, and their eyes met, the two flames rippled in oneness. She closed her eyes, and was dark.

Then later, when she opened her eyes and saw the bud of flame just above her, and the black idol invisibly crouching, she heard his strange voice, the voice of a boy hissing in naive ecstasy, in Spanish:

'Miel! Miel de Malintzi! - Honey of Malintzi!'

And she pressed him to her breast, convulsively. His innermost flame was always virginal, it was always the first time. And it made her again always a virgin girl. She could feel their two flames flowing together.

How else, she said to herself, is one to begin again, save by re- finding one's virginity? And when one finds one's virginity, one realizes one is among the gods. He is of the gods, and so am I. Why should I judge him?

So, when she thought of him and his soldiers, tales of swift cruelty she had heard of him: when she remembered his stabbing the three helpless peons, she thought: Why should I judge him? He is of the gods. And when he comes to me he lays his pure, quick flame to mine, and every time I am a young girl again, and every time he takes the flower of my virginity, and I his. It leaves me insouciant like a young girl. What do I care if he kills people? His flame is young and clean. He is Huitzilopochtli, and I am Malintzi. What do I care, what Cipriano Viedma does or doesn't do? Or even what Kate Leslie does or doesn't do!