

The Night Land

Vol.II

By

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Freeditorial 

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X

THE MAID OF THE OLDEN DAYS

Now, as you shall perceive, all mine utter despair was turned in a moment into an huge gladness and a great hope; so that it did seem to me that I should be with my dear One in but a little while. Yet was this an overhope and expectation, and was not like to have a swift satisfying; for, truly, I was made aware of naught, save that I did perceive the shape of a great pyramid, going upward into the night.

And I knew that the Pyramid did surely stand upon an hill in the midst of that dark Country, for only so might it show so great and high. And I set me to run swift downward into the Land, so that I should make a strong going unto the Pyramid.

And I ran for a few little minutes, and lo! I fell headlong, and did truly feel as that I had brake my neck with the hardness and pain of my fall. And I had no power to go forward any more for a great while; but did just be there where I did fall, and very helpless and moaning a little; so that any creature had been able to slay me, if that it had come upon me in that time.

Yet, presently, I was able to sit upon the earth, and did hold my neck with my hands, and afterward the pain went away; so that I gat once more to my feet. But now I went forward very wisely, and had, moreover, an anxiousness in my heart; for, indeed, how did it be that the Pyramid was so utter dark, if that it did be the Lesser Refuge, in truth. And immediately there did rise in me a fear that it should be some House of Evil in the dark of that Land, or some wicked Force working a Pretence and a bewilderment upon my sight. Yet, truly, the thing was plain now against the faroff fires of the Land; and I did have little thought but that it should be, in verity, the Lesser Refuge.

Now in the first moment that I did perceive the dark Pyramid, I had been without wit, save to run very quick and blind unto the place; for you to remember how long I had made so great a search. And afterward, I had been minded to call unto Naani with my brainelements, sending the MasterWord, and my speech after to tell how that I was come unto her. But now I did heed to have caution, and to discover what this darkness should truly mean.

And so did I go downward again into the night of that Land, at the first with a carefulness; but presently with a fierce eagerness and expecting of the heart, the which had been dulled a little time with the horrid shaking and pain of my fall.

Now I had climbed unto the upper plain of the great volcano in, maybe, thirteen hours; but I went downward of that great Hill in ten, and had made a greater speed, but that I was sore shaken and unsure, by reason of my fall.

And in the end of the tenth hour, I perceived that I was come again to the great Plain of the Land; and I had no more any proper sight of the Refuge, because that it was upward afar in the darkness of the night. Yet was I abled now to see that there went a bulk between me and the far shinings, and did know that this great thing was surely the hill on which the Pyramid did stand.

And I went four hours across the Land, and did pass in this place and that, fireholes that made a little redshining in the night; and because of the fires in those far parts and anear, there was not an utter dark.

And when I was gone four hours towards the Pyramid, I could no more see the distant shinings, for the bulk of the hillbottom stood up between, and made all a blackness that way. And by this thing, I did guess that I was come nigh unto the hill; but yet was a great hour more before that I came to it. And in that five hours, since I was come down from the great Volcano, there had past me thrice and again, the sounds of things running in the night, and once there did be a sound as of a giant roaring afar, and a strange and horrid screaming.

Now I began to go up the hill. And, at the first, an utter excitement took me in the heart; so that I could have shouted the name of the Maid aloud in the night, with vain hopings that she should hear me and make an answer. But this state went from me very swift, as I did go upward, and there came a caution again about me, and a coldness of fear, as that my spirit did wot of something that my heart did not perceive.

And, presently, I was come upward almost to the top of the hill, the which took me nigh three hours. And surely, when I was come that I could see the grimness of the Pyramid, going upward very desolate and silent into the night, lo! an utter shaking fear did take me; for the sweet cunning of my spirit did know that there abode no human in all that great and dark bulk; but that there did await me there, monstrous and horrid things that should bring destruction upon my soul. And I went downward of the hill, very quiet in the darkness; and so in the end, away from that place.

And I was four great hours before that I was come clear away from the hill, and I did feel that there was not any safety for my spirit in all that Land. And surely I went a little blindly, in the first, and did go with no heed unto my way.

And presently, I was upon the shore of the olden sea, and had no knowing how that I was come there; for, surely, I did think it to be a great way off. But now I do think that the dry bed of the sea did curve around unto that place, or that there did be two, or more, olden seas in that Country of Night.

Now, presently, I sat me down, very weak and bewildered; for it was as that my heart did lie dead within me. And, in verity, you shall perceive how this thing was, for I did know by the tellings of my spirit that there abode evil things in the dark Pyramid upon the hill; and I doubted not but that destruction had come upon the Peoples of the Lesser Pyramid, and that evil creatures and Powers did now abide in that place. And if this thing did be truly so, I was come overlate to the saving of the Maid; and with this thought I was very glad that some evil thing should come that I should fight with it and die quickly; for there was naught then in all the world to make me glad to have life.

And so shall you know the utter desolation that was in my heart; and, truly, I can perceive both the wiseness and the unwisdom of my reasonings; for, indeed, I did have no sure knowing that the dark Pyramid did be truly the Lesser Refuge. But yet, in verity, my spirit did know with a certain sureness, and there was no doubt concerning this thing, in all my being.

And, after that I had sat there awhile, I did mind me suddenly that I should send the MasterWord through the night; for, indeed, how else might I ever know whether Naani did yet live; though, in truth, I had little, save desperate hope in this matter; but yet did remember how that I had seemed odd times of my journey to hear the beat of the MasterWord with my spirit, out of all the dark of the world. And, in verity, if Naani answered not to the Word, but there came instead an Evil Power to destroy me, I should but cease me of mine utter heartache.

And I stood me upon my feet, and looked outward about me into the blackness of that Land. And I sent the MasterWord with my brainelements; and immediately I called Naani, thrice, sending the call with my brainelements.

And lo! in a moment, as it did seem, there broke around me out of all the mystery of night, low and solemn, the MasterWord, beating in the night. And immediately there did sound within my brain a far, small voice, very lone and faint, as that it had come from the end of the world. And the voice was the voice of Naani and the voice of Mirdath, and did call me by mine olden lovename.

Then, indeed, I did near to choke with the utter affright of joy that did take me in the heart, and also I was shaken with a mighty excitement, and my despair was gone, as that I had never known it. For, in verity, Naani did live and did call unto me with her

brainelements; and surely I had not heard the voice of mine Own for an utter age of grim labour and dread.

And the voice was, as I did say, as that it came from one that did be in a far place of the earth. And, in verity, whilst I stood dazed with a great joy that the Maid did live, I knew within me, concerning the fear that she was utter far off; and what peril might come anigh to her, before that I should stand to her side, to do battle for her life and wellbeing and mine own joy.

And lo! in the same moment, and before that I made further speech unto Naani, I did wot that someone did be a little way off from me, in the bushes, where a firehole did burn anigh to me; and it was as that my spirit knew this thing, and told of it unto my brain. And I made no answer unto the Maid, across all the dark of the world; but went very swift into a great bush that was nigh to the firehole, upon this side.

And I lookt through, into the open space that did be about the firehole. And there was a little figure that did kneel, sobbing, upon the earth, beside the firehole; and truly it was a slim maid, and she did seem as that she harked very desperate, even whilst yet she did sob. And surely, mine own soul did Know, all in one white moment of life. And she there, unknowing, and harking unto a cry of the spirit, that she did think to come through all the desolation of the nighteven from the Mighty Pyramid. For oft, as I did perceive, had she cried unto me in all that lonesome month, and known no answer; neither that I was making a desperate way unto her; for, indeed, her weakness was great, so that she had no power to throw the Word strongly afar, neither to make plain her spiritual cryings through any mighty space of the aether.

And lo! I drew in my breath, and set my teeth a moment, to steady my lips; and I said: "MIRDATH," out of the bush where I did be, and using natural human speech. And the Maid ceased from her weeping, and lookt this way and that, with an utter new fear, and with a frightened hope that did shine with her tears in the light from the firehole. And I divided the bush before me, and went through the bush, so that I came out before her, and did be there in my grey armour; and I did pause then, and was all adrift in myself; for my heart said that I should take this Maid into mine arms again; for that I was come again to be with Mirdath after an utter lost Eternity. But yet was I all paused; for truly she was Naani and she was Mirdath, and she did be a stranger in mine eyes, and very dainty and pretty and shaken with woe and sore trouble and grief.

And in that same moment of my coming unto her out of the bush, she screamed and fell back from me, and strove weakly to gain unto the hither bushes; for, truly, she knew not what was come upon her in that first little moment. And immediately she saw that it did be an human man, and no monster to slay her, and in that instant I said the

MasterWord unto her, aloud, that she should have knowledge of peace and help. And I told my name, and said I am That One. And she knew this thing, even as my lips made the sounds. And she cried out something in an utter broke voice, and ran unto me, and thrust her two small hands into my charge and keeping, and fell thence into a great sobbing and shaking, so that I was all in trouble to ease her; but did keep a silence and held fast her hands, for I had not on mine armoured gloves.

And she leaned against me, very weak, and seeming wondrous like to a child. And lo! in a while she ceased to sob, and did but catch her breath this time and that, but said no word. And I bethought me that she did suffer of hunger, for I perceived that she had been long wandering and alone, and was come unto the end of hope, when that I did come.

And the Maid stood there yet silent, for she might not yet command her mouth to speak. And she trembled as she stood. And I opened my left hand, and lookt at the hand within my palm, and surely it was utter thin and wasted. And I made no more pause, but lifted mine Own and set her easy upon the earth, with an hump of smooth rock unto her back. And I stript off my cloak very quick, and put it about her, for she was scarce covered with her clothes that had been all torn among the bushes; so that part she shook with an utter chill, and part because of weakness, for she was nigh to be starved unto her death, and destroyed with her grief and lonesomeness.

And I took from my back the scrip and the pouch, and I gat a tablet from the scrip, and brake it into my cup, and with the water I made a little broth very swift upon an hot rock that was to the edge of the firehole. And I fed the broth unto the Maid, for truly her hands did shake so that she had spilt it all, if that I had done otherwise.

And she drank the broth, and was so weak that presently she did fall again to sobbing, yet very quiet; so that I strove not to be troubled in the heart; for, indeed, this thing was but reasonable, and not cause for me to have an anxiousness. But I put my hands under the cloak and took her hands into mine and held them strong and firm; and this did seem to bring something of peace and strength unto her; so that presently the trembling and the weeping went from her. And, indeed, the broth was surely helpful in this matter.

And presently, I knew that her hands did stir a little within mine, and I loosed somewhat of my grip; and immediately, she graspt my hands with a weak and gentle grasp; but lookt not yet at me; only did stay very quiet, as that she did gather her strength within her. And, indeed, I was content; save that an anxiousness of the heart did stir me this time and that, lest some monster should come upon us. And because of this trouble, I did hark about me, now and oft, and with a new and strange fearfulness of danger,

because that now mine Own was given unto my charge; and surely my heart would break, if that there came any hurt unto her.

Now, of a sudden, the Maid did make as that she would rise, and I loosed free from her, to give help. And she gat me by the hand, and slipt sudden to her knees, and did kiss my hand, and did begin again to weep. And surely I was so utter abashed that I stood very stupid and let her do this thing. But in a moment I drew free from her; for this thing might not be. And I gat me to my knee likewise before her, and took her hands, and kist them once, newly humbled, as it were; and thus should she know all that was in my heart, and of mine understanding. And she did but sob the more; for she was so weak, and utter moved unto me, because that I had come to her through the night of the world. And this thing I knew, though no speech had yet past between us. And I gave up her hands, lest she need them for her tears; but she left them to lie in my palms, as she did kneel there; and she bowed her head a little over her weeping; but did show that she was mine, in verity, unto the very essence of her dear spirit.

And I took her into mine arms, very gently and without caress; but presently I stroked her hair, and called her Naani and Mirdath, and said many things unto her, that now I scarce do wot of, but she did know them in the after time. And she was very quiet in mine arms, and seeming wondrous content; but yet did sob onward for a great time. And oft did I coax her and say vague things of comfort, as I have told. But truly she did ask no more comfort at that time than that she be sheltered where she did be. And truly she had been lonesome and in terror and in grief and dread, a great and horrid time.

Now, presently, she was grown quiet; and I made to put her comfortable in the cloak against the rock, that I should have freedom to make her more of the broth. But yet she did nestle unto me, with a little sweet wistfulness, that made warm my heart in a most wondrous fashion; for surely she was mine Own. And she to begin to say odd words to me. And so to have gentle obedience, and to rest quiet against the rock, the while that I did make the broth. Yet ever her gaze did follow me, as I knew; for I must look oft her way.

And I took the broth to her, and she drank it, using her own two hands; and I sat by, and eat three of the tablets and drank some of the water, for truly it was a foolish great time since last I had eat.

Now, in a while, the broth did make bright the eyes of the Maid, and she did begin to talk; and at whiles had pauses, because that she lacked of strength, and there was more to be told than an human may have the heartstrength and cunning to make plain. And twice she did come again to sobbing; for, truly, her father was dead and the Peoples of the Lesser redoubt all slain and dispersed through the night of that Land.

And I learned that an Evil Force had made action upon the Peoples within the Lesser Redoubt; so that some, being utter weak by reason of the failing of the EarthCurrent, had opened the Great Door, and gone forth into the night. And immediately there had come into the Lesser Pyramid, great and horrid monsters, and had made a great and brutish chase, and had slain many; but some had escaped forth into the night.

And with these had come Naani, after that her father, the Master Monstruwacan, had been slain by a shaggy man, very brutal and monstrous. And there had been three maids with Naani, when that she made escape into the night; but there had come certain creatures upon them, as they did sleep among the bushes, and had stolen two, and the other maid had run off, as did Naani, and they had neither met the other any more.

And this dreadful happening unto the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt, had been a great while gone, as it to seem to her; but she had no means to tell me how long this time should be; for, in verity, how should she make a count. Yet had it been a dread long while unto her; and I found presently, that she had been lost through all that time that I did make my journey unto her; for, indeed, this thing I discovered by asking concerning my callings unto her. And she had heard none that did come to her, in any time since she had escaped out of the Lost Refuge into this dreadful Land.

Yet, in verity, oft had she callen unto me, until that her heart did grow sick with the desolation of her lonesomeness and her utter forsakeness. And her callings had told unto the Evil things of the Land that she did be in this part and that; for there had come things and beasts in search for her; but having the gift of the hearing, she had known of their approach, most whiles, and had come free from them; yet oftentimes with piteous and fearful runnings and hiding among the rocks and the bushes, so that she had grown afterward to make no calling unto me, save odd whiles, lest she bring the monsters upon her. And, indeed, as you do know, naught had come plain unto me, for she was so utter weak that she had no power of her brainelements to send the Word afar or the tellings of her spirit.

And because that she was so sorely chased, she had come nigh to be naked, even as I found her; for the bushes and the rocks had torn her garments from her, and she had naught with which to make any proper mending of them. And for food she had eat the moss upon the rocks, and odd strange berries and growths, and had drunk of the waters of the hot springs; and oft had she been made utter sick, because of the sulphur, or somewhat, of the water and, maybe, the poison of odd plants. Yet, as I did think, it was like that the first did save her life from the second; but in this thing I do make only a guessing.

And in all that dreadful time, since that she had come to be quite alone, she had heard a score drear things; for there had been once the slaying of a young maid nigh unto her, by some Brute out in the darkness of the Land; and thrice and more had she heard the feet of people running this way and that, and the tread of giants pursuing. And by this telling I did understand those things which mine ears had told to me as I did go across that Land, and surely a new pity and sorrow and horror did come upward within me. And the Maid told me how that she came once upon certain of the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt, as they did hide among the bushes; but they ran, with no heed to her callings that she did be human, even as they; and by this is it plain the sore and dreadful panic that was upon the hearts of such.

And the bitter chill of the Land had made her to strive alway to be nigh unto the fireholes that were very plentiful; but even as this did be needful unto her, so was it a thing that drew the Monstrous Brutes of that Land, even as I had found in the Night Land, and in the Upward Gorge. And because of this, she was oft made to stay afar off in the utter cold of the night.

Yet, in truth, odd whiles she did be so desperate, that she would make the venture, and so mayhaps have a time of warmth; and because of this, she had been nigh slain in her sleep, twice and thrice. Moreover, there were snakes about the fires, though not overplentiful in all parts, and there did be spidercrabs and monstrous scorpions.

And, indeed, even as she had lain by the firehole, very weak and seeming near unto her death, even this time when my call had come unto her to stir her unto life and bitter knowledge of despair, even then was she all surround by creatures that were like to crabs, that did squat all about her, and did but wait for her to die; so that she had been feared to sleep, lest they destroy her in her slumber.

And by this thing, she had known that her death was surely nigh; and lo! out of all the night of the world had come the beat of the MasterWord, strong and powerful, beating as a low and spiritual thunder out of all the dark of the night. Yet had she thought of me, only as speaking from the faroff Mighty Pyramid; so that the cry had brought naught of hope unto her, but only a newer and more known despair. And, behold, in a little minute, there had come her name, spoken surely with the tongue; and a name that was different from the name that my spirit had said after the beat of the Word. And immediately, I had come out of the bush, and she had fallen back in a sudden great fear that a monster was stolen upon her; and then did see a young man in grey armour, and did know in one instant that I was that olden one of her memory dreams, and the one that had spoken unto her in the spirit across half of the dead world, as it did seem. And now was I come through all that unknown desolation and affright, to succour her. And

she was immediately safe; but yet all broken because of her weakness and her utter joy and her sweet honour for me.

And this is the chief of that which she did tell unto me; and the way that she had seen and did regard the marvel of this our coming together. But, surely, no man was made ever to be worthy of the way that she did look upon me, or of the words that she did say unto me in her weakness and happiness. Now, with the Maid having speech concerning the spidercrabs, I lookt presently well around, and surely, in a minute, I saw that they were not gone away; but did be a circle of silent and steadfast watching and impudence and horror all about us. And surely this thing put an anger and disgust upon me; so that I gat to my feet, and went unto the border of the light, and I spurned this little monster and that, and did truly kick maybe a dozen, before that they were content to be gone. And by this thing shall you know of their calm and foolish assurance; but yet were they seemingly without courage; for they made not to attack me. Yet a true crab of this day been wishful to pinch me, had I put my toe forth unto it.

Now, I went back to the Maid, and she did laugh with a little, weak gleefulness; so that I perceived that she was like to be a very joyous maiden, if but I did have her in health. And I made her another cup of the broth, and she drank it very easy. And afterward, I made a very stern and playful order that she must sleep, and, indeed, she to need it sore, for she was gone again from her excitement, and her weakness upon her; yet very happy and content and without fear.

And I made a smooth place for her, and put the pouch and the scrip to be for a pillow, and I did lay her there very quiet and sweet in the cloak, and covered her feet; but, indeed, I saw first that they did be sore cut and without any gear to them; so that I perceived that Mine Own had worn out her footgear utter in her lonesome journeyings, and in running from Brutes that did come to find her. And so I to know more in the heart, somewhat of the true dreadfulness and fear that had companioned Mine Own. And I was minded then that I would wash and bind up her feet; but yet was she so utter worn, that I did prefer that she sleep so soon as she might, and afterward, when she was come wakeful again, then should I take a proper heed of her feet. And truly, they were very small and shapely.

And presently, she slept; and, surely, I doubt whether she had slumbered so peaceful and proper for a great month; for she never to have known when any evil thing should come upon her in her sleep. And this to be a very dreadful feeling, as you do know well; for you do know how I had been in this same matter.

Now, while Naani did sleep, I stript off mine armour, and took off mine undersuit, which was named the ArmourSuit, and a very warm and proper garment, and made

thick that it should ease the chafe of the armour. And afterward, I put on the armour again; but the suit I folded, and laid beside the Maid; for, truly, she was nigh unclothed, by reason of the bushes and the rocks, that had rent her garments allwise.

And I stood watch for the Maid, the while that she did slumber; and surely she went ten long hours. And I walked upon this side of the firehole and now upon that, and did oft cease, that I might hearken both with mine ears and with my spirit; for, truly, I was all wakened to a new care and delight, and did have a fresh and doubled fear of any Horrid Creature or Force of Evil. And this shall be very plain to you.

And in the end of ten long hours, the Maid wakened, and I ran to her all joyed that she was come again to knowledge and to be that I could talk with her.

And she sat upward and looked at me, and there was new light and movement in her, so that I knew her strength was come back into her. And for a little minute, she said naught unto me, the while that I did ask how she did be; and she lookt at me very keen, so that I wondered some wise in a daze, what was in her mind.

And she askt me, of a sudden, how long it did be since that I had slept. And having not thought to put away her asking, because that the question was over sudden, I said fourandeighty hours, which should be three days and the half of a day of four hours and twenty; and this thing I knew, because that I kept alway a very careful counting of the hours, lest that I get all adrift, and know not how long I was taken to come to this place and that.

And, truly, even as I told this thing to the Maid, I was grown very quaint in the head; for, indeed, I was gone a wondrous while without slumber, and had done much and bitter work in that time; and before then had been much lacking of rest, as you do know.

And, sudden the Maid cried out something, and tost the cloak from her, and had me into her arms, and did heed not to have any foolish shame of her nakedness. And, in verity, I knew not how I was gone so strange; but do see now that I was nigh to swoon for lack of slumber and rest.

And she kept me very steady for a little, and afterward helped me to be laid upon the ground; and she put the scrip and the pouch under my head; and so I did lie very calm and restful, and did be the more so, because that I was grown so tired in the heart, the which did make my head to be very husht, as that all the world was grown very quiet in a moment.

And the Maid did mind then that she did lack to be properly covered, and she gat the cloak, and put it about her, and did afterward sit a little beside me, and did rub my hands. And presently, I was something more to myself, and she did grow more happy of her mind, and made to give me something for my stomach; for, indeed, I was grown those late hours to be foolish and to have no wiseness to proper eating.

And she did lift my head, the while that she did take the scrip from under, and kept me very sweetly upon her knee, and so until she had gat free a pack of the tablets, and the flask and the cup; for I had put all matters back into the scrip before Naani had gone unto sleep, and because of this, I had not been able to eat or drink aught, save by wakening her, as you perceive; for, indeed I had put the scrip and the pouch under her head for a pillow, as I have told.

And she would not bide that I should do aught; but only did ask concerning the making of the water, and was wondrous amazed to see how the powder did fizz up and become water; and indeed, she had too much into the cup, for, truly, it rose up and ran to the ground. And when she had done thus, and ceased to marvel, she put three of the tablets into the water, and made me a broth, even as I had made a broth for her; but, indeed, I was in no need, and had done very well to eat the tablets and drink the water. Yet, truly, I was not wishful to lack the love of her way, as you may think.

Now while I did drink the broth, I did be very restful upon the earth, and mine head against mine own Maid; and I did mind me now that I tell her concerning the ArmourSuit that I did mean for her wear.

Yet I said not that I had stript it from me, for then she had been like to say nay, and to trouble that I was like to come to a chill, as is the way of a woman. But, indeed, I might so well have told her, for truly, she did know on the moment, and set to a little unto weeping; yet very gentle and sweet, and did kiss me as I lay there, and say such things as should make a young man the better to have heard, if but that his own dear Love doth say the same.

And she would nowise wear the garment; but yet in the end I prevailed by gentle reasonings and because that I was her master, as I was born to be; and moreover, her own sweet sense did show that I spoke for wisdom; for how should she come through all the bitter way before, if that she had not a strong and closemade garment; and as you do mind, her coverings did be in utter rags, as I have told; yet very sweet and clean, as I had known; so that I ween she had stript oft in the lonesome night, and washt her garments in this or that hot spring of the sulphur waters and other matters.

And, in verity, always she was much given to washings, as I did soon perceive.

Now, presently, I did be very well again; but with a sore slumber that did press upon my head. Yet, ere I should sleep, I did mean that I bathe her feet and bind them with ointment and with my pocketcloth; and truly her feet were very small and pretty.

And I sat me up, talking my head from her knee; and told her of mine intent. But, in verity, she did but throw her arms about my neck and give me one loving kiss, and laught so hearty that I did think to do this thing when indeed she was the better able to mind it, and I the better suited to have me to my rest. And, surely, this was very true, and I made no ado, save to give her the ointment; but lay back, and did be quiet.

Now I did be upon my right side, and she went to my back, and took the cloak from about her, and spread it upon me, and afterward stoopt over very dainty, and kist me, and bade me to go very swift to my sleep, for that she did mean to make her toilet and to get into mine ArmourSuit.

And I made no foolishness in this matter; yet told her to ease the cloak a little about me, so that I should have room to take the Diskos from my hip; and this thing I did, and took the Diskos to my breast, as was my habit; and surely I saw that her eyes did look at me with a little shining, because that I had so strange and fierce a bedmate.

And I made her to promise that she keep a very keen harking, the which was like that she should do, and to call me on the instant that she did perceive any unease in the night. And after that, I shut mine eyes, that I should not shame her, and put out mine arms, and kist her once and turned from her unto my slumber; and she away to my back that she might be modest to her needs.

And surely, I was asleep in but a little moment, and with a great love and delight in my heart and in all my being.

And, truly, I waked not for twelve great hours. And when that time was gone, lo! I came awake, and surely the Maid did sit beside me, so bonny, and so winsome and pretty that mine arms went unto her in a moment, and she into them, and gave me a loving and tender kiss; and afterward slipt away from me, very sensible and loving; and did stand up and turn about to be lookt at. For she did wear the ArmourSuit, and surely it was loose upon her; but yet very pleasing, being closeknit. And I to my seat, from lying, that I might see the Maid the better. And, in verity, I must kiss her again; for she did be with her hair all about her, that she look pretty unto me; and her little feet did be bare, and so that they made my heart new tender to look upon them; for truly she was utter lost of footgear. And I to my knee to her; and she, not to deny me, did come to be kist again.

Now when I found how great a time I had slept, I did scold Mine Own; but yet, as she did say, I must have long slumber if that I go so long wakeful, else should I lose my strength. And I askt how oft she had eat, and she told me but the once, and that six hours off.

And on this I did scold again; but surely she put a very pretty finger sudden upon my lips, so that I might do naught but laugh, and kiss that same finger.

And, after that, we did eat and drink, and made plans. And once I did comfort the Maid; for, indeed, her sorrow did rise in her, because that her father was come unto his death, and the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt all destroyed, and adrift in the night amid the monsters of that Land.

And, in verity, I was set that we go quickly out of that place, ere there came an horrid Destruction upon us; and, surely, there should scarce be any human, beside, in all that Land; for there must have come death upon the chief of those that did make escape.

And after we had eat and drunk, I did count the packs of the tablets, and was thankful in all my being that I had been careful and denied my belly; for I did perceive that there were left enough for our needs, if that we made a good speed, and did not fear to be empty. And of the waterpowder, as it might be named, there were left two full flasks, and somewhat of that one that I had drunk from, all my journeying. And by this thing you shall perceive that we did not be like to die for the need of such matters.

And here, as it doth occur unto me, I do ponder how it did be that we had no thought to slay any small creature for our food; but, mayhap, we had no knowledge this way; for surely, they did not this thing to my knowing in the Mighty Pyramid. But yet, as I have said before this, I have not all knowledge of the doings of the Peoples. But, in verity, I never saw joint meat in all the time of that far Life that I do wot of. Yet, had we but slain somewhat for our hunger in that great wandering, we had been less empty in the belly.

Now, before that we should do aught beside, we must contrive that Naani have some gear for her feet; and to this intent, I did make a search into the pouch, and surely I found that there did be a change pair of inner shoes, that were made to go within mine own shoes of the grey metal.

And at this I was wondrous glad, and did make the Maid to sit upon a little rock, while that I made a fitting of the shoes. And, surely, they did be utter big and clumsy upon her little feet; so that I was in surprise to know how great is a man, beside a Maid. But in the end I had a cunning thought, for I cut off all the side of a strap, throughout the length of the strap, very thin and careful, and so had a lace to tie the boots around the tops, which

were soft and easy for such a purpose. And after that, I stood away to look at the Maid, and neither she nor I were truly pleased; for, indeed, she was too pretty to be so hid and muffled. Yet were we glad otherwise; for now she might go without hurt to her feet.

And afterward, we packt our gear, and she did make a bundle of her torn garments; for, truly, they might be proper somewise to our need. And so we to begin the way out of that Desolate Land.

And we went forward together across the Land, and the journey was no more a weariness, but of a close and sweet joy; yet did I have a new anxiousness, as you do perceive, lest that any monster come to harm Mine Own.

And we went twelve great hours in the bed of the olden sea, and did eat twice in that time. And surely the Maid did grow utter weak and weary; for she was not come proper unto her strength; yet did she make no odd saying to tell me of this thing. But indeed, I did know; and I stopt in the thirteenth hour, and took her into mine arms, even as I should carry a babe; and I went forward with her, and did hush her protesting with a kiss, and afterward she did but nestle unto me and shelter against my breast.

And I bade the Maid to sleep; but, indeed, she had no power to this end, for her body did ache very sore; but yet did she strive to give me an obedience in this thing. And in the eighteenth hour, when that I stopt to have food and drink, surely she did be awake, yet had she been utter silent; and I made to scold her; but she gat from mine arms, and did go upward upon her toes, and put her finger against my lips very naughtily. And afterward she did be impudent unto me, and did deny me to kiss her. But she went unto my back, and did open the scrip, and gat me to my food, even as a quiet and proper wife should go. As she did be so sedate that I knew she had mischief her heart of harmless kind.

But afterward this did pass sudden into weeping; for she had a quick and sore memory of her father and of the Destruction; and I took the Maid into mine arms, and did let her be there very gentle, and made not to kiss or to comfort her; but yet to give comfort.

And presently she ceased from weeping, and did slip her hand into mine, and I to keep it within, very soft and quiet; and afterward, she began to eat her tablets, yet always she did be very husht; so that I did be quiet also, and feel as that my love did be round her as a shield. And I knew that she had knowledge of this thing in her heart.

And oft I harked into the night of the Land; but there was nowhere any sound, or disturbing of the aether, to trouble me. And the Maid in mine arms did know when that I harked; for in verity, she had the NightHearing and the understanding spirit that doth

be needful to such. And odd whiles did I look down to her through the gloom that did be about us; and presently I did perceive that she lookt up to me, out of mine arms.

And I kist her.

Now, in all that day, we had come nowhere upon any firehole in the bed of the olden sea; and truly I did ache to be nigh unto the warmth of such; for I did feel the cold of the Land, because that I was weary, and because that I had not the thickness of the ArmourSuit below mine armour to warm me.

And the cloak did be about the Maid; for I had feared that she should grow cold as I carried her. Yet, now she did know subtly that I was come to feel the utter chill of the Land; and she gat from mine arms, and put the cloak about me, and afterward came again into mine arms. And I let the cloak bide there, and drew it forward to be around her, also. Yet, truly, I was joyful that I did be cold, as you shall perceive. For it was sweet to the heart to bear somewhat of that dread chill for Mine Own; and she half troubled and likewise with understanding of my heart, because that I was less clothed than I had been.

Now, in a little while, the Maid did pack the scrip; and so we did make ready again to go forward, for I was grown anxious, as you may suppose, that we should come to some firehole, that we have a place for sleep that had warmth and light; for, truly, the cold of the Land did be drear and horrid.

And I stoopt to take the Maid into mine arms, that I should carry her; but she did say nay, that she did be well rested. And I not to gainsay her, for she did mean the thing, as I perceived, and I had no desire to force my way upon her, save when I saw truly that she did seem to go unwisely. And, indeed, when such did be the case I did strive with her, only with a nice reasonableness, as you shall know.

And the Maid walkt by my side, and wondrous silent; but yet very nigh to me, so that I knew she did be very full of love to me, and of that quaint and sweet humbleness that love doth breed odd whiles in a woman when she doth be with her man, if but that man be also her master. And presently, I perceived that the cloak did be over mine own shoulders, and I took it and would have put it about the Maid; but truly she did not allow this; and when I did be stern with her, that she obey me in this matter, she did stand upon her toes, that she might kiss me, and pulled my head down, and surely she kist me and coaxed me that I wear the cloak, else should I give pain to her, in that I did surely be cold because she did wear the ArmourSuit.

Yet, I would not hark to this thing; so that the Maid did be truly in trouble. And first she made a threatening that she wear but her olden garments that did be only rags, if that I did persist. But this I saw to be foolishness and scarcemeant, and did as much need to smile at her as that I did think to scold her; but I did be firm that she wear the cloak.

And lo! she went sudden into crying; and this had been beyond my thoughts. And truly, it set me all adrift; for I perceived that she did be greatly distrest concerning this matter, when I had conceived that she did but mean this thing for tenderness' sake. But mine heart helped me to understand, and I saw how she did be truly shamed, in her sweet womanhood, if that I helped her not in this matter; for she did feel that she was made to do hurt unto that one that was her Love. And this thing I do pray you to think upon, that you understand; for, indeed, until that I was made to think, I had not seen it thiswise, for her.

And in the end, I came to agreement with the Maid, that we wear the garment hour by hour, in turn; and she to wear it the first hour and I to wear it the second hour; and so to go forward.

And truly, this did be an happy arranging; but yet she stampt her foot a little, as I put the cloak about her. And thrice in the hour did she ask me concerning the time that was gone; and surely, when the hour was but up, she had the cloak off in a moment, and went to my back and cast it upon my shoulders, and after to my front, and made it fast upon my breast; and so eager and naughty was she to this, that I took her by the shoulders, and shook her, somewhat, even as she had made to stamp at me; yet mayhaps with more of laughter. And she to take no heed at all; but to button the cloak and be very sedate. Yet, in verity, I caught her up into mine arms, and kissed her, for a sweet and naughty Maid; and she very willing, now that she had gotten something of her way.

But yet in an hour, I did have the cloak about her, again; and so did straiten matters, as you shall conceive.

Now, when we had gone forward, through five great hours, I perceived that the Maid did be utter worn, but yet did make presence that she was unwearied. And because I saw how she did be, I did heed and be anxious only that we come to some rock, to be for our safe refuge, and mayhap there to find an hole or cave, that should be somewhat to keep our heat about us; for there was nowhere any firehole anigh in all those hours.

And presently, we came to a part where there did be rocks, and we went to and fro in the gloom, and came in the end to a place where the rocks did go upward into the night, as that it had been a small and ancient cliff.

And surely in a while I found a hole that did go inwards of the rock; and the hole did be above mine head; yet when I was come to it, and had made the Diskos to spin therein, that I should have light to see whether there did be any creature or creeping thing in the hole, I was well pleased; for truly it did be sweet and dry.

Now the Maid had cried out a little to see the sudden shining that did come from within the hole, when I made the Diskos to spin, and because of the low roar of the weapon. But I answered her that there did be naught to have fear concerning; and so was she peaceful again, but yet a little trembling when that I came down to her; for, indeed, the Diskos did make always a strange sounding and a quaint and drear shining, as you do know; and she did be feared for me that some Evil Force had come upon me out of the cave; for she had neither knowledge nor conceiving that ever there did be so wondrous a weapon in all the world.

And I gave the Maid an help upward to the little cave, and came after, myself; and so we did be in a very nice and cosy place, that did not be easily gotten at by any monstrous thing. And surely I was utter glad for such a place, so that both should have safety that we might sleep in the same hours.

And, in truth, this was a needful plan; for if one had stayed wakeful to keep a watch for the other, then had our sleep taken us double hours; and this thing might not be, else should our food be done, and we to be twice so long as need be, ere ever we did come unto the refuge of the Mighty Pyramid; and I utter wearied and anxious of the heart and spirit that I bring Mine Own soon unto the safety and glory of my Mighty Home, and so free from the Destruction that did hang above our two souls for ever in that Land, and the peril that did be everywhere, save in the Last Redoubt.

Now when we were come into the hole of the rock, the Maid did slip the scrip and the pouch from my shoulders; and she gat out the tablets, and made some of the water, and did be very swift and natty, and all to the despite of the gloom that did be utter in that little cave.

And we eat each of us two of the tablets and drank some of the water; and I made jest with the Maid how that the tablets did be proper for strength, yet very lacking to fill the belly; though, indeed, I named it otherwise.

And she to agree, and did pat mine arm, and did tell me how that she should cook me a monstrous tasty and great meal when that we were come unto the Mighty Pyramid. And immediately afterward, she did make to laugh upon me, and to name me impudently for

so much thought unto my feeding; and afterward again to silence, and to patting my hand.

Now, when that we had made an end of eating and drinking, I was very ready for sleep; for, truly, it was six and twenty great hours since that I did last slumber; but for the Maid it did be eight and thirty great hours; for, as you do mind, she had made no sleeping when that she did lie in mine arms for six hours of our journeying.

And I made how we should sleep; and put the cloak about the Maid; but surely she did refuse, very piteous, and seeming to have also somewhat of doubt and puzzlement. But in this thing I did be very stern and intending; for she did not be overwarm clad, as you do know, and moreover, she was but a little One, while I did be wondrous hardy.

And, in verity, I made her to obey, and gave her the scrip and the pouch for her pillow; and she, as it did seem to me, to sob to herself a little in the gloom of the night. But yet did I stay my heart a little stern to mine intent. And I wrapt the cloak about her, and set the scrip and the pouch very nice beneath her head; and afterward, I knelt over to kiss her, before that I came unto mine own slumber. Yet did she turn her mouth from me, and did put her hand above her face to ward me off, the which did grieve me; for truly, I did heed alway that I should never thrust my love upon her in her lonesomeness; but only let it be to her for a shield and for all comfort unto her heart.

And I turned my back, and went a pace away and lay down; for truly there did be no way else but to be near unto the Maid, for it was but a little cave. And I lay very husht, because that I was so sore in the heart. Yet, truly, I could not come unto my slumber, for I was so disturbed in my love; and I stayed very quiet maybe for a great hour; and did fight that I shake not mine armour to jinglings with the utter cold that did make me to tremble. But the Maid did sleep very sweet and calm, as I perceived by her breathings.

Yet, in verity, the Maid did be so much awake as I, and with some sweet and naughty intent of the heart, as my spirit did sudden perceive. And I lay very husht, and did wait to discover what this thing might be.

And I made my breathing to seem as the breathing of one that did sleep, even as that naughty Maid did make pretending. And surely, in a while I did know that she moved very quiet, and came unto me; and I made yet that I slept very sound and strong; though the cold did nigh to conquer all my quietness.

And in a moment I perceived the intent of the Maid; for I did feel the cloak spread over me with a wondrous gentleness; and afterward there did be a soft kiss put upon my

hand; and the Maid back then to her pillow; yet, as I did hear, she brought it something more nigh to me; as that she did crave to be near unto me that was her own Love.

And I sat up, and I put forth my hands suddenly and took the Maid into mine arms; and she to nestle unto me so that I did be wordless, because that I loved her so utter.

And presently, I felt her to stir in mine arms; and I loost her somewhat; for I did be always very mindful that I impose not upon her dear liberty of maidenhood. Yet she made not to go from me, but only to gather the cloak about her; so that we did both be in the cloak. And she askt why this might not be; for surely it did be madness that one should starve and the other be very nice in warmth. And, indeed, this did be but wisdom; yet it might not come the first from me.

And I said to Mine Own that this thing should be; and she reached out, and brought the scrip and the pouch, and placed them for a pillow for my head, and told me that I should put my head thereon. And I askt her how this did be right; for she did need a pillow the more than I. But she bid me to bide, and to have obedience in my turn. And when I was so, she spread the cloak over me, and afterward crept under, and did lie down beside me, and did seem as that she was asleep in one moment.

Yet, though she did be so sedate and matterofthefact, as we do say, while that she was wakeful, she did yet nestle unto me very sweet and childlike in her sleep. And surely I did want to kiss her; but yet did refrain from my love; for, truly, I did well that I treat her very gently, at such a time, as you do perceive. And, in verity, such a Maid doth make a reverence in the soul of a man.

Now, presently, I was gone over unto sleep; and in seven hours I waked; and in that time had the Maid slumbered through eight hours; yet did I intend that she be not disturbed, until that we were aready to the journey. And I slipt from under the cloak, and put it round her, very gentle. Yet it to be as she did miss me, even in her sleep; for it to seem to me that she put out her arms in the darkness, and she made a little moaning in her slumber. Yet, in a moment, she did be quiet, and afterward I put the cloak about her again.

And I went then to the opening of the little cave, and put forth my head, and lookt well about, and harked a long while; but there stirred nothing in the night thereabout; neither did my spirit wot of any matter for trouble unto us.

And presently, I gat out two of the tablets; for, as you do know, the Maid had given me the scrip and the pouch to be my pillow, so that I had power to come at these matters, without awaking her; but for her own part, as I did learn after, she had used her torn

garments to be for a pillow; yet had made no explaining, as you do mind; and surely this was one of her naughty whimsies; and mayhap she had been so full of a playful happiness doth take the heart betimesthat she had made a little mystery where there did be no mystery; and this but to release her joy, and so to say masterful things unto me, out of her impudence; and afterward had meant that she tell me; but yet was gone unto slumber, ere that she did mind her.

Yet, since that time, a new thought hath come unto me that she did mean in the first that she should come into mine arms to sleep, and thereby need no pillow. But afterward, it may hap that she saw with a sudden olden wisdom, all in one moment; and afterward did act lovingly, yet with understanding. And so did change from her intent; yet with no improperness of modesty; but only with a niceness of Sense, which she did make no talk of; but yet did have. And surely, how oft is a man thus wisely ordered, unknowing.

And to cease from these thinkings, and to go forward, I eat two of the tablets, and afterward made some of the water. And lo! the fizzing of the water waked the Maid; and I knew that she reached out very sudden to me; but afterward knew in a moment what did make the sound, and that I did be up and making ready for the journeying.

And she gat up in the darkness, and said my name, and came unto me, and kist my forehead in the dark; and immediately she ran her hands gently downward of my left arm, and when she came to the cup, she took it from me, and slapt my hand, very dainty. And afterward I knew that she took a sip from the cup, and then did turn that side to me, and so gave me to drink, and did scold me that I had not waked her to tend to my needs; for surely she did be Mine Own, to have her duties to me.

And after that I had drank, she took the cup, and did finish it; and she gat two of the tablets, as I did think, and came afterward and sat upon the rock to my side, and did nestle somewhat against mine armour, and took mine arm and set it about her; and so did make to eat.

But first she put her tablet unto my lips, in the dark, that I should kiss it; and surely this was an olden way of Mirdath My Beautiful One; so that I did be all shaken of the heart. And I kist the tablet; and immediately she nestled unto me, and did begin to eat.

And truly it was as that Eternity had been rolled backward; for I had discovered the soul of mine olden Love in this dainty Maid to my side. Yet, in looks had Mirdath been of an utter differing; but, in verity Naani was wondrous lovely. But, though I to be so stirred, I did be silent; for my heart was very full of memory.

And as the Maid eat, she slipt her fingers between mine, curling them softly; and surely her fingers did be very little; and she stirred mine olden memories again in this thing. And surely I was dumb before my Memory.

And presently, she put up the second tablet, as I did think, that I should kiss it; and I kist it, as before. Yet, ere she did begin again to eat, I did wot suddenly that she hid some intent from me.

And I caught her hand very quick in the dark; and her fingers did close upon the tablet, very guilty; so that I perceived that I had guessed aright. And I opened her fingers; and I found that there did be but the half of a tablet within her hand. And surely she had taken but that one tablet, and had given me the one end to kiss, and afterward the other; so that I should suppose she did eat two proper and complete tablets.

And I perceived that she had done this thing secretly, being minded that if she eat always but one tablet, then should I never lack, even if that we did be overlong coming unto the Mighty Pyramid.

And I askt how oft already had she eat but one, for two. And she confessed in a very quiet voice that this did make the fifth time. And I was so angered, that I took her hand and whipt it thrice, so hard that she had screamed if that she had been any coward. And she said nothing to me, neither went away.

And she began again to eat the half of the tablet, and did eat it from the other hand, as I to be aware, because that her left hand did be hurt. And she wept not, but was very quiet by me; and presently I knew that she kist the whipt hand secretly in the dark.

And afterward, I put mine arm again about her; and she did be there in it, very sober and happy. And when she had made an end of the first tablet, I gave her the second, and she eat it very quiet and content.

And presently I talked with her, and showed her how that this thing did hurt my heart, even as she had been hurt that I did be cold garmented, the while that she did be warm. And I showed her the wickedness that she had done, that she did play so foolish with her life and strength; and well might she be weak and all alack.

Yet, did I think a little sweet impudence came into her, as I told her concerning her wickednesses. And I took her then into mine arms, and I showed her how that I knew all the unselfishness and wonder of her heart; and I kist her, and truly her lips did have a lovely glad humbleness as they came unto mine; so that it was as that I had not kist her

truly until that moment. And I made her to promise that she never deceive me in such matter again. And indeed she promised; but yet with no ready tongue.

And afterward, we made proper for the journey; and when we had gotten our gear together, I went downward of the rock, and gave the Maid help to come down. And when we did stand at last upon the bottom of the rock, I askt Naani how she did feel, and whether her feet did hurt. And she answered that she did be very well and had no soreness in her feet.

And we went forward then, and she close unto me; and odd whiles with low speech, but more oft with silence, because that we did need that we hark alway for any danger or horror; and also there did be so utter a silence upon that part of the Land, which did be the bottom of the olden sea. And we eat and drank at the sixth and the twelfth hours; and in the fifteenth hour, we came upon a great slope of the earth; and lo! it did be the far side of the sea. And we went upward for a long hour; and so came to the upward part, and did be able once more to look over the greatness of that Land.

XI

THE HOMEWARD WAY

Now, truly, it did seem very light, after the horrid and lonesome gloom that did lie allways in the bottom of the olden sea; and I saw that I was come out upon a part of the Land that did be surely to the right of that place where I made entry into the seabed, on mine outward going. And there did be a great plenty of fireholes, so that mine heart was warmed to see them; yet did I mind to be wary in coming unto them; for, as you do know, there did so oft be life of this kind and that about these fires.

And I lookt now down to the Maid, and she upward to me, and did come more anigh to me, and truly she did be most wondrous pretty and sweet; yet did seem very awearied and pale in the face; so that I made blame upon myself that I had overwalked her; for, in verity, I do think that I was so strong and hard as that I had been made from iron; and she but a dear and tender Maid. Yet did she refuse that I should so reproach myself; and did but stand anigh to me and look at me with eyes that were very beautiful. And so I put mine arms about her, and kist her; and afterward lookt again over the Land, that I should shape out our further journeying.

And from that place where I did stand, there spread out all before me the blue shining that I had seen from the mouthpart of the Upward Gorge; yet did it be a great way off. And, indeed, I should tell you in this place, that it was by the glimmering of this shine within the sky of the night that I had steered, as we did come across the olden seabed. And, truly, it was but a broad thing to go toward; but yet did serve me, in that it told me that I went toward the far side of the seabed, and made not to go all about in blind circles in the night.

And after that I had considered a while, I did know somewhat where the Gorge should be, and perceived that I should go unto my left; but not overmuch, for indeed I saw the redshining of the giants' hole that lay at a great space that way; and surely I must go so that I missed the place of the giants so much as I might, and in the same going, come not overnear unto the blueshining that lay before me, across all the far part of that Country; for, in verity, I Mistrusted the place where that shining did be.

Now when I had gained somewhat of knowledge where should be found the Mouth of the Upward Gorge, I put mine arm about the Maid, where she did stand so nigh to me, and very husht, the while that I had lookt about. And I pointed outward over the dark Land unto my left, and told her that the Gorge did be somewhere that way, a great

distance off; yet utter out of my sight, and only to be known that it did be somewise there by the things that I did mind of, concerning my way after I came into the Land.

Now the Maid, having stood very quiet, had lookt all that time about her; and so had come to some knowing of the place where she did be in the Land, for she to know the land someways, as you shall think. And she askt me how I did mind to go; and truly I said, so straight as we might; but yet so that we come neither too nigh to the shining nor to the great red firepit of the Giants.

And the Maid bade me to look in the way that I did mind to go; and I lookt, but yet there was nothing save, as they did seem, certain fireholes that had a greenshining about them. And she set out unto me then, how that there did go a tract of bad gas in that part of the Land, that should be utter poisonous unto any; and this had been well known in the Lesser Redoubt, by the reading of their instruments. And where the gas did go, there was there a greenshining about the fireholes.

And she showed me how that the Place of the Gas went a great way unto the NorthWest, so that I learned now somewhat how the land did lie, as we do say in these days. And it was in all the NorthWest that the great blueshining did burn. And I askt Naani how they named this, and she told me by no name, save but The Shine.

And Mine Own made very earnest to warn me, regarding The Shine; and urged that we go no more thatwards than should be needful to our livesthe which, indeed, was no wish of mine. And her reason to be that the Fixed Giants did be within the borders of The Shine, and all hid in the light thereof, save when the burning mist did roll this way or that. And I took a great heed of this thing, and did guess that these Fixed Giants were somewhat even as the Great Watchers that were about the Mighty Pyramid, as you do know. And immediately I minded me of that utter monstrous face that I did see amid the bright smoke of The Shine, when that I came first into the Land; and surely this had been one of the Fixed Giants, that Naani told me were Forces of great and very horrid Evil.

And I askt Mine Own how far the Place of the Gas went across the Land; and she pointed and made further explaining. And, in verity, in the end, I saw not how I should come that way to the mouth of the Gorge, if that I would keep offwards from The Shine. Yet, in a moment, Naani askt me how I did come across the Land, when that I searched for her. And, truly, as I showed her, I had walked then by a sweet chance, or guiding, alway upon the far side of the Place of the Gas, and so unto the Olden Sea bed; and was in this way come free of the gas, and all unknowing of it.

And at this telling, the Maid said that we go downward again into the bed of the Olden Sea, and walk some great hours below the shore, but in the way that should take us unto the SouthWest, and so until we were come beyond the Place of the Gas. And afterward up again into the Land, and then to have an utter caution that we escape the watching of the giants who did be ever about the Great Red FireHole. And by this plan very speedy to the enteringpart of the Upward Gorge.

And, truly, this did be very good and sound, and such as I should have planned in a moment; for, indeed, I am not overslow in such matters; only the Maid did be very eager and quick; and it was very sweet to me that she should thus plan; for, in verity, I loved alway the sounding of her voice, and to hear her have speech and to plan and think, and so to show me the workings of her inward self and her dear qualities and human niceness. And to have part and lot alway with me in all things and thinkings.

And, we shaped to this plan that Naani made; but at that time, as you do mind, it was somewhat of seventeen hours since last we had slumber; and the Maid was sore wearied, as I did see. And I showed to her how that it did be wise that we have our rest very soon, and so forward again in new strength and ability.

And the Maid did soon agree with me; for indeed she was very weary; and we made it that we should venture unto one of the fireholes that lay no great seeming away, a little upon our right, which was the Northwardway of that Land.

And we went toward the firehole; and, truly, it did be further off than we had thought; for it was a good hour before that we came anigh to it; and, indeed, it to prove a very great and redglowing shine that went upward into the night, out of the hollow place where it did burn among rocks.

And when we were come near unto it, I made a sign to the Maid that she be utter husht; and I took the Diskos from mine hip, and went forward before her; and afterward to my knees and hands, and beckoned backward to Mine Own, that she do likewise.

And we came this way to the edge of the hollowplace where the firehole did burn; and so were able in the end to look downward. And truly it was a great fire that burned in the earth in that place; yet, as I perceived very swift, there did seem nowhere any monstrous thing about the fire, the which set some peace upon mine heart; but yet not overmuch; for it was come fresh upon me that we did well to stay afar off from the fires of the Land, in that it was about the fires that all living things did congregate.

And I lookt a great time, and the Maid crept unto mine elbow, and lookt with me; and afterward we harked, very keen, into the night; but there was nowhere any trouble of the

air or of the aether of the Land. Yet I spoke quiet with the Maid, and showed unto her how that we did well to stay offward from the fires; but, truly, she was so utter cold and chill, that she did beg that we go down by the firehole, even should it be that we stay no more there than should put a warmth through the utter chill of our bodies.

And, in verity, I was so bitter cold that I was all weak to go beside the fire; yet, truly, I do think that the shiverings of the Maid was that which did force my heart, to go against the teachings of my head; so that in the end, we came down into the hollow, and very swift unto the fire.

Now, truly, it doth seem a strange thing to be so diverseminded as this, when that, as you do know, I had been so long asearch for a firepit; and mayhaps you shall perceive the better how my heart and brain did be contrary, when that I tell to you, now, how that I have belief that my spirit did even then be subtly set to warn me. And, also, as all do know, it doth be easy to forget this warning and that of experience; by which saying, I do mean that, oft as I had come to know the dangers that did be alway about the fireholes, yet when I did be far off from them, and Mine Own broken and ashiver with the chill of the Land, the danger did seem but a small thing and afar off from my mind, and unreal; but the cold to be doubly real. Yet, when we did come even unto the firehole, then did come again all about my heart the truth of those dangers that had seemed, but a while gone, so little. And, indeed, I do hope you perceive me in this thing, and how that I strive alway to set unto you the utter truth, so that you shall go with me all the way, and lend me your nice understanding.

Now, when we were come down unto the firepit, I went this way and that among the rocks that did be in the bottom of the hollow, so that I should perceive whether there did be any living creature there hid, that should mayhap come out, unknown, to work us harm.

But, indeed, I discovered nothing of any greatness; yet I saw three snakes, and there were, beside, two scorpioncreatures, as I did name them, that neither went backward from me, nor came against me; but did bide where I saw them, each in an hole of the rock.

And because I had seen these things, I saw that we should not do wise to sleep nigh unto the firehole; for the creeping things did mortally like the heat, and should be like to come upon us in our slumber. And, indeed, this did but uphold my caution, that we should be well actioned, if that we chose some other part to our rest.

Yet, as you shall suppose, I said naught unto the Maid concerning the creeping and the poisonous things; for I did mean that she have rest and happiness the while that we did

stay beside the firehole; and afterward, I should tell her, and so she be the more ready to see the properness that we go elsewhere to our sleep. But, as you to understand, if that she not to see wisely and be still intent to the firehole, I should have her to obey; for surely she was Mine Own, and I did love her and did mean alway to have her to safety.

Now, presently, the Maid was something warmed, and afterward, she slipt the scrip from my shoulder, and so had food and drink very swift to my need.

And we sat together, and eat and drank; and the Maid very sweet and quiet, as she did begin to eat her second tablet; and, truly, I had knowing that she did remember in all her body that I had whipt her. And, indeed, she did be utter mine.

And oft as we did eat and drink, I lookt this way and that, so that no creeping thing should come anigh to us; and presently, when we had made an end of our food, the Maid saw that I did look about, and she then very swift to catch some of mine unease, and to stare over her shoulder. And, indeed, in a little while she saw a snake go among the rocks; and she then to be very eager that we find some place that should be secure from creeping things. And we to begin then to look for such.

But in the end, we stayed in the hollow, for we found a little cave that did be in an upstanding rock of the hollow, and the upstanding rock was, mayhaps, an hundred good feet off from the fire; for the hollow was very great. And the cave did be a hole that was thrice my height up from the bottom rocks; and it was dry and sweet and with no creeping thing within it, neither did there be any place to hide such therein.

And when we were gotten into the hole, surely it did be very sweet and cozy; for the shine of the firehole did shine therein; and surely we had felt it a very haven, but that there was ever the fear of the Land upon our hearts; and upon mine the more than upon the Maid; for, truly, Mine Own did seem to trust me utter; and to seem that she feared not any evil monster, but to have surety that I had power to succour her in all ways. And truly this trust had been very sweet unto my heart, if that I had lacked somewhat of my terror for the safe homegoing of Mine Own.

And we slept that night as we had done before, and shared the cloak over us; for truly, the firehole made no great warmth unto us; yet was it less bitter in that part than in the darkness of the Land.

And by that we had come unto sleep, it was twenty good hours since last we had slumber; and truly we did be very wearied; but yet came unto our rest with our spirits set anxious to harken on danger the while that we did sleep.

And we slept seven hours, and did know suddenly of some matter that had need to waken us; and lo! in a moment I did wake, and the Maid in the same instant of time; and there was a great screaming and crying out in the night, that surely affrighted us both; yet did hurt our hearts the more; for it did be the utter cryings and terror of poor humans in the night of that Land. Yet might I do naught; but only wait that I learn more of the matter; for my duty was unto Mine Own, and I had no leave of rashness any more.

Yet, as you do suppose, I was all shaken to go downward of the rock, and afterward to climb out from the hollow, that I should give some help unto they that did need help; but yet might I not leave the Maid.

And immediately, there was a great roaring in one part of the night, and again another roaring in another part of the night; and lo! in a moment the roarings did be answered; and the roarings were the sounds of big and husky voices; so that it did seem that we harked to men so big as houses that did run and shout in the night.

And the Maid did begin to shake, and I put mine arm about her, and drew her backward into the hole so that she did be into the shadow; and she to tremble like one that was broken in courage; for, truly, she had heard those sounds oft in the night in all the long and dreadful month that she had wandered.

And, indeed, I was all shaken in my courage; for it did be the shouting of giants that I heard; and you do know somewhat of the utter horror and terror that did be always in the heart that did harken unto those monstrous voices, for you do know my tale.

And there came in a moment, a dreadful screaming out in the night, and the screaming did be the screaming of a young maid that doth be slain very brutal. And my heart sickened, because of Mine Own; but my spirit did swell with a strange and utter anger, as that it should burst my body. And the Maid to my side broke into an utter sobbing.

And the screaming of the maid afar off in the dark did end very sudden; but in a moment there did be other screamings in diverse places, and the hoarse shoutings of the great men and the thudding of mighty feet that ran this way and that, achase.

And the cryings of the humans came nearer, and the thuddings of the great feet. And, in verity, in a little minute, it did seem unto me that the sounds did be right upon the hollow; and I crept forward, and peered out. And I felt the night to be full of people running; and immediately there passed by the hollow a clustering of humans that ran ever, and screamed and gasped and wept, panting, as they ran. And the shining of the firehole made them plain seen and clear, and they did be both men and women, and

were but in rags or utter naked, and all torn by the rocks and the bushes, and did seem, indeed, as that they had been wild things that did go by so swift and lost.

And mine heart troubled me with the pain and longing that it did know; so that I had gone in a moment after those people, but that I should leave Mine Own and put her to peril. And even while that I felt so utter in this thing, there came a great thudding of monstrous feet; and there ran four great men out of the night, and went past the hollow very quick. And three did be dull coloured and seeming much haired and brutish; but the other did be an horrid white, and lividblotched; so that it did seem to my spirit that there went by, a thing that did be a very manmonster filled of unwholesome life. And surely they did be gone from out of the shine of the fire, in one moment, as we do say; and again into the night to their dreadful chasing.

And when the thudding of their feet had gone a long way off over the Land, I heard them bellowing, and afterward a far away screaming, that did have a death note in it; and I knew that those dreadful brutemen did be taking the life from some poor wild humans; and afterward there did be the silence again.

And, surely, it did come to me with a fierce impatience of sorrow, that those people did be without spirit of courage; else had they turned them upon the giants, and slain them with their hands, even if that all had died to compass that slaying; for, truly, they should all die anywise by the giantmen; and they had died then with somewhat to comfort their hate.

Yet, as I do know, the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt had long been born of parents that were starved of the EarthCurrent through an hundredthousand years and more, and because of this thing, they did surely lack somewhat in all ways. Yet was Naani otherwise; but this not to prove aught, save the rule, as we do say.

Now, sudden, as I stooped very husht and troubled in the mouth of the little cave, I knew that Mine Own sobbed dryly in the back part of the cave. And I had gone to comfort her, but that in the same moment, I saw a naked maid run very swift over the edge of the hollow, and did look over her shoulder, as she ran. And she came to the bottom, and crept in under a ledge of rock that did be in that place; and she did seem utter worn, and gone of the spirit, and desperate. And I perceived in the same instant why that she did go stealthy and swift in that fashion, and to cower, as for her very life; for there came a squat, haired man, so broad as a bullock, who did come silent down into the hollow, looking this way and that, even as a wild beast doth peer, very sudden.

And the Squat Man had instant knowing of the place where the maid did be; and ran in upon her, with no sound.

And I paused not; but leaped all the great way unto the bottom of the hollow, which did be, mayhaps, twenty good feet and more; for mine anger was upon me, and I did mean that I save that one, though I did be powerless to give succour unto those others.

And I fell strong upon my feet, and had no harm of my limbs, for all that the leap did be so high. And in that moment, before that I had time to save the maid, the Squat Man ript her; and she cried out once with a very dreadful scream, and was suddenly dead in the hands of the BruteMan.

And my heart made my blood to burn with wrath in mine eyes, so that I had scarce power in that instant to see the Squat Man, as I ran upon him. And the roar of the Diskos filled all the hollow, as I made it to spin, as that it did rage with an anger, and to be glut of the Man.

And the Man came round upon me; and thought, mayhaps, to deal with me, as it had dealt with that poor maid, but not all thatwise, as you must know. And I swung the Diskos, and it did seem to sing and to cry eager in my hands. And I smote at the Squat Man, even as it did leap silent upon me, as a tiger doth leap, making no sound. But I gat not home the blow; for the Man dropt sudden down upon the hands, and the blow went overwards. And the BruteMan caught me by the legs, to rip me; and I cut quick with the Diskos, and it did have but one monstrous talon left unto it. And immediately, it cast me with the other, half across the hollow, and I fell with mine armour clanging mightily, and the Diskos did ring like a bell.

And by the graciousness of all good things, I was harmed not by that monster throw; but was to my feet in one instant, and had not loosed the Diskos from my hand. And the BeastMan did be upon me with two quick boundings; and I stood up to the Man, and it made no sound or cry as it came at me; and there did a great froth of brute anger and intent come from the mouth of it, and the teeth came down on each side of the mouth, very great and sharp. And I leaped and smote, so that my blow should come the more speedy, and the Diskos took away the head and the shoulder of the Squat Man; and the dead thing knockt me backward, with the spring that it had made; but it harmed me not greatly. Yet afterward I did know how sore and bruised I did be, in all my body and being. And I came back very swift against the Man; but it did be truly dead and greatly horrid.

And I went from the dead monster, and did go, all heartshaken, unto the dead maid. And I took the torn body of the maid, very sorrowful, and cast it into the firehole.

And I turned me then that I should look unto the cave, that I should know that all did be well with Mine Own, and whether she did have seen the horror, or be gone into a swoon.

And lo! Mine Own did run toward me; and she had in her hand my beltknife which I did give her, before that time, to be a weapon for her defence. And I perceived that she had come to be mine aid, if that I did need such. And she did be utter pale, yet very steadfast and not seeming to tremble.

And I made to take her from that place; but she went beyond me, and lookt at the monstrous bulk of the Squat Man; and was very silent. And she came back unto me; and still so silent. And she stood before me, and said no word; but my heart knew what she did be thinking; for I am not foolish, to have lacked to know what did be in her heart; though mine effort had not shown itself that way unto me, before that moment. And I had no pretending of modesty, but received with gladness and a strangeness of humbleness the honour that her eyes did give to me; for, indeed, she did be so, that she might not give word to her joy of me and her glad respecting, the which is so wondrous good unto the heart of all men that do be loving of a dear and honest maid.

And she said nothing, neither then nor afterward; but I did be honoured all my life after, when that I did anytime mind me of the way that Mine Own lookt upward at me in those moments.

And afterward she did need and allow herself to come unto mine arms, that I hold her from the trembling of heart which did come to her, after that there did be no need for courage; for surely we had both seen a very dreadful thing, and there was a great horror upon us.

And I climbed upward again to the little cave, and did help Naani; and when we were come there again, we did rest awhile. And presently we eat, each of us, two of the tablets and drank some of the water, and indeed we were both utter thirsty.

And in about an hour, after that we had harked very keen a time, we came downward again from the cave, and had our gear with us; and we came up out of the hollow, and set forward with a great caution unto the olden seabed. And we came there in two long hours; for we went very slow and with constant harkings; for the fear of the monstrous men was upon us. But there came no harm anigh, neither did we perceive any disturbance in the night of the Land.

And we went down an hour into the olden seabed, and did go now the more swift; for our fear was something eased from us, because that we had come away from that place where we had perceived so great and dread an hunting. But yet had we all care about us;

for the giants surely to be everywhere in that Land; but yet, as I do think, they to roam more oft anigh to the fireholes; for the humans did surely wander in such parts, that they have warmth of the fires.

And after we had gone downward an hour into the seabed, we turned somewhat unto the SouthWest, and went for twelve great hours, and did never be any huge space from the shore; for it did run that way, as you do know. And I made to steer by the shinings of the Land, and with advices from Mine Own.

And in the end of the twelfth hour, I did count our distance, making that we did walk somewhat of a certain speed; and by the tellings of the Maid, we did be surely come beyond the place of the Land where the Poison Gas did lie.

And by this, it did be something after seventeen hours since we did sleep; and surely we did be very ready to have rest; for we had gone forward strongly, and with anxiousness; and truly my hurts did be come upon me, so that my whole body did ache; for the quick fight had been bitter, and I had been thrown very hard and brutal; and, indeed, it was wondrous that I had not been all smashed, only that the armour did save me.

And this doth show truly how hard and strong I did be; and Naani did speak upon this, and was oft awonder, and at that time did beg me that I make some rest to cure my hurts; for she had not conceived that a man did grow so strong and hardy; and, in verity, the men of the Lesser Redoubt did be softmade and lacking of grimness, as I did perceive, both through my reason and from her tellings; for they did lack the strong life that doth breed where is the beat of the EarthCurrent, as we to have in the Mighty Pyramid. And this thing I have said somewise before this time.

And because that we did be so wearied, I said unto Naani that we find a place for our slumber, and she very willing, as I have shown, and to counsel me likewise.

Yet did we search about in that gloom for a great hour more, and found no cave or hole to give us a safe refuge for our sleep.

And when that we could not find such, I told Naani that we should put the boulders together, somewhat, and so have them about us, that we be greatly hid; and, in truth, even as I began to tell her my plan, she did have the same words in her mouth, so that we caught our little fingers, there in the dark of that grim Land in the end of the world, even as she and I had done oft in the early years, before that eternity, when that she did be Mirdath the Beautiful. And we did both be silent, and after that we had wished very solemn and earnest, we said each a name; even as lad and maid shall do in this age; and

so to laughter and kist one the other. And truly, the world doth seem not to alter in the heart, as you shall think. And this was what I did find.

And we setto, and gathered together the boulders which did be very plentiful in that part. And she carry those that did be thin and flat, and I to roll those that did be great and round. And I made a place that did be long and narrow; and afterward, I set the flat stones round the sides, that there be no little hole by which any creeping thing should come inward to sting us in our sleep.

And afterward we gat inside; and surely it did be very cozy, as we do say; but yet not so secure as I did wish, only that I could not shift to plan aught better. And, indeed, it should keep off from us any small thing, and should be like to save us from any monstrous Brute treading upon us; but otherwise, it did be but a poor affair.

Now we eat two of the tablets, each, and drank some of the water, even as we had done in the sixth and the twelfth hours; and afterward we shared the cloak for our slumber; and we kist very sedate and loving, and charged our spirits that we wake if that any horrid thing should come anigh to us in our sleep; and afterward we did be gone very swift to slumbering, and suffered no harm.

And I waked seven hours after, and surely I did ache very bitter, as I did move my body; for the bruising did be gotten hold of me.

And I slipt away from the Maid, very gentle; for I had mind that she sleep a while more, as I did mean that we make a great journey that day.

And after I had harked a while, and perceived that there was no evil thing anigh, I went outward of the stones. And I walked to and fore and moved mine arms, that I be eased somewhat of the stiffness and ache; but surely it did seem that many hours must go ere I should make any speed of travel; for I did be all clumsy and slow and nigh to groan with the pain of going and aught that I did.

And I minded me that I should do somewhat to ease this thing, lest that I cause us both to come to an harm by staying overlong in that Land.

And I went back into the stones, and gat an ointment from the pouch, that I did carry. And surely the Maid did yet sleep. And I went outward of the stones, again; and stript off the armour, and all my garments; and I rubbed my body with the ointment, and surely the pain did be so that I groaned at this time and that; but yet must I rub good and strong so that I die not of the cold of the Land; and beside I was greatly anxious to cure myself.

And sudden, as I did rub very strong and savage, and heeding so well as I might that I groan not, the Maid did speak close beside me. And, indeed, she could see me but dimly, and had waked sudden to hear my groaning, and I was not to her side. And immediately she had thought that some evil thing harmed me, and was come in an instant that she be with me.

And she cared not that I did be naked; but was utter in anger that I strove to do this thing alone, and with none to aid me, and all uncovered to the chill of the Land. And she ran back into the stones, and brought the cloak and put it about me; and was so angered that she stamp, and had no impudence, but rather as that she did be minded to have tears.

And she sent me back into the sheltering of the stones, and gathered mine armour, and brought these things after me. But the Diskos I took in my hand. And she took the pot of the ointment from me, and made me to lie, and she rubbed me very strong and tender, and kept me warm with the cloak; and surely she was a wise and lovely Maid, and utter Mine Own.

And in the end, she askt me how I was, and I said that I did be different; and she hurried me that I be clothed very quick; for she did be sore afraid that I should come to a chill.

And when I was gotten again into mine armour, she came to me, and showed me where I did lack wisdom, and spoke very straitly and gentle and serious; and afterward kist me, and gave me my tablets, and to sit beside me. And we eat and drank; and I with a new lovingness unto Mine Own; and she somewhat as that she did mother me; but when I put mine arm about her, she did be only a maid. And we did be thus, with but little talk and a great content.

And afterward, we gat our gear together, and went from that little refuge that we had made; and in a while we did go upward out of the olden seabed.

And when we were come again to the top of the shore, the which we did in two good hours, I lookt over the Land, a time, with Mine Own anigh to me. And I perceived that the Great Red FirePit of the Giants did be no mighty way off unto the South and West; and surely in a little moment, we saw that there went monstrous figures against the shine of the mighty firepit; and we stoopt unto the earth; for it did seem that the light did be like to show us standing there, though truly we did be afar off, as you perceive. Yet, mayhaps, you do share with us the utter horror and distress that those horrid Men did cast about the heart, and so have a kindly understanding of our fear.

And over all the Land, in this place and that, there did be the small shining of little fireholes and pits, that did be alway red, save in that part where the Poison Gas did lie, the which we had now come safe past.

And beyond the fireholes, was the great Shine, that lay from the West unto the North of all that Land; and, in verity, we did need that we steer so that we come not anigh to it, neither unto the Great Red FirePit of the Giants; neither unto the low volcanoes, which were beyond the Great Red FirePit, as you do know, and someways unto the Mouth of the Upward Gorge.

And the way of our journey was between the West and the SouthWest of that Land; and to be made with cunning and wisdom, that we come clear of all unseemly danger unto Mine Own. And I askt her concerning this thing and that of the Land; and surely she told me so much of terror that I was half in a wonder that ever I did live in the end to come unto her.

And it was because of the things that she set out to me, that I perceived how we must come nowise anigh to the low volcanoes that were upon this side of the mouth of the Upward Gorge; for it had been known alway in the Lesser Redoubt that there went very horrid men in that part that did be called wolfmen; but whether there did be any such thing in that age, she had no knowing; for she told me the things that did be set down in the Records and the Histories; and truly no man of the Lesser Redoubt had found heart in a thousand great years to make a journeying through the Land, for the desire of glad and dreadful adventuring, such as our young men did be oft set to; though it was not all such that went.

And because there did be no adventuring for so monstrous a space of years, there was no certain new knowledge of the Land of that age. And this thing is plain to you, and needing not of many words, which do so irk me.

And Naani set out to me how that The Shine was conceived to be a land where Evil did live for ever, and whence came all those Forces of Evil that did work upon the Lesser Refuge. And afterward, she did quiet; so that presently I perceived that she did weep to herself, because that her memory was all newstirred by my questionings. And I took her very gentle into mine arms, as we did be there kneeled upon the earth.

And after that time, I askt her no question, save as it did be needful to our health and life; yet oft did she tell me this thing and that of her knowledge, to be for mine help and guiding.

Now we went forward, going a space toward the NorthWest, so that we come the more clear of the place where did be the Great Red FirePit of the Giants. And we journeyed with a care alway that we show not ourselves overplain unto the light that shone over the Land from the great Pit; and oft we did creep a while over this stark place and that; and went nimbly amid the bushes that grew oft in great parts.

And we made six hours this way, and did then have pause, that we eat and drink; and truly it was nine hours since first I did wake; yet had we made no pausing, because that we were so set to our journeying to come clear of the place where did be the Giants.

And after that we had eat and drunk, we went onward again; and made now unto the SouthWest; for we did heed that we go no more unto the NorthWest, because that should bring us overnear to The Shine.

And in the fourteenth hour of that day's travel, we came to a part where the Land dipt downward into a broad valley; and surely it did be very dark down there, and did be seeming shallow, yet truly of a great deepness; but we went that way, because that it did be a weary long journey to go around the place where the valley did be.

And the Valley had a different darkness from the gloom that went alway in the olden seabed; for the gloom of the seabed did be ever of a greyness; but the gloom of this Valley had a greater dark within it; yet did the air seem more clear.

And we went downward three hours into the Valley, and stopt then that we eat and drink; and truly I had not paused then; but that Mine Own did insist; for our methods did be like, else, to go all adrift, and we to be lacking of proper strength.

And this was wisdom of the Maid; but I to be a little irkedlike and restless; and this mayhap because that my blood did itch me, because that it did be so full of the poison of my bruises.

And it was gone now of seventeen hours since last we did sleep; but yet did we be ready to go forward, that we come so quick as maybe out of the dark of that Valley; for there did seem nowheres any firehole to make a light; only that in this place and that, there did be a little blue shining, as that there burned a strange gas in this part or that.

Now, in two hours after the time that we did eat, we stopt, both of us, very sudden; for there did be some vague and curious sound in the night. And we went very swift to the earth, that we be hid, and harked. But did hear nothing.

And in a while, we to go onward again; yet there did be an unease upon our spirits; for our spirits did perceive something afar off in the night; but yet had we no surety in this matter.

And we went forward through a great hour more; and did pass in that time, two places where the blueshining did be; and truly it seemed as that a low gas hung to the earth in this part and that, and made a slow burning, having neither noise nor spurtings; but slow, as that it did smoulder and be all to shine and luminous. And oft there did be a strong smelling of a bitter gas, very horrid in the throat.

And in the end of another hour, while that we were a space off from one of those gasshinings, there went past us at a distance, as it did seem people, running in the night; as that they did be lost spirits; yet with a rustling very soft; so that they did be like to be barefoot.

And I thought mayhap that these did be some of the Peoples of the Lesser Pyramid; yet did they be only as that shadows went among the blueshinings. And I pondered a moment, whether that I send my voice over the Valley, to question what they did be; but yet had caution, and harked through the utter silence of the night; for I had no surety of aught.

And, surely, in that moment that we harked very keen, there did be a sound afar off in the night of the Land; and it was as that we had heard the sound before; and, in verity, our spirits had perceived the sound, those two hours back; and now our bodies did wot, and perceived that we had known it subtly before that moment. And the sound was as that something went spinning in the night.

And a very great terror came upon the Maid; for she did know the sound; and the sound was that which did show that one of the great Evil Forces of the Land did approach; and the sound had been known alway in the Lesser Refuge to show this thing. And, indeed, mine own spirit had been half to know that a Power of Evil did come through the night; but yet was the assurance very terrible; for how should I protect Mine Own.

And the spinning came toward us, and was presently in the Valley; and it came swiftly across the dark of the Valley. And my heart was all broken within me, because that there had been happiness with us, but a little time gone; and now there did be our death anigh.

And Mine Own gave me the knife that I had given to her; meaning that I slay her, in the last moment; for she did heed even in that moment that she be not gashed horridly by the terror of the Diskos. And I took the knife. And I kist not Mine Own; but stood there,

very shaken and desperate, and gript her fast unto me, scarce heeding the hardness of my gripe; and alway I lookt unto the way of the coming of the Sound. And presently did unbare my wrist where the Capsule did be.

And the sound of the thing Spinning came anigh, across the Valley; and my heart did dull and my spirit go black with my desperateness, because that this thing must be, and because that I could nowhere see hope that I should save Mine Own.

And, of a sudden, the Maid put up her arms, and pulled me downward, and kist me once on the lips; but I wot not whether I kist her; for I did burn with despair and was all adrift in my being. Yet was there a sharp comfort that mine own dying did be so nigh.

And the Maid stood gently against me; so that she did be convenient unto my hand. And afterward I remembered this thing; and do you pray that you be never to have such a matter on your hearts! But, indeed, there was a wonder in this thing, beside the horror; so that my memory doth be alway knowing of this wonder; and mayhap you do see with me, and love Mine Own also in your hearts. And in the moment that the Maid stood thus, as I have told, I perceived sudden that there did be a little glowing in the night, and the glowing was pale and horrid. And there was no more any sound of the Spinning; only there did be, as it were, the trunk of a great tree, that did show in the glowing; and the trunk of the tree came toward us across the darkness.

And I turned the Maid from the Tree, and she did flutter a little in my hands, as I did know, scarceknowing; for she perceived that she did be going to die in that moment. And I had my body thus between the Evil Thing and the Maid. And lo! the Tree came no more anigh to us; but went backward, and the pale glowing did fade, and the Tree no more to be seen.

And I cried unto the Maid, very husky, that we did live; for that the Evil Power was gone off from us; but she answered not, and did be heavy against me. And I held her, and lookt alway about us, lest the Tree come in upon the other side.

And, as I lookt this way and that, I saw naught; and afterward, in a moment, I searched the night above, lest that the Thing come from above. And, behold, I saw that there abode over us a clear light, as it were a clear burning Circle, above us in the night. And my heart did leap with an holy joy and an utter great thankfulness; and I was no more in fear of the Tree; for, in verity, there fought for our souls one of those sweet Powers of Goodness, that did strive ever to stand between the Forces of Evil and the spirit of man; and this matter have I shown to you, before this time.

And concerning this holy Defense, I have thought that it should not, mayhap, to have had so strong a power to save us, if that we had shown an overweakness and fear, but because that we did rather stand so well as we might to make battle of escape from so dire a Destruction.

And, surely, this doth seem but a sane thinking unto me; but yet without proof, and to be said to you, only as the shapings of my thoughts. And this the chief end of that happening, that the holy Circle did truly deliver us, and burned through twelve great hours above us; and by this, do I know that the Evil Power hovered anigh, to destroy us, all that while; for, indeed, it doth not be proper of reason to suppose that such an utter wondrous thing did be needlessly over us, save to be a Shield of Great and Lovely Force against a waiting Evil Thing. And surely you do see thiswise with me?

And, truly, so soon as my Spirit and Reason perceived that we did be no more to suffer from the Evil Thing, I remembered that I did know that Mine Own had swooned. And, in verity, you shall mind how that she did face her death so utter sweet and brave, and had given no cry, but made quietly to help me in that dreadful moment, and did stand brave and gentle to the stroke. And so fell into a swoon, as you have seen, because that she did suffer an hundred deaths as she did stand so brave, waiting to be slain, for the blow did be so long delayed, yet to come in any moment.

And I gat her to cometo unto her life again, and I set the lovely tale very swift to ease her, and surely with love and warmth, and kist her with a great joy. And I showed how I did honour her for her good courage.

And she to weep a little, with the ease come so sudden upon her; and afterward to kiss me upon the lips an hundred times, and to need that she be very safe in mine arms, because that I had meant that I do so dread an office to her. And surely I do wonder whether you perceive all that did be then in her heart.

And the holy light that did be over us, she did watch with a sweetness of awe; and rest did come more great upon her in the heart, as she did learn how sure was the seeming of that Lovely Power to deliver us.

And, presently, we made forward again in the Valley. And did go steadfast, and newlyloving each to the other, and so through twelve great and bodyweary hours; but our hearts could never be done singing within us, nor our hands to cease from the hands of the other, because that we did so crave each unto the beloved.

And in the ninth hour, a monstrous way off in the dark of the Valley, there did seem as that there went a far and dreadful screaming in the night. And it did be as that our

spirits perceived the sound of something Spinning in the night; yet faint and a great way off; but yet had we no surety that we did truly hear the sound of the Spinning; only we did be so shaken in the heart, for truly there was some horror done unto humans, downward in the mighty darkness of the Valley. And to think upon the sound of the Spinning, was to be in a shaking trouble of the spirit; and to bless the quiet and holy light that went above us in all that time; and to ache only that it should stay to be to our protecting. And surely it did be plain that there were the signs of great Forces in that Land.

And three hours after that time when we did hear the faroff screaming, we were come up over the edge of the Valley, and did be once more unto such light as did be general in the Land; and truly it did seem a wondrous lightness, after so utter a dark.

And we did be all exhaust, and Mine Own drew her feet so weary that it was as that she must go no more, until we did rest; for indeed it was three and thirty hours since last that we had slept; and a bitter trouble and work there had been in that space, as you do know.

Now we had eat some of the tablets a few hours back, as we did walk, and had drunk some of the water; but had made no rest; for we did crave only that we come free of that Valley. And now it was needful that we rest, if but a little time.

And I minded that we find some place where I should have a hot pool, that I be able to bathe Naani's feet. And, surely, we came in a while to a hollowplace, and there did be two dullburning fireholes in this place, and a hotbubbling spring, the which did seem to be a rare thing in that Land; so that we were the more fortunate to perceive it.

And I made Mine Own to sit, with her feet in the hotspring; for it was not overhot, and did seem pretty natural to my taste, as I did prove in the first. And also I did search about the hollow, lest there be any harmful creature nearby; and this you will have truly supposed, because you do know the methods of my journeying. But yet did I not have so much care as did be proper; for I was so dull in the mind, by reason of my weariness; but, indeed, there came naught to work us any harm; and so we came to no suffering, through mine aches and dullness.

And I sat beside the Maid, and made her to eat a tablet, and saw that the cloak did be nice about her, and her head to rest against my knee, and I laid the palm of my hand to be as a pillow, because of the armour, to ease the hardness.

And I eat with the Maid, and we both drank after; and so there came back somewhat of our strength. Then I took the Maid's little feet, and rubbed a portion of the ointment

from the pot all about them, very gentle and constant; and so did they be newrested and eased; and she presently fit again to the journey; for I was strong set that we go quickly hence out of that Land, and stay no more there to sleep, lest we come unto Destruction.

And when we had rested an hour, I put the shoes again upon the Maid, and made them secure; and so gat my gear about me, and made to the journey.

And lo! as we did leave the hollow, I lookt upward unto the Holy Light; and behold it was gone from us, and by this thing I supposed that we had come free of instant danger; but yet did there be to me a seeming of nakedness and unprotection, as you must perceive.

And because that the Light was vanished, I was the more set that we come speedy out of the Land. And we went forward at a strong speed, and had the Great Red FirePit of the Giants to our rear unto the left, and a mighty way off in the night; but yet I did wish it the further. And before us, was a small ridging up of the dark Land, as I did judge, because that our view of the lights and the shinings was bounded; and to our left at a great way the low volcanoes, and somewhat to our right, across all that part of the Land went the cold and horrid glare of the Shine.

Now, in a little while, I felt that the ground did be sloped upward before us a little, and by this thing I saw that I had known aright, for that there did be a ridge that hid the Land somewise over unto the part where I lookt to find the mouth of the Upward Gorge. And we went up this slope at a strong pace, because that I was so eager that I find where we did be in nearness unto the mouth of the Upward Gorge.

And surely, I was something forgetful, in mine eagerness, and came somewhat ahead of Mine Own, who did make to hide from me that she did begin to lag, because that her new strength was near gone from her.

And sudden there did be a very dreadful cry, to my back; and I came round in one instant, so quick as a light doth flash; for it was the voice of Mine Own, and all my being did suddenly burn with fear that kindled through me in a moment of thought.

And lo! Mine Own did struggle terribly with a yellow thing which I perceived to be a man with four arms; and the Man had two arms about the Maid, and with two did make to choke her unto death; for she cried out no more.

And I came unto the Man with a quick leaping, and stopt not to pluck the Diskos from my hip; and surely I did be very strong, and mine anger and rage to make me monstrous; for I caught the two upper arms of the Man, and brought them backward in

an instant, so fierce and savage, and so wrenched upon them, that I brake them in the shoulders of the Man.

And the Man roared and shriekt, even as a wild and dreadful Beast should cry out, and came round upon me with the two lower arms. And surely it was a mighty and brutish thing, and so broad and bulkt as an ox, and the lower arms were huge and greatly haired, and the fingers of the hands did have the nails grown into horrid talons, as that they should grip very bitter.

And it caught me by the thighs, to rip me upward, as I did fear; but yet this did not be the intent of the Man; for in a moment it caught me round the body; and on the instant, I gat the Man by the great throat, and the throat did be haired, and so great as the neck of a bull. And I strove with mine armoured hands that I choke the Man, and surely I made it to suffer great trouble; yet, I could not harm it in the life.

And so I did be an horrid minute, and fought with the Beast, with no more than the strength of my body; and it was as that an human went with his hands to slay a monster so strong as an horse. And the breath of the ManBeast came at me, and did sicken me; and I held the face off from me; for I had died with horror, if that it had come more anigh; and surely the mouth of the Man was small and shaped so that I knew that it did never eat of aught that it did slay; but to drink as a vampire; and in truth, I did mean that I chop the Man to pieces, if that I have chance to the Diskos.

And I did sway this way and that, as we did struggle; and surely it was as that the Man had never made to use the lower arms, save to hold unto prey, the while that it did use the upper arms to strangle, as I do think. For all that weary minute of the fight, the Man made not to loose from me, that it should tear my hands from their grip to the throat; but made vain waggings with the arms that I brake, as that it would use these to the attack; but surely they had no more power to do hurt.

And sudden, it put forth an utter power about my body, so that mine armour did be like to crack; and truly I had died in a moment; but for the strongness of the armour. And the man hugged me thus for an horrid time, the while that I did hold off from me the brutish face, and gript very savage into the haired throat.

And lo! the creature did work slow in the brain, and in the end loost from me, abrupt, and went back with a leap, so that my hands did be ript from the throat of the Beast. And in one instant it did be back unto me, and gave me no moment to free the Diskos. But I made anew to fight, and shaped as I had learned in the Exercises of mine Upbringing; for truly I had been alway deep in practice of such matters. And I slipt from the great hands of the Man, as it did try to take me by the head; and I hit the Man with

mine armoured fist, and put a great power and skill to the blow. And I went instant to the side with a swift stepping, and evaded the Man, and I smote the Man again, and took him very savage in the neck; but all the while grown very cold and brutal and cruel; for I was set to the slaying. And the ManBeast came round on me; and lo! I slipt the gripe of the great hands, and my body and my legs and mine arms did work together unto that last blow; so that I did hit so hard as a great hammer. And I gat the Beast in the throat, and the Beast went backward to the earth, even as it did think to hold me.

And lo! in a moment, I was free, and I pluckt forth the Diskos from my hip. And the Yellow BeastMan grunted upon the ground; and it rose up again to come at me; and it stood and did grunt, and did seem as that it was gone mazed; for it did make other sounds, and an horrid screeching, so that truly, by the way of it, I conceived that it cried out unknown and halfshapen words at me. And in a moment, it came again at me; but I cut the head from the BeastMan, that was in verity an horrid monster, and the Man died, and was quiet upon the earth.

And truly, in that moment, the distress of mine efforts and mine utter tiredness and the ache of the bruises took me; so that I do surely think I rockt as I stood; but yet was my head strong to think and my heart set in anxiousness; for I wotted not how great an hurt had been done upon Mine Own.

And I ran to her, and came to where she did be upon the ground; and surely she was all huddled, and had her hands very piteous to her throat, that did be so pretty. And it did shake me in that moment that she was truly slain; for she was gone so utter still and as that she did be broken unto death.

And I took her hands from her throat, and surely it did be a little torn; yet not to be much, or so that it should loose her of her dear life. And I strove that I steady the trembling of my hands; and I gat free of mine armoured gloves; and made that I feel whether her throat did be deadly hurt; and, in verity, it seemed not so; only that my hands did so shake, because that I was so frightened for Mine Own, and because that I was but new come from the battle; and because of this, I had not power of touch to assure me.

I made then that I quieten my breath, which did yet come very full and laboured; and I put mine ear above the heart of the Maid, and lo! her heart did beat, and the horridness of my fear went from me in a moment.

And I had the scrip from my back very speedy, and some of the water to fizz, and I dashed the water upon her face and upon her throat; and surely there did be a little quivering and an answering of her body.

And I strove with her for a while more; and she came unto her life again; and in the first, she was all alack, as you may think; and immediately she began that she remembered, and she then to shake.

And I told her how that the FourArmed Man was surely dead and could harm her no more; and she then to weep, because that she had been put to such shock and horror, and held by so brutish a thing. But I took her into mine arms, and so she did come presently to an ease; and I perceived in all my being that she was as a little ship that doth lie in harbour; for she did cling and nestle unto me; and did be safe with me in all her heart and body and belief. And surely she was Mine Own, and I to have glory in that knowing.

And presently, I put her from mine arms, to lie; yet so that she might not perceive the body of the Yellow BeastMan. And I made clean the Diskos, from her sight, and afterward I put on the scrip; and I took the Maid to mine arms again, and had the Diskos in my hand beside her. And she made protest that she should truly walk; for that I was all aweary, and she come to her strength again. And, indeed, I carried her a certain way, and did then put her down to her feet; and truly her knees did so tremble that she had not stood, let be to walk! And I caught her up again; and I kist her, and I told her that I did be surely her Master, in verity, and she mine own BabySlave. And truly you shall not laugh upon me; for I was so human as any; and a man doth talk this way with his maid.

And she did be quiet and sweet and to obey wisely; for she was gone very weak. And thiswise we did go; and I to say loving words, in the first; but afterward I did heed more of my going, now that she was something eased and at rest within mine arms. And I did peer everywhere about, lest that some other evil thing come outward of the bushes, to have at us ere I did ware. And, truly, the bushes grew here and there in that place, very plentiful, in great dumpings.

And presently I was come to the top part of the ridge; and lo! a great gladness took me, and some amazement; for there did be the lights that did be in the mouth of the Upward Gorge, and they did show me that I was come anigh to that place. Yet had I feared that we were surely a dozen great miles off; and now I to learn that we did be scarce of two or maybe three, as I did judge.

And I told this thing to the Maid; and she rejoiced in mine arms, with a deep and quiet thankfulness. And I set forward then at so good a pace as I might; and I was come into the mouthpart of the Upward Gorge in about an hour; and surely I did be very weary, for

it was beyond six and thirty hours that we had gone since last we did sleep; and there had been sore labour and terror to our share in that time, as I have told.

And I turned in the mouth of the Gorge, and told Mine Own, very gentle, that we did take our last look upon that Land. And she askt that I put her down to her feet; and I put her down. And therewith we stood in that place, and mine arm about her; and so did I support the Maid, the while that she lookt silent over the dark of the Land.

And presently she askt me in a very husht voice, whether that I knew where the Lesser Pyramid did be in all that Darkness; for she was all adrift of her bearings, and was as a stranger, because that she had never lookt upon the Land from that place, before then. And I showed her where I thought the Pyramid to stand hid in the everlasting night; and she nodded, very quiet, as that she did think thatwise, also.

And so a time did pass, and I knew that Naani said goodbye forever unto all that she had known of the world in all her life; and she did be whispering a goodbye in her soul unto her Dead.

And I was very husht, and deeply sorrowful for the Maid, and did understand; for in verity, there should no other human look upon that Land of terror through all the quiet of eternity; and the Maid did lose all her young life into that blackness, and the Father that was her Father; and the grave of her Mother; and the friends of all her years. And there went death in the Land, even then, after those that did live.

And Mine Own shook a little within mine arm; so that I knew she strove that she be brave, to weep not; but afterward, she made not to cease from her tears; and truly I was there, to be her understanding; and she did be sweet and natural ever with me; for she was Mine Own, and did be hourly the more so.

And presently, I moved a little, to sign that we go downward of the Gorge; and she stayed me one moment, that she look once more over all that Land; and afterward, she submitted, and turned with me, and did break into very bitter sobbing as she did go stumbling beside me; for the sorrow of memory did fill her; and she was truly a very lonesome Maid in that moment, and had come through much dreadfulness.

And in a minute, I stoopt and lifted her; and she wept in mine arms against mine armour; and I very silent and tender with her; and carried her downward of the Gorge for a great hour more. And presently she was grown calm, and I knew that she slept in mine arms.

And in thiswise we made farewell of that dark Land, and left it unto

Eternity.

XII

DOWNWARD OF THE GORGE

Now I carried the Maid an hour downward of the Gorge, as I did say; and I was then grown so weary that I near fell, as I walked, and stumbled everywhile, because that I had lost somewhat of guiding in my feet, the which did show mine utter alackness.

And I saw that I must come very swift to a place for slumber, or that I did be like to fall headlong with the Maid; for I nigh slept as I walkt.

And I began that I give attention to the sides of the Gorge; and surely I had gone that hour all in a dream; for I was freshwaked, as it were, in that I did give my will to perceive aught; and when I did come to have power to attend, I knew that I had gone, even as a sleepwalker; for the Gorge did seem a fresh matter unto me, and as that I had come awake sudden to find myself awalk in that strange and narrow place.

And presently, I saw somewhat where I did be; for I minded the memory of mine outward journey, and truly I have a good power to know and remember a way that I have gone. And I saw that there was a great and ruddy firehole anigh to me; and I was all sure that I had perceived certain caves in the wall of the Gorge, near to that fire, as I past it on mine upward way; and I had been given a mighty longing of heart at that time, that it be given to me that I should bring safe Mine Own out of the peril that beset her, and have her unto just such a place for her slumber, on the way of our journey backward.

And surely I tell you this thing as a child in pleasure; for, truly, it was a wondrous happy matter that my desiring should be like to have a true ending; as, indeed, it did seem was truly to be, if that my memory had set me aright.

And I went onward somewhat; and lo! I to be right, for the little caves did be there, a little past the great firehole; and there were seven of them in the left side of the great cliff of the Gorge; and one did be as that it were very cozy and a place of sure safety, if that we could win unto it.

And truly, as I did conceive, we had come safe from the Evil Forces of that Land; but yet did I mind that there was no surety in this thing; and neither did I know but that some Monster should come downward of the Gorge, out of that Land; and so work our deaths, as we did sleep; if that we have no sure place for our slumber. And, indeed, I had wished that we were come a greater way downward of the Gorge, but this might not be; for I was all adrift with weariness. And truly, if that we gat upward to the topmost cave, there did be few Monsters that should have power to come at us, ere we be warned of their

coming. And afterward they should be like to come upward against the Diskos; and this should be indeed a thing difficult, as you shall conceive.

Now it did be needful that I wake the Maid, and I kist her, as she did be in mine arms; and surely that dear One did kiss back again in her sleep, and was yet asleep. And truly I did love her with all my being; and I kist her again, and shook her very gentle, and so had her to wakefulness, and told how we did be come to a place fit for our slumber.

And she to look about, very sleepy, as I set her to her feet; and then to upbraid herself that she did over to slumber, the while that I did labour with her carrying. And, in verity, I kist her again, as she did stand making to steady herself, and looking so pretty with the sleep that did lie yet in her eyes. And she to kiss me very dear and all mine; and even then scarce proper come to wakefulness; and did say with something of a little dear abandon, that she did love me utter and forever.

And afterward, I climbed to the topmost of the caves, and told Mine Own the while that she walk up and down a little; so that she come to a full awakedness; and this I was careful to, because that she should have a need of all her powers that she come safe upward unto the cave.

And when I was come to the cave, lo! it did be so sweet and dry, as did make glad my heart. And there did be a warmth in the cave, as that there went a fire somewhere through the rocks anigh. And the light from the firehole did make a reflection inward, and so this did seem a place safe, and fit to our slumbering.

And I came downward unto Naani, calling that the cave was very proper for our use; and presently I gave her mine aid to the climbing, and so we came in the end safe into the cave; and truly we did feel very safe and happy.

Yet, before we did sleep, I set free the scrip and the pouch, and took the straps and went downward again into the Gorge; and I gat a good boulder, so heavy as I might carry, and strapt it to my back, and came upward again to the cave, and the Maid very grave and anxious, lest that I slip to my hurt. And when I was come to the cave again, I set the boulder in the mouth of the cave, and did balance it so light upon the edge, that a touch should send it rolling downward.

And by this devising, I conceived that any Beast or Monstrous thing that should climb upward whilst that we slept, should be like to set the rock adrift, and mayhaps the rock to work an harm to such, but the chief end to be that I should be swiftly waked by the noise.

And then I did turn that we go to our slumber; and lo! the Maid had spread the cloak upon the rock, that we should sleep upon it; for truly there did be no need that we have it now to our covering, because that the cave did be so warm as I have told before.

And surely, there did be no cause either that I should have the cloak for a bed; for how should I perceive any softness from the cloak, through all the sternness of mine armour; but yet did I see that the Maid had made a couch that should be for the two of us, and did be so sweet and natural, and to lie by me; but yet to preserve her sweet modesty, and to do the thing with no thought, save that it was natural to our hearts; and that she did long alway to be anigh to me; but yet, mayhaps, scarce full conscious that her heart did prompt her in this thing.

And, in verity, I loved her very dear.

And surely, Naani showed me the where that I should lie upon my side; and when I had obeyed, she kneeled, and kist me on the lips, very sober and loving; and she lay down then upon the cloak beside me; and truly we had both gone to sleep in one little minute, as I do think.

Now I did be waked twelve great hours after, by the fizzing of the water; and lo! when I lookt, the Maid was not beside me; but did make ready our simple eating and drinking. And she laughed at me, very sweet and tender, because that she loved me so, and did be so glad to have me awake to her; and she came over to me, and kist me, very bright and loving upon the lips.

And after that she had kist me, she kneeled beside me, and lookt at me, very dear and tender; so that I knew in a moment that she had waked a while gone, and watched me, somewise motherlike, as I did sleep. But how I knew this thing, I am not sure, save that my spirit did know, or that her thoughts did have tongues unto mine.

And truly I needed that I be so loved, and all of you to say like with me; and I put up mine arms to her, as I did yet lie; and she not to deny me, but came into mine arms, and did snuggle there so sweet and happy and gladly, and with so true a delight, that it did be plain how she did love in all her body and spirit to be anigh to me, as I to her. Yet, truly, as you do mind, the armour did be upon me; so that I feared to take her very strong in mine arms, lest I hurt the dear Maid; and surely the armour did be a stern matter for her to nestle unto; but yet, mayhaps, did the sternness something please her womanheart, and yet, again, mayhaps to lack.

And presently, she made that she would go from me, and I loosed mine arms from her very ready, because that I did heed alway that she have full sweet liberty of her dear

Maidenhood; and I to be watchful sufficient unto this end, yet always honest and wholesome and not overpondering even in this my care; and this proper intending you shall ever perceive, if that your hearts do strive to hearken unto my heart, which doth speak always before you.

And the Maid went from me, over to where she had put the cup of the water, and the tablets; and I to make to rise, that I look that the boulder did be safe untouched in the mouth of the cave. But she called unto me that I lie backward; for that she did mean gently to spoil me that once; and that I have no heed to the boulder or whether there did be any Monster or Beast anigh in the Gorge; for that the boulder did be safe as I did balance it; and nowheres any Creature to sight in the Gorge; for she had lookt oft, since waking, to this end.

And truly I obeyed, and lay back, and did like that I should be spoilt, as we do say. And Naani brought the cup of the water, and the tablets over to me; for she gat them from the scrip before I had it to my pillow, in that while when I had gone downward for the boulder. And surely, even when she brought the cup, she would not have me to rise; but took my head upon her knees, and kist me once very dainty on the lips, and I very happy to be so loved, and wishful no otherwise.

And she took a tablet and kist it and gave it to me; and afterward touched another to my lips, and had that to be for her own. And so we eat and were very glad and happy, someways as children are happy, and our hearts all at ease.

And presently, we eat each our second tablet, in the same wise as the first. And truly I did be kist more than once. And afterward, we drank each of the water.

And when we had made an end, Naani told me that I move to stand; and surely I wondered; and I stood up, and lo! I near cried out with the pains of my bruising; for I was all gone stiff in my sleep, and as that I did be more sore than ever; and this to be because I had fought again, as you do know, and surely had been hurt more by the FourArmed Man than I had known.

And I perceived then that Naani had supposed that I should be thus pained, and had given dear thought to the matter; and truly she had the pot of the ointment, ready, if that I did be very bad, that she rub me.

And she gave me aid with mine armour, and afterward eased me with my garments; and surely I did be utter bruised in the body, by reason of the violence of the Yellow BeastMan. And the Maid had somewhat so tender and sweet in her eyes as she looked upon the bruising, that I did be very happy and to glow with contentment.

And she had me to lie, and made me in comfort with the cloak, so loving and grave, so that I was as a child that doth be cared of by his mother. And she did rub me very skilful and gentle for a great hour, until I was all refreshed. And in verity she was a lovely wise maid.

And as the Maid ministered unto me, I lay alway very restful, and harked to the low sound of the muttering of the firehole that did be in the bottom of the Gorge; and alway I did feel as an happy child that doth be clothed in love and guided in wisdom.

And presently, when that the Maid had ended her dear care, she put by the ointment, and gave me her hands very dainty, that she mean to aid me to rise; and surely when I was come again to my feet, I was all eased, and to have movement with no great pain; and truly this made me wondrous pleased and to feel new couraged; for I had been troubled that I should be so helpless, in that I did be the Protector of Mine Own.

And when I had tried my limbs, and found them to be in command and ready, I lookt about for my garments. And lo, the Maid brought me my spare bodyvest, from the Pouch, and had it upon her arm, to give to me. But surely she denied me a moment, of the vest, and stood before me, and had an admiring and wonder, very sweet and honest, because that my arms did be so great and hard with muscles.

And, indeed, I did be very strong, as you have perceived; for I did be alway in affection of the Exercises that were taught in the Upbringing of all the Peoples of the Mighty Pyramid; and by this explaining, you shall understand that I was like to be strong; but indeed, I owed the straightness and shaping of my body to the Mother that bore me. And afterward, in all my life, had I taken pride of my body to be of health and to have strength; and surely this is a matter very fit for pride; and to be told bravely and with honesty.

And the admiring of the Maid was very sweet to me; and, in verity, I did be to deceive, if that I said otherwise. And in a moment, she dropt my bodyvest, and put out her hands to me that I take her into mine arms.

And I took the Maid into mine arms with a great gladness and with somewhat of humbleness that I was nowise good enough to hold her, for my heart was young, and I loved her very dear and youthful. And she did lie there very quiet and happy, a little; and surely I did find presently that she kist the great muscling of my breast, very sweet and sly, where her face did be press against it. And lo, in a moment, she came free of mine arms, and gave me an aid with my garments, and afterward with mine armour.

And when that this was done, she stood off from me; and she lookt at me, half shy and half of sweetness and naughtiness. And she came then in a moment, and put her hands upward to my shoulders, and so stood her eyelids something down over her eyes; and did steal a little look up, this time and that. And lo! in a sudden moment, before I did wot, she was to her knees before me, and did weep; and I down very swift to kneel with her.

And I askt not why she wept; for I perceived that she did have joy and glad happiness and sweet trouble of her man; and that she did be a true woman, and one part of the woman did worship, so that she did be strangely humble and nigh to be shy; and another did love, and need that she be anigh to me; and a third to have a calm wisdom. And all did now be atremble, together in her heart; and I knew that I did be truly an hero to her, though but usual to all others. And my heart was wondrous proud and wondrous humble, so that I was in the same moment upraised and to feel dreadly unworthy. But I made no pretending to discredit myself to her, but only did resolve that I win alway her dear respect; and I did be natural and truthful of my manner and without foolish denial of her sweet worship, for she was utter Mine Own, and it did be a pitiful thing if that I seem otherwise than an hero unto her.

But of you I ask kind understanding, and to call me not a thing of conceit because that I did understand; for truly I knew my faults, even so well as you, that do know all of my going. And you to look backward upon the lovedays, and to mind how that your maid did ever to make you great in manhood with her dear belief and uplooking; and so shall you conceive of all my feelings; for we do be all so human in this matter, and to meet on a dear natural ground, as you will say.

And, truly, in a little time, Mine Own did be steadied, and wiped her pretty eyes, and nestled to me a while, very husht and to need that she be close. And I to have her gentle against mine armour, and to be in my heart as that I did be her father and her lover in the one man, and surely to be silent and joyful that I lived.

And presently I slipt her shoes from her little feet, with my right hand, the while that she did rest within my left arm; and I condemned myself that I had thought not more swift to this end; but indeed I had thought upon it while that Naani rubbed me, and had intention thiswise; but afterward forgat, as you shall understand, that have been with me alway. And truly Mine Own did be hurt that I say aught to my blame; and I to cease, but yet to feel reproached by my heart.

And when I had lookt to the Maid's feet, I tied on her shoes again; and we gat together our gear. And afterward we came down from the cave, with a great care, because that it did be so high up in the cliff of the Gorge.

And afterward, we made downward of the Gorge, and had a good care to our going, and so much of speed as we could make, that we come something off from the Dark Land of the Lesser Redoubt, so quick as we might.

And in six hours we had gone very well, and we stopt then that we eat and drink; and afterward, I lookt again to the feet of the Maid. And I bathed them in a great rock basin of warm water that did be anigh to the place of our eating; and afterward I put the ointment about them very thorough and gentle and for a good while; and so she had some ease and comfort.

And afterward, we made onward again; but now we did go pretty easy; for I had considered the notings of mine outward journey, and so did perceive that we should be but six or seven hours off that part of the Gorge, where did be the Slugs.

And I was minded that we rest and sleep, ere that we make through that dire and dreadful place; for that we should be twelve great hours, and more, to go through, and to have no rest or pause, until that we did be safe outward again, as you shall think. And so did we need to be strong and well rested, and this to be wise also for the feet of the Maid.

Now surely the Maid did be in delight of the fires of that part of the Gorge where we were come, and she had beside a rest of the soul, in that she had feeling that there did be no Evil Force to trouble us to our destruction; and I bothered her not yet awhile with tellings of the horrid place that we should to journey through in a while, as you do know.

And so we did go, and alway with a good caution, lest that some Beast or Creature should come upon us; and alway with the fireholes before and behind, and in the air of the Gorge the little whistlings of steam that did spirt out in this place and that; and a good warmth in many parts, by reason of the fires; and odd whiles a smelling of sulphur; but not greatly, nor to our trouble. And alway the low muttering of the fireholes and pits, and the red lights, and the dancing of the shadows when that we did go by a firepit where the fire did frisk and burn lively. And upon either side, the grim walls of the Gorge going up measureless into the night.

And so we were gone presently, pretty comfortable, for six good hours, since last that we eat; and we made halt, and eat and drank; and I showed the Maid how that we should make a short journey that day, and sleep, and so be ready to the horrid journey through the dark part of the Gorge, where the Slugs did be.

And we made search then, that we have a safe place to our slumber; and surely I perceived where we did be; for we came upon that same cave where I did sleep after that

I was come free of the Slugs; and that we were come no farther, doth show how easy did be our present going, and this you do know. And there did be the spring where I washed, and the firehole anigh, and truly they were not like to be gone away, as you shall say! Yet did we exclaim, very natural; for the Maid did be so deep in interest of the matters of my coming, and to be at once that no other place should serve for our rest and slumber.

And, indeed, this was a natural thing, and the place so good as any, save that I did wish it had been upward unto a high place of the Gorge, as you shall understand. But yet might we block the mouthpart of the cave with boulders, somewise as I did before, and so to have a defence against any thing that should make to enter upon our sleep; or at the least to be waked by the falling of the boulders.

Now Mine Own went inward of the little cave, which did be very light from the firepit that was to the front; but before that she did go, I made a swift search of the place, that there should be no creeping thing; and truly it was sweet and free. And the Maid did be strangely taken that she should come to the veritable place where once I did lie on mine outward way; and truly I do understand, and so shall many that do have these feelings about matters. And afterward, we went unto the hot spring that was in the hollow of the rock, anigh to the firepit. And I saw that there did be no snakes, neither any of the rattings anigh; and so I had the Maid to sit very comfortable on the side of the pool, and I freed her shoes, and bathed her feet, and afterward rubbed them very steady with the ointment; and so for a good time, and alway to keep a looking out upon the Gorge.

And presently, when that I had taken a loving care of her pretty feet, I tied the shoes again upon the Maid, and so back to the cave; and the two of us to carry boulders, according to our strength. And when we had a sufficient, we builded a rough and clumsy wall, after that we were gone into the cave; and the wall rose nigh to fill the mouth of the cave, and made us to be somewise in darkness, but yet to feel in safety. And I had a good heed to make the chinks of the wall very close in the bottom, so that no small creeping thing should come through unto us whilst that we slept.

And afterward, Naani set the scrip and the pouch to be for my pillow; but had the bundle of her torn garments to be for her own purpose.

And I perceived that she had the waterpowder and a pack of the tablets to her hand for our waking, that she might prepare our food, and mayhap to wake a little before me, so that she have all ready to greet me from my sleep. But, indeed, I said naught to show that I knew; for I saw that this thing did give her a dear pleasure, and truly it was very sweet to have her to these gentle duties, that did be to her so sure and quiet a delight.

And Mine Own bade me that I lie; and she put the Diskos upon the outward side of me, to mine hand; and with a dainty and fearful touch; for the weapon did be very dreadful unto her thoughts; but yet a comforting thing to abide for our defence. And afterward, she covered me with the cloak, and kist me very sedate upon the lips; and then to her own side, and to come very nice and happy under the cloak, and so to her rest.

And presently she did sleep, as I perceived by her breathings; and surely it did seem to my spirit that she had an utter and dear content in this arranging of our slumber, so that she did be all at peace in all her being, because that she did be nigh unto me, that did be her Own Love.

But, indeed, I could not sleep for a time; and surely, in a while, Mine Own did nestle unto me in her sleep, so sweet and dear as a child, and likewise as that it did be her right to be so anigh unto me; and I to be that I should put mine arms about her, but indeed I moved not, neither did I kiss her, as I did wish; for truly I should be very manly with mine own maid that did be so trustful and utter mine in her sleep.

And presently I was over unto slumber also, and stirred not for eight good hours, and did wake then to the hissing of the water, so that I knew Mine Own was awake before me, as she had planned, and was making ready that we eat.

And when she saw me move in the halflight, she gave out a little word of joy, that I did be again to knowledge of her; and she came over, and put her arms about my neck, and kist me very loving, thrice upon the lips. And, in verity, it came to me in that moment that I had been kist a while gone in my dreams, but scarce to know it; yet I perceived now that Mine Own had taken a naughty advantaging of my slumber, that she kiss me to her own pleasure; yet did the Maid say no word of her naughtiness; and I to be likewise; but to resolve that I waken, mayhaps, on the next time, and so catch her in her sweet and secret delight of me.

And, truly, this doth sound quaint; but to be true.

And I rose, and took down the half of the wall that did be across the mouth of the cave, and afterward lookt out; but there was no sight of any horrid thing in the Gorge, save that one of the rathings did slumber, very gorgedseeming, upon the side of the little fire hole.

And afterwards, we eat and drank; and the Maid then to rub me, as before; for I was greatly stiff on my waking, as you shall think; but she came not into mine arms presently, as I did hope; but only kist my shoulders, when that she had finished, and so bid me to dress.

Yet, after that I was drest, and had mine armour full upon me, she must come unto me, and she slipt her two small hands into the one of mine, and so stood by me, very silent. And sudden she put up her lips very quiet and passionate, that I should kiss her; and she kist me once, as it did be as that her spirit kist mine, and all her being came unto me; and she gave me but that one kiss, and afterward slipt her hands very gentle from mine, and made to the gathering of our gear.

But truly, I that loved her so great, knew that a tumult of love did be hid in her heart. And, indeed, she looked once at me in such wise, that I grew near to a true humbleness of heart because of the honour and love that did be in her eyes.

And surely, it is a very little thing to die for such an One as Mine Own did be. And by this saying, shall you perceive my heart in that moment, and that I did pant, as it were, that I do some deed of love to show my love. And truly this is but a natural desiring and human, and the cause proper to the uplifting of manhood. And surely you shall all mind you of such feelings in the past lovedays, that I do pray should be never past.

And when we had our gear together, I left it in the cave, and took Mine Own over unto the hot pool that was anigh to the firepit; and she to exclaim upon the ratthing that did be yet aslumber upon the side of the firepit; and I to say that the thing did be no cause for fear, but rather, indeed, a good friend, in that it was a devourer of snakes, as you shall mind.

And while that we talked, I bathed the little feet of Naani; and surely, as I dried them upon my pocketcloth, I was taken that I should kiss them; and surely I kist them, and they did be very shapely and dainty, and all eased of travel by the care that I did take to this end.

And afterward I rubbed them with the ointment for a good while, and so had them again into the shoes, and the Maid very quiet, after that I had kist her feet that did be so dainty, but yet with a sweet naughtiness in her way, as my heart perceived, though she did nothing, neither said anything, to this end; and was truly very obedient, and orderly to all my wishes.

And we went back then to the cave, and the Maid put the pot of the ointment back into the pouch, and she buckled the pouch and the scrip upon me; and the Diskos I had upon my hip; for I went nowise anywhere, without it, as you shall suppose. And she had the little bundle of her clothing for her burden, and truly, I was ready that she should carry so much; for we did be to act wisely, and she well able to carry so small a thing, and I better to have my hands alway free to the Diskos and to the needs of the way.

And we went downward of the Gorge at a strong speed, for there did be somewise of fifteen hours good journey, ere that we come out upon the far side of that place where the Monsters did be, and this did be three hours to the upward beginning of that place, and twelve hours journey then, in the least, that we should take to go through again into the light of the Gorge below. And this I did reckon from my notings of mine upward journey, as you do know.

And I made all clear to the Maid, of the thing that did be before us, and made not to hide the danger and horror, but yet to make not overmuch of the same. And she to walk close beside me, very sweet and trustful, and to say that she feared naught, so that I should be there to have care of her; but only that she did fear harm for me; and yet to have confidence that I should slay all hurtful things that should be like to trouble us. And, truly, I did kiss her for her dear belief and love.

Now, in the middle part of the third hour, the air of the Gorge did begin that it was heavy, and to have a seeming of fumes that stang something upon the throat, odd whiles. And there were presently less of the fireholes, and soon, as we did go the more downward, the beginnings of a great gloom, and to have smoke therein that made us to feel husky.

And in the end of the fourth hour, we were come truly far downward within the gloom; and to be as that we groped in a fog of distaste; and to know not how we went with any surety; for oft there did be an utter darkness about us; and awhile the shine of a dullglowing firepit upon our sight, that did show us the gloom and dread of that place.

And we went alway very husht, and the Maid to my back; but I did halt now and this time, and make to know how she did be; and surely she whispered very brave to me through the dimness, and once did slip her hand into mine, and I to take off mine armoured glove for a little moment, that I hold her hand, and give her nice assurance. But, in verity, there was terror in mine heart, that did be a terror far beyond the trouble of mine upward way; and surely I was shaken newly with every danger, lest that I should lose Mine Own, or she to come to any hurt. And, indeed, you shall perceive how I did be; for so should you be in a like case, and, in truth, it doth be an utter anxiousness and suffering.

Now when we had been two hours in the dark part of the Gorge, I smelled of the dread and horrid stink that you do wot of. And surely a great fear came upon me; for I perceived that we did come among the Monsters, or that one came anigh to us.

And I whispered unto the Maid that she halt; and we stood very husht a while, and surely the stink did grow, and to be very dreadful in the nostrils, so that I felt Mine Own Maid to shake somewhat with the fear and disgust that this thing did make in us. And presently the stinking did ease somewhat from about us; but whether there had gone past us a monster Slug, I have no sure knowing; for there did be no firepit anigh to that place; so that there was a great darkness all about.

And surely there was a great slowness and wetness of the air, and dismal drippings that made desolation in the silence; and the feel of strange growths upon the boulders, as you do know, and oft an horrid slime and dankness; and the stink to be everywhere, so that we knew a constant disgust and fear. And alway the fumings of sulphur, that did seem, in verity, to beat down upon us, utter heavy and sore upon our lungs.

And so went we onward amid the smell that did be as of dead things; and oft did we make pause and hark, and had a great care as we did go by the dull fireholes and firepits, that we should make no showing of ourselves in the light.

And sudden, as we did go by a great pit that burned very deep and red, I reached back and caught Mine Own by the arm, and I set her gaze unto the right side of the Gorge, which was beyond the fire. And the Maid went very still, as she did see the thing that was there; for in verity it was utter monstrous, and did shine very wetlooking in the light of the fire. And truly it moved a little with the head, this way and that, stretching through the dark and the shadows, as you shall see a slug to move, and with no speed or sound, and nowise seeming heedful of aught. But yet did I fear that it smelled us, if this might be; and this, as you shall think, to be a very natural fear.

And alway, as I do mind, it seemed to go blindly somewise, or to have that slow and strange moving that doth make one to think of a blindness; but whether it did be truly blind, how shall I say; only that it was an utter Monstrous Brute, so great as the black hull of a ship, and very dreadful unto our hearts.

And we moved not for a while, save that I pulled Mine Own down into the hiding of the boulders of that part; and she to put her hand very anxious unto me; yet not to be comforted, as I did half to think, but to persuade me, lest that I go to some adventuring that should set me in a surer danger. And this I perceived in a little moment, and loved her for her care.

But, indeed, I had no mind to aught, save that we come clear of that place; and I watched the Monster, through places between the boulders; and surely, in a little while, it swayed the great head very slow and quiet unto the cliff that did make that side of the

Gorge; and the Brute set unto the Cliff, and began that it went upward with a strange moving of muscles that did go wavewise under the wet and horridgleaming hide.

And so, in a little time, it was gone quiet against the cliff, and the headpart did be upward in the darkness above, so that it did be from our sight. But the monster body did be plain for a great way, and was seeming clung to the cliff, and to come downward out of the dark, as that it did be a great black ridge of soft and dreadful life upon the face of the cliff; and the tail was something less bulked, and to taper, and did trail outward into the Gorge upon the boulders.

And surely the thing did seem as that it slept, but that odd whiles the tail did lift a little off the boulders, and curl somewise, and afterward come down again upon the boulders, mayhap in this place and mayhap in that place, as we did watch, all hid.

And it was as that our sense and our Spirits did assure us that the thing had no wotting of us; but surely our fears did nigh to equal the comfort of this sweet reason, and to make us think otherwise.

Yet, in a time, I made that we go forward together through the spaces that did be among the boulders. And I went creeping, and the Maid to follow likewise.

And oft I did pause, and made a watching upon the monster; but truly it moved not, save as I have told; and I kept a great heed upon the Maid, that she follow always close unto my feet.

And in the end we came safe from that place where the monster did be clung unto the great cliff in the night.

And we went then for two great hours without adventure, save that once the Maid touched me that we pause; for that something went by us where we did be in an utter dark place of the Gorge, and no firehole anigh.

And I knew that the thing did be near, even as the Maid toucht me. And caught I the Maid in the dark, and thrust her under the side of a boulder; and I crouched then before her, with mine armour, that I should protect her from any Brutish thing. And the Diskos in my hand, and afterward an horrid time of waiting.

And the stink of that part of the Gorge grew very dreadful, so that it did be as that we should not breathe, with the horror of the stink. And there went past us some horrid and utter Monster, that made neither sound nor anything, save that there seemed a strange noise that might be the breathing of a great thing; but yet did be all uncertain, in that the

sides of the Gorge cast the sound this way and that, in an horrid whispering of echoes; so that we did not know whether the sound be made nigh to us, or afar upward in the eternity of the night, where I did suppose the mountains to be joined over the Gorge in a monstrous roof in that part.

And presently, the strange noisings died in the upward height, and all about us; and the utter disgust of the stink went from us; so that we knew that the Monster had gone past us, and did make downward through the dark Gorge; and mayhap then to some lone and dreadful cavern of the world, as I did think.

And, indeed, as I do mind, I had a sudden wonder at that time, and other whiles, as it did chance, whether this way did be truly the olden way that the Peoples of the Lesser Refuge did travel in the Olden Days. And surely, as I did suppose, they had come some other way, or the Gorge to be different and less dreadful in the faroff years. And this thing you shall agree with me to be a reasonable thinking.

And after that the Monster had gone a good while we went onward again, and with a great caution; and dreading always lest that we come upon that Monster, in the darkness; but yet did we know by smell, and by all our consciousness, whether that we came nigh unto one of the monster Slugs.

Then, in the end of the fifth hour in the dark part of the Gorge, we came by the mouth of that great cavern, upon our left; and you to remember the same.

And I made pause in the darkness, and had the Maid very gentle by the arm, that she should look with me. And I whispered how that I past this place, to my right, upon mine upward way, and how that I did think there to be aplenty of monster caverns within the mountains that made the sides of the Gorge, and that, mayhap, the SlugCreatures had there an home in such places, or came up, it might be, from some utter strange deepness and mystery of the great world.

And the Maid did bide very close unto me, and silent, whilst that I whispered; for the terror of the place did be on her, yet not to make her lacking of courage, but yet to put a monstrous awe upon her and a great and natural fear; and I likewise, as you do know.

And we stayed there, where we did be, a little moment, and looked downward into the bowels of the monster cavern; and the shine of the firehole beat over the cavern in the near part; but there did be an utter mystery and deathly dark beyond the shining of the pit that did be within, as you shall remember.

And, in verity, as we stayed but to glance, I perceived that there lay humped things about the fire, and some to be blackseeming, and some to have a seeming of whiteness, but with no sureness in the colour to mine eyes.

And there came a moving in one of the humpt things, so that it did be as that an hill did wake unto an horrid life. And immediately I knew that the humps did be some utter monsters, mayhaps even the great Slugs, aslumber about the firepit that did burn in that strange deeply cavern. And I saw that I did ill for our lives, that I should pause even for a little moment to such staring.

And immediately I whispered to Mine Own that we go with all our speed; for, indeed, I knew not whether that our nearness had waked that Monster, or whether that it had but waked by chance. And truly, I was utter eager that we be gone from that place, so swift as we might.

And we went on then through all of the sixth hour that we did be in the Slug part of the Gorge, as I named it unto myself. And in all that hour, there did nothing harmful come anigh; only, as I did know presently, there came an unease upon our spirits, but yet to be very little at that time, and we to be scarce knowing of it. And alway, as we went, there did be darkness for the most, and oddwhiles a vague murmuring of the night far above, as it did seem; and presently the dull glare of a firepit to shine out far off below us in the Gorge, and to seem very dim and unreal unto us, by reason of the smokes and the fumes that made a haze and a distaste in the Gorge.

And presently, the murmuring of the night to grow somewhat, and, afterward, the sound of the muttering of the firepit to come unto us; and the murmuring to die unto our ears that did be hearing now only the dull muttering, and so we to know that the murmuring of the night did be truly the faroff muttering of the fireholes, and our eyes to guide our hearing, and our reason to explain and knit the sounds; and so we to pass by the firehole with a great quiet and caution and ever with watchfulness, as you shall suppose. And afterward again into the dark; and presently again the murmuring, to tell that we came unto another of the firepits, that was yet afar off in the Gorge, and made dim echoes in the night.

And alway we went very watchful, and in grim fear; but with steadfastness and good intention to win forth out of that desolation and horror, and having alway so great a speed as the darkness and the dangers and the trouble of the way did allow.

And in this place I will make explanation why that I speak somewhiles of firepits and otherwhiles of fireholes; for the holes did be those fires that burned nigh to the brim of the holes; but the pits were those places where the fire was deeply in the earth. And this

thing I give for your enlightenment, even on a small matter; so that you shall have a clear knowledge to abide with me all the way; and you to agree of this for wisdom, and I to be pleased that you so agree.

And here also, I should tell that there did not come a muttering from all of the fireholes and the firepits; but mayhap from this one, and mayhap not from that one, according to the way of the fire therein. And this shall be plain unto you.

And so shall you see us go, and the smoke and the bitterness of the sulphur to be all about us; and oddwhiles the murmuring of a faroff pit, and oft the utter silence; and to pass this time a lonesome firehole; and afterward the utter dark, or the halfgloom, all as might chance, according to the nearness of the fires. And upward in the everlasting night, the grim mountains to make a roof over us, as I did suppose.

And all this while did the unease, of which I have told, make upon us; so that, presently, Mine Own whispered unto me the thing that already my spirit did half to perceive, that there came after us through the night some harmful thing, that did be surely no great way off, as I did feel within me, and the Maid to have a likeways belief.

And, truly I thought at once upon that Brute that did wake downward in the mighty Cavern, where did be the great inward firehole, as I have told; but whether this did be true knowledge that we did be chased in the dark by that thing, or whether there came after us some other Monster, I could have no sureness; but only that we did be chased, and of this I had assuredness.

And I set the Maid before me, that I have myself ready to the danger that followed; and we made forward again then, so quick as we were abled; and she went very wisely; for she had good wit and had noted the ways of my leading.

And we went thus until the end of the seventh hour. And surely, in that time, we heard the murmuring in the night which told of a firehole somewise before us; and soon to have the red glare plain to our eyes, and the noise of the murmuring to die away into the nearer mutter of the fire; and so presently to be anigh; and we to make forward with a good speed, because that we feared utterly the thing that made quiet chase of us through the night.

And oft I did look backward, and smelt the air, that I know whether it did be a monster Slugbeast that chased us; but there did be no worseness of the smell, to tell me aught.

And alway, I did be fretted in the heart, that we could make no greater speed; but, indeed, as you shall perceive, our going did be but a slow thing in the dark places, and even thus we had many a sore tumbling and bruising.

And by this, we were come almost unto the firehole; and immediately, I saw that I knew the place, for there went upward beside the fire, a great jaggedness of rock, that I had seen upon mine upward way.

And surely, I caught the Maid in an instant, and bent her, and she quick to obey with her body. And we were both immediately hid downward among the boulders. And this I did, because I minded how that there did be many of the Monsters nigh to this same firehole, as I did go upon mine upward way.

And we went forward then with an utter care; but yet to keep onward, because that there did be somewhat in chase of us. And, in verity, when that we were come opposite unto the firehole, I saw that there did be seven of the monster Slugs against the far side of the Gorge, and did be all set upon their bellies against the cliff, and their horrid heads to be hid in the upward dark, and their tails to lie very great and softseeming in the bottom of the gorge, upon the boulders.

And, lo! the Maid toucht me, and she drew me to look upon the near cliff of the Gorge. And truly there did be three of the Brutish Things laid upward there, and a fourth did be humped somewhat upon a great ledge that did be upward of the Gorge, and just to be plain to our eyes.

And surely, it was as that we did be all surround by such Monsters, and to make the heart sink, and fear to lie upon our hopefulnes. But, indeed, the Maid showed a good spirit, and I to have fierce determining that we come free of that Gorge, and afterward, in time, unto our Mighty Home.

And we made forward again, and did go creeping among the rocks and the boulders; and so came presently past that place, and had not waked the Monsters, if that indeed they did truly sleep.

And I made halt a moment upon the far border of the light from the firehole, and I lookt backward up the Gorge, perchance that I should see the thing that followed us. But, indeed, there came nothing out of the dark of the upward Gorge, so that I knew that there did be some safe space to our backs, which did be truly a comforting thing.

And here I should tell how that there was no great stinking in that place where did be so many of the Slugbeasts, and this to puzzle me; and in the end to make me think that

some of those horrid things did stench more great than others; but yet I to have no certainty in this matter, as you do perceive. And, truly, this thing troubled me; for I had been comforted that my nose should tell me when that the thing that made chase of us should draw nigh in the darkness; and now, in verity, I knew not what to have for assurance; for the awaredness of the spirit was but a vague thing, and no more in such a matter, than a feeling as of an inward warning.

And we went onward then for a great hour, and with an horrid unease upon us; and thrice we did go by firepits in the darkness; and alway I made pause upon the far side of the light, that I should look backward; but did have no sight of aught; yet did my spirit or my fears warn me with new fear, and a greater sense of nearness; and the Maid to confess also to this thing.

Now, we saw not any of the Slugs for a long while, neither had there been any about the three fireholes; and the air of the Gorge was grown something sweet and free somewhat of the stench of deadseeming things; but yet to be very bitter with fumings and smoke and sulphur stinks.

And lo! in the middle of the tenth hour, as we did go, painful and with anxiousness in a very dark place of the Gorge, there came unto us again the smell that told to us that one of the Monsters did be anigh. And surely we had both a great fear, in that we had belief that it did be a sign that the thing that made chase, did draw near upon us. But yet did I to use my Reason also, and to know that the stink might be from some Monster that we were come nigh to in the darkness of that place; and I whispered this unto the Maid, and she to say, very husht, that it might be so; but to have no belief; and I to be likewise, as you do see.

And we pusht forward at a new speed, and had many bitter falls, so that we did be all bruised; but not to know it at that time, because that our fear did be so keen. And oft we made a little pause and harkt; but there did be only the dismal drip of water from on high; and presently the murmur of the night, that told that we drew near unto a new firepit.

And surely this was a great easement to our spirits, in that we should have light to perceive our danger, and mayhap to win free. But to be in that utter dark, was a thing to break the courage, and to breed belief that we did be utter helpless, and all wrapt in horror and despair.

And the stink grew ever, as we made forward; so that I knew not whether there did be great Monsters beside the firepit that was to our front, as I have told, or whether it made plain the advancing of the Pursuer. And we only to be able to make our best speed, and

to be weary with hope that we rush not blind into death; and always to be chilled in the back with the belief that the thing that made chase did be very close in that utter dark, and to gain upon us.

And we knew not whether to make our belief to be the tellings of the spirit or the utterings of our fears; and so shall you perceive our plight; and we but to be able to make forward. And, in verity, the dreadfulness of that time doth shake me now to think upon, and you also, if that you have gotten my tellings to your hearts, so that your human sympathy doth be with me.

And there came presently to our ears the far mutter of the firepit, so that very soon the murmuring was lost to us in the night, and only the slow mutter to be plain. And the dull looming of the fire shone afar off, through the night and the smoke and fumings; and we to a great speed, and to pant with fear; but yet with a freshness of hope again to sweeten us.

And we came nigh to the firepit, and lo! the smell did be grown very drear and foul; but there did be no SlugBeast near the fire. And by this, we perceived that we did be truly in an utter danger, in that the Pursuer did be upon us, and the stinking to tell this to be truth, and our spirits to have warned us very strong and proper.

And I stopt near to the firepit, which did be great, and very redglowing; and I lookt upward of the Gorge, into the night of the Gorge that we did come from; but the Monster was not yet upon us to work our death. And I lookt to the sides of the Gorge, and the Maid to have the same thought that did be mine, that we climb the mountains that made the sides of the Gorge.

And I lookt very keen first to this side, and then did run overward, that I look more close upon the other; and afterward back again; for it did seem that we should have a greater ease upon the side that we did be.

And I askt the Maid whether that she did be prepared; and she to be very white and wearied, and all besmirched with the dankness and growths upon the boulders and the hidden pools of the Gorge and the dripping of the waters; but yet did she be sound in her courage, and to show that she had all belief and abiding in me, and her judgement likewise to be with mine, in that her own Reason did approve.

And I took the bundle of her torn clothing from her, for it did be at her girdle, and like to trouble her movings; but she to refuse, very determined, in that I did be already overburdened. And I to be firm in my deciding, and to make her to yield the bundle, the which I hookt unto the "hold" of the Diskos, where it did be to mine hip.

And the Maid to be there, a little figure, and white in the face, and strangely angered, and her anger mixt with hidden acknowledgement that I did be her master, and half to be minded that she move not from where she did stand, and part to be reasonable and fearful of the hidden Beast; and in part also to thrill in her womanhood unto the man that did be so masterful unto her. And all to pass in a little moment, and we to be to the Gorge side, and busied very eager to the climb.

And the Maid to be first, as I did heed, and I to follow, and have constant looking to the task and to her safety, and alway to be bitter anxious for our speed to be good, and to be anxious the more then, lest that Mine Own should slip; for there did be an horrid wetness upon the sides of the Gorge, as you shall have guessed, and horrid growths that blotched the great rocks mightily, and made an utter slipperiness, if that they did be trod upon; and we to have to come so clear of all such matters, as we might, and yet to be speedy for our lives, and likewise to lack no care and thought to the setting of our hands and of our feet in places fitted to the lifting of our weight.

And truly you shall see that we went very desperate, and I to give word to the Maid that she look not downward, the which I was urgent upon, lest that she come giddy in the heart. But I, as you shall think, could scarce to keep from fearful peerings below, so that I learn speedy whether the Pursuer did come yet into the light of the firehole, beneath.

And presently, the Maid did gasp very weak and troubled with the soreness of the climb; and I came higher, and set mine arm about her, as we did be there upon the face of the cliff; and she stopt very still a little while, and an ease did come to her, and an assurance of safety. And surely, I kist her there where we did be in that upward place, and her lips did tremble unto mine; and her courage and strength to come back into her, so that in a minute she did make once more to the climbing.

And we came presently to a place where a great ledge did be, that juttet out from the mighty cliff, and was surely a huge way above the Gorge bottom. And the ledge sloped, and there were on the ledge, great stones and boulders that did make lodgement there through eternity.

And I lookt very careful to our way, and saw that we did be in the path of a mighty rock that was overnigh unto the edge of the shelfplace, and did put fear upon me, in that it seemed that it should come down with great thundering upon us, if that we but shook the place where it did be.

And I caught the Maid very swift and gentle, and shaped our path unto one side of that great rock, and did presently lose my fear, when that we did come safe from under it.

And in a minute after, we were come upward upon the ledge, and a very safe place it did seem, and surely as that no monster should be abled to come upward upon us. And this I did try to make for comfort unto ourselves; but that we both to know how that the great Slugs could lie up against the sides of the Gorge, and surely it did be like that they should be able to come upward clear of the Gorge, and so to the place where we made to have safety. And I had no thought to deny this thing, when that it was clear to my brain; but set rather that we should have some way to fight the Monster, if that we did be discovered.

And I thought in a moment upon the stones that did be about; and the Maid in the same moment cried out that we should push the big rock down upon the Slug that we believed to have chase of us, and indeed, the rock to be a great weapon, if we could but stir it, as you shall think.

And alway, as we talked, very hushed, we lookt downward into the deepness of the Gorge, unto the upward end of the firelight; but there came no thing yet unto our knowledge, only that the stinking did rise up to us through that great distance.

And the firepit to seem now a very small burning, and to give no great light up to us; and we neither to be abled to see very clear of the Gorge bottom, in that the haze of the fumes and the smoke was in the air of the Gorge, and made uncertainty; and we to be nowise proper free of the smoke, even where we did be.

And we watched, very set with anxiousness and fearful expecting of the monster; and did be both yet lost of breath, and the Maid that she made her words something broken for a little while.

And lo! in a moment, Naani cried out very low and sharp that the thing did come; and I to see a moving of somewhat, in the same instant, in the Gorge that lay upon the upward side of the firepit.

And immediately I saw the great and monster head of the Beast come forward into the shine from the pit; and the head did be of a blotched white, and to have the eyes upon great stalks that came from the forward part of the head; and the stalks to be set downward, so that the eyes lookt upon the bottom parts of the Gorge. And surely this doth be very horridseeming to the mind of this age, but yet to have a less strangeness unto the two of us that had seen many horrid sights, as you do know.

And as the Monster came forward the more into the light, I saw that the great and utter mighty bulk did be all of that same whiteness, that did be so set over with blotchings and

a seeming of unhealth. But, truly the colour was proper to a creature that did abide in so great a darkness, as you shall say, yet had those Slugs that we did see, been black and shining, for the most, as I have told; and this to be as I saw, and I not to heed here that I try unto explainings in this place; else should I be never eased of my task, as you do see.

And the Monster Slug came onward, and as it did go, it set the stalks of the eyes in among the boulders, as that it did search; swayed now this way and now that way, from side to side of the Gorge, and alway it pushed the stalks of the eyes inward among the boulders; and so to go forward, searching. And truly it was very dreadful to see the thing make search for us, and to go so steadfast to so dread a purpose.

And, indeed, I saw it not so plain as might be, because of the haze of the fumes and the smoke that did lie in the air of the Gorge, as I have told, and made something vague the sight at this time and that; but yet we did both see a strange thing; for when that the great white body did be come half into the light, the SlugBeast set out a big tongue among the boulders, after that it did peer thereunder; and the tongue did be very long, and white, and something thinseeming; and the Monster lapped inward in a moment a great snake from among the boulders, and the tongue did hold upon the snake, as that there did be surely teeth or roughness upon the tongue; but yet the distance to be too great for any surety of the sight, as you do know; and moreover, there did be the uncertainty of the haze within the air.

And the Slug took the snake inward, all as it did lash and wriggle, and swallowed it in a moment; and, in verity, that snake did be a big and horrid creature, else had it been not so plain to our sight; but it did be as a worm unto the monster, and gone instant.

And immediately, the SlugBeast went again to searching, and the head to sway from this side unto that side of the Gorge; and by the wideness and ease of this swaying shall you perceive the utter greatness of the Beast.

And alway, as it did come downward of the Gorge, it thrust the stalks of the eyes inward among the boulders, looking all ways; and oft the breath did come from it, as a cloud; and the stink to rise up unto us, very plain and an abomination. And again, we saw the Beast set the tongue in among the boulders of the Gorge bottom; and it lickt forth a snake that did seem so thick as a man in the body, and the snake to thrash in the great white tongue, and to be immediately drawn inward, and gone utter.

And surely, as the thought did stir in me, there did be a great Mercy over us, in that we did not die by such a serpent in some dark and horrid place of the Gorge. But yet, as it is like to be, mayhap the snakes did be only anigh to the fireholes; yet doth it be anywise a

wondrous thing that we had come so free of them alway; and truly to learn, was to be given a new terror.

Now the Monster was come fully into the shining of the firepit, and was upon this side; and the fire to make a shining against the side of the Slug, so that odd whiles I did perceive very plain the huge wrinklins and musclings of the skin, as the Beast made onward. And alway it did search, thrusting in the eyestalks among the boulders.

And sudden, it made pause, and did begin that it brought all the mighty body together, and humpt itself, and brought the headpart round unto the bottom of the cliff that made this side of the Gorge. And it gathered itself, and afterward did lengthen upward against the cliff, and begin to climb. And lo! I saw that the Beast did scent of us, and made to come upward to destroy us.

And as the mighty hill of the body did come into length against the great cliffside, the Beast set the eyestalks into this cave and that, as it did go, and into all crannies; and so lengthened upward very straight and monstrous and dreadful unto us, and did be as a white and mildewed hill, that had an horrid life. And the stink to come up, so that we did be like to lose our breath with the dreadfulness of it, as you shall think.

And surely, for a moment, I looked unto the rocks upon the ledge, and this way and that way, and upward unto the everlasting darkness that did be above us, and again unto the great rock that did seem to quiver upon the edge, as I have told. And I was grown utter desperate in a moment; for, truly, it did seem in that instant that there did be no power in the world that should slay so utter mighty a Monster.

And immediately, even as I did despair, I had run very swift unto the great rock, and the Maid with me, both very strained and shaken with the horror of the thing that did make upward unto us so sure and intent.

And I set my strength unto the rock, and heaved; but indeed the rock gave not from the place where it did be; so that I had a dreadful despair; for I saw that it did be more secure than had seemed. And the Maid lent her strength unto mine, and we heaved together, with sore pantings, and little cries to guide our endeavours and because we could not be contained in that moment.

And surely it seemed that the great rock moved, and lo! as we strove together to the task, there came a vast and sudden grinding, and the rock to cease from our shoulders, and to be gone from us, or scarce we did wot of the happening. And the rock went over, and rushed downward upon the Monster, and with mighty crashings, as it did grind and crush the face of the cliffside with a quick and constant thundering. And I caught the

Maid, as she did stagger upon that dire upward edge because that she had set her strength so utter to the endeavour, and the rock to be gone so sudden, as you do see, and she to be like to follow after. And she clung unto me, and I to hold her very safe as I lookt down upon the falling of the Rock. And behold! the Great Rock smote the Monster in the humpt part of the back, below of the head, and did enter into the Monster, even as a bullet doth strike, and was gone instant from my sight into the Vitals.

And there came a mighty sound of anguish from the Monster; and the Monster did loosen from the cliff, and to crumple, as it did seem, and sink backward. And a great steam of dread breathing to go upward from the Beast, and a reek; and it made again the strange and horrid noise of pain, and the Gorge to be yet full of the echoes of the Rock thundering, and with the noise of the rock there was now mingled the horrid sounding of the deathcrying of the Beast. And the Gorge to be filled with dull and dreadful echoings, as that an hundred Monsters died in this place and that of the darkness in the Gorge, and all to be bred of the noise of that mildewed hill adying.

And the echoes ceased not for a while, even after that the Monster did be utter quiet; for truly they came presently from far upward and downward of the Gorge, out of all the eternity of the night, and to be as that they came backward very faint out of lonesome miles, and out of the strange deepness of unknown caverns of the world. And so in the end to silence; and the far bottom of the Gorge to be filled with a white and horrid hill, very dreadful, and that did yet quiver to show the slowness of Death. And alway a dreadful reek and stinking to fill all the air, even unto the height, as of the grave.

And I stood upward in that far, high place, and held the Maid very strong and tender; and she to have covered her ears from that dreadful crying; and to be yet shaken with the greatness and horror of the dying of the Monster, and the nearness that she did come unto falling, as you have seen.

And presently she came less to tremble, and did weep very easeful, even as a babe doth weep; and I, mayhap, to be not oversteady, as you shall think; but yet to have a great gladness set in my heart, and a triumph, and an utter grace of thankfulness.

And I held Mine Own, very tender and sure, as I did say; and she very soon to be eased of her trouble, and the shock to be something gone from her. And she lookt up at me, and slipt her arms upward about my neck, and pulled me downward unto her, that she might kiss me.

And we to talk then, of the going down; and surely this did seem a great and dangerous task; for, truly, we had come upward pretty easy in the excess of our fear; but how we might go down, with our blood cool, I did be all in doubt.

Yet, before that we did aught else, I led the Maid upward on to the safe part of the ledge; and we sat there, very quiet and weary, and she did be leaned against me. And we eat, each of us, two of the tablets, and I to scold and coax Mine Own to this end, and she to obey and to be better afterward, because that she had eat. And we drank some of the water, and did rest a time longer.

And presently, our courage and strength was come back into us; and we packt the scrip again, and the Maid set it fast to my back; and we went then to the edge of the shelf, and lookt downward, this way and that; and surely, there did be no way to go, save the way we came; only that we might shape our downward climbing to bring us a little below that place where the dead Monster did be.

And I saw by mine own heart and by the paleness of the Maid, that we should do well that we consider the thing no more; but make to the task.

And I went immediately over the edge of the shelf, upon my belly, and I bade Naani to follow. And we began then that we go downward; and, in verity, we went downward for, mayhap, a great hour; and I gave help alway unto Mine Own, as I could; and she to come after me very brave, and made that she hold back her fear, and come downward of that cliff, that did be oft like to a mighty wall. And surely, even as we came down, I marvelled how we did ever go upward, even though fear did aid us; but, indeed, I do think it doth be easier to climb safely, than to come backward; for this is how I have found.

And we made rest thrice upon ledges of the cliff. And afterward came downward again; and alway very slow and with exceeding heed where our hands and our feet did go, that we slip not suddenly to our death.

And once, as I did see, the Maid was lost of all her strength, and did be going to fall, because that she did be all gone into a sudden weakness of the head in an instant. And she did be silent, even in that moment, the which doth be marvellous unto me, and to give me a strong pride of her, as you shall understand, if that ever you have loved. And surely, I came upward, in a moment, that little space that was between, and had mine arm about Mine Own very swift, and held her hard and fierce against the cliff; and this I did that she should feel how that she could never fall; and immediately, her strength and her dear courage came back into her; and I kist her, there against the mighty cliff; and afterward she did have power again to come downward safe.

And presently we were come to the Gorge bottom, and maybe an hundred paces down the Gorge from that place where did be the dead Monster, all sunk into an ugly and horrid heap, so great as a small hill.

And a dreadful stinking did hang in all that part of the Gorge, by reason of the Slug; and signs of disgust, as you shall think; and the great and mildewed body of the thing yet to settle and twitch, as I did look, as it did come properly unto death in all that mighty bulk. And everywhere, the skin of the Beast did be set into great wrinklings, and horrid blotchings to be upon the improper whiteness thereof; and truly I did be in haste that I turn the Maid away from that thing, and that we haste downward of the Gorge.

And we went then for two good hours, and alway I did hearten the Maid, and she to go very husht and trustful by me; but truly I did be in an anguish of heart, because that I was newly aware that there did be such great and dreadful serpents in that part of the Gorge, as you do also know. And I was not overfeared for myself, but for the Maid that did have no armour to protect her dear body. And because that I was so set with this trouble, I took the Maid presently into mine arms, that I carry her, and so to have her clear of aught that should lie among the boulders.

And, in verity, Mine Own did show an anger very surprising and determined; for I said not why I should carry herfearing to give her a greater uneasebut only that she did be weary, and I very strong and willing.

And, indeed, I could not bring her to reason, without I told her, which was not mine intent; for she did refuse me to carry her; and said that truly I had need of no added burden unto my labours.

And when she saw that I would not be moved by her reasonings, she made to win upon me by her loving ways; but, indeed, I only kist her; and went forward with her in mine arms. And she half naughty, that I did be so heedless of her wishings, and somewise hurt also; and so to be silent in mine arms; yet mayhap to be something stirred in her nature, that I did be steadfast to mine intention, despite that her will did be contrary.

And this I do believe to be truth, because that, afterward, I do think that she lay there in mine arms, only as a woman that doth be in the hands of her Master that hath all her love.

And in thiswise we went forward.

And in the end of the two hours that we did go, there was come the end of the dark part of the Gorge; and we to be outward of that mighty roof of the mountains, as I do think it to have been; and the air to be free of the stink of the Monsters, and the fireholes to be very plenty, and their smokings to go upward very proper; so that we had no more the bitterness of their fumings in our throats.

And there did be a pretty good light, to go by the contrast of the past hours; and I set Mine Own again to her feet, and made that she keep to my rearward, so that if there did be any serpents to our path, they should come first under my feet, and thiswise to work no harm to me, because of mine armour, neither to Naani, Mine Own Maid.

Now by this time, it was somewhat of nineteen great hours since we did sleep; for we had been a long while making that we come safe from the Slug; and, indeed, we had come downward with a less speed than I did go through upon mine upward way, as you shall mind; and this to be that Mine Own did not have the hard strength that was in my body to the enduring of great labour and stress; and this surely all to be plain unto you that have been with me in all my journey. And, moreover, there must be kept to mind the three hours that we had gone, ere we were come proper into the dark part of the Gorge; and so all to be remembered unto you; and also you to mind that we did be wakeful a time, ere that we set forward upon that day's journeying.

And we did go almost in joyouswise, because that we were come safe out of that dreadful place; and surely, odd whiles I did feel the hands of Mine Own Naughty One to be hookt very pretty and sly into the backward part of my belt, as that she did make a pretending that she drive me before her; and surely this doth be a strange thing to tell upon; for there did be no knowledge of the olden horse in all the eternity of that dark world; but yet, maybe, some dear olden memorydream did set her hands unconscious to this pretty work.

And, in verity, once I turned very sudden, and had her swift into mine arms, as she did pretend to drive me; and she to laugh with a sweet and joyous gurgle against mine armour; and I to heed that I hurt her not, because I did be like an iron man that should put arms about a tender maid.

And we lookt alway now for a place that should be proper to our rest and to our sleep; and when it did be close upon the end of the twentieth hour of that journey, the Maid showed me a cave that was, mayhap, fifty good feet upward in the right side of the Gorge.

And I lookt about, and saw that there did be two fireholes anigh, and a warm spring to make a basin of water, that did lie between the fires; and all very well set to our need, as I did perceive; for, indeed, we did be utter besmirched with the filth of the Slug part of the Gorge, and to need that we be nice and fitly washed, before that we have any comfort of our selves.

And I bade Naani to wait a little minute; and I lookt well up the Gorge and well down the Gorge; and lo! there did be no thing to set me in unease; and I told Mine Own that she keep a sharp and steadfast watching, and not to heed me; and this I said, because I knew she did be like otherwise to look at me and be overanxious, as I go upward to the cave; and, indeed, she to be better anyway in watch of the Gorge, and to cry out to me, if that anything came anigh, whilst that I went upward.

And I made upward to the cave; and was come there pretty quick; and truly it did be good for our purpose, and freshseeming and dry, and to have no holes that I could see for the hiding of creeping things.

And I called down gently to the Maid that the cave did be proper; and she to show her gladness, and to be looking upward at me, instead of the way of the Gorge, as I set her; and truly she did be a dear and human little Maid, and utter Mine; so that I did find a new joy in each small lack of wisdom, and this just so much as that she had done a wondrous proper thing. And truly, you shall say, there was some properness to her heart, in that she could abide not but to watch me.

And I went quickly down to Mine Own; for there was alway an unease upon me, save when I did be nigh to her, in chance of trouble.

And when I was come down to her, the Maid did be seeming a little in thought; and afterward showed me how that she did be all in a pitiful disgust of the dirt and slime and the drippings of the Gorge, that did be on her, and had made her garment utter wet and bemired, so that she did feel that her very body was a repulse unto her.

And I saw how it did be with Naani; and I went to the warm pool, and felt that it did be not overhot, and afterward found the deepness, by the handle of the Diskos, and this to be scarce of three feet, and the water very clear to show me the bottom, so that it was surely a nice and proper place to be for such a purpose as I did think. And I set some of the water to my mouth, using my hand; and truly there did seem no hurtful chemical in the water; and therefore was I eased that the Maid should have the desire that I did see to be in her mind.

And I saw that I should be helpful to Mine Own, if that I make the arranging of things to be in mine own hands. And I went back unto the Maid, and told her that the pool was very nice to be for a bathplace; and that she to haste to wash herself, whilst the Gorge did be free of any Creature or Monster.

Now I saw that Naani was troubled, and feared that I did be going to leave her, and yet did be paused a little in her words, to show me all that she did wish.

And surely, I stoopt and kist her, as she did look so wistful in her little puzzlement; and immediately I removed her trouble very natural, and told that I should stand guard anigh to her, the while that she bathed. And, truly she did be at ease on the moment, and mayhap something surprised to know wherefore she had been something alack to ask me. But, in truth, it did be very natural.

And I told her to be so quick as she might, which was a needless thing to say, yet to start her; and she to go quietly to obey me; but first to take the cloak out of the hold upon my shoulders, and to unfold it, and so to the pool. And I to stand with my back thatwards, and to lean, ready, upon the Diskos.

And presently she did be in the water, as I knew; and I to be her man, very sure and gentle to her and sedate. And truly, as you shall think, I did love that I be to stand guard to her in her dear maidenhood; and she, after that she was cheered and warmed by the delight of the water, to sing very low and happy to herself, where she did be to my back.

And, sudden, the singing to cease, and the Maid screamed; and I to have no thought of improper modesty but turned instant to the Maid. And in a moment, I saw what did trouble her; for there came a serpent out of the water; and the Maid to be all adrift with natural modesty, and with her fear of the serpent. And I was come into the pool in a moment, in mine armour, and did lift the Maid, naked and wet into mine arms, and had her instant from the water, and upon the side of the pool; and there I wrapt the cloak about her; and ran very quick and killed the serpent, as it did go offwards among the boulders. And surely it did be so thick as mine arm, and to have come from some hole that did be hid in the bottom of the pool.

And I came back then to Mine Own, and took her into mine arms, and set the cloak well about her; and she to cry and to tremble with the shock and disturbance of the thing; but soon to be eased, and ready to laugh with me.

And so she was come proper to her happiness again, and I very gentle and joyous with her, for truly my heart had been sick that she had come so nigh to that horrid danger.

And I eased the scrip from me, and opened it, and made her to take two of the tablets, and she to refuse to eat, save I company her also; and indeed I did be very willing, for truly my belly was alway empty. And she to be very glad to eat, because she did be clean now, and to have no more disgust of herself. And afterward, we drank some of the water. And soon we did be finished, and she to ask for her girdle that I did give her with the knife, as I have surely told. And she belted the cloak very graceful about her; and lookt very dear and pretty with her little bare feet; and her hair very lovely upon her

shoulders, for she did wear away in the Gorge the lining of my headpiece, and so had her hair dry and sweet.

And, in verity, I did mind now, how that she did look very beautiful in her bath, as I had gone to succour her from the snake; and I to be nicely wholesome in this remembering, because of my love, but yet to be knowing that I was sweetly stirred to new things; and did not know before that a maid lookt in the same moment so holy and so human. And afterward, in odd whiles, I remembered; but never to think overmuch, because that I did feel inwardly that I should be gently wise in such things; and you to understand my heart in this, if that ever you have loved.

And surely, the Maid brought me from my dreamings very sensible, in that she had me to stand; and she was gone about me very swift and natty with her pretty fingers, that she ease me of mine armour.

And afterward, she bade me to strip and wash, whilst that she keep watch for me of the Gorge. And she took the Diskos, and leaned upon it, very brave and proper; but yet, as I do think, with somewhat of roguishness within her, very deep hid, and scarce known unto herself.

And I warned her to be very wise with the great weapon; for it did fit only to fight in my hands, and did be like to cause harm to any that should meddle with it or make to use it, save me.

And Naani to nod that she did hear me, and to be half in fear of the thing, and half to feel that it did be friendly to her; and so to stand guard for me; and truly to seem a very sweet and slender maid, despite the bigness of the cloak; and the great weapon to seem more great in her small hands; and to mind me how strong I did be. And surely you shall think me in conceit; but truly I did be glad to be so strong; and a proper thing for pride, if that there be no scorn for others therein. And you to agree with me in this thing, or to be lacking of sympathy and good human understanding.

Now I washt me, not by going down into the pool; for indeed I did not wot whether there be any more snakes hid there in some other hole. And the way I washt, was that I dipt my headpiece into the hot pool, and poured the water over me, and rubbed my body very strong with my hands; and there to be, surely, some certain chemical in the water that aided mine efforts; for the water went very smooth under my hands.

And when I was done, I washt my pocketcloth very speedy in the pool, and wrung it, and did then wipe my body so dry as I should; and afterward I wrung the cloth again, and set it about my loins, and so to be as proper as I might.

And I did call to the Maid that I was proper, and she to come then and kiss me; and she gave back to me the Diskos, and set me that I stand anigh to the nearer firehole, and so to be that I should guard her, and in the same time be come free of the chill of the Gorge, which was not great in that place.

And surely I did mean that I help her; but she would have no help in her work that she did say to be her glad right; but bade me that I to mine own work to be her dear protector, as she did call me. And I to lift that Wilful One into mine arms, a moment, and to give her a very loving hug, and for that time to have no fear that I harm her, because that I was freed of the hardness of the armour about me, as you do know.

And surely she to feel very dear and pretty in mine arms, and she kist me the once with a little passion of love; and immediately to want to go from me; so that I freed her in a moment, as was ever my way. And she then to pause a small space off from me, and lookt at me with a light in her eyes, and half to put out her arms that she be taken again into mine; but so to cease, ere she yield to her heart; and turned from me immediately to the task of the washing.

And she took first my bodyvest, and washt it very quick and clever in the pool, and afterward came over by me, and spread it upon the hot flat rock anigh to the firehole.

And she got then my change bodyvest from the bundle of her torn garments, where she did put it to be washt on opportunity, even as now; and mayhap to like that it should lie in her bundle with her own garments, for so, as I do mind, the thought came to me very natural; but she to say naught to lead me thus; yet to be a very honest and dear Maid, and to have little secret ways of love, as I did perceive, that I did not be told of.

And she washt the second bodyvest, and set it to dry by the first; and afterward did likewise with all my garments, and came then to the washing of her own.

And lo! as she spread it also to the drying, there came to mine heart that the Maid did have only this one rough and thick garment, that did be the armoursuit, as I have told. And surely it did be dreadful that she have the hardness of that strong knitted and fibrous garment to be next to her dear body, and I to be in comfort with the softness of my bodyvest.

And I was all angered in a moment, that she had gone thiswise, while that I had been gentled, as it might be. And I bade Naani take the second vest to her own use when it did be dry. And she to look upward from where she did turn the garments upon the hot rock; and to mean in the first to deny me. But indeed she was quick to see that I did be

truly in anger; and mine anger to come because that I was hurt that this did be, and because that I was shamed that she had gone so roughclad, the while that I had no thought to the matter. And moreover because that she had known her lack, and did not tell me of the thing.

But yet I did have a great tenderness in the backward part of mine anger, because that I perceived all the unselfishness and delight of her love that did be about this little matter, as you shall see, if you have gone away with me.

But mine anger yet to be something hard, because I did see that I have need to watch the Maid, that she put not her dear body to pain, that I might come unknowing to some little pleasuring or ease, as did be now as I have shown. And truly it did be sweetly done in love; but to be somewise lacking of judgement; and so shall you know somewhat of the way that I did be angered, and to have understanding with me; but if you have not, you shall think it to be naught, and that the Maid did need only that she be kist, and to be shaken a little in playfulness, and warned to heed that I did be earnest; and mayhap you to be somewise right, and not to guess far off from the inward deepness of my heart. But yet it doth be verity that I was truly angered, and fit to shake Mine Own, and in the same moment to be utter tender unto her. And surely this doth be all a contradiction, and the human heart to be a wayward thing, whether it doth be of a man or of a woman.

And Naani, as I do think, to have loved the chafe of that rough garment for love's sake, and to go very humble and loving, as I lookt at her; but in verity to be never gone from the sweet naughtiness that did be alway in her heart, and to plan even in that moment some new and secret service unto me, that should be for her quiet joy, and to be hid from me, until that my wit should come upon it to uncover it. And in verity a young man doth want that he whip his maid and kiss her, and all in the one moment. And, indeed, he to have delight in both.

And she obeyed me that time, as alway when I did be earnest, without more word. And surely that Naughty One did know how I loved her.

And the Maid washt then her torn garments that did be in the bundle, and had gotten soiled by the slime of the dark part of the Gorge. And she put these to dry, and afterward washed mine armour and the scrip and the pouch and the cloakhold, and all such matters of our gear; and so to be presently done.

And she was heedful then that she turned the garments upon the hot rock; and afterward did attend to my bruisings. And when she did rest, I lookt to her pretty feet, and rubbed them very gentle and constant with the ointment; and surely they did be pretty well; but I to like that I should tend them, and to have joy to feel their littleness

within my palms, and surely she did know how it did be with me; for presently she took her feet inward under the cloak; and I, maybe, to look something woeful; for she put one out presently, when that I did the least expect, and slipt it very cosy into my hand; and surely I kist her naughty toes; and she then to be very sedate.

Now, presently, when Naani found the garments to be proper dry, she gave those to me that were mine, and bid me to turn my back and be drest very speedy. And lo! in a little time, when I was nigh done, she came over and stood before me, and was drest again in the armoursuit, and to look very slender and dainty. And she lookt at me, so that I put out my hands, that I kiss her; but she went from me, very proper, and brought mine armour, and gave me help with it, and alway very grave and quiet; but yet to have naughtiness underneath, as I did believe.

And when I was full armed, she took my hand, and set mine arm about her waist, and she leaned her head against my breast, and put up her lips to be kist, as that she did be a child maiden; yet when I kist her, she did be a woman, and to kiss me very dear and loving, and to look at me then from under her eyelids; and sudden to make a dainty growling, and to pretend that she did be a fierce thing that should be like to eat me; and I to be utter feared, as you shall think, and to be scarce able that I kiss Mine Own Pretty Fierce One, because that I did laugh so hearty, and to be so taken with a surprise that the Maid did show this new playfulness; and in the same moment to be stirred and waked anew that she did be so lovely and graceful in mine arms, and to make her naughty growling so pretty that I did be eager that she make it again; but she to do this playing only as her mood did stir her.

And she made then that she would go from me, and I to loose her, as ever; and she bade me that I guard her the while that she washt the outward part of the cloak; for the inward did be clean, and the cloak proof to water; but the outward part to be something needful of washing.

And surely, when this was made clean, it dried very quick, because that the water went not into it; and whilst that it dried, I gave Mine Own an aid upward unto the cave, and afterward I passed up the gear, and the cloak when it did be dry; and so came upward also myself, and brought with me a boulder, that I balanced very light in the mouth of the cave, so that it should fall, if that anything toucht it; and this plan you do know of; for I used it before, as I have told.

And truly we did be utter wearied, and the time to be something beyond three and twenty hours, since last we had slumber. And the Maid had the scrip and the pouch set to be for my pillow, and the bundle of her torn garment to be for her own. And she to have me to my pillow, and to tuck the cloak about me, and the Diskos to my hand; and

afterward to kiss me very sedate upon the lips, and then to come in under the cloak, with a quiet and lovely happiness, as I did know; and to be gone to slumber very content and sweet.

And I waked eight good hours after, with the fizzing of the water in mine ears; and lo! Mine Own did be waked and to make ready our breakfast; and I came upward upon mine elbow, to see whether that the boulder did be unmoved; and indeed it was not touched.

And Mine Own saw that I was come awake; and she ran to me, very dear and glad, and kist my lips very eager and loving. And surely, as she kist me, I did feel that she had taken again a naughty advantaging of my slumber, and had kist me as I did sleep; but truly I said no word of my thoughts; for I did mind that I should wake sudden one time, and so to catch her in this, and to call her then Mine Own, and that she did be a rogue; and all as you shall know, that have loved.

And I scolded the Maid a little, in that she had not waked me; but I said not that I would attend to the duties that she did heed to; for I knew that she had joy of these things, in that she did love to do aught that should be done unto me. And when I scolded her, she to make but a little mouth at me, as we do say, and to put her tablets to my lips, that I kiss them, and she to kiss mine; and so to our breakfast.

And when we were done, we gat together our gear, and went downward from the cave, and began again to journey. And we went eighteen hours that day, and eat and drunk at every sixth hour, as ever.

And in the fourteenth hour, I perceived that I did be like to overtravel the Maid, though I made alway to have a less speed than did be natural unto me. And surely then, I took her up into mine arms; and she to refuse, and to be troubled that I should so carry her; for she did think that I was like to be wearied by the task.

And I to take no heed to her pretestings; but to laugh gently with her, and to carry her, even as a babe in mine arms; and she to love that she be in mine arms, if but she be able to have assuredness that I come not to weariness through her. And truly it did be a dear love task, and to be set unto the needing of mine especial heart.

And I carried Mine Own then for four hours; and in the eighteenth hour we were come to that part of the Gorge where did be the ledge where I killed the spider, ere I slept, as you shall mayhap to mind. And here I aided the Maid to climb, and we had the same ledge that night to be our refuge; and did sleep very happy and unharmed, and alway with our spirits set to warn us, if that harm did make to come nigh to us.

And we went then through three days of eighteen hours' journey each; and alway I did carry Mine Own, from the twelfth unto the eighteenth hour of each journeying; and this to be very dear unto me, and to give me a new rejoicing that I did be strong and easy to carry Mine Own; and she to lie in mine arms very content, when that she perceived how that I did be so glad to go thiswise and that I had no weariness by the carrying.

And thus I did rest her feet, and wore not her dear and slender body overmuch with the vigour of my going; and was abled to make a very good speed.

And Mine Own, this time and that, to make sayings of impudence unto me, and to hide her naughty lips, when that I should kiss them; and to have quaint nestlings unto me, and odd whiles to kiss me very dainty when that I did be going thoughtful of the way. And surely never did there be so dear a maid as Mine Own; so that I did go many a mile, and to be scarce that I knew that I was gone any way, because of the stirrings of my heart and the content of my spirit.

And oft as we did go, there were great scorpions in the path, and odd whiles they to have no heed to go from my way; but to be so great as my head, and very fat and lazy, so that surely I kickt a good number, from my path, even as you shall kick a ball with the foot; and three I burst in this way. And truly it did be well that I had on me mine armour, else had they been like to sting me very quick unto death; for they were so great.

And likewise, in this place and that, there were snakes; but none to come anigh to me; and I to choose alway the open goings; for I did think there to be many hid snakes and lesser monsters in the dark places between the great boulders. And alway, when the Maid did walk, I to go before, that I see clear her way, and this thing to be but a matter of wiseness, as you shall think.

And odd whiles, as I did carry Mine Own, she to talk a little with me of her memorydreams of the olden days; and mayhap you to think it strange that we said not overmuch on this wise; but the way of our journey to have been so utter bitter, as you have seen; and we to be more of that far age, than we did be of this present age; and this present life to seem but a dream of Memory, and we to be set then with the realness of that life. And this telling, indeed, to be a plain thing to your understanding. Yet did we have a greater talk to these ends, when that we were come free of the Gorge; but yet, oft there to be an odd saying and a sweet memory, like to an olden and forgot fragrance of dreams, to pass between Mine Own and me. And do you to set your sympathy of understanding with me in this thing, and to know how holy these things did be, and far off, and to hold memory, as a mist that doth shine with golden lights, that did make an

holy pain upon the eyes of the spirit, even as a quiet dawn of this day doth set a pleasure of vague pain upon the heart.

And once, as I did carry the Maid, I saw that she wept a little, very husht unto herself; and I to say naught; for I saw that it did be a natural sorrow for her father, and for the dead Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt; that did be left for ever unto the desolation of Eternity. And so, because I did be wise to leave her be, she to be eased presently, and to wipe her eyes, quiet and secret, and mayhap to think that I did not perceive; and then to nestle unto me; and so to be the more Mine Own.

And about the middle part of the second day, we came past the cave where I did sleep on the upward journey; and I to tell Naani, and she to look upward to the cave, and to wish that she might come a moment into it; only that it did be twenty good feet upward, and I to desire that she run no risk of her dear life, when that there did be no need.

And so to go onward; and odd whiles to see strange things alurk among the boulders; but none to come anigh to us; yet did I keep the Diskos very ready in my hand, as you shall think; and had mine eyes alway to look upon every side, and mine ears to be wary; and to use my spirit alway to mine aid.

And surely, as we did come lower in the Gorge, the Maid was all awondered at the warmness that did grow, and something disturbed in the first, by the new thickness, as it did seem, of the air. And she to waste some of the water, because that it did fizz up so quick, even as I, until that she was come used to this newness. And all this to be very plain unto you.

And in the end of every journey, we slept eight good hours in a safe place; and so to go onward again; and the Maid to grow very eager as I did tell her this thing and that of the Country that we did come downward unto.

And she askt me questions, time and oft, and much I told her, and she to think upon it with a growing wonder and desire, even as a gladsome child that hath never seen the sea, and doth be told that it shall presently be there. And this to be but to shadow the way that Naani did be; for truly she did be a very live and eager maid, in all things.

And we to be still within the Gorge, and to go constant by the fireholes and the firepits, and to see the flames leap upward in this place and that, so that the mighty walls of the Gorge would show very plain in an instant; and immediately to come the shadows again, and afterward the leaping of the flames. And so did it be forever. And oft the muttering of the firepits; and oft the utter quiet and the shadows.

And this time and that there did be a snake to go by us, and the scuttling of the monster scorpions; and mayhap a moving in the shadows of the great boulders, that did tell me there went maybe some peculiar monster in that place; so that I did be very wary, and to have the Diskos always ready.

And when the fourth day was come, I showed the Maid, in the sixth hour, the ledge that did be my first sleeping place, when that I was entered into the Gorge.

Now presently, in the eleventh hour, after that we had gone five hours in a gloom, there did show afar off a shining; and I caught the Maid, and I pointed; and she also to perceive that it did be surely the shining of the light of that great Country that I did tell upon.

And immediately we did begin to run downward, and with sore stumblings in this place and that; but not to halt us; for we did be so mad as two children for the gladsome light.

And we came down presently in the twelfth hour of that journey into the warm light and wonder of the Country of the Seas.

XIII

HOMeward BY THE SHORE

Now we came presently out of that sad and dreary place that did go inward of the great mountains, and which I have named the Upward Gorge; and we to halt soon between the feet of the mountains, beyond the mouthpart of the Gorge.

And Naani alway to look every way about her, and to breathe very quick, and her eyes to be gone bright with wonder and the seeing of new things, and the coming of freedom from so great a dread.

And she turned, now, and did look upward into the dark of the Gorge, and to spy upon the great mouth thereof, and to be feared then, and must run a greater way downward into the lightness of the Country of the Seas; and to come once more to pause, and to look backward, and with an awe and a relieved soul; and so again to the wonder of the spreaded Country and the great Sea; and did near to laugh and cry in the same moment, with the amazement and gladness and great astonishment that did be upon her. And she to turn constant this way and that, and to be never ceased of looking, and of deep breathings of the wide air; for never in that life had she been in a broad place of light, as you shall have perceived.

And we to feel, both, that there did be no more need to talk husht, as we did alway in the gloom and narrow dark of the gorge. And surely she to shout, as a child that doth try an echo; and her voice to go very pretty into the distance, and to be lost afar off in that Country.

And lo! in a moment, an echo to come out of the dark mountains to our backs; so that we lookt round very sudden; but whether the echo did be truly an echo, or some strangeness, or some unnatural call to come downward out of the gloom and horror of the Gorge, we did be all unsure; and indeed must run downward a while more, until that we did be all breathed, and to halt presently where we did feel to be utter free of the Gorge and of the strangeness that did seem to our minds, in that moment, to lie upward in the darkness of the great mountains.

And surely we did took about for a flat rock to be for our use, and we came presently to a place nice to our purpose, that did be yet upward over the Land; and we climbed up on to the rock and sat thereon to have our food and drink.

And as we eat and drank, we did sit very close and happy; but yet to have a wise looking about anigh to us, so that we be caught by no danger of the Humpt Men, or by any other danger that might be.

And alway, the Maid did question, and did stare afar over the Country, and to have a shining wonder and joy of the sea, and to be stirred in all her being, so that she was pained with vague and sudden memories, that did be as strange dreams, and all mixt with pleasure and pain. And, indeed, she sudden to weeping, and to need that she be in mine arms, until that she know herself once again; and so to her dear natural joy and way.

And oft did Mine Own speak upon the clear wonder of the air, as it did seem to her; and to me it did seem likewise, that had lived my life also in a Dark Land, as you do know.

And she to break sudden from her rapture, and to set back her speech an Eternity with vague words, and memories so olden and englamoured that they did be as moonlight that once hath shone. And in a moment she to be forward again into that far future time and speech, and all her being to be close unto me, and oft in a solemn silence of the heart.

And the greatness of the sea to call unto her with an olden voice, and to half waken her; and I with her to be thus halfwakened, yet had I been not thus as I did come mine outward way; but truly I did stir to the stirring of the Maid, and all mine olden thoughts that did be my memorydreams, to come afresh upon my spirit.

And so we two to sit there all shaken with dreamings that did concern happenings of the olden world that did lie upward in that dreadful night which made a mighty and deeply roof over that Country. And surely I am dumb, in that I have no speech to make known to you all the troublings and stirrings of our spirits that we did know in that moment.

And far off, by miles, beyond the feet of the mountain, where went the shore of the sea, upon our left, there was a great mist and steam; and this to be that mist and steam that I did come through on mine outward way; and Naani to ask concerning it, and I to tell her so much as I knew, and how that we must indeed come presently through it, upon our journey.

And she to be in wonder of the volcanoes that did burn in the sea, and in this place and that of the wide Country, and the height and grandness to exalt her, and in the same time to give her a strange humbleness of her mind; so that presently I did take her into mine arms, for I must kiss her, because that she did be so utter a sweet maiden, and lovely with interest and naturalness. And truly she to kiss me in turn; and to make her

questionings between her kissings; and this to be because she did yearn for a greater knowing of the Country; but also, as I do half to think, because she did be sweetly impudent unto me; and this to be of her joy.

And presently, she to kiss me thrice very passionate and warm upon the mouth; and immediately to take my shoulders, with her small hands, that did seem so pretty upon my broadness and upon the metal of the armour. And she to strive thus that she shake me to a speedier answering; and she, all that while, to be full of a dear naughtiness, and to need that she be kist very hard.

And I to answer her; but after mine own fashion which did be a word between each kiss that I gave to her. And she very quick and naughty to put her hand between our lips; and I then to kiss the palm, that did be in my way, and did be very small and pretty. And she, when I had no thought, to open her fingers very quick, and kiss me through between the fingers, and immediately to shut the fingers, so that I did be stopt from the same.

And afterward, I made her to stand upon the rock, and I set free her hair over her shoulders; and I took then the boots from her, so that her little feet did show bare and pretty. And she, at the first, half to refuse me; but afterward to stand very dear and obedient that I should have my way with her; and to be a little shy, and the more pretty because of her sweet blushings.

And surely, when that I had her to my likings, I stept back a little pace, and lookt at her. And she to look again at me, very quaint and naughty; and then to turn her about, very grave; and to make pretend that she did be a dummy figure. And, surely, when she did be come right round, and to face me again, and had a very sedate look, she stretched out her pretty foot, all in a moment, and put her pink toes sudden upon my lips; and I to be so in surprise, that I had not wit to do aught, ere she had them back swift from me. And she then to make one glad spring into mine arms, and to want that she be hugged, and to be loved very great. And I to laugh, all tender; for I loved her so utter, as you do know; and I to tell her, as you sure likewise to have told your maid, that I wanted a pocket sufficient, that I might have her therein alway anigh to my heart; and this thing I to say to her, as a man that doth love, shall say it; and you to know the way of it so well as I. And she to laugh very mischievous, and to tell me that she should truly tickle me, if that I carried her thatwise; aye and to pinch me, too. And I to have no answer, save that I shake her, very gentle, but indeed she to kiss me very naughty on the mouth, in the midst of my shaking; and truly, what shall a man do with such an one.

And she then to want to be more sedate and to be set down upon the rock; and she to make me to turn around, so that she should come at the pouch, which did be upon my back.

And she gat thence the comb that was a fitment, and did comb her pretty hair, and I to sit and talk with her, and to jest, with a heart that did be so light as it had not been for a great while; for though I did dread the Humpt Men and the monstrous animals of the Country of Seas, I had not any abiding horror of aught that I had seen in that Country; for there seemed a naturalness in all things, so that I did have no loathing; neither any fear of an Evil Force.

And presently, when that the Maid had combed her hair, she to bind it upon her head; but I to ask that she leave it upon her shoulders, because that it did be so pretty; and she to smile at me, and to be happy to my pleasuring.

Now we did be truly sedate, and to set our gear together; and I to put the boots upon the Maid; and afterward we to begin again to journey downward into the Country of the Seas.

And we went at a good pace; but not to bring us to any great weariness; for it was mine intent that we rest for our slumber upon this side of the place where did be the steam of the boilings, that was anigh to the shore of the sea, as you shall mind.

And we at this time to be passing along the feet of the mountains, unto the place of the steam; and to go thiswise for six good hours, and still to be a great hour off that part; for we went not so fierce as did be the speed of mine outward way, which was utter strong, as you do mind, that have gone with me in all my journey.

And so, when we had walkt six hours, we did be gone something beyond the eighteenth hour of that day's journeying; and to be very ready to our slumber.

Now, presently we found a tall rock, very hard to climb, that had a flat top so great as may be twice my length everyways; and this to be very good to our purpose. And when we were come safe to the top, we to eat and drink, and presently to sleep, and to have the cloak under us, as did be the will of the Maid; for the Country did be utter warm and nice, so that we had no occasion for covering.

And surely, we waked, both of us when that we had slept seven good hours; and we sat upward, and lookt newly each at the other; and to be as that we did each see the other anew in that good light, and to have a fresh joy each in the look of the other. And she to come into mine arms, and to kiss and to need that she be kist; and truly, we both to have our need; but yet to be something the more hungry of the other, for the having.

And Mine Own then to make our breakfast; and the water to fizz very strong and surprising; and we to eat and drink, and to be utter happy each with the other, and to talk on this thing and that, and the Maid to look about, as we eat; and she to look afar off at the wonders and the newness of the Country to her knowledge; but I to look near, lest there be any danger that might be anigh.

And in a while, Mine Own to draw my gaze to the Mountains that the Gorge came through. And, in verity, now that I did look in ease, I to see with her how that they did be truly monstrous, even as a monstrous wall that did go upward for ever until that they were gone out of the light of that Country, into the dark night of the deathly Upper World, that did be lost an eternity. And I to mind that I had some vague thoughts thiswise, on the outward way; but now I to have ease, and the Maid to speak with, and so to perceive odd matters the more. And I to tell you this little thing, so that you shall perceive the way that restfulness did be upon me, by compare with the Outward Going.

And, truly, we had no great speed with our talk and with our eating; but in the end did make somewhat to hurry, because that we did be conscious that we leaned to slackness. And indeed, we came down then pretty speedy from the rock where we did sleep; and had forward to our way at a good pace.

And when we had gone a while, we to begin to hear the far hissing of the steam and the noise of the upward burstings of waters that did boil; and the sound to be very strange; but I to have heard it before, as you do know; so that it to trouble me the less than the Maid. And I to assure her; and she to come nigh to me, and thiswise we to enter presently into the steam.

And we went then for more than three hours; and I had the Maid to my back, that I should be the first; and this I did, that she have no danger to walk into a boiling pool in the mazingness of the steam, which was everywhere. And I to be something guided in my path by the shore of the sea which did be unto our left alway; only that we could see neither the sea nor otherwise, except that we go so close that we near into the water.

And, truly, the sea to seem to boil in parts, and there to be hot pools in all places; so that who should say with ease whether we did go by one of the great hot pools or by the true sea. And this, our constant puzzle, shall be likewise to you; and you to perceive how that we did go utter wary.

And about us from every part there did come the strange burstings and shriekings and whistlings of the boil of the waters breaking upward from the deep world. And odd whiles the sounds to be as of great monsters; and the earth to shake under us; and otherwhiles there to be a hush and only the steam about us, and somewhere in the

distance and uncertainness a low piping of some steam cranny, very strange and lonesomesounding.

And when it did be somewheres nigh upon the fourth hour, we came out of the thick steam; and the pipings and the roarings to be to our rearward; and soon the steam to be gone thin, as but a mist, and the noises to be very farseeming; and presently we to be come clear out into the air of that Country.

And the Maid now to perceive the trees, which did be in great forests unto our right hand, while that the shore of the sea did go alway upon our left. And she to be utter in wonder of the trees; and to need that she pluck branches, and smell of them and look at each leaf; and so to be all stirred; for never in that life did she to have seen such a matter as those great trees did be; but yet to be all stirred by vague memories that did seem no more than dreams. And you to think but a moment, and to perceive how the thing did be with her; and you to have been likewise stirred, if that you did be so strangely waked in a corner part of the heart; though but a little matter to wake you.

Now when the sixth hour did be full come, we made a halt in a wise place, and had there our tablets and the water; and afterward, the Maid bid me that I take her unto a warm pool that did be near by, and to ask that I turn from her, but yet to be anigh for her Protector, as I did be ever.

And so she to wash and to make herself happy with a sweet cleanness that did be proper to her; and afterward, when she did be done, she to act watch whilst I to mine; and to help me in all matters, that she was able; and truly, I to be happy indeed that she did so have delight to attend upon me and to treat me motherwise; yet truly with her maidheart not all hid, as you have perceived, this time and that.

And surely thus did we go alway in these matters; and oft that I have not space to have told; and oft that you shall remember, if that I do be too full of other happenings to give heed to tell upon.

And afterward we to our journeying again; and to talk upon this thing and that thing; and I to be watchful as we talked, and to tell the Maid that she keep her eyes wary, but yet not to be of unease.

And when we did go thiswise for seven good hours, we were come nigh opposed to the brightburning firehill that did be offward in the sea, and had made me a warm light in that time when I did sleep in the tree, as you do remember. And truly, as I shall here mind you, we did be past seven hours coming to this place, from the part where the steam did be; yet had I gone that space upon the outward way at a speed that was

greater; but truly I might not set so great a pace to the Maid, save, mayhap, odd whiles; and this thing I beg that you have alway in your mind, and so to understand why that we did be oft long upon this part of the journey and that, by compare with mine outward going.

And, in verity, I had set off our hour for food, because that I saw we did come nigh to the place where the tree did be; and I to know that the Maid should like to eat and drink anigh to that place, and to know that I did sleep there.

And surely I took her to the tree, and when that I told her, she to beg me that I indulge her and that we go upward to that branch where I did sleep, and there to eat our tablets.

And I to be willing, and to enter into her wishing; for, indeed, there was no danger in the climb, and I to go alway below her, so that I could be surety for her safeness. And we came up to the great branch; and she to make how we should sit, and I to have to show just where I did lie, and she to look very close, and to see that my weight had surely marked the hardness of the armour upon the bark; and she then to be upon that branch alone, as she did eat and drink; and to look outward at the light from the firehill, and to be very husht, and to think, and I not to disturb her with speech.

And when she did be done, she gat from the branch, and kist the place where I did lie; and lo! in a moment a thought came into her, and she drew her knife, and cut out a piece of the bark, and put it into her breast to be for a keepsake; and so to seem somewise contented.

And truly, I told her about the great beast, when we were come down again to the earth; and she to cry out and to show me that there did be yet the mark where the belly of the monstrous beast did brush upon the earth, as it ran, and moreover the broken places of the footmarks; and she by this to see how great a beast it did be; but yet did it be a little thing beside the Slug; only that it did be a thing of horn and hardness of skin, as you have perceived.

And truly, I do mind how that the observings of the Maid did bring very keen to me how that there had past but seventeen days since that I did go onward from this place; and this to seem very strange and scarce credible unto me; for I had thought it, somewise, as a great time; and truly this to be because it was so marked by stress of the mind and great happenings; and you to agree in this thing. But yet, also, we shall truly mind that those times that I have called days, did hold oft the hours of two days, and mayhap three, as you do remember. Now we went onward then to our journeying; and I to make to carry the Maid, as ever, after that she had walked twelve hours, though she did walk thirteen hours this time as you have seen. And she to say that she go now upon her own

feet through the next six hours, and so to ease me from the labour that did be needful to carry her.

But I to know how that she did be like to be all gone of her strength thiswise, in but a day or two, and we to make the better speed, if that I keep to my way, and to have her to walk twelve hours of every journey, and afterward to come into mine arms; for, truly, she did be bred less hardy than I, as you shall think from all that I have told concerning the Peoples of the Lesser Pyramid; and moreover she was yet something weakened, as I did think, by the dreadful month of her lonesomeness and escapings, before that I was come to succour her.

And truly, as I did carry her, the Maid did make remark of her wonderment concerning me, in that I did be so hard of my body and set in the determination of my mind. And, in verity, I did be exceeding strong and of great hardness of body; and mayhap my will did be somewhat this way also, else do I think I had never borne to come unto Mine Own through so much desolation. And I to smile very happy upon her; for I did love that I was so strong, and very truly in delight that Mine Own Maid did take gladness in this thing. And you to mind how you did be also in the lovedays; and so to have nice understanding of my naturalness and human pride.

And surely the Maid did nestle unto me, as she did talk; even, somewise, as a Child shall come nigh to the Mother, but yet also as a Maid doth love to be nigh unto her Man, if that she doth truly love. And I to lift her more nigh to my lips; but she to refuse to kiss me, and to be a Sweet Impertinence that did lie in mine arms; yet when I did make to lower her again to the way that had her easy to carry, she to slip her pretty face very snug under my chin, and to kiss me there, after her own fashion; and afterward to be willing that she be as usual into mine arms.

Now, as I set the Maid again comfortable, it seemed to me that she was something tender; and sudden it came to me that mayhap the armour to be very hard and painful unto her; and I to ask this thing of her, in a moment; and she to see that I would not be put off; and so to tell me. And, truly, I was utter angered with myself; and somewise also with her, in that she did not waken mine unthinkingness to this thing.

And I set her instant to the earth, and made her to bare her shoulders to me; and truly they did be much bruised where that she had lain so oft in mine arms, against the hardness of mine armour.

And I to be so angered that I near shook her, and she to see how I did be, and that she did be nigh to be shaken, because that I was grown so angry that she should let herself come to this foolish hurt, that yet I did know was very dear unto her secret heart. And, in

truth, she put up her lips to me, very sudden, and with a strange naughtiness, that she have her own way with me to tempt me from mine anger, that yet she did half to like. And, in verity, I near slapt her then upon her pretty shoulders, but that she ceased from her tempting of me; and instead she turned her shoulders to me, even as a child, that I button her garment for her.

And surely, when I had buttoned her garment, she came round unto me, and closed her hand, so that it did be a little fist, even as I did love her to do, because that it was so small beside my great hand.

And she slipt her shut hand into mine; and surely I let it stay within, very quiet, and made not to close upon it, as I did wont. And the Maid did move her hand around in mine, that she make me to take notice upon her, and to grasp her little fist. Yet I did be very stern, for I was truly angered; and neither did I put her hand from mine, nor made to hold it; but only to let it bide; yet, truly, I to be something stirred in the heartpart by her pretty ways.

And in a little while, she took her hand from out of mine, and did have daring to be cold unto me. And mine anger then to be quaintly renewed, and to think that she did well need to be whipt. And she made a naughty and foolish impudence upon that which I said to her; so that presently I did say that she did need such as should make her to heed her manners; but yet, as you shall conceive, I to know inwardly all that time how that even this true naughtiness did not stir me to proper anger; but more that it made me masterful and to lack not that I make her to know truly that I did be her Master; and in the same time to be strangely touched in a very deep and secret place of my heart. And truly love doth have strange actings upon the heart.

And the Maid to ask me in a very saucy fashion that did be intentioned to anger me, what I did mean that she to need. And truly I said that she did go the way to earn that she be flogged like any boy, and I to mean actual all that I did say, which doth something amaze me now; but, as I do know, I yet to be constant stirred inwardly by her beloved quaintness that did be alway so dainty, even when that she did mean her naughtiness to be truly to anger me.

And lo! when I told the Maid this thing, that she did well go to earn a sharp reproof, she turned in a quick instant, and came close to me, all tender and small and to need to be nigh to me. And she slipt both her closed hands into the one of mine, and truly they did be little fists. And because I could be no more stern with Mine Own, I put mine arm about her, and she did nestle to me, so that all my being did want to be a shield about her.

And she to hark very quiet and humble to my counsellings; and in the end did be so strangely husht that I lookt down to where her pretty face did be hid against mine armour, as she did love to do, when that I did be those odd whiles a little stern with her. And I held her face away from mine armour; and surely she did be smiling, very quiet and naughty; so that I perceived that she did be good only for that time, and did be like to show again this wrongful and impudent spirit. Yet I not then to be in trouble of the future; but to hope only that I do wisely, if that she show again this waywardness. And, truly, I to perceive now that I did be very young; but, anywise, as you do know, I to act alway from the natural telling of my heart.

And I shook Naani a little, for this naughty spirit which did not be gone from her. For I perceived that my manhood had but stirred the woman in her to that strange quick humbleness that had seemed to be a quenching of her wayward unwisdom; and truly it had not been stilled, but only sunken for a little moment in the uprising of her dear nature, which had responded unto me.

And the Maid to look at me from under her lids, as I did shake her with gentleness; and I to know that Mine Own did be a wondrous maiden, full of all life and spirit, and to be held wisely and to be loosed wisely, all as did be for the best to bring out the uttermost of her goodness which did be in all her being, and to be very lovely; and to make me feel as that I did be a giant that held a white flower very tender; but I to feel also that I did be her Master. And this mayhap you to understand, if that you look into your hearts.

And by all my telling, you to know that I did be very dainty with Mine Own Maid that did be all of daintiness; but yet I to be masterful, as did be my nature, and a very proper way it did be with the Maid, so that she did be alway reasonable in the main; and this to come out of her love, which did have pleasure to know that I did be Master unto her, all in the same while that she did fight to show that I did be otherwise. And truly, and in part by this same showing, you shall perceive that her naughtiness to come likewise from her love, and the way that my nature did work upon her.

Now I to shake the Maid very gentle, as I have said, and with much that did be of play, but in the same wise there to be also somewhat of tender reproof. And surely, that naughty maid to spring very light upon her toes, and had kist me sudden and dainty upon the mouth, before that I did wot.

And I to put mine arm about her, and to give her a little hug; and immediately then to matters that did be practical; for I was eager to have come across that stony part of the journey, that did be before us, as you do know, before that we look for a place for our slumber. And this eagerness of haste to be, because of the great bird things which I had seen to go bounding over that waste, when that I was upon mine outward way.

And, surely, after that I had thought a little moment, I bid the Maid that she dress in her torn garments, so that these should be over the top of the armoursuit, and thiswise to make a soft thickness upon the top of the armoursuit, that should act for a cushion between mine armour and her dear body.

But indeed, the Maid would nowise to do this thing; and I not to make her, because that my heart perceived how it did be with her. And her reasons to be someways mixt, as doth be proper in all humans, and the more so when that it doth be a maid that hath reasons, as you to know, if that you have ever held such dear perverseness in your arms.

And she, as I could know, to be strangely in love that her gentle body be bruised by the hardness of mine armour; and if this might not be, she to be not wishful that she wear her torn clothing upon her neat suit and so to seem careless and to lack to be dainty in mine eyes; for, indeed, she did be alway to wash herself and to make tidiness; and she to have a way now that she did set the armoursuit upon her, that had it to seem different, and she to have set a little sprig from the trees upon her breast, and in her girdle, and so to seem the more of a maid; and surely a man doth know and love these things; but not alway to have full knowing how that they be done. And, indeed, you to be likewise with me in this thing. And we all to think we know, but somewise to be just alack when that it doth come to the proof.

And, in verity, the Maid to find a way that she be eased of the hardness of the armour; and I to have come to the same thing in the same moment; but truly I do think she had been able to think upon it a long while, if that she had been so desired.

And truly, this was but that I fold the cloak very thick across mine arms and breast, and to take her then into the little nest that did be prepared.

And, surely, now that the Maid might no more have her secret wish that she lie close against mine armour, she to be helpful, and to have the cloak folded so in a very quick while; and so to be into mine arms again; and we to be once more upon the journey, and she to nestle to me, as that she did hunger to be nigh to me; and she to talk with me, odd whiles, and odd whiles to be silent.

And once, I to think that she wept a little; and to know that she did be like to think upon her father and her own Peoples; but she to have her face turned to me, so that I could but guess upon this thing; and she very soon to be husht again of this sorrow, and to lie content in mine arms.

And once, when that I had carried her for three hours, she to ask me that I kiss her; and truly I did kiss her, very gentle and with reverence, because that my heart did understand the holiness that did be in her heart in that moment.

And, surely, as I kist her, she to kiss me very tender; and I to know that some olden memory did be like to stir in her. And in a moment, she to take her lips from mine, where she had let them to nestle very light, and did whisper mine olden lovename; and I then to look at her, and her eyes to shine as the olden stars that did shine in the olden summers.

And I to be too shaken even that I kiss her. But she to put her arms about my neck, and to look steadfast into mine eyes. And immediately, after that she had lookt awhile, and I to have ceased from walking, she to put her hands upon each side of my face, within the metal of mine headgear, where the guards did come down at the sides; and she to kiss me very sober upon the lips; but yet to mean utter by that kiss. And I not to return the kiss; for I saw that it did not be her need.

Now, in the beginning of the fourth hour, as I did go with the Maid, I to see afar off one of the halfbird monsters, that I did see before upon this place where there did be naught save great stones and boulders for a great way that did be many miles.

And truly, I to hide very swift with the Maid, where two great boulders did come together; and surely the birdcreature to go past at no great way, and to go with a great bounding, that did be half of flight and half of leaping, as that it did be too weighty in the body to make to fly proper.

And, indeed, I to have a sudden memory how that there did be a picture in some book that I did read in the Mighty Pyramid, where it did show such a birdthing as this; and to make remark in the book that these things had been seen no more in the Night Land for a score thousand of years, or more; and to be extinct, as we do say.

But, indeed, now I do think that they did be come downward to that warm Country, a great while gone, and so to have new life and to breed through a great age, and this way to have set a pattern unto the Humans. And, in verity, it might be that in some age that did be far after that time, the Humans to find some way to journey from the Pyramid, and to build a new Refuge in that deep Country; and mayhap the Humans thiswise to have a new space of life, after that all the Night Land did be dead and lost in the bitter frost of Eternity. But this, indeed, to be no more than an odd thought; for how might any great multitude pass the Monsters; and I to ask that you take it for nothing of fact, but only as of my suppositions; and thiswise to come back again to happenings.

Now, when the birdthing did be gone a long way off, I to go forward again with Mine Own, and to have a new care, and to look very swift and frequent everyway.

And, truly, it did be as that the creatures did inhabit that part of the Country; for in an hour after that, I to see a good score. And, I to free the Diskos from my hip, and to have it ready in mine arms beside the Maid; and so to journey.

And many times I to have to hide with Mine Own, and to crouch low among the rocks and the boulders; and this way to escape free of all for a great while.

Yet, when that the fifth hour did be nigh gone, I heard a noise sudden to my back, as we did go over a clear space. And, in verity, there did be one of the monsters that came upward over certain rocks that were to my rearward; and surely it to have been stayed hid there, or resting, and to have heard us or to have smelled us; but anywise then to have knowledge of us, and to come with low and brutish heavy boundings, very lumberesome, after us.

And I lookt everyway in a moment; but there was nowhere any shelter anigh. And the Maid to leap sudden from mine arms, that I be free with the Diskos; and I to look swift to her, and to see that she have her knife ready in her hand, that she might chance to aid me. But surely I might not fight in ease of mind, if that Mine Own did be needless in danger; and I caught her very quick by the waist, and set her upon the ground between my feet. And she to make half to refuse; but I to have no time for explaining, and to be sharp that I have her safe; so that I gave her a little shake that did sudden to make her feel the strength in me; and she then to be instant quiet in my hands, and to let me that I set her upon her face, and to cast the thick cloak above her; and in a moment to be stood over her, and to set down the visor of mine headgear, lest that the birdmonster strike me in the face.

And surely, the birdthing did be scarce an hundred good paces off; and to make two lumbering and monstrous bounds, and to come at me.

Yet, truly, it made sudden a pause, because that the Diskos did roar and send out fire, as I made it to spin; but in an instant the great thing to come in at me upon the left side, and to strike me very hard with the bill, that did be so long as mine arm, and had surely gone through my body, if that I had been naked. And the bill of the monster rang upon mine armour; and it smote me twice thiswise, so that I staggered very sick and shaken. But in a moment, as it made to draw off, that it should come the more hard upon me, I swung the Diskos very sure and quick, and I smote the Birdthing above the place where the great seemingleathern wing did join upon the right side, as it should be the shoulder of the Birdmonster. And, in verity, the monster gave out a mighty squarking, and went

backward this way and that, and beat all about upon the stones, and did strike with the great bill at the place where it did be hurt. And I heeded that I end it swiftly; and I ran in upon it, and the creature to strike at me with the great bill, very savage. But I jumpt speedy to this side, and again to that, and so in a moment to have chance to come in surely. And truly I split the skull of the Birdthing, so that it died very quick and was gone from pain.

And the Birdcreature lay all spread upon the stones and the rock of that place; and surely it did be as that it were leathern, and made somewise as a bat doth be of this age, in that it did have no feathers.

And, truly, it lookt mighty, where it did be spread; and indeed the body to be full so big as the body of a young horse; and the bill to be very deadly and sharp and cumbrous, as you to have guessed. And I to be all and utter thankful that it did be there, dead, in the stead of mine own body. And the thing yet to twitch and stir a little, as the life did go from it.

And surely I was back then very speedy to the Maid, and she to be kneeled upward to watch me. And I took her into mine arms, and lookt well about; and made then forward again.

And about the middle part of the sixth hour of crossing that rocky land, I saw that we did draw near unto the shallow river, that you shall mind I came over, after that I had done with the olden flying ship. And in all that time, since the Birdmonster to come after us, I had seen but two more, and they a great way off, so that I guessed that I was come beyond that part where they did go very frequent.

And I to wade over the river, and to carry Mine Own upon one arm, the while that I did sound my way with the staff of the Diskos; and truly I came across very easy, save that I did have to go around somewhat, where that the river did seem to have a deep place.

And when that we had crost the river, it did be full one and twenty hours since that we slumbered, as you shall know, if that you but count a little; for you do mind that we spent a certain time within the tree, as I have told; and this not to have been proper counted into the time of our journeying.

And surely, the Maid to have been very quiet, since that I did show my strength a little to her, when that I made her to lie, that she be safe from the bill of the Birdmonster. But she not to be anywise in anger upon me; but only, as I do think, that the woman in her did be something fresh waked unto me; and she to be very content that she be quiet in mine arms.

Now the place that we were come to, was much spread with boulders; but yet to have the beginnings again of the forests, as you to remember; for I to have made some small remark of the land in this part, upon mine outward way. And we lookt about for a firehole, that I should dry my lower garments; and truly, we had not past many in a great while; but we to be in fortune, that we came soon upon a little firehill that did be no more than so high as a man, and to have the rock all hot about; so that this did be a good place to our purpose.

And I kist the Maid, and set her down out of mine arms; and when that I had lookt well about, and seen that there did be naught to our sight to give us to fear, the Maid to help me with mine armour; and afterward with my garments, and to ease me all ways that she could think of with helpfulness. And she set the garments of my lower parts to dry, and whilst that they did be drying, she to make ready the water and the tablets, and to have me to sit beside her, in my bodyvest and gear, and we to eat and drink very comfortable in the warm hollow that was something anigh to the small firehill.

Now, truly, I did be very hungry that time, and indeed to be alway so, for the tablets did be very unfilling to the belly, as you do well know from my tellings. And when that I did be finished, I saw that the Maid lookt at me somewise oddways, and sudden she to come into laughter, and askt me whether that I did be very empty; and in the same moment there to be a wondrous dear look within her eyes; so that I perceived that there went a mothernote under her impudence.

And she to yearn, as I could know, that she have some way to feed me; but truly there did be no way, for we thought not to make to slay aught for our purpose, and we did be feared that we eat any root or plant, lest that we be ill. And this to seem strange to my spirit of this our age, but to be natural unto that; so that I do think I did be so long bred from the primal obtaining of food, that I did be all lost to that which should seem natural unto the peoples of this early age of the world; though we truly to think that the world doth even now be old; and this to have seemed a true thing unto every age that ever did live.

Now, beside that we did lack somewise to think serious that we slay something to eat, in that the tablets did actually suffice to our strength, I to believe that there did be some other reason that I do forget, and mayhap never to have thought plain upon; but which to be set within me as an instinct, as we do say; and this to mean, if that I try to set it in other words, that the tablets did keep the body and the spirit in such condition that the Forces of Evil did have the less power to act upon us.

Yet, have I no remembering that I was taught in the preparation that I eat naught, save the tablets; and this mayhap never to have been set upon me; but to have been as a thing that doth never need to have been told; even as you shall not tell a grown man in this Age that he shall refrain from dung, and eat only wholesome matter.

And truly, I to hope that I have made this thing somewise clear unto you; for, indeed, it doth be something hard to set out; for every Age hath the subtleties peculiar to that Age; and these to be hard to the understanding of other Ages, but yet to seem plain and utter natural, even without thought, unto the Peoples of the Age.

And surely all this to be plain to you, and to be overplain; for, in verity, I tell to you, and overtell, until that I should be weary; and mayhap you to be the more so. And, indeed, I not to blame you; but only to hope that your understanding, which doth mean also in general your hearts, doth be with me all along my way. And, indeed, this my tale to be not easy told.

And, in verity, I to be back now unto the Maid alough upon me, and in the same moment deeply loving and alack that she could not feed me, and I to laugh with her, and to have understanding with her, as you to know; and, indeed, I to have an heart that doth be made someways natural unto understanding; so that even though I be dead when you read this, my tale, you to feel that we be friends, and to know that could I meet with you in pitiful trouble, I to have understanding and love to you, if that you be not utter brutish; and evenso, I to be sorrowful that you should be brutish, and to have understanding, in that I to know that by developement you to become wise unto sweetness and charity, and in love with all dear things, and kind pity of the rest. And thiswise you to be in human sympathy with me, because that you do feel that I be honest with you, and somewise even now to your elbow, as you read. And this to be writ now, and you mayhap not to be born a great while yet; but in the end to read and to have understanding with me, and to know how I did love Mine Own. And so we to go forward again, the closer, in that we do be the more knit in dear human sympathy.

And surely the Maid kist me very nice on the lips, and did promise again how that she should make me a great meal when that we did come to our Mighty Home; and, indeed, as she to say, she to join with me, and we both to be naughty gluttons for that once. And, surely, I laughed gently at the Maid, because that she should be so dainty a glutton; but for my part, I to feel that I could eat an horse, as we do say in this Age.

And by that we had eat and drunk and talked awhile, and lookt oft about, so that we know that no brutish thing came near, to our hurt, the Maid to tell me that my garments did be dry; and she then to give me aid that I dress very quick; and afterward she to help me with mine armour, the which she did wipe after that we had eat and drunk; and she

to have had joy that she do this thing, and all things for me; and to have used a part of her torn garments to this end.

And so, truly, I to be clothed and armed very speedy, and to feel eased and the more sure in my mind; for in verity, I was alway in unease, when that I did not be ready that I be able to meet any horrid Brute that should be like to come upon us.

Now, when that I did be into mine armour again, the Maid to set the scrip and the pouch upon me, and all the while I scarce to be loosed of the Diskos, as ever. And we then to our way, which did be that we find a place proper to our slumber.

And when that we did be gone allways, and no cave proper to our sight, we found a great tree, that did be set off alone, and had a plenty of branches; but none that did be near to the bottompart.

And surely, I gave the Maid a lift, and held her up so far as mine arms did go, so that she might stand upon the palms of my hands, and be steady against the trunk of the tree; and she thiswise to have a hold upon a branch, and so to go upward.

And, truly, when that she was safe, I loosed one of the straps from the pouch and the scrip, and I cast this up to the Maid, and she set it strong about the branch. And when I had caught the downward end, I went upward very easy; and afterward took loose the strap; and this way we did be something safe, as you shall see.

And we climbed upward then, and so came to a part of the tree where the branches did be very thick together; and we made here a place for our slumber, and the Maid set the cloak over the branches that did be so close, and afterward we lay down; but first I set the strap about her waist, and thence to a branch, and she to refuse sleep until that I be likewise; so that we did be both very safe from any fall.

And she kist me, and we then to our slumber, and very weary; for it did be two and twenty hours, by this, since that we had sleep.

Now we had eight hours in which we slept utter; and we both to awake, as it did seem in the same moment; but truly, I to think that Mine Own did be wakeful before that time; for, indeed, as she put her arms very dainty about my neck, that she kiss me, I did have a quick and sudden knowledge that I had been kist oft in my sleep, and this to have been but a little while gone. And surely, it did seem to me that Mine Own did have a sweet and contented Mischief inward of her eyes; but yet she to be very sedate outward, and to kiss me loving and dear, and then we to our breakfast, upon the cloak.

And afterward, I climbed to the topmost branches of the tree, and lookt well over the Country all about; but there was no brutish thing to my sight in any place, neither near nor far.

And I came down then to the Maid, and told her how that there was quietness of life all about. And we had our gear together, and went downward to the earth, and I to help Mine Own, and this way she to be safe.

Now, as we went forward upon our journeying, I perceived that the Maid had a wayward air; and truly, I thought that she did have her heart all set toward naughtiness and mischief; and in the same moment that I was in this belief, I did know in mine understanding that this did spring from the workings of my nature upon the nature of Mine Own Maiden.

And Naani to walk, in the first, beside me, and to have no word for me, because that she did be so filled with the stirrings of her naughtiness, that did be in the same moment very sweet unto me, and yet to waken all that did be masterful within me. And she to be that she did know, and to delight, in her secret heart that she waken that which did be masterful in me; but yet in the same moment to be strong determined that she be not mastered by me. And surely this to seem contrarywise in the words; but to be clear to the heart, if indeed you have ever been loved by a dear maid of an high spirit.

And above all this, the Maid did be filled with a love for me, that did beat and dance in all her being; and this in truth to overweigh all; but yet from this same thing her dainty naughtiness to be born, because, as I did say, my manhood to stir all her nature upwise in sweet trouble that did be half of rebellion, and half that she did ache that she be close unto me in mine arms.

And, in verity, you to be with me in all these things, if that you have had the lovedays beside a dear and dainty maid, of an high and pure and natural spirit; so that if you be old these days, even but the light merriment of a passing maiden to bring a pain of wonderings and golden memories upon your heart.

And presently, I saw that Mine Own put a little space between us, as the naughtiness did work in her, as my heart to know; and she to be offward from me a little. And she still to have no speech with me; but in a little to begin that she sing in a low voice; and to have her pretty body very upright and lithesome, and to go forward with a wondrous dainty swing, so that my heart told me that she did all be stirred with small thrillings of defiance unto me, and with thrillings of love; and she to have the triumph of her Maidenhood and of her Womanhood, as it were both to contend in her and to thrill

upon her tongue, and to show out the lilted and pretty warfare of her spirit that did go dancing and dearly naughty in her breast.

And surely I went, very lifted in my heart, and astir; for it did be wondrous to me that this lovely Maid did be so utter mine. And to see but the way that she set her feet to the earth, and the way that she did lift them sure and dainty; and the way that her body did be poised, and the way of her head; and the way of her naughtiness and the sweetness and the love that did be wrapt in with all, did make me want that I have her in mine arms.

But yet, I not to do this, because that in the same time that she did so stir me to love and admirings, she to set somewhat else in me at variance, so that I did half to feel stern with her, for I perceived that she had that naughtiness then within her, that she did be like to have a real intent of impertinence unto me, so that she should be naughtily outrageous, and to have no heed to my advisings, neither unto my desires, unless that I set my hand upon her, to make her to obey.

And truly, you that have had dear maids, shall follow mine explainings; but unto others, I know not whether they shall understand, until they too have been possessed of One that shall set all their heart adrift, even as this One that did be Mine Own.

And sudden, I to know that Naani did change from her low singing unto an olden air that had surely not been heard in all that eternity. And in verity, for a little while, I not to know why that it did so shake all my heart; nor what it did be; nor whether that I had truly heard it before, or only to think so.

And, surely, it did be as that the silence of the olden moonlit world did steal all about me; and sudden, I to know that the Maid did sing an olden lovesong of the olden world, and to go halting a little as she sang, because that the words did steal something oddwise through the far veils of her memory, even as a song doth come backward out of dreams.

And I to feel all my blood to seem to tremble in my veins, and my throat to be troubled, as with vague sobs that did be the ghosts of forgotten tears. And the dim sorrow that had come so swift and strange upon me, to be likewise steeped in golden mists of the love that I once did love; and the glamour to be come all fresh upon me, and I to know in that moment how much we do forget, even when that we do believe that we have all memory and all sorrow within our hearts.

And I lookt unto the Maid, something dimly, because of the way that I did be; and I perceived in a moment that Mine Own did weep as she walked; but the less with pain

than with the strange anguish of Memory, that doth have in it Tenderness and Sorrow and Love and all that Hath Been and all that Did Never Be, and all to make a Vale unto the Spirit, where doth be both a dim greyness and a warm and everlasting light, and an utter speechlessness, and the low and far music of forgotten songs, that do come downward over the shadowy mountains that do be builded of Years and Forgetfulness, and yet made to be seen with the light of that our Memory, which doth cast so many husht shadows.

And surely, as I did say, the Maid did weep as she went; but not to be cast down; but rather that she held her head upwise, as that she did walk in a glory. And the song to come oftbroke, and oddly, and to set her voice to little human quiverings, as her memory did shake her sweet spirit unto tears afresh; and she to walk with her pretty head upheld and as that she did go in a Triumph; and the tears to come down strangely upon her face, and all her soul to be there, pure and wondrous, and in the same time both troubled and glad.

And this thing to be very dear and amazing; and she to be as that she not to know then that she sang; but as that she did be lost in her thoughts, as we do say, and this to have come sudden upon her, out of all her upliftedness of spirit, that had been like to make her very open unto all subtile and subtle powers of thought and inward stirrings, as you shall think.

And again the song to come fullremembered, and fresh, as that this Eternity did be but the yesterday of that moment. And Mine Own to be all in a sweet madness with those halfdreamed memories, and the wonder and pain of all that no man hath ever said, and that shall be never said; and of the utter lost years, and all that hath been lost, and all forgotten greatness and splendour, and the dreadfulness of parting, and the loveliness of beautiful things that do be hid in the abyss of the years.

And it did be sudden to my quickened fancy, that there did be low echoes all about us, of the voices of dear beautiful ones that have died; for so did memory set a strange and lovely mystery about my spirit in that moment, that I did be all shaken so much as Mine Own. And I to be as that I drew my breath anigh to tears, and did be there with Naani amid the quiet spareness of the trees and the rock of that part of the land; but yet did be to see half dimly that I stood within a light, even as the light that doth be the wonder of olden sunsets; and I to be, in the same time, both that man and this man that now doth write; and to have beside my spirit but one maid, that I did lack to know whether I say to her Naani or Mirdath; for though the two that have been Mine Own did be differentseeming to the eye, there to be but the spirit of one maid beside me in that moment.

And surely, I did be there, all shaken unto the seeing of visions, as it did seem; so that the Land about me to have grown half as that it did lack that it be real unto my sight, because that I lookt inward unto Lands that did be of Memory. And lo! in a moment this to go; and I to be in that Country of the Seas, and to look newly unto Naani, and she to go as I have told; and there to be the lonesome trees and the rocks in all parts for a great way about.

And sudden, as I lookt at Mine Own, she to come round unto me, and she held out her arms, and did gaze at me with such a love, as that she were transfigured, and to need strangely that she be in mine arms; and surely, I to an holy need that I have her unto me, because that, after all, there did be no wonder so great as that wonder, that when all did be said I did have Mine Own, after that all Eternity had nigh past.

And, in verity, we ran each to the other, and did be silent, because that there was no speech of words by which we could say aught of all that did be in our hearts. And truly you to be with me in understanding; for you too, mayhap, to have suffered thiswise of dumbness; even if that it hath not been so great. But yet to make you to know.

And presently, we grew quiet in the spirit; and Mine Own to come back again to her joyousness, and to go beside by me, as we made forward.

And presently, Naani to begin that she look at me with dear impudences again, that did be very sweet unto me; but yet to be like to lead unto defyings.

And truly, by these things shall you know the spirit of Mine Own Maid; and there to be none to me that ever did be like her. But, indeed, you to think thatwise of the maid that you did love; and all the world to be thinking each these thoughts of one dear maiden that doth be the one maid in all the round world.

And this to be the lovely niceness of the human heart; and I not to have any grumble thereat; but yet, surely, you shall say that this Maid that did be Mine Own, did be very dear and lovely. And, in verity, I to show my human heart in this thing; for you likewise to want that I think your Maid to have been just so dear, and the more so. And indeed we ever to be going these ways; and to have good comradeship of understanding, because that we have all loved and suffered joy and had utter belief in a dear One.

And surely a defyingness to come presently into the way that the Maid did go, and she to walk a little offward from me; and truly I lookt at her, both with love and yet with somewhat that did be to reprove her gently, and all in the same moment that she to make my heart stirred with her sweet naughtiness.

And she to look sudden at me; and to be that she half to intend to run to kiss me; but also that she be minded in the same moment that she set herself up impertinently against me. And, in verity, she made me to harden my nature a little, as manhood doth make a man to do; and this because of the rebellion that I knew to be in her; and she likewise to know. But she hid her eyes, when that I shook my head, half with play and half with earnest; and was then impudent unto me; and gone from that in a moment to her pretty singing, and her naughty walking apart. But she no more to sing an olden lovesong.

Now, in a while, we past a basin of rock, in a place among the trees; and there was a warm spring bubbling in the rock, and the basin to be full of water, very warm and with some smelling of chemistry.

And the Maid told me that she would wash, and I to think it a good place for that end. And when I had tasted the water, I found that it did seem smooth and proper for our intent, as that there did be a verity of an alkali in it.

And truly we washed, and after that I was done, the Maid bid me that I turn my back; and I to do this, and she to mock me very naughty whilst that I could not see her, and to seem very quiet; for indeed, I heard no splashings of water, though I stood off from her a long while, and she alway to say naughty things unto me, as that she did mind truly to have me angered; for, indeed, she did have a plain intent that she mock at me, and to ease not her wit. And surely, after that I had stood a great while, I askt the Maid when that she did be like to be done; but she to say that she was nowise ended of her toilets. And I knew very sudden that she made foolishness upon me also in this matter; and I turned upon her, and lo! she did be sitting upon a little rock, very sedate, even as when she had bid me turn from her; and to have made no more forward, but only to have been there at ease, that she keep me turned away to please her naughty mood, and all the while have a double liberty to have impudence upon me.

And, in verity, I did be a little angered; but scarce that I did know it; for I did love her very great, and was stirred inwardly with her dearness and that she did look just thatwise that I knew not whether I to need to kiss her, or to shake her; and truly, how should I know; for my heart did ache that I have her to mine arms; but my brain to say that she did go overfar in the joke; and truly you to see that I did not be unreasonable, neither to be lacking of grace; for indeed I do think that I was swayed allways, because that I saw all the dear way that her pretty nature did work; and to conceive of her mood and to understand and be stirred; but yet to shape a little in my manhood unto hardening, and in my judgement unto sternness.

Yet, truly, I scolded Mine Own with no more than a little jesting, and did be nice and gentle with her, because she did be so dear, and I to know justwise her mood and the cause and working of it.

And I told her that I did love her, and that she hasten now and let us again to the journey. But, indeed, she only to make a face at me, so that I did be near like to shake her unto sedateness. And she then to be both merry, and a rogue, as we do say, and to stop her ears and again to sing very gleeful; and all so that she might not hear aught that I said. And surely she lookt a very dainty Rebellious One.

And I went then straightway to her, and took her hands from her ears; and I kist her pretty ears very gentle that I not to deafen her. And I kist her lips as she did sing; and afterward shook her, that she be not such a sweet Torment. But this to have no success that way; for she only to put out her toes to be kist; for her footgear was off from her feet. And, indeed, I laughed, even as I made to frown; and truly I kist her pretty toes, and tried then to coax her to go forward something speedy with her hair, and to be ready to the journey. But she only to sing, and to refuse to be sedate.

And, in verity, in the end, I caught her up in mine arms, and had her bundle in my hand, and so went off with her very sudden, with her hair all loose upon me in a lovely and soft shining, and her feet bare as they did be.

And this action I made, because that I was grown truly a little stern with Mine Own; for, indeed, she did half to need that she be whipt unto properness, as you shall think, that have seen how she did be thiswise only because that her nature did be stirred strangely, and her Womanhood and her Maidenhood to be all unto war, and in part to make a rebellion against me that she did know glad to be her true Master; but yet she to be thus, even though she did be so glad.

And this to act so that she did be in the same moment both sweet and wise and yet to show a dainty foolishness and a true naughtiness that did make me to feel somewhat of a real anger; but yet did have me to know that all my being did be stirred by her; so that I did think with one thought that she did be very foolish, and with another that she did be lovely wayward.

Now, when that I took the Maid up so quick, and made off with her, she to give a little gasp and to submit to me with a quick humbleness; but immediately, she to regain her courage, and to be outraged of me. But, indeed, I took no heed, only that I was like to shake her; and did know also that her hair did be wondrous pretty upon mine armour. And she soon to lie very quiet and easy in mine arms, and to be demure.

And I to have a half knowledge of somewhat amiss; but yet to have no sureness, neither to think much upon this vague feeling.

And when that I had gone a good mile, she to put up her lips to be kist; and I to kiss her very loving, for she was so dear. And she then to say, very ordinary like, that I should do wisely now if that I went back for her footgear, which truly I had lacked thought to notice, when that I did pick up the Maid.

And I saw that she had known this thing all that while, and had made that mile of carrying all a waste and a foolishness, because of the naughty rebellion which did be in her. And lo! I set her instant to the ground; and she gave out a little cry as she saw that I did be gone somewise hard and stern with her.

And indeed I pulled a small branch from a tree that did be near, to be for a switch as you shall whip a boy with; and I held her with my left hand, and in verity I laid the switch thrice very sharp across her pretty shoulders, that she know all that she did need to know. And she seeming to be ceased in a moment from her perverseness, and did nestle very quick unto me, that had whipt her; and did need that she be wondrous nigh unto me. And, truly, how shall even a young man flog such an one.

And the Maid to be very husht against mine armour, and to resist that I look into her face that did be prest so anigh me. But presently, I used a little and gentle force, and so to look into her face something sudden. And truly, that One did be smiling very naughty and dainty to herself; so that I perceived that I had not truly whipt her enough; but yet I could harden my heart no more at that time; for, in verity, there doth be a strange halfpain in the bosom, if that you have to flog a maid that doth be utter thine, and this to the despite that there hath beenas thenno properness of anger to have for an after selfreproach.

And surely, I to have done this thing only of a stern intent and steadfastness, that I steady Mine Own Maid unto wisdom; but yet to have been helpt by a little anger, because of the thing that she had done. Yet, alway, my love did be so strong, that mine anger never to have aught of bitterness, as you shall have seen, and to understand.

And we went back then for the footgear of the Maid; and she to be very husht in mine arms; but yet, as I perceived, not to be quiet, of an humble little heart, but only of the chance that her nature did be stirred that way for the while.

And truly, when we were gone back, the footgear did be there to the side of the pool, and the Maid gat shod very speedy, and would have no aid; and afterward did up her hair very tight upon her head, to have it utter from my sight; and this to be for a

perverseness; for she knew that I did love to see it pretty upon her shoulders, or if that she must do it, that she do it up very loose and nice; and truly you to know how I mean; only that I have no skill of such matters; but yet a good taste to admirings, if that the thing be aright.

And I to say nothing, as I looked at her; and she presently to make a quick glance unto me, to see why I did say naught. And I shook my head, smiling at her waywardness; but she to look away from me, and to seem to be set to fresh naughtiness.

Now we went forward then upon our journey; and alway the Maid to walk onward from me; but yet to have no other impudence, neither to sing.

And I to go kindly with her; but yet to think that she did lack somewhat to know that I did be truly her Master; and I to wonder a little whether she did know proper that my gentleness with her did be not of weakness, but born of understanding and love, and the more proof that I did be fit to possess and to guide her.

And truly this was the thought of a young man, yet lacking not of Reason in the bottom part, though mayhap to be something clumsyseeming unto the mind of a maid; and to be very human to my years; and you to have been likewise, if that you have tried allways with a dear One, and she to be yet overwilful, so that you to wonder whether she did truly know how you did understand.

And surely a maid doth know much that doth be in the heart of a man, if that she be true woman in her own secret heart. And oft she doth know more of her man than her man doth wot of himself, and to go her own diverse ways that she search out and bring forth and waken all that is the inward being of the man that she doth love.

Yet, when that she have stirred you in the deeps that you scarce to know, she to be all fearful, and in the same moment to have no fear; and to be in rebellion, and in the same moment to be most strange humble. And all to be born of love, and nature in action upon nature.

And more than this how shall I have learning of the heart to tell you; for, in verity, there doth be much in these few lines, if that you know to read. And surely you to know, or to learn; but if neither, then have you gone short of joy and the true inwardness of life.

Now this way I did be, as I have told; and the Maid to be quietly naughty in perverseness, as also I have set out; yet to have a strict mind to her duties, and to go now wondrous sedate upon the journey; yet alway apart. And likewise, when that the sixth hour did come, and we to our halt, as ever, she to be very speedy and nice that the water

and the tablets be ready for me; but yet to have no word; neither to eat by me; but again a little apart, and not to share the water, but to make a brewing to herself, when that I had done.

And likewise, the Maid held not up her tablets to be kist, as alway; but eat them, quiet and meditative, and with little nibblings, as that she did ponder upon other matters, or mayhap to be not hungry.

And these things I saw, as we eat and drank in a silence; and I to look at the Maid, somewise sad in the heart, and something stirred; and I to say to myself wisely, yet as a young man, that she did not yet be taught sufficient that I was her master. And this you to perceive.

And she never to seem to look at me; but to be quiet and demure, and to have her eyelids something down upon her eyes.

Now, presently, as I thought upon the matter, I saw that I do well that I take no heed of Mine Own; but to let her to come to a natural end of this naughtiness, that did be, in the same time, both pretty and a little foolish; so that in half I condemned it and in half I was stirred; and alway I loved the Maid very dear, and had a good understanding; and there to be also an interest in my heart at this new side that she did be showing. And also, she to stir me odd whiles unto masterfulness; and so you to know pretty well how it did be with me in the matter.

Now, surely, I found this plan, that I attend not to the Maid, to have something of success; for I knew presently that she did look upward at me, slyly, from under her pretty eyelashes; and after, to be demure in a moment; and this to go forward for a while; yet I to show no heed.

And in a while, I saw that she gave attention to her garments, in the way of nattiness; and afterward, she took down her hair, and made it up then very loose and pretty upon her head; so that she did be very lovely, and to tempt mine eyes that they look alway at her. But, indeed, I did make as that I had no heed that the Maid did shape her hair different upon her head.

And she very soon then to speak, and to have the lesser gear together, and to make that she attract me. But truly, I was very nice with her; yet to keep her now a little off from me in the spirit; and so to teach her thatwise, that she was somewhat of a dear naughty maid; but also, as I do think, I was this way, because that in part I would tease her, in great love of her prettiness and her makings up to me; and so maybe even that I make her to be the more defying of me. And this to be as that I also lacked somewhat of

reason; for I did strangely that I think that she need to be whipt, and in the same time that I go to make her the more deserving of the same.

Yet, this to be the truth, as I know it; and surely to be the natural waywardness of love. But yet, there did be also in the backward part of my wisdom, an intent that I be wise and careful with Mine Own; and I surely to have no full realisings that I did be like to set her further unto perverseness than yet she did be.

Now, after that I had shown well that I lacked to heed the Maid, I found that I did be looking oft at her; and she to be so dear and pretty, and to be all husht, that truly I could not bear that I be longer silent to her advancements.

And I ceased then from pretending, and would have had her into mine arms; but she to be now in sweet dignity, and to keep me off with very sober graces. And because of this, I to feel someway that I did be someway in blame; and surely, now that I consider it, I can see that I was something acted upon, even as had been the Maid; and so we two to be; and a most human pair, as you to say; and somewhat both alack; but indeed, we did be very wholesome, and in utter love each of the other; and mayhap both then to perceive something of the sweet foolishness within us that did be as yeast awork in us; for I thought that Naani did smile a little to herself. But, surely, this clearseeing, to be but for an odd time; and afterward we each again to earnestness in our way with the other; but alway, even when we did make to show indifference, we to be something troubled inwardly with sweet flashings of our bewildered natures.

Now, though I have shown you that I to know that I did be not utter free of this most strange and natural foolishness; yet you to perceive that I tell this only that I have utter truth of all things that did happen; for, in verity, because that I was something subtly touched this way at whiles, yet was this no full excusing of the Maid; though, in the same moment, you to perceive, that there did be only the half of me to think that she did need to be excused; for, in truth, mine understanding went alway, in the main, with the workings of her nature; and had a natural sympathy with her dear whimsies; but also, as you to know, I to be stirred constant in my manhood by her naughty defyings; and to be troubled in my Natural Sense, when that her whimsies made her to act that she be likely to come unto aught of harm.

And surely now you to see all the way of my heart, and to have understanding in things that do follow. And alway you shall mind that I did love her utter, and to crave alway that I be a shield unto her; though truly, there doth be, mayhap, somewhat in me that doth act to make me a little stern seeming in my love; but yet not oft so; as you do know, that have gone with me in all my tellings.

Now, we went then upon our journey; and the Maid to be somewhat before me, and offward to the side, upon my right; and to have no speech with me, but to make a good pace, and to be very dear and graceful as she went.

And now we did pass this thing of strangeness, and now that; and these I did point out to her, and made some telling concerning the same, having the memory of mine outward way, and how that I did see these things then, when that I was all in suffering of so lonesome a doubt.

And she to hark alway very intent, and to move her head nice and intelligent, to show that she heard me; and once I saw that she lookt sudden at me with a dear light in her eyes; but this to be done in a moment, and she to be again silentseeming and in her new perversity of dignity.

And surely she did seem so utter sweet in this new way of naughtiness; but yet I did think, odd whiles, that I should like to shake her unto dear humbleness and her usual way.

And in the twelfth hour, we made halt again, and had our food and our drink; and the Maid to serve me very clever and quiet, as that I did be her Lord, and she an husht slave. And I saw that she made a constant and naughty mock upon me; and truly, as I did half think, she to need that she be in care that I not treat her sternly, as shall a slavemaster, and to give her that which she did ask for so mute and impudent. But alway she did stir me mightily to have her to mine arms, and to love her very dear.

And presently, we did be again to our way; and to be yet silent; so that I scarce knew whether to have patience with Mine Own, or whether that I take her and speak seriously with her to cease this play, which did begin a little to dispirit me somewhat strangely.

And in the end I went over to her, as we did walk, and I put mine arm about her, and she to yield to me without word, and to hark very quiet to my speech of reasoning and gentle sayings, and to hide whether she did be stirred inwardly, or not; though, indeed, my spirit to know that her spirit did never be afar off from mine in all deep matters; but only this thing to be to the top, and to set somewhat between us that did be both a sweetness and a trouble.

And alway, as I talked with the Maid, I saw that she did make naughtily to act as that I did be a slavemaster, and she but a chattel to me; for she to be husht before me, and neither to yield her slender body willing to mine arm, nor to resist me; but only to be still, as that she had no saying in this matter; and as that I was like to beat her at my pleasure, or to withhold my hand, all as might chance to be my desire. And this I

perceived was the shaping of her actions, so that all her dumbness and her quiet obedience did be but a way to say this thing to me; and all to have come from her love of me and that she did be shaken in her nature by my manhood, and so to be but a new form of her naughtiness, that did have this change when that I whipt her.

And all this, you to perceive, that have gone with me.

And I saw that she would not cease from this perverseness, but made a dumb and naughty and hidden mock upon me, very dainty and constant, and scarce to be truly perceived, save by the inward sense. And truly, I grew something angered afresh, and to feel that she did need that she be shaken so stern that she come unto the reality that I did be her man and natural master; yet alway in love.

And surely I loosed her then, and went off a pace to her side; and we again to go forward thiswise; yet she soon to have a greater distance between us, which she made very quiet and natural; but, indeed, I saw what she did.

Now, about the fourteenth hour of that journeying, I saw before us, in the far distance, the rock upon which did be the olden flying ship, that you shall remember. And presently, as we came more nigh, I lookt oft to Mine Own; and I saw that she did be staring that way, and to be in wonder; but yet to say naught to me.

And soon, as we came very close, I did want that I tell her about the ship, and of mine adventuring there, and of the wonder of that olden ship, set there through Eternity.

But in the first, I hesitated, as you shall think, because of her way; but truly, my heart knew that her heart did be proper unto me; and, moreover, I should be small in my nature, if that I let any pettiness put a silence upon me; though, in verity, if that the Maid had not been inwardly loving to me, I had been that I had told her no word; and this to be very natural, whether it be of smallness or not.

And when that we were come beside the great uprising rock, I made halt, and the Maid to halt with me; and I showed her how that the thing upon the rock did be an olden flying ship from the Mighty Pyramid. And in the first, she askt no questions; but did be quiet and but to show with little noddings that she did be greatly interest.

And I to show to her how that this olden ship did be there mayhap an hundred thousand years; and to have been there, as it did seem to us (that were of that age) since the beginnings of the world; though, in verity, our two spirits did know that the beginnings of That Age, did be truly the ending of This, as you also to know.

And much I told Mine Own, and afterward concerning the two Humpt Men that did come after me; and she alway to be silent, until that I spoke of the fight; but then to come round upon me very swift, and with a dear light in her eyes; and had askt, before she did wot, whether they did hurt me.

And surely, this to have been the first thing of her olden sweet naturalness that she did say for a great while, and I to be so in delight, that I had her into mine arms, and kist her very loving, all in a moment, and she to submit with a nice gladness, and to nestle unto me, and all unwitting that she did be gone from her waywardness.

Yet, in verity, she did be a naughty Maid; for she minded in an instant that she did forget her pose unto me; and lo, her lips did be no more to search unto mine, but to be as that they did be kist only of my will, and she to have no more live nestling unto me, but only to be quiet in mine arms. And I lookt into her face, and her lids to be down somewhat over her pretty eyes, and she did look very husht and demure; so that truly, I knew not whether to shake her or again to kiss her.

But in the end I loost her, and made then that we go forward; yet, indeed, she did rather stay awhile, to hark further concerning the olden ship and of mine adventurings; but she did then to mind that she obey as a slave shall obey; and truly, I did punish her, in that I told her no more; but went forward at a good pace, and had some natural wonder how that I deal with such a Maid, if that I spare to shake her.

And surely, I thought then again that I leave her be, and so to have her presently again to her old and natural way.

Now, in a while, I lifted the Maid into mine arms, that I carry her, as ever, through the last part of each journey, and so to have her never overtired for the morrow. And she for a moment to resist; but instantly to give unto me, and to lie quiet in mine arms, as that she had no saying in aught that did be done, but must alway obey. And, indeed, you to see how dearly perverse she did be.

And I went on then through four hours from that time, and lookt oft upon every side, and walkt quietly; for truly we were come now into a part of the Country where I did feel that there might be near some of the Humpt Men.

But I saw nowhere anything to put me in dread.

And alway as we journeyed, there did seem a great stillness in all the Country near about; and afar off the low mutter of the Great FireHills, in this place and that, and a drowse as of life and warmth about us, and everywhere the air very rich and plentiful.

And presently, when that we did be come down from that high place where did be set the rock and the olden ship, we came in among the trees that came very nigh to the shore for a great way; and oft as we did go, there were clumpings of small firehills that did cast fire and noise; and oft the roaring of monstrous springs aboil; and then again the smell of the woods about us, and oft still in odd places the low near sound of a little firehill, that did burn, lonesome, in some clear space of the woods, in this place and that; and afterward we to be gone onward again into the dull low mutter that did be in all the air of that Country, and that did but make a seeming of silence, because that it did be so far and constant.

Now, about the eighteenth hour I to note that the noise of the Great FireHills grew more loud; and I saw presently over the trees, afar upward in the great night and gloom that did lie above, those two mighty FireHills that I did feel to make the earth tremble, in that part, upon mine outward way. And surely I have told something of this before; and you to remember, if that you but think a little moment.

Now, it may appear strange that I speak thiswise of seeing the two Hills of fire; as that I had perceived them sudden. But, indeed, I had been long abled to see them both, yet to have had no attention to them, because that they did be a great way off, and because they did be but two Hills of fire, in a Country that did be plentiful with such.

And, truly, I not to have said aught about them, only that our path did take us now by their feet, and I to see them, as it were, newly; and to have nice ease of heart to perceive how that they did be a wonder unto the spirit and the brain for all time.

For it did be as that the earth had a constant shaking within miles of them, and that a monstrous force of nature did be in that place. But yet there to be no desolation around, as you should think; but in all parts a wondrous growing of trees and great plants in abundance.

And the trees to grow upward upon the shoulders of the mountain; and there to be no falling of hot rocks and ash, as you to think; but all very sweet and wholesome, as that the mighty valley made a chimney to the mountain, and mayhap to others, so that their waste, if that they had such, did go free. But, indeed, you shall take no heed of this explaining, save as an odd thinking that hath come to me, and to be without foundation. And there to be no surety of the reason to this; only that there did be no falling of ash in that part, as I do know. Yet in other parts of that Country the FireHills did make new mountains of the matter that did come from them; but this not to be alway so; and there to seem to my knowledge no cause to order why this did not be constant; save that my guessings to be right, or naught to be blown from some. But, indeed, I to be sure only of

that which did be plain to mine eyes. And mayhap there to be no mystery in the thing; but a score of natural explainings, if that I did know, or had patience to think long enough upon such.

Now when that the eighteenth hour did be proper come, we to be anigh to the great Hills, and there to seem nowise any danger of falling fire, so that I sought about for a place for our slumber.

And I found a cave in the side of a big rock; and the cave was dry and comfortable, and had the mouth about a score feet above the earth. And when that I had climbed and lookt well into the cave, I gave the Maid an help, and had her safe into that place; and she then to prepare the tablets and the water, the while that I brought up a boulder from below, to set very light balanced in the mouth of the cave. And this I meant for a signal to fall, if that any creature should climb upward into the cave, while that we did sleep. And surely, you to know this plan; for I did it before, as you to have learned.

And the Maid sat near to me, and eat her tablets very quiet and with a demure naughtiness; but yet to be also in wonder, and to gaze outward at the Great FireHills, and to be in awe, as I did know.

And I put my halfanger and my play from me, and told her of mine outward journeying, and how I did go by these same mighty FireHills, that did seem as mighty torches to light me in my search, and to have held a new strangeness and wonder over my path.

And she still to be silent, but yet to look at me twice or thrice with a very dear and loving way; though she did hide her eyes in a moment, when that she saw that I perceived her.

And soon the Maid spread the cloak for our sleep; and while that she did this, I lookt well about for any creature that might be anigh; and I had an especial thought unto the Humpt Men; but, indeed, there was naught living, unto my sight, and nowhere did I see anything to put me in fear for our lives.

And truly I had a great viewing from that place; for we did be in an upward rock that stood in a high part, and the cave to be twenty good feet aloft, as I have told; so that all made to set us in a lofty place.

And the cave to look toward the two Mountains that did rise upward no more than twelve good miles off from us, as I do think; and the Country between to be somewise as a mighty park; for it was spread much about the feet of the Great FireHills, and did be bare in this place and that, as that rock did make the earth naked there, or the falling of some later fire to have wrought thus. And between the bare parts, there went strange

and romantic woods, seen mistily, and in parts the gleaming of waters, as that hot lakes did be half shown among the broken forests.

And presently the Land did go upward with a monstrous sweep, and was then in great terraces in the height, and trees to grow very plentiful upon the mountains, in sundry parts; and so those two Mighty Hills to go upward to meet the everlasting night; and presently to show strange uplands that did be seen very wondrous and queer in the light that did glow from the vast glowing of the fire that did be a crown upon the hills, that did seem in verity to be that they burned halfway between that known world, and the lost olden world, that was mayhap two hundred great miles above in the everlasting night and eternity of darkness.

And I lookt upward for awhile, and was much held by the mighty uplands that did be on high; yet did lie utter far below the burning crests of the Mountains, and showed vague and sombre and dreadful seeming, because that they did be so lost upward, and to have the mystery of the red shining and of the shadows upon them, and to seem to slope far under the great fires, but yet to be a place where no life should ever come, because that they did be so monstrous a way upward beyond the great shoulders of the Hills, the which did be themselves a huge way up. And truly, I should give you somewhat of the affecting of those grim and unknown Uplands, if that I said they did seem to my fancy to be a place where a sorrowful thing might wander lost forever. But why I to think this thing, how shall I say; and do tell it to you, only because that it doth seem to hold in the thought the grimness and utter desolation of those high and lonesome lands.

And by this, I was done looking, and turned me about, and so did find that Mine Own did stand silent, and waited that I come to my slumber. And surely, I lookt at her; but she did have her lids something downward, when that she saw me turn; and so in the end, I said naught, but went to my sleep, and had the Diskos very handy, as ever, beside me.

And I then to know that Mine Own did lie down beside me, to my back, as always, and this to gladden me, as you shall think; for I perceived afresh how thin did be the crust of her naughtiness; and I to be always stirred and touched in the heart by her loving naturalness, that did need always that she be near to me, save when she did play this naughtiness upon me along the way.

And I saw that she had no mind to be perverse whilst that I did slumber; but must now be nigh unto me, and quietly loving; though nowise truly ceased from her naughty acting that I did be as an hard slave master, because that I had whipt her; yet she to have somewhat a truce with me, as my heart did know. But, indeed, she not to kiss me goodnight upon the mouth, in her dear usual and sober fashion.

And surely I did lie awhile, and pondered upon the Maid and upon all her ways; and I perceived that she kist me not, only because that she did not be able to break utter from her perverseness, that did come from the stirring of her nature. And truly, I did love her, and was half minded that I turn about to her, and take her a moment into mine arms; but yet to abide from this, because that I was set that I wait awhile, and to bring her to me thiswise, mayhaps.

And presently, I knew that the Maid kist mine armour, very quiet and shy, because that she must kiss me; yet to be intent that I have no knowledge of this pretty act. But, indeed, I did know in all my being, and did be newly tender unto her; yet to say naught, and to wait.

And thus I knew presently that her breathing did go easy, so that I perceived that she was all content and gone over unto slumber, somewise as a little child that doth be weary, and doth sleep without care, and with happy assurance.

And, in verity, did a man ever to have so sweet and gentle a maid, that did be in the same time so troublous and perverse.

And I to lie yet awhile, and to note the constant tremble and shake of the rock that did be under us; and this to be alway thus as I did lie, and to be the more plain, because that I did be quiet in thought. And this, as I conceived, did come from the earthshaking that was made by the inward fire of the world, the which did make a vague trouble in all that part of the Land.

And then in a little, I was gone over into sleep, and waked not for seven good hours; and then to hear the fizzing of the water, very brisk and cheerful, and so to have mine eyes open in a moment, and to know by my timekeeper or dial, that was somewhat like to a watch of this age, that I had slumbered through seven good hours. But this to be learned after that I had lookt to see whether Mine Own did be well, and whether that the boulder did balance in the mouthpart of the cave.

And surely, there did be nothing in harm; for the boulder was there, as I did put it; and the Maid a little off from me, and did make ready the water and the tablets, that we eat before our journeying.

And I rose then, and in the same moment I did know that my mouth had been kist whilst that I slept; and the knowing to come to me vague, as that I had been kist in my dreams.

And I lookt over toward the Maid; but she to have her lids something down upon her eyes, and to seem very demure; so that I saw her naughtiness was come again upon her. Yet, truly, I could not bear that I not to have her into mine arms; for, indeed, her perverseness did seem as that she did the more tempt me unto her. And thus I came to her in a moment; but she neither to resist me, nor to give herself unto me; but only to be still in mine arms, and to do no more than submit very quiet.

And because of this, I loost her unkist, and was silent, and a little to be angered, even whilst that my heart perceived the way of the working of her heart. Yet truly I ached now that she come back to her dear natural fashion.

And I eat my tablets and drank some of the water; and the Maid to do likewise.

And afterward, I lookt well from the mouth of the cave; but did nowhere see aught to put me in trouble for our safety, though, truly, as presently I saw, there went an herd of strange creatures afar off in the Northwestward part, which did be that way of the Country, beyond the feet of the mountains, toward the InLand.

Now, when that I was something assured of the safeness of the way, I gat the Diskos to my hip, and the Maid to have the scrip and the pouch ready to my back, and her bundle to her hand; and so all to be ready.

And I went downward from the cave, when that I was girt, and gave aid to Mine Own; and so to be soon upon the journey.

And surely, as we went onward, and I to look about me with differentseeing eyes from my looking on mine outward way, I to see how wondrous this part of the Land did be; and how that it did be truly like a great and wondrous park, that did be made of the skill and labour of godlike things; and truly this to show my feeling, as I lookt allways. And all that part did be bred of the inward forces of the world, and did be burned clear in this place, and upheaved in that, and made to an hot lake in another part; and odd whiles there to go a great steam fountain, that did whistle a lonely song forever. And anon there to be a small wood, and again a wood; and oft the quietness of great and strange trees, that did stand alone. And here, and in that part, a little firehill, that did be surely no greater than an house, and we to pass seven of these in but three hours. And two to glow very steadfast, and to make no vigour of burning; but the five others did burn very strong, and sent out a smoke and ash, and made a small desolation all about them; and of these five, there did be one that cast stones oft and again, so that they went upward with a strange loud noise, and fell in this place and that, all about, so that we came downward more nigh to the shore, that we be a good way off.

And here, as I do mind, there was a strangeness, in that there did be many trees that had stones set in the branches; and this to be plainly the work of the little firehill; and I to think it but something new come, else surely there had been no trees within all that space that it did throw; but yet, mayhap, I am wrong in this; for all things did seem that they grew very easy in that Country; and indeed this to be for surprise to me, only that I saw it with mine own eyes, as we do say.

And always as we did go, there were signs of inward life and forces; so that we but to stand quiet to feel that the earth did tremble gently in many parts.

And presently there sounded for a great while a low and dull booming sound; and this we found to be from a place amid certain great rocks toward the mountains; for there came thence a mighty upspouting of boiling water, that went so high as an hundred feet, and oft to be thrice so high, and belched a great steam; and there went up in the jet of the water, a great rock, that was so big as an house, and did dance and play in the might of the water, as that it had been no more than a thing very light and easy. And when that the water fell, as it did oft, the rock to go downward with the dull booming that we did hear.

And I minded how that I had heard the booming upon mine outward way; but had been then something more to the shore, so that it had been less plain to mine ears, as you shall suppose; neither had it been then to my sight, as now it did be to us because that we were come mayhap the half of a mile more toward the InLand of the Country.

And truly, we lookt awhile at this huge great fountain and upboiling, and came nearer unto it; but yet to be a large space off, because of the way that it did throw out a spattering of small stones odd whiles. And surely the thing did cough and roar in the deep earth, and anon to gruntle gently and to sob and gurgle; and lo! to come forth in a moment with a bellow, very hollow and strange, and the great rock to go spinning upward, and all ashine in the light from the volcanoes, and was so round as a monstrous ball, and polished by the fret of the waters, so that I saw it had surely danced in the great jet through a weary time.

And anon the jet to cease and to go downward with a great soughing and thundering of waters, and the dancing rock to fall downward from that height which did show very huge, now that we did be come so near. And the rock surely to fall backward into some deep pit, whence came the waters, and as it fell, there was again the dull booming. But why the rock brake not, I could not perceive, save that it did always fall into a boiling up of waters, and had no hurt from the rock of the place whence it was come.

And the Maid and I both to have stood a while, that we stare at this thing; for it did be more strange than I have made you to know; but now I did make to our journey again, and did think the Maid followed; but lo! in a moment, when that I lookt, she was to my back, and went toward the great boiling fountain. Then I stopt very swift, and called to her; but she did take no heed of me, and went onward very naughty, unto the danger of the great boil of the Jet, and the constant flying out of the stones, that you do know.

Now, even as I stood and lookt, the Maid drew nigh to the place where the water did thunder; and the Jet in that moment to bellow, so that I knew it came upward again. And I ran then after the Maid, and she to see me, and began likewise to run from me toward the monstrous fountain; and surely I did think that I had done well if that I had whipt or beat her proper before this time; for truly it did be as that her naughtiness had gone nigh unto somewhat that did be near to a wayward madness, so that as I did perceive all her nature did surely work in her toward some deed that should be for regret; and this to come, because that she did be something pusht from her dear balance by her loving, and by the acting of my manhood upon her, so that her nature both to be in rebellion against me and to need me, and all in the same time. And thisway, she to be in an inward turmoil, and to be ready foolishly that she put in danger her beloved life, if only thereby she to make me something adrift, and in the same moment to have some ease of her perverseness. And, in verity, you to know all this, because that I have shown the working of her heart to you before this time.

Now, I caught the Maid among the great rocks, which did stand all about; and before her there did be a monstrous pit whence came the upbursting of the water; and the water to go upward before our faces in a mighty column, so that it did be as that a sea shot up on end, into a pillar of living water, and went upward forever, as it did seem in that moment. And how we should be saved, I knew not, for the water did be as that it overhung us, and should come down upon us and smother us in one moment, forever. And the roar was in our ears and shook all the air of that place with sound, as of an harsh and dreadful thunder; and there was a scalding of beaten water, as fine as an haze, all about us.

And I had the Maid in one instant into mine arms, and I ran very swift, with a fierce running, that I have her away speedy, and so made forlorn trial that I save her life. And lo! as I went from under that huge and dreadful overhang of the great waters, there came downward from the height a great stone that had been cast by the Jet, and it burst upon the rock to my back, and certain of the flinders did strike and ring upon mine armour, and made me to stagger as I ran. But I held the Maid crowded safe against my breast, and she did not be hurt; and truly I was yet able to run, and did save Mine Own, and brought her out from under that grim Spouting.

And I put the Maid down then to her feet; and she not to know how near that she had given us to death, neither of the way that the fragments did strike me; for she laughed very naughty and gleeful. But truly I laughed not; for my heart had been nigh husht with terror for her; so that I did be yet sick in my spirit, and mayhap also something shaken by the blows that I gat from the broken stone.

And, in verity, I to have meant that I flog her, very sharp, if that there be no other way that I might bring her to reason; for, in surety, as you to see, she to be acting so wild as a child, and so unreasoning as only a Maidinlove; and I to know that she did have to be brought back from this way of spirit, even though I have to hurt her pretty body, that I bring her again to her dear natural wiseness.

Yet, indeed, I could not whip her then, because that she did laugh so joyous, though with a naughty heart, and did look so wondrous dainty, so that even her defyings did but seem that which my heart desired. And you, mayhap, to have been something likewise in the lovedays. Yet I pled and reasoned with her to be a wise maid; but, indeed, she only to make a gleeful mock of all that I did say.

Now I went forward again, for I was not harmed by the stone, only that I did be shaken, as you shall think. And the Maid to go offward from me, and to sing, and did oft dance naughtily as she went. But truly, I did be silent with her, for I was but human, and did lack that she come to mine arms, and love me, because that I had pluckt her safe from that place. And, indeed, this to be but a natural desiring; and you to have understanding with me, and to know that you also to have this lack and need, if that you to have done aught for love of your maid, and she to deny you a word of loving tenderness.

Yet, in verity, I to be even then able to perceive with mine inward senses, how that the Maid did have a wondrous uppouring of love for me, but yet did be so perverse, and the more so, mayhap, because that her love did so urge her unto loving admittings that I did be her Man. And she, maybe, to have meant that she be the more humble presently, but yet to go naughtily awhile more, and not, indeed, to have had the power within her at that time, to have come unto me, and cast off her waywardness, and askt that she be in mine arms, as all my heart did desire.

And so, as I have told, I went silently, and mayhap with a little dullness, that did be part of anger and part of hurt and part of that same strange lovefoolishness from which the Maid did suffer. And truly, this doth be very contraryseeming, only that you have seen my heart; and all indeed the more human, that it doth be so contrariwise to the brainreason; and all to be desired, else did a man be no better than an ant or a weariful machine.

And this to be truth and wholesomeness as you shall perceive, if that you look deep enough, and do modify Reason with heartunderstanding; for, in verity, how shall that which we call Reason, bring any to the full and the great knowledge. And this doth be a power of holy things, and doth be a child that is born of Love and Reason, and in the one to hold the two, and to know all things is the gift of this power; so that no man may walk truly that hath only the first, neither any man do utter wise that hath only the second.

And surely, I to cease from these thoughts, and to my tellings; and you to your harkings and dear sympathy.

Now, when the sixth hour did be come, we made a halt and eat and drank, and afterward went onward again, and so came presently clear of the two monstrous firehills; and their great noise to be presently to our rear, and likewise that quiet country that did be round their feet, and did seem so utter husht and strange and doubly so, because of the upward noise of the mountains, and because of the slow and subtle earthshaking that did be so constant, and because of all those things that I have told.

Now, when we had made halt, the Maid had done her hair very uncomely upon her head, and had lookt slyly to see whether I did note; but truly, I took no heed; so that in the end she had it again in a pretty fashion, and did sing naughtily and with an heart of mischief, as she did shape it loose and wondrous nice about her head.

And I still to have no word for her; neither to show that I did watch her with love and somewise a quaint pleasure of her perverseness, even whilst that I did strive by silence and an aloofness that I bring her to my side, as she did be in the first days; for truly I did ache that she be near unto me, and to cease from her waywardness that did put a distance of spirit between us, as you to perceive.

And so we did go forward again, as I have told, and the Maid did strive that she make me to give attention to her naughtiness, for she did walk alway offward from me, and did sing aloud, and truly they did be songs strange unto me, but yet to be of love, and much as the songs of this Age; for, truly, there doth be but one song upon all the earth, and she but to sing it in diverse ways.

And she did oft to make little glancing toward me, and did pout very pretty; and in a moment come something toward me, as that she did be humble, and would be forgiven; but all to be in a naughty mockery; so that, in verity, I lookt not at her, save odd whiles; but did go forward alway, and made as that I had no heed of her doings.

And surely this did presently to stir her to a new defying and to a pretty anger; for she did sing other songs of impudence, that she did fit very clever about me; and this way to have a constant impertinence.

And so we did go, and I never to speak with the Maid, but to wonder when that she cease, or how long it should be ere that I did run swift to her and have her into mine arms, that I shake her and kiss her, all as my heart did desire.

And when that the twelfth hour did be come, we made halt again and eat and drank; and the Maid to serve me very intent, and hand me the water, the while that she went down upon her knee, as a slave; but when I would have laughed gently at her mockings, and taken her into mine arms, she went from me very sudden and cold, and was afterward silent and did sit apart from me.

Now I also did be silent, and in the first because that I was a little pained, and also because that I did be new touched with the lovefoolishness that did trouble Mine Own.

But afterward, I ceased from these feelings, and did be intent to another matter; for it did seem to my spirit that there was some danger anigh to us; and I had a thought of the Humpt Men, and lookt well about, and did beckon the Maid to come nigh, because that the trees did be plentiful thereabout, to hide any creature.

But Mine Own came not over to me, so that I loosed the Diskos from mine hip, and went that I be nigh to her. And she made that she saw me not; but did set the gear together, and had it presently aready for the journey, the while that I did look allways among the trees; but indeed I saw naught.

And when that I had the gear upon me, and the Maid her bundle, we went forward again; and I to be very wary, and bid the Maid keep close to my side; but indeed, she would not obey, and went offward among the trees, so that I was all anhaunted with dread for her, and ran and caught her, and talkt wisely with her; but indeed she did not hark to me; but did run off in the moment that I loost her.

And I caught her again, and I took one of the straps from around the Scrip and the Pouch, and set it about her pretty waist, and the end I held in my hand, and so had her to obey me in this thing which did be needful to her safety.

And the Maid to go with me very husht for two great hours, and I alway to look well about. And in the end of that time, the Maid did begin to sing impudently, and I did ask her that she be a quiet maid, lest that she bring danger upon us; but she to be the more impudent.

And lo! as I did strive that I look allways, lest any harm did come upon us, and in the same moment to reason Mine Own from her pretty folly, she did grow very husht, so that I lookt round upon her in an instant. And truly, she had cut the strap with her beltknife, and did run away very swift among the trees. And surely my heart did slow a little in my breast, because that there did seem something amove in the dark of the shadows, where the trees did grow thick, and the Maid did run that way in her foolishness and waywardness.

And I ran hard after the Maid, and did call her, not overloud, lest I bring somewhat upon her; but she to have no heed, and to run very light and swift, so that I caught her not for the half of a minute, as it might be; for she was gone ahead, and I did be a little cumbered with mine armour.

And lo! when I caught her, I shook her, and pointed inward among the trees, for it did seem even then to me that something moved there; but she to struggle in my hand a moment, and afterward to be still, and to ask with an insolence and a defiance whether that I did mean to flog my chattel, the which she did call herself in her naughtiness.

And, in verity, ere I did know, she had twist from me, and did run with a true wickedness straight toward that place where somewhat had seemed to be amove. And I ran then with all my strength, and with a fearful and an anxious heart. And because I put all my strength to the matter, I caught the Maid in a moment, ere she did be gone any way; and she again to fight to be gone from me. But I took her into mine arms, very strong, and I ran outward from that place where the trees made a darkness.

And surely, when I was come again to where the trees did be more spare, I saw that I was come nigh to that river which I crost on the raft, as you shall mind; and truly I did be glad, and to feel safe in a moment. Yet I was firm now to my purpose; for I set the Maid to the earth upon her feet, and kept my hold very sure upon her; for I did mean that I whip her, before that her lovefoolishness bring her needless unto death.

And I took the belt from her pretty waist, for it did be but a light strap, and I whipt her very sharp over her shoulders with the belt. And, truly, she did make to nestle unto me in a moment, as that other time when that I whipt her; but I stayed her from this, and I set the belt thrice more across her shoulders, very sharp, so that she to learn wisdom at once, and I to be free for ever of this need to pain her, which did hurt me very strange.

And the Maid to stand very quiet, now that I did keep her from coming unto me; and her head did be something bent, so that I knew not whether I did mayhap have flogged her

overhard; for I did be something lacking in knowledge whether that a maid be very easy hurt.

And I stooped and lookt into her face; and lo! she did be smiling naughtily, and kist me in a moment very saucy upon the mouth, ere I did be aware; and afterward, she laughed and made try to make a bitter mock upon me, and askt when that I should be pleased to cease from whipping my chattel; for that then she should run away immediately into the wood, and to trust the Humpt Men that they protect her from me.

And surely, I lookt at her very grave; for I perceived that she did not truly jest, but made to anger me, and did be half in a strange anger herself, and something adrift; for she had not been whipt enough, but only to stir her rebellion utterly. And I saw that if she be not set right then, ere she leave my hand, she to be like to have some new foolishness that should take her unto her death, even as she had come overnear already, as you to know. And this to be because that her nature did be stirred so that her natural wiseness was all overset, and she to be that she do aught of unwisdom that should come to her, because of her pretty lovefoolishness, which did now be made the more strong, by reason of the halfrising of her anger.

And this way, as I have known, I perceived that, for her dear sake, I should not let my lovingness weaken me in that moment. And, in verity, I shifted my hand and loosed the fastenings of her garment, so that her pretty shoulders did be bared. And her face to change sudden, and she lookt up at me an instant, with a little gasp; so that I knew she did be all unbroken, as was mine intent; but she did not yet have learned deeply in her heart, all that I was minded that she to learn; for even in that moment, she made a sound that showed she did try to mock me; but truly, she did not know in that instant whether to mock or to weep; though she did try to suppose that she had yet an heart for mockery.

And I set the belt thrice across her pretty shoulders, where they did be bared; and surely the blows did be very stern and sharp. And lo! in one moment Mine Own broke into an utter weeping, so that I took her instant into mine arms, and did hold her strong and gentle against mine armour. And she to be as a child in mine arms, and did sob very strange and bitter, as that she did be all undone in the heart.

And presently she did be quiet in mine arms; though I to feel how she did yet tremble; and she did cling tight unto me, and her face to be against mine armour.

And afterward, when that she had ceased to tremble, I kist her, and surely her mouth did be very humble, and her lids to be downward, and she to be something pale. And she then to be awhile more in mine arms, very quiet; and so to come unto her dear self. And

lo! presently, she to want to kiss me of her own accord; and she put up her lips, very sweet and as a loving maid, that I kiss her. And surely I kist her, with an humble and a masterful love; and a strange pain to be about my heart, as you shall suppose; but yet my heart and my reason both to approve mine action; and the Maid to be but the more mine own, and to have come again to her dear natural wisdom.

Yet, as you shall know, there to be for a long while a strange and mixed pain, in my bosom, both dreadful and tender, because that I had been so stern with Mine Own Maid; so that even while that my heart and my reason did approve me, my heart to make somewhat of reproach. And this to have been someways of foolishness; but yet human of our Nature, and an wholesome trouble to the spirit, if that this troubling be not allowed to shape our actions to any harmful weakness.

Now, in a while, the Maid did come to composedness, and to be very gentle and sweetly natural. And she made presently that she would have me to loose her; and afterward, she turned her back to me, even as a dear child, that I fasten her garment again upon the shoulders. And she did be both shy and glad, and humble, and in dainty pride of submission, and utter Mine Own. And surely, as I did this thing for her, I perceived that she lookt with a great shyness at the belt which did be yet in my hand. And when that I had made an end of fastening her garment, she did nestle unto me for a while, and afterward stood away and made shyly to show me that I put her belt again about her pretty waist. And I saw that she did be somewhat alack yet that she touch the belt, because that I had whipt her with it.

And truly you to perceive how her heart did be in this matter; but if you not to know, then how shall I to tell you; and do but bid you ask your own maid; though, in verity, she to be like that she but laugh at you, and leave you so wise as you be now; for the way of the heart of a maid doth be most hid to the maid, and she but to know the desire, and to lack the ending. But truly she doth know when that a man shall set the truth of her heart before her.

Now, when I had buckled the belt very nice again about Mine Own, we went backward a space, until that we found the bundle, which she had dropt, when that she ran off from me. And I saw also the portion of the strap, which she cut; and so all to be found.

And we went then at a good speed toward the river; for I was still minded regarding the seeming of movement which there had been among the trees; and very wishful that we have a raft made with haste, so that we might come to the little island, where I did sleep before, upon the outward way, as you shall remember. And I thought to have our slumber again in that place, and to make that day's journeying something short, because that the island was near, and a good and safe place for our sleeping.

And I told the Maid concerning the island; and she to be in great delight and interest, because that it did be one of those halts of mine outward going, and did be all eager as a child, when that I said we should truly have need of a raft to come to the island.

And we came downward to the shore of the river, and, indeed, there did be those two same trees, that had been my raft, there upon the shore of that place. And I showed these to Mine Own, and truly she did nigh to weep upon them, because of her dear emotions and love, and did cut a small branch therefrom, with her beltknife, and put the branch where she did put the piece of bark; and this to be for a remembrance and an afterdelight and pondering.

Now we lookt well in all parts, that we find some other small tree that should be fallen; and the Maid did climb a rock that did be near, with a flat top, so that she might search out around.

And presently she cried out to me that there did be a tree to our purpose, and but an hundred paces away; and she to go with me to show me, and to aid, if need be; but, indeed I carried the tree very easy, and had it with the others; and afterward, we went about again for branches, and these I cut from live trees, using the Diskos with care and wiseness.

And with these branches to be for crosspieces, and our belts and the straps for binders, I set the trees together into a raft, and made it pretty good for our need, and so that no monstrous thing in the river should have chance to snap upward between the trees at my dear One.

And when the raft was done, I gat it to the water, and the Maid did lend her strength; for the thing was heavy, as you shall think. And when this was done, I pushed a sharp branch downward into the shore, and I hookt a branch of the raft about this mooring, and so did be nigh ready for the voyage.

But first I did need a pole to push the raft, and did wonder now where the other did be gone, that I cut upon the outward way; for I had set the pole with the two trees, as I did mind, having some vague thought that mayhap I should live to come that way again.

And I had a little strange unease that the pole did be gone; but scarce to know that I did be troubled, yet to set me to a new haste. And I bid the Maid put the scrip and the pouch and her bundle secure upon the raft; and in that time I lookt well about for a sapling tree that should do my purpose. And I saw that there grew an odd one a little to the side of

the flattopt rock that the Maid had lookt from; and whilst that I cut it, the Maid did come to watch, and made pretty chatter in the time that I trimmed the branches away.

And lo! whilst that I did be part divided in mine attention between her dear talk and my work and an haste that did be born of that little unease that was come upon me, my spirit to seem to be aware that there came a danger anigh to us; and the Maid to have this same knowing; for she ceased her speech, and lookt at me with somewhat of trouble. And lo! in that moment, as I balanced the pole in my hands, there came the noise of a sudden bounding to our backward part, where the trees did grow something anigh.

And I turned, instant, and lookt; and behold! there did be upon us an Humpt Man, very lumpish and mighty; and he stretched out his hands, and ran at me. And I had no time to the Diskos, which did be upon the earth to my feet; and I smote the Humpt Man with the point of the pole that did be in my hands, and the point took him very strong and horrid in the breast, and entered in, so that the Humpt Man gave out a strange howling, that did be half seeming of an animal and half of an human. And he clutched at the pole that did so hurt him, and I stoopt very swift for the Diskos, and had it in a moment. And the Humpt Man tore the pole out of his breast, and in the same instant I ript him from the head downward, so that he did be nigh in two halves; for I had no mercy in mine act, even though my heart did be something sorry.

Now, even as the man died, there did be a sound of running in the wood before me; and lo! I turned very speedy to the Maid, and she was there to my back, and had her beltknife drawn in her hand; for she had it in her bosom, where she had put it when that I took her belt for the raft.

And I caught the Maid about the waist with my left arm, and was come with her to the top of the rock in two great houndings. And I set her there upon the rock, and turned again to the way I came and swung the Diskos free; for indeed, I had seen that there did come a number of the Humpt Men among the trees.

And there came running from the wood, mayhaps a great score of the Humpt Men; so that it did seem to me that we did be going to die; for how should one stand against so many, and they so quick and strong, as you shall mind.

Yet, in verity, I had no despair; but did be mixt in the heart with a great fear for Mine Own, and a strange and exulting gladness that I should do that day some deed for Mine Own Maid; and truly this to be the pomp of love and the heartcry of the barbarian, as

you shall say. And this maybe; but truly I did be proper human, and to make no excuse because that I was natural; neither have I hid anywheres aught that I did think and feel.

And whether that you approve or not, if that you condemn me, you to condemn all Humanity, and to have vain words and vain regrettings; for these things that be named for faults, do but be the complement of our virtues, and if that you slay the first, you may chance to wither the last; for now I speak of things as they be now, and as they did be then; and nowise of lovely ideals that do live chief in the mind, and so much in mine as any, as you to know, if that you have gone with me all along my way.

And surely, I must cease from my thinkings, and go forward with my telling; for the Humpt Men did come forward at a wondrous quick run, and did swarm upward on to the rock, as that they did be panthers; and they made no outcry; but came silent to the killing; and I saw that they did be something smaller than he that I had but then slain. And, in verity, I did be all knit in that moment with speed and cleverness; for I split the heads of three, with but quick turns of my wrist, as I did wield the Diskos. And I kicked the face of another, in the same time, with my metal boot, so that he died; for there did be all my strength and all my skill working then for our salvation.

Now all this to have been done in but a few beats of the heart, as I might say; and these men to have been in the front of the attacking. Yet there did be no space to have breath; for there leaped three more of the Men upon the rock; and one smote me with a great piece of rock that he carried, so that mine armour did seem as that it crackt, and I to be driven backward upon the Maid; yet had slain one of the Humpt Men, even in that moment.

And surely, my dear One caught me in her arms, behind, and steadied me, so that I fell not; and I slew the Humpt Man with the rock, even in that moment whilst Mine Own held me, as he came again to strike me. And I then to be firm again upon my feet, and did spring at the third of the Humpt Men; and surely there was no room that he should be able to avoid me, even did that be his intent; and he came at me with a great leap. And I stood strong, looking clearly to my work; and I swung the Diskos with both my hands, and the blow took the Humpt Man in the middle part, and split him, whilst that he did be yet leaping. And in that instant there reached over the edge of the rock, two of the Humpt Men, and gat me by the feet; so that I was pulled sudden to my back very hard and bitter; and this to be done, even whilst that the body of the Humpt Man did be yet in the air. And the body came forward over me, and did be utter dead already, and fell down upon the rock beyond me, and rolled horridly and went over the edge of the rock.

And I did be all shaken and something bemused by the hardness of my fall; and the hands of the two Humpt Men pluckt me sharp to the edge of the rock, the while that I did strike vaguely to wound them; but did only chip the rock, and fortunate that I harmed not the weapon.

And lo! in the moment that they had been like to have me downward to the earth into their midst, I to make a good stroke, for I cut the shoulder of one very dreadful, so that he loosed me; and immediately, I kicked very fierce with my freed foot, and surely I nigh crushed the hand of that other with my metal boot; and he likewise to cease from dragging upon me.

And immediately, I knew that Mine Own did be helping me that I get instant to my feet again; for I was yet something dazed.

And there came then a rush of the Humpt Men up the rock; and truly it did be a glad thing for our lives that they might come up only upon but one side; for the other sides did be utter steep and smooth worn; and this to have been unto our saving, as you shall think.

And I stood up to the rush of the Humpt Men, and did smite hard at them, with a quick circling of the Diskos, so that the great weapon did glow and roar. And they gave back from the blaze and the sound of the Diskos; and surely then I ran in upon them, whilst that they did be something bewildered; and I gat the foremost man full upon the head, so that he did be dead before he did know what thing happened. Yet, in verity, this did be a dread moment to me; for the Humpt Men leaped in at me upon every side in an instant of time; and I did be struck upon my headpiece and upon my back and breast with the stones that certain of them did carry, so that I rockt as I stood, and did near to swoon, and mine armour to be all dint and bent upon me, and I truly to seem that I had come to the time of my dying.

And lo! in that moment of time, there did come to my dazed sense a low and bitter cry of anguish from the Maid; and this to set all my life aglow in me. And, in verity, there went a strange greyness of fury before mine eyes, and I then to fight as I did never fight before; and I did smite as it did seem forever. And the greyness did ease from mine eyes, and the Maid did have her arms about me as I stood, and the dead Men to lie heapt upon the rock, and Mine Own to steady me, for I did be near slain and the blood did go from me, and mine armour was all broke upon me by the smittings of the sharp stones.

And I lookt something slowly upon Mine Own; and she to know that I would ask whether that she did be harmed anywise; and she to be very brave with me, and to tell me that she did be well; and she to be all slain in the heart, because that I did be so hurt;

but truly I had fought a good fight, and did lack only to know that she come to no harm. Now my wits did come back into me very soon; but I did be utter weak, and scarce to stand; so that I did mind only that I get Mine Own safe unto the raft, and to put off then from the shore.

And I walkt slow to the edge of the rock, and lookt well about, that I learn whether the Humpt Men did be all gone away; and the Maid did steady me.

And lo! there came up in that instant the last of the Humpt Men, and they were five and did creep very stealthy, that they have me in surprise. And I loost from the Maid, for I saw that I must come upon them whilst that I had any strength left in my body; and they now to leap upward unto me, so that I gat the first upon the head, and he to go backward dead; but truly I did be more weak than I knew; for I swayed upon the edge of the rock, and sudden I went downward to the earth; and did be there upon my knees, and my back to the rock.

And, in verity, the Humpt Men did come in upon me very swift; yet did they give back from the Diskos, which I swung to and fro, so speedy as I might, for my weakness, which did be so utter that I could nowise come to my feet to stand.

And Mine Own came down swiftly from the rock, and ran past the Humpt Men, and I to make that I shout to her to go to the raft; but truly I had no voice in my body, and did be dumb and weak, and did know that I should be gone forever from Mine Own in a little moment, and she to have none to protect her, neither to know the way of our journey, save by reason.

And behold! Mine Own did shout to the Humpt Men, and I perceived that she made to draw them after her; for she ran to and fore and did shout continually. But, indeed, the Humpt Men had no heed of her; but did make alway to come at me; and surely, in that moment, one of the Humpt Men reached me, and smote me so shrewd that sure he nigh crackt his monstrous hand upon mine armour, and did drive me backward upon the rock, and to make me bleed afresh, so that I was all in a daze and near swooned away. And the Humpt Man caught at the Diskos; yet, in verity, he loost it on the instant, for it did burn and shake him very sore; and immediately, he smote me again, and so made to end me.

And lo! in that moment, the Maid ran right in among the Humpt Men, and she struck the man that strove with me, and drove her beltknife once and again through his arm, very savage and determined. And surely, the man turned upon her, and he caught her by her garments, and he ript her two garments utter from her, so that they came away and she did be free. And behold, mine utter despair for her did give me a new strength, so

that I shouted to her that she run instant to the raft; and I cut the Humpt Man in twain, and did fall back then into a part swoon against the rock. And lo! the Maid ran out from the Humpt Men; but they neither to know whether that they follow her or that they come in upon me; and as they did pause, she to call to them, and to try that she tempt them from me toward the wood; for she had no thought of her life, but only that she free me and save me; and I too weak even to have power to command her to the raft; and she, truly, to have no heed to such command, even did I thus to call again. And there I did be, halfgone out from this life, and lookt at her with eyes that did scarce wot, save as in a dream.

And lo! the Humpt Men ceased sudden that they heed her; and the three that did be left came very sly unto me, and with slowness and cunning; for they wotted not whether I did be dead, or but await for them. And the Maid perceived that they came not after her; and she let out a great cry that did be distantseeming in my dulled ears, and came back, naked, and running very swift. And she ran by me as death should run, white and silent and her face set unto despair, and her eyes utter intent. And she struck her beltknife into the shoulder of the near Humpt Man; and the Man howled and turned, and she did leap to the side, and the Humpt Man ran at her. But lo! she leaped again this way and that, and utter silent, and so quick as a light doth seem to dance all ways in a moment. And the two other Men did join with the first, that they catch her; and behold! she went about, and did run right away among the trees, and the three Men did come after her, running very lumberesome, yet with a great speed.

And the Maid had the knife in her hand, and I knew that she did mean to slay herself presently, when that she could run no more; and in that moment it seemed that my heart burst; for that I should never more see Mine Own Maid forever. And there came some power of movement into me, and I came forward from the rock and fell over upon my face. And I gat again to my knees, and began that I creep after the Maid, and I did shout in whispers, for my voice had no more power to call. And the Maid went from my sight among the trees, as a far white figure, that did run very swift, and was presently lost utter to my sight; and the Humpt Men did go after; yet even in my weakness, I perceived that two did go something clumsy, as that they had been hurt in the fight; and they to be the rearward of the chasing; but he that the Maid did cut with the knife was to the fore, and did run very strong; and surely they were all gone inward of the trees with a dreadful speed, and were lost from me. And the world did become sudden an Emptyness and a great Horror, and there was no sound in all the Earth, as it did seem. And I knew that I was come to my feet, and did run toward the trees, and the Diskos did trail from mine arm by the holdbuckle; and the ground did be as that it moved and shifted under me, and I not to feel where I trod, but did only peer desperate and lost among the trees; and, as I to know now, I heard my voice calling strangely; and afterward there was a thundering in mine ears, and I came downward upon my face.

And I did know presently that I was alive, and there to be some dreadful terror at my heart; and surely I did remember and sickened and gat my head from the ground. And I lookt among the trees; but there did be nothing, and everywhere there did be a strange silence and a dimness of unreal seemings. And I knew that Mine Own was gone from me, and had surely died. And the earth did be all stained about me with my blood, and I did be utter glad; for I to need death.

And I swooned again and was lost to my pain; but did live presently to know.

And there was a little strength come into me, and I gat my head up somewhat from the ground, and did peer among the trees; and my head did be too heavy, and my face came against the earth once more. And because that I could not hold up my head, I rolled my head a little, until that my cheek did be to the ground, and I to look thiswise, so well as I might; but there did be nothing; and afterward, I rolled my head again to the other cheek, and so to stare very weak and desperate, and not abled to look proper to my front. And lo! there went something among the trees, and did show white in the gloom of the wood; and did come through the trees. And I not to believe in the first that I did truly see aught; and sudden I to know that I saw somewhat. And behold! my heart did bound in me, so that all my body did waken; for I knew that Mine Own Maid did run slow and staggering toward me, through the wood. And I did be now upon my knees and upon my hands, and did begin again to creep and to bleed; and did make little callings to Mine Own, that had no sounding.

And Mine Own drew nigh, and did rock and stagger, and did strike anon against the trunks of the trees, as that she did be gone near blind with her running. And in a moment she saw me, and that I did yet live and did come unto her; and she made a strange and loving crying unto me, with a great gladness and with an utter weakness.

And she came running, and was lost with faintness, and did sway this way and that, stumbling; and she went sudden to the earth, and did be still.

And I crept onward so speedy as I might, and the earth to seem alway as that it moved from my hands, and to slide; and thisseeming to be of my weakness; for my hands and my knees went everyway, and my head to be that it kept nodding forward very stupid to the earth.

And lo! as I came anigh unto the Maid, where she did lie so quiet, I saw that something moved in the wood, and was running. And truly it did be an Humpt Man, and came forward very silent and with a quick slyness, as that he did track the Maid secretly; for he lookt alway to the earth. And I perceived that he was that one of the Humpt Men

which the Maid had cut with the knife; for the blood did show upon the shoulder and the breast; and this bleeding mayhap to have slowed the Man; so that Mine Own did be like to have supposed she had come utter free; yet he to have found her, by tracking, as I perceived.

And I strave to my feet, that I should come to the Maid, before the Humpt Man; and surely I gat upright, and went with a strange running, and did roll, and lo! I fell immediate, ere I was come to her. And the Humpt Man to run also; and surely it did be a dreadful race; for I went creeping and did be weak and as that I was of lead. And the Humpt Man came very swift and brutish; but I came the first to Mine Own Maid. And I rose up at the Humpt Man, upon my knees, and I swung the Diskos, and the great weapon did roar in my hands, as that it did know and did live. And the Humpt Man ran in upon me; but I smote him truly with the Diskos, and he ran past me, all blundering, and fell and died upon his face, a little way off.

And lo! my wounds had brake out into a great bleeding, and my head did roll upon my shoulders. And I lookt dull, yet with an utter great love upon Mine Own; and there did be no proper wound upon her; but yet was she all bruised and knockt and marked with the trees, and where she did fall in her running. And she did be there, very still and dear, and I to have brake my heart with love for her, but that I did be so dulled, as I have told.

And I fought that I should be strong a little while more against my weakness; and I strove that I set mine ear gently upon her breast, that I should listen for her heart. But my head did go downward something clumsy and heavy upon her; and I then to hearken, and surely she did live and her heart did beat; though, in verity, mine ears did have at first a thundering; but afterward a quietness in them, that made the sounding of her pulsing to seem an utter long way off; and very faint it did be. And surely, in that moment, even as I harked, I was gone over into a deadness, and had no more knowing; neither to have even a knowledge that I did be slipt from my senses. And, behold, the Maid did lie swooning; and I to be there in my broken armour, and my head upon the breast of Mine Own, and likewise to know naught; and about us the quietness of that Country, and the far noise of the great FireHills that did sound through Eternity.

XIV

ON THE ISLAND

Now I came unto my senses, and did be in pain and a great forgetfulness and bewilderment. And I strove that I rise; but did be held by a strange force, that did be surely my weakness, as I to know afterward.

And I was upon my back; and a little sound did be near me, as that something did pant. And I turned my head, very slow, because that I did so lack of strength. And lo! I saw that the Maid did be anigh to me, and did be yet naked; and did pant, and pusht hard and desperate with a great pole, which did be surely that one which I had cut when that the Humpt Men came upon us. And therewith I remembered all, and perceived that I did be upon the raft, and the Maid to push the raft along with the pole.

And, at that, I made a little sound with my mouth; but the Maid not to hear me; for she did look backward, as I should think to the shore; and her face did be very set and anxious; and there to be a far noise of howling, that I knew to be the voices of the Humpt Men; and so to perceive that the Maid had come unto her senses, and had gat me somewise to the raft, whilst that I did yet be swoond. And thus to save me ere the Humpt Men had come. But, in verity, how she did this thing, I never to learn; neither she to know, but only that her love did give her a great and desperate strength that she save me, that did be her man.

And afterward, Mine Own Maid did tell me how that she had come into her senses, and did be there upon the earth, and somewhat did be upon her breast; and she saw that it was my head which did be heavy upon her, and I to be surely gone out from this life; for I was so still.

And she came from under me, and did ease me out upon the earth, and her heart nigh brake, because that I was so bebled, and my blood to have stained all that did be near. But when she had gat me restful, she saw that I did surely live; and a great hope to spring in her heart. And oft, as she had eased me, she had lookt about, and there did be naught to the sight, save the body of the Humpt Man anigh, and the others dead about and upon the flattopped rock, as you to mind.

And she ran then very speedy to the raft, and brought water from the river in my headpiece, and she dasht the water upon me; but I to have no power to come unto my senses. And lo! in that moment, she to know by some subtile telling of the spirit, that there came some danger anigh; and she then to make that she save me, or that we die both of us together. And she strave with me, and did carry and draw me that weariful

way unto the raft. And she gat me on to the raft; and she ran then for the pole that did be beside the rock; and whilst that she took the pole, she perceived her torn garments, that did be yet in the hands of the Humpt Man, even as she had slipt them to escape him. And she caught the garments very hasty from the hand of the Man, and ran then to the raft; and she pusht the raft out from the shore, and leaped aboard; and behold! as she made to use the pole, there came a sound out of the wood. And there ran from the wood the two Humpt Men that did yet live; and they to have trackt her, after that she did run from them; and they ran downward to the shore, very silent and intent upon her; but she to work with an utter despair, and to have the raft a good way out, ere they did be come. And surely, they either to have no power of swimming, or to know that there did be a Dread in the water; for they made not to come after; but did stand and stare very stupid, and afterward to howl; and this howling I did hear when that I was come unto myself upon the raft, as you do know. And by this telling, you to be so wise as I; for more I know not, save odd things that I did learn afterward, that did but set my love more holy unto Mine Own Maid; and these to have been but small matters of lovethoughts that we did have together; and scarce clear unto my remembering.

And lo! even as I harked unto the howling of the Humpt Men, the sound did grow more faint and far off; for the Maid worked very desperate with the pole. And I did feel that I would help her; but yet was so alack; and surely, even as I did mean to rise, I was gone again utter from my senses; and that dear naked One did pilot me safe and loving unto the safe harbouring of the little island, that you do mind; and had no thought unto herself; but only that she save me. And I to be there, scarce offward from my death, and to have no knowing of aught, and no more power to help or to be a shield unto Mine Own; but did be only an helpless man, that had surely died, save for the care of My Beloved.

Yet did I fight a good fight, and have alway a great joy in the remembering.

Now, I mind nothing very clear after this for a great time; but only of pain and weariness, and of half wakings and times when I did know naught, and others when that I did be awake, yet did have no realness, either in myself or in any land or place; and all to come back strange and vague; yet with a constant knowing that there went Love about me, and a great and gentle watchfulness; so that I was eased when that the black mists of my weakness did uprise about me to swamp me; and I was made to know hope, when that unknown despairs did live stealthy within me.

And lo! there came a time when I waked, and did be freed of uncertain burdenings and peculiar woes and that still haze through which great achings did come constant upon me. And surely, I was laid very nice upon somewhat that did be soft, and there went a sweet quietness about me, and an healthful drowse did grow in my bones.

And slowly I perceived that the Maid did kneel beside me, and did look upon me with so great a love and gladness that it did be as that I drank in health and a drowsy joy and peace. And surely, she stooped and kiss me with an utter gentle love, upon my mouth, and her tears to go sweet upon my face; and truly I kist her again, with an utter content.

And she took my head in the comfort of her arm, and gave me somewhat that I drink; and when I had drunk, she kiss me once again, so light as that a pretty wind did blow hushed upon my lips. And my head she made easy; and lo! I was gone over unto sleep, even as she tended me.

And thrice do I mind that this to happen; and at the third time, I knew that my strength was come something into me again; and I moved my hand a little, this way and that; and she to know that I did need her to hold my hand; and she to do this, and I to go into sleep again, even while that I look sleepy, yet with all my love, into her eyes.

And when I waked for the fourth time, I did whisper that I loved her; and surely she broke into a sudden weeping, and did hold my hand very dear against her breast.

And when I waked for the fifth time, I to know how things did be about me, and that I did lie naked in the cloak, and did be all bandaged about my body; and the bandages, as I did know afterward, did be from the torn garments of the Maid.

And I look at the Maid, and knew that she did be drest again, and did be in the garments that I did give to her, as you to mind; which did be that one, and the inner, that the Humpt Man tore from her, and which she had slipt, that she escape from the Man.

And afterward, I found that she had made a very cunning mend of the garments, whilst that she did sit so utter long beside me to tend me; for she had gotten threads from her torn garments, and had made needles from thorns that did grow on the little bushes of the island; and the thorns did brake oft, and she then to have another, and so to persist an hundred times. And this way she did be drest very nice and dainty.

And Mine Own Maid perceived how that I lookt with interest at her, and did mind, very natural, how that I last to have seen her; and she then to blush gently; and did kiss me, that she have her pretty face something from mine eyes. And truly, I to wish the more that I be strong, that I kneel in a glad reverence unto her; for this way did be my love, and ever so; and you likewise, that have truly loved.

Now I did begin that I grew very steady unto my strength, again, and Mine Own Maid did tend me alway, and she gave me a broth of tablets and the water at set times, by the telling of my timepiece. And oft she washt me and did change the bandages, and did wash and dry the bandages, that she use them over again; for we did be so lacking for such matters, as you to know.

And on the fifth day, I was come utter to ease; and did be wondrous happy, and Mine Own to make pretty talk unto me; but had me to be alway quiet, because that I did be yet so weak.

And on the sixth day, I to be let answer Mine Own, and to say how great I did love her, the which mine eyes had said alway, while that I did lie in silence. And I to be assured by the Maid that she did be in health, and recovered; but indeed, I saw that she was gone very thin, and that her eyes did be weary, even while that they had so great a love and a gladness to me.

And I made Mine Own to bring her tablets by me, as she did alway, and when that I had kist them, and she to have eat and drunk, I bade her to make me the broth ready; and when she had made the broth, I askt that the Diskos be set anigh to me. And afterward, I bid her to my side, and had her to lie by me; and I took her pretty head upon mine arm, and told her that she to lie thus and to sleep, and to have no fear that she weary me; for that I to be but the more rested to have her so, beside me.

And she in the first to trouble that she be too heavy for mine arm; but truly, I showed that my strength was something come back to me; for I prest her gentle unto me, and she then to nestle content, and to be gone into an utter sleep, and to have been in a sore need of the same.

And Mine Own did sleep for twelve great hours, and had scarce any life in all that time, save when once she did make a little and gentle moaning, and did afterward set her pretty face more nigh to me in her sleep. And surely, I had neither weariness nor lonesomeness; but did lie with an utter content; and did look downward upon the Maid, where she did sleep in the hollow of mine arm; and truly she did be most wondrous lovely and dainty; and the goodness of her face did seem as that it made an holiness about my heart, so that my spirit was uplift in a quiet and constant glory of love.

And I drank a part of the broth at the third hour, and at the sixth hour, and at the ninth hour, when that I finished it; and my right arm did be free to this purpose and to the Diskos; and surely I did twice and thrice set my hand upon that great weapon, as to a true comrade; and, in verity, I could think the weapon did know and did love me. And this thinking to be because I did be so uplift, as I have told; yet truly, the Diskos did be a

strange and wondrous thing, and did be alway thought to have an oneness with the man that did use it.

And in the twelfth hour, the Maid awoke sudden, and came upward out of mine arm, all in a sweet haste, that she know that I did be well; and she did be eased wondrous, when that she saw how I laughed with a quiet joy but to see her dear eyes, and her pretty trouble. Yet did she be in reproach to herself, when that she lookt to find how the hours had past. But, indeed, I did make a mocking sternness with her; and forbad that she even to say one little word more upon this matter; but to be glad that I did be so utter happy, and she likewise.

And truly, when I had said this, that impudent Maid did set her little fist against my nose, and to threaten me. And, in verity, I laught so hearty that the Maid did be in fear I should set my wounds again to bleed, and did reproach herself again; but, in truth, I came to no harm.

And when that I could speak, I askt the Maid whether that there had been brothers to her, because that she did play so natural. And this I askt, not thinking; and lo! in a moment I perceived my thoughtlessness; but said naught, save to take the hand of Mine Own, that she know utter that I did not be heartless. And she to nod very quiet, and afterward kist my hand, and slipt from me. And I knew that she was gone a little way off, lest she weep; and I did be in trouble for her and for mine alackness; but truly I could do naught, only that I called very gentle unto her.

And she to return soon, and did smile loving and cheerful upon me; but, indeed, I saw that she covered her weeping, whilst that she had made me new broth. Yet, before I would take the broth, I would have her to mine arms; and she to submit very glad and happy, but to keep her pretty weight from me, lest she hurt my woundings.

And afterward, we both to eat, and be happy in glad talk.

And presently, I did sleep; but would have her to be nigh to me, even though she did be wakeful; and so we to be utter content together.

Now, the seventh day, as it might be called, was a wondrous happy time; and when I waked, the Maid did be sleeping as a child to my side, and her face nestled against me. And she to waken in a moment; for thus had she drowsed and watched through all the hours whilst that I had slept.

And we then to eat and to drink together, after that Mine Own had made me easy with a gentle washing and care. And I now to be allowed that I have my tablets whole, and the

water afterward, as when that I did be well; and this to please me, as you shall think; for I did ache that I be strong very speedy, that I have power to guard Mine Own Maid again, and to go forward with our journeying, that I have the Maid unto the safeness of the Mighty Pyramid; and surely, now that I had my tablets whole, I to feel that I did grow near unto fitness again; and moreover, they did satisfy my hunger the better than the broth.

And the Maid to give me my tablets oft, so that I eat a great many; and I did make her to count; and surely there did be sufficient, if that I get strong pretty quick. And so I made no refusing of the tablets; for I did need them, that I make blood again within me, else should I be lacking, when that there came any need anigh.

And we kist each the tablets of the other, and did drink from the same cup, and did be utter happy; and did be part like children, but also to be man and maid.

And presently, the Maid did shift my bandages, as alway, and washt me proper, and had me into comfort. But she did keep me alway very lowlying; and truly I scarce to mind; for I was not gotten enough of my strength, to give me to feel irked. And further, as you shall think, there did be that lovely One with me alway; and did make sweet quips unto me, and talkt and did laugh, and oft did come into singing; for she did be so sweetly joyed that I was in life and did mend so proper.

And afterward, she went off from me a little, to her toilet; but I to ask that she be so swift as might be, and she to promise very merry; and she came back in a little while, and her hair to be in a lovely cloud about her shoulders, and her pretty feet yet to be bared from her bath, which she had in a pool beyond some bushes; and she to say that I did be so impatient a man, that she to be forced that she do the half of her dressing with me; but truly, she came thiswise only because she to know how I did delight in her thus, and to watch the way that she set up her abundance of hair; and she to be hungry also that she be with me, and to love me that I watch her, even while that there did be oft a little and quaint stirring of shyness in her dear heart.

And I had her to come beside me, and to sit anigh to my hand; and I made presently that I did scold her, because that she had no proper care to her pretty feet; and I bid her to set her feet toward me, that I look the more close at them. And she to be a pretty rogue, and did think I to mean to kiss them and truly not to think alway wrong but I then to have another planning; for I had pluckt a hair very sly from her head, and she but to have said an Oh! to me, and to have thought no more. But, indeed, when that she gave her feet to me, I held them so strong as I might, and I bound her pretty toes together with the hair; and surely she did be a captive unto me, and we to laugh, as that we to be both children. And afterward she stole back her feet from me; but, in verity, I knew that

she had a wondrous heed that she brake not the hair that bound her; but did sit beside me bound in that pretty way; but yet to hide from me that she did not brake the hair.

And she then to do her hair upon her head, very lovely; and afterward, I put up my hands, and took it down again; and she then to kiss me and to ask how that she should ever have it proper upon her head, if that I did always so tease her.

And she then to take her hair, and did set the abundance of it upon both sides of my face, and then to kiss me, as I did look up at her, from out of so much beauty.

And afterward she cut a lock of my hair, and a lock from her own dear head; and she did plait the two locks together, so that our hair did blend and be together; and afterward she hid it in her bosom. But I did be then out of content, and would have done likewise, only that it did so weary me to uphold my hands; and she to cut a second lock from my head, and a second tress of her own most lovely hair; and she made me to kiss the hair that did be from her, and she then to kiss the hair that did be from me; and afterward, she did plait them together, and gave them to me. And I set the hair, for that time, under the great bandage that went over my heart; and truly, she did be then the one that lackt content; for she to say that the second plaiting did be kist, and the first to lack; but I to refuse to exchange; so that we made up a quarrelling, and did presently have to be kist, unto forgiveness. And, truly, have you not likewise known such glad foolishness, when that you were in the lovedays.

And she then to make me to be quiet, and to keep my hands downward from her hair, because that the uplifting did prove overmuch to me; and she took my great hands then, and did threaten how dreadful she use me, if that I be not humble. And truly, I said that I did be an humble man; and she then to hold my hands with but one small one; and surely, her hand did be so small that she not able to hold me, save by the thumbs. And she then with her free hand to cover mine eyes, so that I might not see; and whilst that she did hold me thus so utter helpless, she to kiss me very dainty and impudent upon the mouth; and afterward she loost me, and did be demure.

And we did be then silent a space; and presently, I put forth my hand, that did be very great, yet to be gone white and to tremble, because that I did lack so utter of blood. And the Maid to know what I did mean, and she clenched her hands into two fists, and set them both into my one hand, and surely they did be little fists; and I then to be happy; for this did be a wondrous pleasure alway unto me; and she to have her lids a little downward upon her eyes, and to be quietly happy. And, truly, how I mind it all so plain.

And afterward, I did plague her very gentle that she to be all alack, if that she did try to use her hands to aught, because that they did be so small. And she in a moment to have

her two arms very dear about my neck, and did kiss me with an utter love and tenderness upon the mouth, and afterward went from me, lest that she have me to overset myself.

And I did then to make her to sit by me, and I did tell her a tale how that a young man did once live in the olden days, and did meet with the One Maid Upon All The Earth. And how that they loved and did be married, and she to die, and of the utter and desperate madness of grief that nigh destroyed the man; and how that he sudden to wake into the future of the world, in a New Time, and did come to learn that His Own did also to live in that Time. And he then to make that he find her; and did truly come unto her. And how she did be different in her beauty; but yet to be utter lovely. And the man did hold an utter reverence to the Maid, that had been his wife in the olden dreamdays, so that his reverence of love did live in him like a constant pain and anguish of sweetness and trouble, and of holy thoughts that did be bred of her lovely companionship, and of his memories. But, in truth, I gat not further in the tale than this; for Mine Own did have come sudden into weeping, and had gotten to her knees, and did hold my hand against her breast, and did put her hand gentle upon my lips. And, in a moment, she to whisper somewhat through her tears; and there to be dear Motherhood within her face; and a sudden shining of Memory in her eyes, that had been near dreadful, only that it did seem to be to her as that she were part dreaming. And the strange and solemn pain did come also unto me through the partopen gateways of my Memory. And I to remember very clear and with an anguish in that moment. And I told Mine Own how that the babe had gone onward, after that the Beloved had died. And there did be then an utter quiet upon us.

And lo! sudden the Maid did bend unto me, and I to take her into mine arms, out of the vague dreamings of her Memorydreams. But, ere she did be come outward entire from the haze of the Past, she to try to set somewhat into words concerning this memoryvision of the babe; but someways to be strangely dumb. And I did be silent likewise, because of all those things that did be between us forever and forever.

And presently, she kist me, and was herself again; and she went from me to attend unto our food.

Now, that did be truly a lovely day; for I to have gat sufficient of strength that I did be able to have interest, and talk with Mine Own Maid; and she now to be well rest, and to have ease in her dear heart concerning me.

And surely we oft to laugh, and did make jests utter glad and foolish. And indeed, I do mind how that I askt Mine Own an olden puzzle, that did come out of the vagueness of my Memorydreams. And she to be like a person that doth hear a strange familiar thing;

and lo! sudden she to say, as that she gat knowledge from beyond Eternity, that it did be when that he was a little hoarse. And you to know the jest, and to have troubled it oft at school; but, in verity, it did be a strange thing to have from our Memories out of all the deep of Time. And we, in truth, never in that Age to have seen or to have known that ever there did be an Horse, or to mind the likeness of one. And this to be but a little matter; yet of strange and peculiar interest, as you to agree. And, indeed, we did both to look one at the other, when that we had ended, and did wonder what an horse did be; yet in the same time did have a vague inward knowing.

And so we to look ever backward through dim Ages; and surely we gat presently from jests, unto solemnness; and the Maid to be nigh again unto tears. And, in truth, I then to bring our thoughts and our speech forward from the Abyss of the Years, and did cease from Memorydreaming for that time; and so to have the Maid again in joy; yet mayhap something wistful odd whiles.

And presently, I to tell the Maid an hundred thousand things concerning the Mighty Pyramid, of which I had so oft said somewhat; but never to have gat so great a chance as this unto a plenty of time and so nice an oneness in the way that our minds did go.

And surely, the Maid did be eager in a moment, and did be husht; and again to ask constant concerning all matters.

And, in verity, there went a great while this way; and the Maid to have an utter wonder and excitement of all that I to tell; for truly, it did be as that a man of this age should come downward from a great star in the heavens, and to tell of wonders and new things; and you to understand how she did feel.

And of all things that did most have a happiness unto the Maid, I to perceive that the great Life and Humanness of the Millions to dwell within her imaginings as a cloud of warmth and quiet joy; for I did show this thing to her, so well as I was able; and, in truth, you shall tell me in honesty whether that I have made the same likewise clearseen unto you?

And she, as you shall mind, did be a maid that had grown all her life in a Refuge that did be shaken with hauntings, because that it lackt the power of the EarthCurrent to protect; and with a People that did be weakconceived through great thousands of years; and where love did bloom something faded, even in youth; and youth to have lack of the lifeblood of an utter joy, such as did be ours and likewise to many that did be of the Mighty Pyramid.

Though, truly, there did go millions then, as now, that did never to know love; though the name did be in their mouths, and they to have belief that the sweet kernel did be in their hearts; but, in verity, THIS to be love, that your life shall bound in you with abundance, and joy dwell round you, and your spirit to live in a natural holiness with the Beloved, and your bodies to be a sweet and natural delight that shall never be lost of a lovely mystery that doth hold a perfect peace each unto the need of the other; and all to be that there go round about you a wonder and a splendour all the days and the nights that you shall bethe Man with the Woman, the Woman with the Man. And Shame to be unborn, and all things to go natural and wholesome, out of an utter greatness of understanding; and the Man to be an Hero and a Child before the Woman; and the Woman to be an Holy Light of the Spirit and an utter Companion and in the same time a glad Possession unto the Man. And lo! if one to die, then the soul of the other shall fail; and that one never to have full life again, in that bitter parting. And this doth be the true Human Love; and all else that be not like to this with the Man and with the Woman, doth be but a borrowing of the name of Love for that quiet desiring, which is but an Endurance beside Love, which doth be between they that be not mated both in their souls and in their bodies. And this telling to take no heed to those base joinings that be made for purposes of wealth or Desire or other piteous ends; for, in verity, these to have no more dealings with the thing that I do tell upon, than hath the merchanting of goods, or the need of a glutton. But the thing that I do have upon my heart doth be that dear and uplifting Power of Love, which I to set forth in this mine own story; for, in truth, I to have known love, and to need death when that I be parted from Mine Own.

Now, surely, Mine Own did come twice and thrice unto weeping, as I did tell of this thing and that, which did set her memory backward unto the ways of the Lesser Redoubt. And presently, I did cease from my tellings, because that she did so be gone into pain of her memories. But, indeed, she then to beg me that I go forward again; for, truly, she to need in the heart that she know, and to strive to be no more in grief for the telling.

And I then to say on, and did tell upon the Might and Wonder and great Olden Delight of the Underground Fields, that were below the Great Redoubt, as you do know. And I told how that they went downward an hundred strange miles, that did be dug of the labour of Millions and of the years of Eternity.

And I set out unto Mine Own concerning that there did be wondrous villages spread through that great and hidden Country that did be in the underground; and how that great millions of the Peoples did live there, and made a constant labour in those deep Lands and Countries, that did be truly so monstrous in all as an huge Continent.

And I showed Mine Own how that there did be wondrous processes that did be learned in the Ages; and how that water did be made in chemistry; and truly she to nod to this, because that she did mind upon the powder that we did use; but truly the powder to have to be made in the first, as you shall think; and we but to advantage ourselves of that which did result, and I to speak to her of the making of the powder, rather than of the way that it afterward to make chemistry with the air, unto water.

And I told the Maid how that there did be mighty underground pipes that went across the Night Land, and did be, mayhap, oft so much as twenty great miles deep in the world, and did come upward into the seas of the Land; and all to have been made secret and hid from the monsters of the Land, as I to know from much readings of the Histories.

And Mine Own then to tell me that they did lack to have any such great wonders below the Lesser Redoubt; but that there did be utter monstrous caverns, where that there had been alway a strange and uncouth Country of Husbandry, and lit from the EarthCurrent; and they also there to bury their Dead. And all had been alack through great thousands of years, as she did know of their Records, and had grown dimlit and lonesome, and a Land of deepness to starve the spirit with an utter strangeness and discomfort, where that the men went quietly as ghosts, through many ages; and all a place in dire want of sound and laughter.

Yet this all to have been surely different a monstrous Age gone, when that the EarthCurrent did be a power in the Lesser Redoubt, and the Humans to be in plenty, and of good and natural health and courage of life. And, truly, to mind upon that Place, doth alway to set a fresh wonder in me, that Mine Own did be so lovely and wholesome of spirit and wise and in knowledge and good force of her being. But so it did be with her; and she to have been surely alway That One that did be Mine Own.

And I then to tell Mine Own Maid concerning the lowest Field, which did be the Country of Silence, and was the Place of Memory unto all the great Millions, where did linger and bide the ghosts of an hundred billion griefs and the drifted thoughts of sorrowful hearts; and there to live a great hallowedness and a mystery of silence and an holiness and a Greatness, as that it did be the Expressing of all that doth be Noble and Everlasting that ever did come out of the heart of Man and all the lost Dead of Eternity; so that the spirit of a man did seem to go on great wings, unto lovely and splendid resolvings, if that he but to walk lonely awhile in that Country, that surely did be never lonesome unto the spirit.

And lo! the Maid did be all husht, as I did speak, and did look downward unto me with her eyes very bright, and lovely with the thinkings and tears that did stir within her.

And sudden she to ask whether that I did make my resolve to my journey, whilst that I walkt in that place; and she to look very intent and beautiful upon me, as she did question. And, indeed, I saw that she to mean a lovely praise unto me, as you to perceive; and truly, I did feel a little strange, as that I did be both glad and shy in the same moment. And she then to ease me of any answer; for she gat upward upon her knees, and she put her two hands to the sides of my face, and bid me to look into her eyes and to know that she loved me with her soul and with all that did make her to be.

And afterward, she kist me very gentle upon the forehead, and did be then husht awhile, as that she to be in thought; yet oft she did look downward at me, and did have a beauty of love and honour within her eyes, so that they alway to shine, as she did look at me.

And presently, the Maid did sit again beside me, and slipt her two hands into the one of mine, as did be ever my desire, and she to love that she give me this delight, and likewise, she to have joy to herself in this lovingness.

And we then again to have talk; and I did tell Mine Own somewhat of the History of the Olden World! and she did have dim memories, as in dreams, of the days of light; yet scarce that she could believe it of truth. But she to have knowledge of the Olden Love Days within her spirit, and to mind that there did be alway, as it did be, a lovely and golden light upon the world; but she not to know truly whether this to be but the holy glamourlight that Memory doth set about a past loveliness; and to have no remembering of the Sun; but yet to be made ready by her memories unto believing. And I to know of certainty; but yet even I that do tell this My Tale, did but perceive the Days of the Light, as in a far and vague dream; and to remember it but in the chief by the glory of lost sunsets that had cast an holiness upon my heart, and of the hush of Dawns that had made ready my spirit in the Gone Ages to look quietly unto my death.

And surely you to go with me in all this thing, and to have felt within your own spirit that uplifted wonder that doth shake the soul with the lost Beginning and with the unknown End, when that you have lookt through the sorrow of the Sunset, and stood silent before the Quiet Voice that doth make promise in the Dawn.

But, in verity, we that had near lost our Memory of the surety of these great wonders, did have memory of Love; and this to be most beautiful unto my heart; for it but to show the more how that love doth live forever, and doth make an holiness in all places; and doth give Companionship and Satisfying; so that to have love, is to have all, and to have escaped this Wonder is to have missed to have Lived.

And I to find then that Mine Own did have no knowledge of the way that the World did be in that Future Age; and did lack to know that there abode mightily above us in the everlasting night, the dead starkness of the world, where did bemaighap two hundred great miles above us snow and the eternal desolation of a lost world, that did be once the lovely world of the olden days, which did be now given over unto Night and Silence.

And mayhap there did wander upward there Memory, and did go companioned by Grief. But, indeed, I to delight to think that Hope and Love did build houses of joy about the Dead; and there to be no true death; but only the dying of days. Yet, surely, this doth be sorrow enough unto the heart and the soul, if that they did be days when love did make a mystery of light about the spirit, and the Beloved to have been anigh to make ever a sweet wonder unto the heart.

But I to cease from these thoughts; for we to face our life brave and wise, and to take both the sorrow and the joy unto our developing, and to hold up the face with courage when that Grief doth come anigh; and to see that we grow not to bitterness, but unto sweet wholesomeness. And there to be Joy again, and we then the better abled to have that delight into our hearts; for how shall Joy ever to come truly again to that heart which bitterness hath made a place for the abode of sorrow.

And truly, I to cease from these thinkings also; for my story to wait upon me, and these things that I do say do be plain unto you, and to have no need to the telling.

And so did I tell Mine Own Maid of the things that I did learn from the little metal book; and she to be in a constant wonder and delight and with an awe and newness upon her. And sudden, there did some olden memory stir within her; for she askt me, in one instant, whether that I did remember when that the Cities did move alway unto the Westward.

But truly I had no remembering of this thing, and did look at her awhile, with somewhat of a trouble upon me; for, that there should be aught lacking in my memory of those times that we did be together upon this world, was a fear unto me, and a vague sorrow alway, if that I did but to let my thought go that way; though, indeed, I did ever strive to wiseness, and did have knowledge that there doth be an heartwearing and despair and needless trouble in vain regrets; but yet these to be natural unto the spirit, if that you to know love; and do be but the complement of the lovejoy, and mayhap to have a use unto the sweetening of the spirit, if that they be not let to override the reason.

And whilst that I did look unto Mine Own, that she help me to remember, she did strive with her Memory. But in the end, did fail to come unto aught of clearness, save that she did see, as in a far dream, yet very plain, a great metal roadway, set in two lines that

went forever unto the setting Sun; and she then sudden to say that she did see in her memory the Sun, and she to have a strange and troubled amazement upon her. And there did be Cities upon the great road; and the houses did be strangeseeming, and did move forward eternally and at a constant speed; and behind them the Night did march forever; and they to have an even pace with the sun, that they live ever in the light, and so to escape the night which pursued forever, as she did tell, and a dread and terrible chill that did live in the night. And there did be cities far forward in the morning Sunshine, that did have gone before at speed, and set the husbandry of the world, and to be finished and gone forward again ere that certain of the latter cities did come to that place to the reaping; and the night to come presently to that place; but this not to be for some part of a year after that the crops were taken. But how long this might be, she not to remember.

And all this the Maid did say to me, as out of a strange dream, and I to have set it down, and to have made it so clear to you as she to have told it; and surely it doth be plain then that she to speak of a time when that the day did be grown to a monstrous length, because that the world did turn but slow and weary.

And it to be a sureness, as you shall perceive, that but to stand still in that age of which Naani told, was to be left presently in an utter night and chill, that should last mayhap a great and weary year. And, in verity, it doth seem that all Humanity did travel forever in that strange age, when that to stay was to die unprepared in the bitter night, and to go forward, was to be forever in the sun. And truly, this doth be so strange seeming to me, as to you.

And much I questioned the Maid, and did have an hurt within my heart, and a pain of jealousy and sadness to grow in me; for surely she did speak of some life that she did live, when that I did be elsewhere, either in Life or Unknowing. And, in verity, what man then should have taught Mine Own to love him? And she then mayhap to have had no remembering of me.

And truly I questioned very desperate, and the more so because that I was yet weak, and lacking my strength to be composed. But she neither to remember me nor any other man of that time; and to have no memories, save these bare things that she to have spoken out so strange, and which did come sudden unto her out of all the deepness of the years and the lost sorrows and joys and wonders of that which doth make a World of Humans.

And surely my questionings brought a distress upon Mine Own, both because that she did be troubled by the way that my love did bring me to this strange anguish, and

because that she also to have pain, and a sudden fear that there did be ever a time when she not to have known me, or to have permitted the arms of another.

And she did then strive that she be both wise and strong, and to give help unto me, and to take reason unto her own easing. And truly she to show how that she did be all unknowing of any love in that far backward time; but it to be possible in reason that she to have gone to another, in natural course, the while that her heart did yearn alway in vague trouble unto Her Own, that her spirit did mayhap never to have forgotten. And, truly, this doth be the way of Life, and a bitter thing and a sorrow to Joyous Love to think upon; yet I here to be set to the tellings of Truth, and to have heed to all that reason doth show to be.

But Mine Own did also have us both to remember that there did be equal right to think that she had died Mine Own Maid in that life; for that it did be not out of reason to think that she had been voidhearted unto all men, because that she had known in her spirit that she did once to meet Her Own, and did be thereafter untuned unto all other men that ever did live. And this all to be in a mist, and we to go vainly. And of her will, she did think that no man did ever to have possessed her, save I; yet this to be mayhaps only the prompting of her love; and she then to kiss me, and to say that there did be no surety in aught, but only that we did have been together before, and have borne a love so great that it did live through Eternity; and we to be now together, and maybe all else to be but dreams.

And truly I did have a fierce hope that this be so; and the Maid likewise so to hope, yet to be less bitter with rebellion than I, though in pain upon the thought; for she did be so utter and dreadful glad and in happy thankfulness that we did be now come together again in the end; and did mean that she conquer all that should be like to set a greyness upon our joy, and to be steadfast unto this end.

And I afterward to be likewise in wisdom, when that I was come the more to strength, and to mind that I suffer vainly for that which did have no surety, as I have shown; and moreover I did have no power upon the past, either to learn aught or to mend aught; so that I did go the way of an Human, and did shake free from these broodings, and strove unto forgetfulness; which, in truth, doth be both a Terror and a Mercifulness, as doth chance. And I kist Mine Own Maid, with somewhat more of the years within my love; and she to kiss me very sober and dear; and to desire only for my happiness, and to be utter mine own.

Now, we then to eat and to drink, and the Maid to see me unto comfort in all things, and my bandages all right; and she then to make that she have on her footgear and her hair to be bound; but indeed I bid her that she to dare do this thing, when that she to know

how I did delight that her little feet be bare to mine eyes, and her hair most lovely upon her shoulders; and she to be very happy that I so to have an utter pleasure in her dear beauties, and did sit beside me again, and set her feet very sly where they did be anigh to my hand; for she to know that she did be Mine Own, and I to be her Master, and she to have joy that she to have to render her beauty unto me; for she did be that true complement unto me that the heart of a man doth ache for eternally.

And so, presently, did end that lovely day of quiet speech and togetherness; and the Maid did prepare me for my slumber, and she then to lie anigh to me, and her head to rest gentle beside me, so that her pretty face did be near unto my breast upon the right side; and she to give me at the first a loving and sober kiss that did be somewise to set a guard upon her tenderness, and afterward did sleep content and gentle, as that she did be in the same moment a child and a woman.

And I also to come unto slumbering; yet did know vaguely how that Mine Own did rise a little upon her elbow, this time and that, and look very loving into my face, that she have assurance of my comfort and wellbeing; and once I did waken, proper, and lookt at her, and she then to kiss me gentle upon mine eyelids, and bid me to sleep; and so did come herself unto her sweet slumber. Now when that I did come to my proper wakening, I to hear the fizzing of the water, and to know that the Maid did be risen a good while, and had made her toilets, as I perceived in a moment, when that she came unto me; for her hair did be in a lovely cloud upon her shoulders, all combed and made ready against my waking; and she to have bathed, as I supposed, in some warm pool that did be among the bushes upon the island; and she now to slip her footgear, that her feet be bare unto me, as I did love, and to stand a moment, and her eyes to twinkle gently. And I lookt at her with love and honour in mine eyes, as you shall know, and she to have dancing of sweet pleasure in her heart, that I so to look upon her with holiness and with natural love, and surely the last doth be unnatural if that it do lack the first; but my love did burn upward out of my being, so that the flame of my spirit did light the fires of my heart, and my Reason to add coals unto that fire that hath lived for ever, and doth be as that it shall be never quenched.

And Mine Own in a moment did kneel beside me, and, truly, someways in her deep intenseness unto me; for our love did make all the world holy, and she to be both uplifted and as that she must give all the humbleness of her heart unto the greatness of my love; and this she to feel, and her deep and utter love, to make it as that she did be all a passion of humbleness unto me, so that in her soul I did rise in that moment upon the wings of my love, and to seem that I did be all the world and all time and all place and all that ever she did need unto her.

And she put out her arms to me, and her eyes did shine with those tears that do never be shed; and lo! in a moment, she did be upon my heart, and we two to be husht together in content; for our need did be in the other. And truly, where there do be two together with love, there doth be neither lack nor need; but eternal fulfilment.

And in verity this to be my Hope for that which doth come Afterwardthat all doth be leading unto so glad a joy as this, and that all pain and grief and all that doth make the shaping of Life, doth be but a process by which we be eternally perfected from living unto living, unto each Fulfilment that doth be but the doorway unto greater Fulfilment in the Beloved.

And, presently, Mine Own Maid did loose herself gentle from me, and washt me and tended me; and very husht and tender, and something downridded of her dear and lovely eyes.

And we then to eat and to drink together, and joy so great and quiet did be upon us, that it did be as that we had gone into an eternity of peace and an utter content. And surely, as the thought did stir in me, it did be of beauty that we did be both of us true unto the other, in that life, and I never to have kist a maid, until that I kist Mine Own, and she to have been likewise, and to have fended all men from her, because that they did be Strangers unto her inwardness, and so we two to be so utter together, both in that our spirits did be knit, being each the complement of the other, and because that we had no secret pains of remembered things, to set any apartness between our hearts.

And in verity, I to think back then upon my jealousies, that I have told, and to know that Mine Own did never to have given herself lightly to any, neither to have taken lightly; and her spirit to have been alway mine through all the Everlasting; and mayhap this to be how all Peoples shall come to be in the length of time, only that to us had come the great wonder that we did early meet; though this also to bring that utter pain, which doth seem to slay, when that once you have known the Beloved, and to be parted.

And so I to think, and did presently ponder with a great and strange pity upon they that did not yet have met the Beloved, and they mayhap not to have kept all for the Beloved; but to have been light with that which doth be the Treasure, because that Love had not come to show them that they did unknowingly squander the strange and holy glory which doth be the possession of they that shall come to the Beloved and say, All that is thine have I kept for thee. And the Beloved to know and to have peace in the remembering. But what doth be the peculiar sorrow of they that have gone overlightly, when that they shall meet the Beloved; for then shall there be a constant and inward regret, as a thorn in the heart, that they not to have observed alway that holy care of all which doth pertain unto love; and they nigh to moan in the spirit, if they had but known,

if they had but known. Yet, in the end, of their pain, shall they grow unto all loveliness, if that now they have truly come upon Love, and to live with Love; for this to be the especial glory of love, that it doth make unto all Sweetness and Greatness, and doth be a fire burning all Littleness, so that did all in this world to have met The Beloved, then did Wantonness be dead, and there to grow Gladness and Charity, dancing in the years.

And there to be yet one thing upon which, mayhap, I not to have thought sufficient; for it doth be this, that they who did err, as I have shown, shall be the greater for their Pain; and let this be to cheer you, if that you have done foolishly, and thought not upon that day when the Beloved shall come; for Pain is but the voice of Development or Destruction; and truly you to suffer the first, if that Love doth work in you; but truly, the more that you have lacked, the greater shall be your pain; for the more change there doth need be in you.

And so would I have you now to think, and to know that the Beloved shall come, and so shall you live in glad care of all your being, that you be able to come unto the Beloved in that day, and to say with beauty and human joy in your heart, even as I have said; and thus shall you miss that bitter pain. But yet, truly, you to be like to heed not this, until that Love doth come upon you; and I therefore to cease from this vain setting of mine inward reasonings.

But truly, when that day be come, as I have told, you to know how that there went always with me in this mine own story which I tell, the simplicity of Truth; and how that I did be minded only that you to know, and thereby that you have gentle wisdom that you lay not up pain for that day. Yet, if you do lack to go with me, you to need that developing which shall then come upon you.

And so shall you perceive how my thoughts did go to and fro, as I did eat with Mine Own; and so in the last I to find that I did think very serious; and I then to cast from me this pondering, and to have that utter joy which did be upon us, and to seem that it did fill all that strange Country of Seas.

And lo! after we did be done of eating and drinking, which did be but a little time, as you shall think, the Maid did ease me to an upward sitting, and had my back very nice to an olden stump which did be light, and she to push unto me.

And Mine Own did sit then beside me, so that mine arm did come most natural about her; and she there to be nestled all gleeful and content, so that my heart did be doubly tender unto her. And I took the abundance of her hair, and set it about my neck, and upon my breast, so that it did near to cover me in the upward part; and we both then to laugh as that we did be two children, because that Love did make us so utter young in

the heart; and our hands to be hid under the beauty of the Maid's hair, and I to have her then that she explain just how great she did love me; and you that go with me, do know how that this doth be a delight that is never done, neither to be set only into words.

And all that day we did be wondrous happy, save once when we saw that there were Humpt Men upon the shore, about the FlatTopt rock where did be the fight; but what they did there, we not to be able to see, only that presently they went away; and indeed seemed to have no thought unto us, neither any knowledge; and so did be gone again into the forests; and we saw no more of them, after that time. And afterward we to be lost utter in happiness.

Now, upon the tenth day, I did be so come into health that I to walk a little way to and fore upon the island; and Mine Own did go with me, and so I to pace a good while, and afterward to rest again.

And Mine Own then to bring mine armour to me, which she had scoured very nice; but truly, the Armour did be sore broke and bent, and did be jagged inward this place and that, with the monstrous strength of the Humpt Men, when that they did strike me with the great sharp stones.

And, in verity, how I should ever come again to wear this protection, I to be in doubt. Yet, truly it had been a wondrous suit of strength that had kept my life within me when that I had been so deadly beset; and I to know that it to be yet like to save both our lives, if that we could someway straighten it, and ease the broken jags from wounding me afresh.

And I thought a time, and the Maid with me; and afterward we gat that stump upon which I had leant, and had this to be for an anvil; and we found then smooth stones of different sizes, and these to be for hammers; and we wrought all that day, with restings, upon the armour; and surely, we beat it into a very good shape, from the inward, and the broken parts we beat smooth, so that they should not wound, and in the end to have mine armour fit to go upon me.

And I, by now, as you shall think, to be drest part in my garments; but not all; for there did be yet some of the bandages upon my body, so that for the main I did wear the cloak, that the bandages be easily come at. And all that day did be utter happy, whilst that we workt; for we to be together.

And on the morrow, as we do say, which was the eleventh wakening upon the island, the Maid and I to talk long and oft, whilst that we yet worked upon the armour; and we to ponder the best way that we continue to our journeying; for, indeed, I was not come to

my strength; yet was I very earnest that we go forward early; but in the same time, I did fear, lest that we meet with aught of Danger, and I to be alack, because that I was yet weak.

And presently, the Maid and I both to think upon the same thing; for she to cry out concerning the raft, and I to have the same word in my mouth. And, in verity, this to be a great thought; for then should we be able alway to be free of the Humpt Men, and to have frequent rest when that we be weary, and to sleep with an ease in the mind; and, indeed, I to hope that the labour of oars should be something less than to go upon the feet.

And surely, we talkt upon this a good while, and afterward we left the armour, and went over to the raft, and so to learn whether we should have power to make it something more stable, and that we have some way that we should put a solid matter between our bodies and any monster that should chance to swim under us.

And we went then together over all the little island; for I did search for some bush that should have a long tendril in plenty, and supple, and so to suit for binding. But, truly, there did be no such bush in all the island; and this to put me in trouble, as you shall suppose; yet was there a sufficient plenty of small and upright trees, that did seem very good for any purpose of structure.

And when we had gone all about the island, and found naught that should bind, the Maid to say with a pretty jesting that we should cut her hair, and plait it to be for cords. And, surely, even as the words did come from her, they to set me upon the thing that should supply our need; for I stoopt sudden to the grass that did grow oft and plenty in this place and that, and was so tall as my thigh, and to my head in the middle of the dumpings where it did sprout. And lo! it was wondrous tough.

And the Maid to have likewise perceived the thought, almost at that moment; but I to have been the first this time, and so to tease her; for truly, we had grown that we did nigh alway to discover all things in the same instant, as you mayhap to have seen. But I did surely be first this time, and must kiss her, as we do kiss little ones, that they be eased in their dismays and disappointments; and she to see how I did mock her, and she to pretend to weep; and surely how could she even to pretend, when that she did not be able to keep her pretty mouth from searching with laughter unto mine; but must be kissed full and plenty in our constant joyfulness.

And we cut then a good armload of the grasses, using the knife, and had those to our camp; for we did be homely now unto that place, as you shall think. And the Maid then

to show me plaiting, and how that we could work in the grass piece by piece, so that we should plait unto any length that we to need.

And all that day we workt, and did be very happy together; but when that we came to the time of our slumber, the Maid had done twice and thrice so much as I; and surely she came over to me, and kist me very grave, that I should be not to fret, even as I did kiss her with gentle mocking concerning the thought about the grass; and so did she make level with me, by this impudence and quaint sweetness.

And on the next day, which did be the twelfth, I took the Diskos, and on that day I cut down six of the trees; and alway the Maid did bring her plaiting, that she be near me; and when I had cut the six trees, she had me to cease, lest that I risk to open any wound. And truly they to have healed very wonderful.

And afterward, we to plait all that day, and did also finish the armour; and did be content and utter happy.

And on the thirteenth day, I counted the tablets, and found that we yet to have sufficient, if that we came unto the Mighty Pyramid within any reasonable time. But I insist that I should eat no more now than did be my usual way; and though Mine Own did beg and to coax me, and even to try whether that a naughty and loving anger should do aught to shift me, I not to alter from my deciding, which was based upon my reason and upon my intention that Mine Own should never to go in hungerdanger, whilst that there did be life in my body. And when that the Maid did show this dear and pretty anger, I to take her into mine arms, and to tell her how I did reverence and love her, and that she did be all beauty unto me, and I but to love her the more, because that I did know the reason for her dear shaping of anger unto me.

And she then to kiss me, and yet to beg again that she have her way in this thing; but presently I did show her that my reasoning was sound in this matter; though I said not that my strongest thought did be unto her own needs. And she to have to agree with me in her brain, even whilst that her heart did ache to feed me. And truly, I to love her but the more, as you shall think.

And this way shall you ever to manage a dear and sensible woman that doth both love you and hath reason in her; for the wise man and he that hath an heart unto bigness, doth be never hasty to command. But, indeed, I speak not now of the way that you shall go with a woman that hath the lovefoolishness upon her; for this to be a different matter, as you do know; and a woman then to require a double wit and tenderness in the governing; but also to need to be commanded, mayhap with sternness; yet with the more love.

Now, when that we wakened on our fourteenth day upon the Island, we gat to work, so soon as we had washt and eat and drunk, and Mine Own to see how my scars did go.

And I cut seven more trees that day, which made thirteen in all; and afterward I trimmed the trees very nice. And when this was done, I cut twelve good saplingtrees, and two more very thin, that I did mean to be for paddling the raft upon the water. And Mine Own Maid did sit near me alway, and never to be ceased from her plaiting.

And whilst that the Maid did plait, and make gentle and happy talk with me, I presently to sit beside her, and had her beltknife to my need; and therewith, when I had cut bark from a tree, I made a footlong crosspiece of wood which I did fasten with pegs and some lashing unto the end of one of the paddleshafts.

And I took then a piece of the bark, so big, mayhap, as would cover my thigh, and shaped broad one end and thence to a point; and when I had made holes in the piece of bark, I lasht the broad end to the crosspiece, and the end that did be narrowed, I lasht secure to the shaft, and likewise made holes down the length of the bark, and lasht it also thereby to the shaft, and thiswise I had a pretty good paddle, that did be about ten feet long in the clear shaft, and the head to be somewise two feet more, mayhap.

And when this was done, I shaped the handle so small as might come into the grasp of the Maid, and did jest her very loving and gentle that she give me so great a work, because that she have her hands so little. And truly, she presently to stop me of my mocking; for she put her pretty hands upon my mouth, and I then to have to mumble and to laugh, and so she to go forward again with the plaiting.

And when I had made the one paddle, I made also the other; but something more rough and heavy, and suited unto my strength; and so did be very well pleased; for they did be made more of my Reason than of memory; yet had I used somewhat of the kind upon the quiet lakes which did be in the Country of Silence.

And we then to join in the plaiting, and thus with happy talk and our times of eating, until that we did be come again to our slumber.

And on the fifteenth day, when that we had gotten up and washt and eat and drank, the Maid did look unto my bandages; and did consider that I be healed very good, if but that I not to overstrain my body. And we then to dance, half in play and half in victory, but gentle; and afterward she to come with me that she give me aid that we get the trees unto the water.

And in six hours, we rolled the trees down to the shore, and did begin then that I lash the saplings across the trees, and thiswise to hold them secure into a raft. And the midmost tree I put something more forward than the next; and so, until that which did be the front was shaped somewise like to the bow of a ship. And the saplings to hold the trees thiswise, when that I had set the lashings about every sapling and every tree, where the saplings did go across.

And all that day I worked pretty constant and steady, until that Mine Own had me to cease awhile, lest that I bend overmuch, and so to put strain upon my scars. And I to be reasonable; but yet to go forward again with the work; only that I did rest now, this time and that; and so did all to prosper.

And on the morrow, which did be the sixteenth day upon the island, I made an end of lashing the saplings across the raft; and I set up also, two rests for the paddles, so that we might row if we stood upon the raft; and afterward, being ready, we gat together our gear, and set all upon the raft.

And I put the pole that the Maid had used, also upon the raft, and loosed the straps from that first raft, and had the straps for our requirement, as heretofore. And mine armour we made safe on the raft; but the Diskos I had to my hip, as ever; and so did we be ready to leave that little island of refuge, where we had been so near to sorrow, but yet had come utterly upon joy.

And surely, Mine Own did take me by the arm, and she to stand a little, and to look with me unto that bed of soft herbage where she had laid me, when that I did be so nigh unto death; and she then to kiss me very sweet and loving and gentle, and all atremble with the tears and love that did stir in her; and I to set mine arms about her in love; and so we to turn and to put off then in the Raft.

XV

PAST THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

Now it was in the tenth hour of that day, that we put off in the raft; and surely we found the paddles to go very easy and with somewhat of balance in the rests which I had set up, as you do mind; and the raft to go forward with not overmuch of labour; so that we stood, the Maid to the fore paddle and I did be to the hinder one, and we pusht very steady upon the paddles, and had the raft presently to a speed something less than we should walk over the rough way of the Land.

And about the twelfth hour we stopt and eat and drunk, and went on again with our easy labouring; and truly, when that we gat set to the movement, we scarce to wot that we did aught more than rock something fore and back upon our feet; and so the hours to pass, and we to have a constant gentle speech one with the other, and the Maid oft to look back unto me with love, and to set her lips that she tempt me; but yet to shake her head most dear, when that I would leave my paddle, that I go forward unto her.

And when that the eighteenth hour of that day was come, we to draw inward our paddles, and the Maid set the cloak very nice to be our bed, and afterward we eat and drank, and so presently to our slumber, and did have sleep, very sound and happy, all in a moment, as it to seem.

And eight good hours after, we did waken both of us, together; and lo! we scarce to mind where we did be for a little moment; but afterward to know and to perceive that we did be safe and naught to have come unto us in our sleep. And surely we laught each in the face of the other; for we did be so joyous to be wakened each unto the knowledge of the other. And after that we had kist, we washt somewhat in the water of the sea, and so to our food. And when we had eat and drunk, we made again to the paddling; and went forward thus along the coast very peaceful and content all that day.

Now, in all, that voyaging did talk four good days of fourandtwenty hours each, for we made no great haste or labour, but went easy, that I have time to gather my strength. And naught to happen in all that time, save that once we did see a great beast to come upward lumbbersome out of the sea on to the shore, and there did eat and browse upon the herbage in that part; or so it did seem to us; though, truly, we did be over far off to have surety.

And this beast not to put us into any horror; but only to make us glad that we be afar off from it; and by this saying, I to mean that it did seem unto us a natural thing; and nowise to have an odour of aught monstrous to trouble our spirits. And this way did be

all the creatures of that Country; and truly I do think the Early World did be somewise like to it; and this to seem to make true that olden saying that extreme things do meet, as doth be overapparent; for thus doth it be somewise to our knowings, as you shall perceive by your Reasonings Upon Olden Days, and by the showings of this Mine Own Story, for that Deep World to have put forth natural creatures that did be even as might be those that did live in the Beginning; though I to make no point of this, but only that it doth occur to my thought; and all to seem that it did be bred of Circumstance and Condition; yet this to have no saying whether that there to be a spiritualforce something deeper than the Circumstance; for this to be outside of any surety, but not offensive unto my Reason.

But this thinking also neither to offend me, that although muchand mayhap alldoth be modified and shapen diverse ways by the Circumstance and the Condition, yet doth there be an inward force that doth be peculiar each unto each; though, mayhap, to be mixt and made monstrous or diverse by foul or foolish breedingas you to have knowledge of in the bodies of those dread Monsters that did be both Man and Beast. Yet, also, I here to say that maybe all diverse breeding not to be monstrous; but this to be beside my point. For I to be now set to tell, as I have told, that it not to offend me to suppose that there to be this inward force peculiar to each shaping of all bodies that do hold that wondrous quality of Life. And if that you ask me that I give example to make clear my thought, I to say that it doth be reasonable to suppose that the Force or Spirit of the Human doth be peculiar to the Human, whether that it to be a Cause of Life, or the Result of that which hath been evolved out of a Condition. And whether it to be the one way or the other, you to know that where this Force or Spirit be found untainted, there is man; and I to be not opposed to think that Man doth be constant alway in matters of fundament, and neither to have been ever truly different; though something modified in the body and surely, in the first, all undeveloped in the lovely things of the spirit, because that there to be no call to these. Yet, presently, they likewise to come, and to act upon the flesh with refinings; and likewise, mayhap, there to be some act of the flesh upon the spirit; and so to the state of this Age of this our day, and to that far Age of which I do tell. But development never to make the Human other than the Human; for the development to have limits peculiar to the Human. And surely, it doth appeal to me, that the development of Man doth lie between two points, that be not wondrous wide apart; and Man to have power that he arrive very speedy from one unto the other, and likewise that he go back so quick, or even the more hasty. Yet, even did it be ever proved that Man once to be a fish, I to have no cause to abate the first part of mine argument; but to have the more need of the thought, that I gain power to accept the Fact; for I still then to have no occasion that I think Man to have been truly a Fish, or aught truly different from a Man; but only that he did be once Modified physically to his need, and to be still possessed of the ManSpirit, though all lackt of development. Yet, truly, I to be less offend in my Reason, if that it be shown that Man did be ever somewise in his

present shape, though mayhap so brutish as the Humpt Men; but yet I do be ready to consider all matters, and do build no Walls about my Reason. Yet, neither I to have an overready acceptance of aught, but to need that my Reason shall approve.

And you to perceive, surely, that I here not to speak of that which may be Afterward, when that all This, our life, be done. For who shall say how much or how little we then to go forward unto loveliness; and I at this point to tell you that I do have a wondrous hope of beauteous things, and of sweet and mighty Uplifting and Furtherance unto that Glad World which we have beheld the shores of, when that we had stood in holiness with the Beloved.

And, in verity, I now once more to my story; and to be glad that I am done at this small setting forth of a matter which did need words, because that it did have root in this Mine Own Story, and to be grown of it and from it.

Now, there did be one other thing of note, beside the Sea Beast, whilst that we did be upon the Seas; and this did be the strangeness of a great FireHill which did stand in the sea, and we to pass very nigh unto it. And surely the sea did boil about it, yet not in all places; and there did be a score great jets that did go upward a monstrous way, and did roar very plain to us across the sea between; and there did come strange gruntings from the sea about the base of the FireHill, and these I to conceive to be made by the upbursting of gases in this place and that; and surely, it all to make us to know of the great energy that did be wakeful in that deep Country; and we yet to stare backward upon that Hill of Fire and Force, for a great while after that we had come past.

Now, beyond this, there to be naught, except that we had a certain care as we did come to that place where the Great Sea did be broke to smaller seas; but all to be knit with passages of water, which let us through upon our way.

And surely, I did show Mine Own Maid those two places where I did sleep when first I was come into that Country; and she to be sweet in interest, and alway to have somewhat that she would learn of this and that.

And so, when that we did be four good days upon the water, as I have told, we to come to the land, upon a flat place of the shore, where the Country did slope upward unto the mouth of the First Gorge, of which you do mind. And this to be in the tenth hour of that day; and we likewise to have begun that voyage in the tenth hour, as you do remember; and surely it to have been a sweet and peaceful waterjourney; and I to have been happy, if that all that did be yet before us, to hold so much of pleasantness and safe goings. But, indeed, there to be much danger yet to come, as you do know; and we to have our hearts set in courage, and to go forward to conquer; for surely, if that we to conquer, and to

come safe into our Mighty Home, there to be then that we have all our lives together in loveliness; and this to be truly a worthy prize and a glory of the heart, to end and to repay our Stress.

And surely, the Maid and I did presently strand the raft, so well as we might, and did then to wonder whether any should evermore to behold it through all Eternity. And we lookt a little, each at the other; and the Maid then to cut free a small piece of the wood of the raft, to be for an after remembrance.

And so we to have our gear upon the shore; and the Maid then to give me aid that I get once more into mine armour; and so I presently to have the Scrip and the Pouch again to my back, and the Diskos in my hand, and all in readiness, and the Maid with her bundle (that was now grown small), and her belt about her body, that she have her knife unto her hand.

And surely, the Maid then to kneel and to kiss the raft; for memories did gather upon her; and she there to have one more breaking from all that did be the first part of her life; and you to give your understanding, and so to have a quiet sympathy, and to perceive that her heart did be like that it should stir with a strange trouble of sorrowing in that moment.

And surely I stoopt then, very gentle and loving, and had Mine Own to her feet; and I led her from the raft, and she to need that she be near me; and so we to go forward, and to make upward unto the dark mouth of the Great Gorge.

And there to be some miles unto our right, that grim and utter huge Mountain, whereon afar upward in the monstrosousness of the night did be perched those four firehills of which I have told. And below them, there to go upward the great hills of ash, that had been cast down throughout Eternity. And this thing had the Maid lookt upon for a great time, and did be never done of her wonder; neither I, nor any human that ever should have sight of so great a wonder.

And so we to have come presently upward into the high mouth of the Gorge, and did go onward then into the gloom, a little space, until that we were come to the place where the Gorge did bend sharp unto the left, into darkness.

And lo! we made pause here, and turned again unto the Country of Seas, that we have a last outward look over all that Deep and living Land, that did be hid so far downward in the everlasting night of the world.

And, in verity, it did be a solemn thing to know that we, mayhap, to be the last of the olden Humans that should ever to look upon that Country; and I to wonder, in that moment, whether that the Humpt Men should ever to develop, in some far eternity, unto the full sweetness of the spirit of Humanity which I did think to be inward of them. And this to be both an odd and a natural thought to have then, as I do see. But at that time, I only to think it, and not to wot or to trouble whether that it did be odd or otherwise. And I to think that Country did be somewise as the Olden Time renewed; but truly we to look upon early things with new eyes.

And we yet to look awhile, and to be husht, and to hark in those last moments unto the far mutter of the Great FireMountains, and the FireHills, and the noise of life which did go over that Land; and we even then to be but a few short pacings off from the silence of the Great Gorge, which should lead us presently toward the Eternal Strangeness which did be in the Night Land. And the Maid did hold mine arm very close, as we lookt our last into the red light of that Deep and Hid Country of the World, where, in verity, we had come so utter nigh to our Death.

And presently, I turned, and the Maid slipt her hand into mine, and the tears did go silent down her face, because of all that did be prest upon her heart; but yet not to be all of sorrow, for there to be both sorrow and happiness, and also there did be somewhat of vague emotion that she never more to look upon that dear island where she had nurst her man again unto life and wellbeing; and she to be in mind of all those places where she to know that in afterlife her memory to wander; and she to have oftold tales, mayhap, unto her children, of that Country that they never to see; but only to be for a wonder to them for ever.

And we past then round the Mighty Cornerplace of the Gorge, and went forward, somewhat stumbling, into the gloom.

Now we went sixteen hours very steady, and with naught save the great darkness to trouble us; and we by this to have been twenty and six hours since last that we had sleep; and surely this did be a foolishness, because that I to need that I come into my full strength, ere we reach the Night Land; and it to be a folly that I should overtire myself; and the Maid to have said so much.

And, indeed, then, we came to a safe place for our slumber, and whilst that we eat and drunk, we made count from my notings of the outward way, and so did decide that we go no more than sixteen hours' journey each day through the Gorge, and to sleep alway for eight good hours. And this we to do, both then, and until that we did be come out of the Great Gorge, which did take us in all, so much as five days thiswise.

And surely, when that we were come into the light places of the Gorge, we to be more cheered, as you shall suppose; yet oft did we be half smothered with the horrid gases that came upward in this part and that, as you do mind.

And my strength did grow constant, as we journeyed; yet would the Maid never suffer that I carry her; but went away very light and clever, and was grown, in truth, set unto this constant wander.

And at this place and that, I to make pause that I show Mine Own those places where I did slumber, and she alway to need that she come unto the very part, and that she stand for a little moment where I did lie so lonesome, as I went outward unto that despairful searching. And alway she then to be utter tender with me, and to be something lacking of speech, because of the calling of her heart.

And surely, Mine Own did be alway now to ask me when that we should be come unto the Night Land; and to require how far it should be, and to be taken with a growing of excitement, very dear and natural; and, in verity, I to be almost so much so as she; and to wonder what she to think of the Mighty Redoubt, and of all that strange and monstrous Land. And, above all these, I to be shaken unto my very heart, that I have the Maid speedy unto safety; lest, after all, even though we to have come so far, there somewhat to happen of woe. And all this did make it a hard thing that we not to begin to race, and to exceed the hours that we did set; but truly we had wisdom in this matter, and slumbered alway after the sixteenth hour.

And we never to see aught of life in all that great and desolate Gorge; for there did be only the gasburnings, and the boulders and the stark rocks, and oft the rank smellings of the gases. And alway an utter and everlasting quiet; save when some lonesome gasfire did oddly to moan or to whistle, and the whistling to sound very dree across the great waste of the Gorge, and likewise the moaning to be but a thing to make the loneliness to be felt in the heart; and the Maid to feel thus with me.

And alway, as I did know, she to think in her heart that I did come through that place alone to make a searching for her into the unknown lands of the world; and surely, I did be but a natural man if that I was something happy in my heart that Mine Own so to ponder and to remember; for thereby did her love seem ever to grow. And likewise, a man doth be glad in his spirit and natural pride, that his Maid to know that he hath done wholesomely of his best for her need. And you but to think upon the lovedays, and to hear the echoes of those dear proud thoughts that did so to swell in you; and doth not all to go so strangely with familiar pain in the old way?

Now it was upon the fifth day, in about the seventh hour, that I heard oddwhiles a sound in this place and that of the Gorge, as that the rocks made husht and strange sounds at us. And I to have the Maid instant very nigh to me, and the Diskos to my hand, and we then to go onward with a great caution.

And thrice we did pass places where gasfires did burn and dance, and made oft a low moaning, and somewhiles a little whistling; and the other sounds yet to come oddly from the rocks, in this place and that, very strange and unthought of, yet to be something familiar.

And sudden, it did come to me that there to be a faraway noise in these sounds; though they to seem to come from this place and that almost to mine elbow, as you should say. And lo! I knew then that I harked unto little echoings, that did be caught by the near rocks, and to come from some far and mighty sound. And this should be surely the monstrous piping of the Great Gas Fountain, that you do well mind. And, in verity, I told Mine Own in a moment; and she to be all eager with me, because that this did be both a wondrous thing, and to be also a landmark to show that we did be nigh to come out of the Gorge, and our journey to come the more near unto an ending.

And surely we lookt ahead very earnest; and there to be so many strange and leaping fires to our front, that we not to be very sure which did be the far and monstrous dance of the Great Gas Fountain; for truly it to be yet so distant that the near gasfires did make more upon the eye up all of a weary length of the Gorge, than did the great dance of the faroff fire, that was now so small, by the distance.

And presently, when that we were gone onward something more, we to see that there went a lightening and a darkening afar along the Gorge, so that the background of the night was made to lose somewhat of the intensity of its darkness, as with constant shudders of light; and this to be surely the far away dance of the flame of the Great Gas Fountain. And we then to watch alway as we journeyed, and to see how that the vague shudderings of light did grow in the distance of the night, and did merge and become known presently in a strange uplifting and falling of a far away blue flame.

And the sound now to come more steady, and to grow in a long while into a monstrous piping, very great and wonderful, and having a constant change in the note.

And we to come past the last of the lesser fires, and to be in that part of the Gorge which did be fireless, save for the great upward dance of the Gas Fountain, which did now to be grown huge and plainseen, and did make a quaking light over all the Gorge.

And so in the end, we to be come very nigh to the dance of the monstrous flame; and did be half stunned by the noise, which did be now an utter and furious roaring, as you shall remember; and the Maid and I did stand as but two lonesome strangers in the mouthpart of that deep and desolate Gorge, and did stare voiceless unto the great flaw; and mine arm did be about the Maid, and she to stand very nigh to me; and neither to speak; and surely, how should we anyway; for the noise did be so huge.

And after that we had stared a great while, we turned that we look each at the other; and we kist very sober, there in the light from the monster flame. And afterward, we did stare again at the Flame, and soon turned, and lookt all ways, and did marvel to see the great throw of the light go blue and spreading and strange unto great distances.

And a while we did be watching the way that the faroff side of the Gorge did come plain to sight, when that the Flame did leap; and, truly, that did seem a far and lonesome Place, as that a lost and forgot world of desolate mountains did be there.

And lo! we now to look that we should see somewhat of the way that our journey to go; and surely naught to be clear shown save when the Flame did rise oddwhiles to a monstrous height; and this to be because of the huge rocks that did stand about the Flame. Yet something I was abled to show the Maid of the bottom part of the Mighty and Utter Monster Slope that did be the last way of our journey, ere we were come to the Night Land.

And we then to go onward for about a good mile, that we be not so deafened by the noise of the Gas Fountain; and it did be now beyond the seventeenth hour; so that we eat and drunk, and made our rest in a secure place among the great boulders.

And lo! when that we waked, we eat and drunk again, and did be something silent, as we to gaze at the Flame dancing monstrous, and lonesome and all set about with the stark and mighty Rocks, which did be like unto giants of silence that did watch forever. And presently, we had our gear upon us, and we went forward toward the utter dark of the Mighty Slope; and we began that huge climb, that should last through days in an eternity of night.

And oft in the first hours did we turn about from our blind stumblings, and gaze downward out of the long height, unto the loom of the Flame, that did shudder far below in the night, and made a quaking light in that far darkness. And so did we leave it to dance forever through Eternity in that deep and lost place of the world; and we bent all our will and our strength unto the climb.

And this way went we stumbling for sixteen great hours; and by that time had come to a pace proper for that task, and to be something numbed, and seeming grown unreal, because of the affecting of the Darkness.

And lo! for eight days then did we go upward forever through that most dreadful night. And after the first day, we crept alway upon our hands and our knees, and I to go in the front, and had the Diskos ready upon my hip. And I took two of the straps from the pouch and the scrip, and so had a certain length; and I set them from the waistbelt of the Maid unto mine own belt, and so did know ever that she came close after me.

And we made journeys sixteen hours long, and did eat and drink at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and likewise we eat and drank ere we slept, and again upon our wakings; and our slumbertime to go alway somewheres about eight good hours; for thus did I be heedful that we have all our strength for that dreadness of the journey, which did be yet before us, across the fear and horrid terror of the Night Land.

And oft, at this time and that, I was utter sickened and awearied of reaching forward and upward forever, and making blind fumblings that I find a way about great boulders and the rocks and holes that did be in our path in the dark; for it to seem that we went lost from all life and knowing, in a blackness that should be never slackened from about us.

And I, these times, to make a pause, and to call softly unto Mine Own that she creep up nigh unto me; and I then to take her into mine arms, out of the utter blackness of that night. And so to give and to have comfort.

And surely, Mine Own did whisper once unto me, that she did be stunned with love and wonder in the heart; for she to never cease to know that I did adventure through this great night, that I find her. And this thing did make me very warm in my heart, as you shall think; but yet I to stop her speech with a gentle kiss; and she then to know that she be dumb concerning her thought in this matter; yet she never to cease from remembering it, and did be the more stirred with the trouble of her lovely secret worship; for, in verity, she to have me to be for her hero; and this to make me in the same moment both something shamed and greatly proud.

And so we to be together, and after such pause, to go forward again, with a new courage.

And surely it did be a great comfort to me to think that, because we to go upward and not downward, we be not like to fall over any hid cliff in the night; for I to have now some little knowing of the Slope, from mine outward journey; yet to remember upon that monstrous pit that I then to escape, and so to go with care.

And, indeed, upon the second day, I had Mine Own to creep more nigh with me, and I then to have but one strap between us, and the other I set a stone into, and did cast the stone alway before us, as upon the outward way. And you to mind you of this, if you but to think a little minute.

And oft in those weary days in the Darkness, did I make gentle whisperings through the blackness, unto Mine Own, that I give cheer unto her; and she alway to answer, very sweet and loving; yet ever husht, as I did be; and in verity, it did be as that we could not set our voices loud upon that Mighty Slope, lest some enchantment come upon us, as it might be said. And, indeed, each time that I cast the stone, the noise of the stone to make a little trouble and dismalness in mine ears; for all did be so quiet and desolate and lost in night, that it to make us to need to be likewise so quiet, and to desire that we might go upward so silent as shadows.

Now, surely, I must tell here how that the Maid to have alway at waking that same awaredness that I did have upon the Outward Way, that somewhat did be nigh to us, and to seem to have been concerned with our waking; and I likewise to have also the same knowledge, as before. And oft as we did go, I to feel that somewhat did go near to us. And this to put something of a fear upon me, because that I was ever anxious for Mine Own; and I to have her to be alway the more nigh to me, and did set the strap from her to me, even when that she slept; so that she not to be touched, and I to lack to know. Yet she to have no fear concerning this thing; but to feel in her spirit that it did be a force that had no evil intent unto us; but more, neither she nor I to know; and I, in truth, to come in the end used to it; save that I did be, as I have told, anxious in all that did concern the life and wellbeing of My Beloved.

And so did we go onward through those eight days.

And it soon to be grown cold, so that we both to need the cloak over us in our slumbers; but in the journeyhours to need naught; for the upwardgoing did surely heat us very well.

And there also to be come presently a change and a seeming of thinness into the air; and the Maid to remark upon this, and likewise that the waterpowder now to be that it not to fizz so plentiful.

And we went upward, as it did seem forever, and journeyed very husht and steadfast; and likewise did halt at set times, that we eat and drink; and did alway sit then very close and quiet and in love. And so alway to go never beyond sixteen hours' journey each day, and very weariful even so much; for it to be a sore and constant labour of climbing.

And I to learn the hour alway, by a little shining of the Diskos upon my timedial, which I have told did be somewise as the watch of this our present Age. Yet, truly, I also to learn that I made somewhat of a constant number of forwardthrows of the stone in an hour; and the Maid to be the first to discover this, as she did creep behind me and harked steadfast and quiet unto the clatter of the stone, each time that I cast it. And she sometimes to call low to me that it now to be this time or that time; and I to look at my Dial, as I have told, and oft to find that she did be curiously right.

Yet otherwhiles, we to have no thought to count; but made a constant husht talk one to the other; and did grow odd times, that it did seem to us that we did be two spirits there in an Everlasting Darkness, that had quiet speech one to the other, and to be seeming gone from our bodies. And we then to need that we look each at the other, that we know truly that we yet to live and to be indeed with the Beloved. And I then alway to make the Diskos spin a little, yet something more than when I should see the hour; and, in verity, our faces then to show pale and strange seeming in that luminous glowing of the great weapon in the Darkness; and we to look very eager and an hungered of love, each at the other; and so to need that we be held loving by the Beloved, and so to have comfort and assuredness; and afterward to have peace to go onward again.

And it did be one such time as these, that Mine Own to give me a love name she had called me in those olden days of this Age; and which surely I had not heard since Mirdath died. And, in verity, you to have dear understanding with me, how that I then to be all troubled with vague troubles and ghostly loveaches in the heart; and likewise, I did be all set about in a moment by the olden enchantment and speechless glamour that did be so long hid and lost in the Spaces of Memory, where surely the spirit doth wander such oddwhiles, husht unto a dumb tearlessness and to know in the same moment both Agony and the voiceless Glory and lost Delight of the HathBeen; so that it doth be as that you wandered in the spirit between the sorrowful pain of the Sunset, and the Promise of the Dawn which doth be builded upon the Need and Hope of the soul, and doth also to have an essence of pain within it; because that these do be knit with Longing which doth be the essential pang of Memory. And so, mayhap, you to have gone with me; for you to have also strange thoughts that do come out of the years, and do hurt the heart, even whilst that the heart doth hunger of that which doth so pain. Yet, truly, Mine Own did be now with me, as you do know so that I had joy all about my heart; yet did all the years of my lost delights and of my pain, be in the spaces of my memory, and Mine Own now to have stirred all; so that no words that did be ever shaped of man should help me to have ease in speech.

And Mine Own Maid to know how it did be with me; and she to have said the thing, scarce wotting, even as her spirit did set it through her lips; and she before then to have forgot so utter as I; and now she to be stirred likewise with me; so that, in verity, we to

hold hands in the great Darkness upon the Slope, and to wait till the pain and strange trouble did go somewhat from our hearts; and we to have power again to know truly that we did be again together in sweet verity, after a mighty Eternity.

And thus did we go, and even in that strange Night to have an everlasting coming together; so that surely our two spirits to be nigh made one, somewise; and this to be that sweet and holy thing which I do name Love; and it to be my glory and Astonishment that Love hath come unto me. And with you that have love, I am as a Brother in holy delight; but with all that have not known Love, or to have missed Love, I am a Mourner, and my heart to pray that they to know this Wonder, ere they die; for else shall they die so green and bitter as they be born, and to have grown nowise unto Ripeness, which doth be Charity the end of life and the Crown of Humanity.

And surely I to go forward again now with my telling. And you to know that on the eighth day upon the Slope, about the end of the ninth hour, there to be an upward seeming of light, afar before us in the Darkness, and did show as a dull and vague sheen above us in the night. And truly, I to know that we did be come at last anear unto the Night Land.

And we went upward then very eager through the dark; and the dim shine did grow, ever; so that we soon to see it very plain, as a looming of light afar upward. And we ever to climb and to go onward. And lo! in the fourteenth hour of that day, we came up slowly out of the Night upon the Slope, and stood at the ending of that strange road Where The Silent Ones Walk.

And surely it did be as that I was come home, and to have set my feet again upon familiar Lands; and this to bring to you how far off I did seem to have gone; and now to be come again to a Known Place.

And we went upward upon the Road, until that we did truly have topt the Slope, and at last to look out over all the wonder and mystery of that Land. And I never to be rid of the utter gladness of knowing that I was come there again, after so strange a journey, and that Mine Own had I brought with me, out of all the unknown world. Yet, truly, I also never to have forgetting that this familiar Land of Strangeness did be the last test and the greatest dreadfulness of our journey; and anxiousness did hang upon me; for I now to have to take the preciousness of Mine Own among and beyond all that Danger of Horrid Forces and of Monstrous Things and Beast Men, and the like.

And truly, I did be like to trouble.

And, in verity, I did stare with a fierce eagerness unto the faroff place in the middle part of the Night Land, where did be the Mighty Pyramid; and surely it there to shine in the midst of the land, and did be mine Home, where never had I dared hope I should return. And I set mine arm very swift and eager about the Maid, and pointed, so that she see quickly the wonder and safe Mightiness of that which did be our Refuge for all our life to come, if but that we to win unto it. And the Maid to look with a great and earnest soberness and a lovely gladness and utter soul and heart interest, unto that Place that bare me, and where I to have come from, and now to take her.

And long and long she lookt; and sudden came round unto me, and set her arms quick about my neck, and burst unto a strange and happy weeping. And I to hold her gentle to me, and let her cry very natural, until that she was something unpent.

And lo! when that she was eased, she to stand close beside me, and to look again unto the Mighty Pyramid; and afterward, as she to steady, she to ask an hundred questions, so utter eager and so to thrill with joy and excitement, as that she did be a glad child. And an hundred questions I answered, and showed her new things and Wonders uncounted.

And of all strangeness that she then to see, there did none so to shake her in the spirit with terror as did that dreadful and Horrid House, which did be the House of Silence. And it was as that her very being did know and be repulsed of some Horror that did concern and be in that House; so that she to want to hide in the bushes that did be anigh to the Road; and truly, I to think this wise, and to remember and to be ware suddenly that we did be indeed come now into the Power of Monstrosity which did be utter and forever abroad in that Land.

And surely, we went then in among the bushes that did grow clumpt upon the side of the Road, as you to remember; and afterward, I calmed this new fear that had come so quick upon Mine Own; and she then to peer forth with me from the bushes, and to have renewed sight over the Land.

And the House of Silence to stand upon that low hill of which you do know; and did not be a very great way off, somewise toward the right. Yet, as you shall have remembering, it did take me some long and bitter hours upon mine outward way, ere I did be come from under the shadow of it, as we do say, unto the toppart of the Mighty Slope.

But this to have been in the main, because of the utter care that I did need to bring me safe past the House; for I to have gone long and weary upon my hands and knees among the bushes, as you remember; and oft to pause, and to be so still as Death, lest that the Power of the House to have become aware of my passing. And truly, we to need again so

utter a care, when that we make to go past, unto our Mighty Home; and this to be heavy upon my heart, and I to be in the same moment anxious that we have haste to the trial, and yet very willing, if it might be, that we not make it forever.

And, indeed, after that we had peered a good while from the bushes, I to consider that we do well to eat now, and afterward to have a safe place for our slumber, so that we go fresh to the horrid dangers and dreadfulness that did be before us upon our way.

And we then to look about, and soon to find a great boulder that did be set with the bushes. And we made our place for sleep against the boulder, and the bushes went all around, so that we did be complete hid.

And, in verity, we to be very cold, as we had been those two past days, whilst that we made toward the top of the Mighty Slope. And now we to have the full chill of the Night Land, and did be very glad to have the cloak, so that we eat and drank whilst that we sat together, and the cloak round us. And afterward, the Maid set the cloak about us for our sleep; and we then to kiss very sober, and I with anxiousness in the heart; but she with less, because she to have rest in me.

And so we lay down to our sleep, and the Diskos ready in my hand; and my spirit wakeful against any terror that should come anigh to us in our slumber; and the Maid I warned to be likewise wary.

And surely we slept and waked, and there had gone eight good hours, and naught was come anigh to us to harm us. And we eat and drank, and did hark oft, and lookt out from among the bushes; but there did be naught abroad to set dread upon our spirits; and so we did be more content, and well rest and aready for the further journeying.

Now I had the Maid to wear the cloak, because of the chill of the Land; but she in the first to refuse, save I also to have it in my turn; but truly, I did feel that it should smother me, and that I need all my freedom of my body, lest there come any thing sudden upon us; and all this I showed Mine Own, and also that we should have weary work, and to creep much, so that I should be warm by my labour of going, and she likewise, mayhap. And she then to consent, because she saw that I did be earnest and to burn with anxiousness; yet had me to promise that I take the cloak, if that the chill of the Land gat me anywise bitter.

Now we made a pause, when that we have our gear upon us, and we lookt well out over the Land; and surely alway our eyes did gaze in the ending upon that far Wonder of Light and Safeness, which did be the Mighty Pyramid; and I to be never ceased from telling Mine Own this thing and that thing concerning the Great Refuge; and she to be

constant stunned unto silence and delight of wonder, and anon shaken unto a multitude of questionings, so that truly we did be as that we never to have done making known one unto the other.

Now, as you have knowledge, the House of Silence stood upon a low hill, and the Road did bend about the bottom of the hill; and this way did I come, when that I was on mine outward way.

Yet now there to be a new plan of journeying come into my mind; for, as you do remember, I did take somewise of eleven great days from the Pyramid unto the toppart of the Mighty Slope, because that I had gone diversely and round about to the NorthWest of the Plain of Blue Fire.

And surely, as now I lookt, it did seem that we should try a short passage, and thereby be come free out of all danger in but a space of four or five days, if only we to succeed. And I stood a good while very husht and anxious, and did consider this new way, and did presently point it out to the Maid, how that we saw the Mighty Redoubt straight to the back of the low hill where stood the House of Silence, and mayhap we might chance to find a safe going that way, and that I did ponder thatwise. For, indeed, as you do know, we must go nigh past the House, even did we return by the long journeying, and this to be because that the bushes did make a cover only near to the Road, and all to be a country of bare rock beyond the bushes on that side of the Road, which did be to the North and West.

Now, presently, I had formed my intention regarding our way, and told all to Mine Own, and how that we to have alway an utter caution; and the danger I made so plain to her as I did know it, and she then to beware in her heart the need there to be of care and wiseness forever, as we did go. And we then to make forward into the Night Land, and to be gone from the toppart of that great deep, in which there to be hid strange lands, as you do know. And surely, it to be like that none should ever to go that way again for an eternity, or maybe forever.

And so went we forward, with a new caution.

And we came out from among the bushes upon the NorthWest of the Road, and crost unto the Eastward side; and here the bushes to grow very plentiful, so that I led on with a cheerfulness of hope within my heart. And alway I went so far to the SouthEast as the bushes would give us their cover, and this way I made that we should scarce to pass within a great mile of the dread and horrid House; though, in verity, this to be most dreadful close.

And we walked then for six hours, and went sometimes creeping, and oft stoopt, and ever with a great caution.

And in the sixth hour we made a rest, and eat and drank, and afterward went forward again.

And in the tenth hour were we come something nigh unto the House; for truly, we to be off from the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and so to go more straightly, and alway to save distance. And we kept so far outward from the House as we might; but could pass it not more than a great mile off, because that the bushes did have their margin near upon our left, as we went; and there to be bareness of rock beyond; and fireholes in this part and that amid the starkness of the rocky spaces, that should be like to show us very plain, if that we came outward from the bushes.

And moreover, there went upward into the everlasting night one of those Towers of Silence, which did be in this part and that part of the land, and were thought to hold Strange Watchers. And the Tower stood great and monstrous afar off in the midst of the naked rocks, showing very grey and dim, save when the flare of some great fire did beat upward in the Land, and sent huge and monstrous lights upon it. And we to have need alway now to remember this Tower, and to keep the more so to the sheltered hiding of the bushes. Yet, in verity, we to have little thought of aught, save of the grim and threatening terror and monstrousness which did stand forever upon that low hill, and did be the House of Silence.

And in the eleventh hour, we did go creeping from bush unto bush, and did be as shadows that went in the mixt greyness and odd shinings of that Land. And the grim and dreadful House did be now unto our right, and did loom huge and utter silent above us in the night. And the lights of the House did shine steadfast and deathless with a noiseless shining, as that they shone out of the quiet of some drear and unnatural Eternity. And there did a seeming of Unholiness to brood in the air, and a sense of all and deathly Knowledge; so that, surely, our hiding did seem but a futile thing unto our spirits; for it was to us as that we did be watched quiet and alway by a Power, as we slipt gentle from bush unto bush.

And when the twelfth hour did be nigh, we to begin to draw clear of the House; and surely there to come somewhat of ease into my brain and heart; for it did be as that we should come clear of all harm.

And I turned to the Maid, that I whisper gentle and loving encouragement unto her. And lo! in that moment, Mine Own gave out a sudden low sobbing, and was gone still upon the earth. And, truly, my heart did seem to die in me; for I knew that there did be

directed a Force out of the House of Silence, which did be aimed unto the Spirit of Mine Own Maid. And I caught the Maid instant into mine arms, and I set my body between her body and the dreadness of the House; and surely, my spirit to perceive that there beat out at her a dreadful Force, which did have in it an utter Silence and a bleakness of Desolation. And lo! I saw in a moment that the Force had no power to slay me; but did surely make to slay the Maid. And I set my Spirit and my Will about her, for a shield, if this might be, and I had her to mine arms as that she did be mine own babe.

And I stood upright, for there did be no more use to hide; and I knew that I must walk forever until that I have Mine Own to the Shelter of the Mighty Refuge, or to walk until I die; for only with speed might I save her from the dread and horrid Malice of that Force.

And I set free the Diskos from my hip, and had it in mine arms beside the Maid, and I strode forward out of the bushes, and put forth my strength that I journey with an utter speed. And ever my Spirit did know of that monstrous Force which did be direct upon us, to the Destruction of Mine Own Maid.

And odd whiles, as I walkt, I called Mine Own by her olden love name, and by the new name of Naani; but never did she move or seem even that she lived; and surely my heart sickened within me with a mighty despair, so that a constant madness did begin to thrill in me and to make me something monstrous in strength, with my fierce agony and intentness to save. And one hope only had I, that I bring her yet living into the Shelter of the Mighty Refuge; and so, swift, to the care of the Doctors.

And lo! I did strive to be wise in my despair; for I made a quick halting soon, and I warmed a broth of the tablets and water upon a hot rock, and strove that I set some of the broth between the closed lips of Mine Own Maid; yet did it be useless, as I to have known before in my heart. And alway I kept my body and my Will and my Spirit and my Love between the Maid and the dreadfulness of the House. And I made some of the water, and dasht it upon the face of Mine Own, and I chafed her hands; but truly it to have no use; neither did I truly to think it should be like to.

And I wiped her face then, and harked to her dear heart; and surely it did beat, very slow and husht. And afterward, I wrapt her in the cloak.

And I forced myself then that I eat some of the tablets, and I drank a great lot of the water, for a fever did seem to burn in me, and moreover I to mean that I lack not for strength to my task.

And I set my gear upon me very speedy, and I lifted Mine Own Beloved, that did be now so husht, that once had been so merry and dearly naughty. And surely, I nigh choked as

the thought uprase in me; but I set it back, and did but go the more furious. And surely no man did ever go so fast and constant upon his feet, through an eternity; for I was come again to my strength, and there did be a madness of intention and despair upon me; and I went on forever.

And at each sixth hour when I stopt very brief to eat and to drink, I made to bring Mine Own to her senses; yet she never to come, and alway her heart to grow the more feeble; so that in the end I did utter fear to hark; and did but set food and drink into me, and onward again with an utter fierceness.

And why there came not any Sweet Power of Goodness to help me in my strait, I never to know; but did call desperate upon all Good things to aid me, as I went, to save Mine Own. But there naught to come; so that I had grown into cursings, but that I did not to lose my wisdom to any useless foolishness. And alway, as I went, I to see the Land blindly, and oft vague and grey as that I did look at naught real, and again with strange flashings of light, and the glare of fires; and anon to see the Land as it did be, and all odd whiles to have now to me the feel of a dread and monstrous dreaming.

And surely I sped forever through the dreadful hours, and went neither to the right nor to the left, neither did I strive to hide in the bushes nor to evade aught, for I knew that the Maid died slowly in mine arms, and there to be no more gain in life, save by speed, that I have her swift to the Mighty Pyramid to the care of the Doctors. And a great and despairing madness grew ever within me.

And thrice I to have a vague memory that there came creatures at me, from the dark of the Land; but surely I slew them with the Diskos, and have no remembering thereof, only that mine anger did boil in me, and I to know once that the Diskos did run blood in my hand.

And lo! there to come sudden unto my spirit the knowledge that the aether of the world did be stirred. And, indeed, I did be surely sighted by the great Millions of the Mighty Pyramid. And they to have seen me come forward into the sight of the spyglasses, and that I did bring a maid in mine arms out of all the night of the world.

And truly, as I did after learn, the dear Master Monstruwacan had discovered me great hours before; for there had been a steadfast watch kept in the Tower of Observation for my returning, if that ever I should return; and the might of the Great SpyGlass had shown me plain a good while gone, and that I did carry somewhat, that was surely the maid that I did go to find. Yet had the Master given an order that no word be set abroad to the Peoples, of this discovering, lest that the emotions of the Millions to tell overmuch unto the evil Powers of the Land. But now had the Millions also come unto knowledge;

for many had ceased not to watch through their spyglasses, and the news to travel very speedy through the cities; and surely now there did be a constant spiritual noise in the night, to be heard only of the Spirit, yet to suffice to wake and to warn all that Land.

And truly, as I after to learn, the Master Monstruwacan did know by the instruments that there came a force out of the House of Silence, and this to trouble him greatly; so that he set the word through the Pyramid, by the HourSlips, that all the Peoples strive to contain their emotion, lest they bring an Harm and a Destruction upon me, by warning the Land with the greatness of their feelings.

Yet, in verily, this did be useless; for the Peoples did be very human, and could nowise check their gladness and great wonder and excitement; for it was to them so great a wonder almost as we should suffer if that a man in this Age should go beyond Death in search of his Beloved; and afterward to come backward unto the Living; and, surely, in such case, how mighty should be our amazement; and this to be somewise how they did be; yet with it also a sweet and natural gladness and strong welcoming, which doth be the true beat of the Human Heart unto the Wanderer.

And presently, and through all the time that I came forward across the Land, there did be mayhaps an hundred million that did never cease to watch me from the embrasures, from the ViewTables, and from all vantages. Yet, for a long while, only they which possessed strong spynglasses did be abled to see me truly, for I was a great way off.

And millions did but stare vainly unto that part where I was said to be; and the HourSlips to come out four times in the hour, and to tell aught that did be known. And so shall you perceive that Humanity did but have grown the more Human.

And, in verity, I went forward with all my strength, and did drive heedless through the miles and the night, and scarce conscious of aught, because of the aching madness of despair that did grow ever within me; for I knew that Mine Own Maid died away in mine arms, as I did carry her.

And later, a monstrous space of hours it to seem, I knew that I was come to that part of the Road, where it did bend somewhat unto the Vale Of Red Fire; and this did be something anigh to that wilderness where the Youths did fight with the giantmen.

And I came over the Road, and urged my body utter furious across the Land. And, surely, in that moment when I cross the Road, great numbers of the Millions did see me, that had not seen before. And there went a shaking in the aether of the World, because of the sudden emotion of so mighty a Multitude; and lo! it did be as that in that moment the Land was at last waked; for there came from far away unto the Eastward, a faint and

dreadful laughter, as that a monstrous Being laught unto Itself in some lost and dreadful country. And the Laughter passed over the Land, and did echo strangely, as it did seem, in this part and that part, and presently to go rolling round in the far and hid West Lands, and to be as that it wandered awhile amid the far mountains of the Outer Lands, and was presently lost from my hearing.

And my heart chilled a little maybe; but yet did I not care overmuch; for I to lack all if that I lackt Death, if that I not to be given power to save Mine Own. Yet did I make a little pause, so that I gat the knife from the belt of the Maid, and did also to bare the Capsule; for if that there came a Destruction upon us, I to make instant sure that Mine Own Maid be safe unto death, and I then to go quickly with the Capsule.

And afterward I again upon my way.

And ever upon each sixth hour I did stop that I eat and drink, and did onward again, even as a machine; for I commanded myself to this duty of victual, that I lack not my strength unto the saving of the Maid. Yet, truly, I did seem to choke alway as I strove with the tablets.

And lo! ever as I went forward did the Land awake; and my spirit to know that Great Forces did be abroad, restless. And the Monsters to begin wild roamings, because that they also to know of the Unrest that did be come into the Land. And there to go presently odd roarings across the Land, from night unto night. And I to go forward the more desperate, and to step neither to the right nor to the left; but to make direct unto my Mighty Home.

And the Vale of Red Fire did be soon afar off unto my right, and the bulk of the Watcher of the NorthEast to be somewise unto my left, before me; and the great back to be toward me. And truly, I lookt at the BruteForce, and it did be as that I drew nigh unto a Mountain of Watchfulness; and above it in the everlasting night did be the blue shining of the luminous ring, and the ring shed a light downward over the MonsterForce; and the shoulders did be huge and humpt, even as two small hills, and it lookt forever from me through eternity unto the Pyramid. And this to be plain, though I did be a great way off from it.

And sudden, as I went, there came Somewhat out of a bush unto my left, and rose up at me, very long and tall; and surely it did be some kind of a man, and came at me. And my fury and my despair came inward upon me in a moment, so that I troubled not to set down the Maid, but leaped at the thing, where it did be yet half hid in the dark. And lo! it died in pieces, and the Diskos did roar to content my heart an instant. And I then onward again the more savage, so that my heart did be a dreadful thing within me.

And a great while I went then, and do have a vague remembering that this time and that there came things at me from out of the dark; but surely they to have died very speedy, that I not to remember more.

And the hours did pass in spaces of time that did be made of terror and numbness and an utter and evergrowing fury of despair. And I did be at last as that I did burn inward with a grim and dreadful energy, and to seem to grow the less tired, and to come over the Land with a stronger ease and somewhat as that I did desire things to come unto me, that I have something to ease my heart; for lo! Mine Own Maid did be dying in mine arms as I carried her; and I to be in a bleak and sickened dread, so that I lacked all courage now to listen unto her heart, as I have told; and went burning, and dry and hot in the eyes.

And ever there sounded the roarings across the Land; and there did be added presently lower and more horrid and dread noises. And later I heard a far thudding of the earth; and in a little there went past me a great Man, running so heavy that he did make a shaking as he past me; yet, in verity, by a sweet mercy, he saw me not, and was gone onward in a moment and lost utter into the night. And the aether of the world to be full of the trouble of the Peoples, as the Man past me; and afterward there to be a stirring of glad thankfulness. And truly, alway my spirit did know strangely as in a dream, that the Millions set their sympathy and pity and help about me, and did girt me about with Human love and with encouragement and with uplifted thoughts. Yet, in verity, did all be as water beside the fierce wine of my love and despair, which did urge me onward in a natural lacking of all dread, save for Mine Own. And truly this doth be the way of Love, and shall make fearless the heart of the weakest. And there to be prayers in the night, and all the aether to be surged with the spiritual trouble and callings and cryings of the Millions; so that, indeed, if that my spirit so to hear these things, it to be conceived that these do pass outward into the Everlasting, and to break upon the Shore of Eternity in an anguish, even as a visible foam of supplication.

And surely the unity of love of the Millions did make a natural Force about me; for, in verity, the Force that did come from the House to seem to be somewhat eased from the Maid; yet there to be no surety in this; for all did be desperation and turmoil in my heart, and I to have but one thought in my brain, that I bring Mine Own swift across the Land unto the Mighty Pyramid, and so unto the Doctors.

And lo! there stole presently from afar the deep and dreadful baying of the Hounds; so that I knew we did be surely dead, save that a miracle should happen. And I askt in my heart in a fierce and mad fashion why that they did not to rig one of the olden shooting

weapons, that they shoot from the Pyramid, and so to give me some aid in mine extremity.

And behold, even as I did be so bitter, there went afar upward in the everlasting night, where did shine the Last Light, the sharp flashings of the Set Speech; and I did warm in my heart a little with hope; for the Master Monstruwacan did see that I was now all discovered, and there to be no more use for silence, and did speak straight and helpful unto me. And I made to read the Set Speech, but mine eyes had been mad and near blinded with lost hope. But in a moment I saw clear. And behold, the dear Master Monstruwacan bid me to keep good my courage, for that they did have made ready three of the olden weapons; and moreover, they to save me, even if that they have to turn loose the EarthCurrent over the Land. And he commended me with Honour, and that I strive forward yet a little while; for that an Hundred Thousand Men did be Prepared, and did even then go downward in their armour by the Lifts.

And surely, as you shall think, my heart eased a little in me, and there burned somewhat of a hope in my spirit that I yet to bring Mine Own unto the Doctors, ere it be too late.

And the baying of the Hounds did grow nearer in the night; and there to grow ever the roarings over the Land; and a sense of Evil and monstrousness to be abroad in all the night.

And lo! I to have come by this so that the Watcher of the NorthEast did be backward upon my left; and I lookt keen and fearful now at the MonsterForce; and behold, the great bellar did quiver continually, so that I saw the Monster made somewhat known unto all the Land. And the Monster did look as ever, unto the Pyramid; and did be a great and silent Hill of Life that did lean toward the Pyramid; and the light from the Ring came downward upon the monstrous hide, which did be set in vast folds and wrinkles upon it. And the Monster to know of me; yet never to move, neither to show life, save that the ear did quiver so horridly.

And I knew that they made some great preparation in the Pyramid for our defence; for all the night did begin now to shake and to quiver with the mighty beat of the EarthCurrent.

XVI

IN THE COUNTRY OF SILENCE

And lo! I did be come something nigh unto the Mighty Pyramid; and my great Home went up vast into the everlasting night, as a very Mountain of sweet Life and Safety, and had surely amazed me afresh with the utter Bigness of it, only that despair and weariness did have too grim an hold upon my heart for me to care of aught, save to have Mine Own Maid within the safe wonder of the huge Refuge. And it did be still afar off from me.

And I to go forward across the Land with a strong going; and lo! as I past a hollow place where did burn a firehole, there came something out of the hollow. And the thing gat upward from crawling, and did be a great and haired Man. And the Man lookt at me, and afterward came unto me, and did put his hands forward, very eager, as he came. And I did see the hands plain in the light from the firehole, and the hands were monstrous, and did be armed brutish with horrid claws, so that the Man should have been able to rip aught, even as a wild beast.

And I put Mine Own very swift to the earth; and surely, I cared not for life or aught; for this thing did make to delay me, and I to be fierce with despair that aught should halt me. And lo! I leaped very furious and with cold anger at the giant; and I smote at the monstrous brute; but he unto the side in an instant of time, and so escaped the blow. And he flung forth his monstrous arm out of the halfdark of a shadow that did be cast by the dance of the firehole, and caught my headpiece and pluckt it from me so strong and brutish that he cast me nigh a dozen feet on to my back. Yet I was not harmed in the life, but only sore shaken and bruised; and I to be up in a moment, and came in upon the giant, and the Diskos did roar and blaze in my hands as I swung the weapon. And I gat the giant above the middle part, and the Diskos did glut itself, and went through the giant as that he did be naught, though so huge and monstrous and girt with strength. And he to have surely turned his shoulders as he died; for the upper part of the giantman went horrid to the earth, and the legs and the trunk stood plain in the light of the firehole, and the blood went upward as a fountain in the night.

And I made no pause, but leaped unto the Maid, and had her in a moment to mine arms, and onward again past that dead thing, that did only then to fall with an horrid sound. And surely the night did be full of an astonishment and upliftedness of the Millions, so that their spiritual cryings did go all about me, and did tell me that they had perceived this thing, and did cast their love and delight unto me, and a vast excitement to be upon them.

And lo! I scarce to have gone a great mile more, but there came two vague things out of a dark place, where certain rocks did upstand; and I smote them with the Diskos, and went onward; but what they did be, I never to know.

And surely, after that, I did seem to go smiting forever; for there to come, time and oft, strange things out from the bushes and the rocks, as that all the Land did be acrawl with foul and monstrous life, and I to go smiting, as in a dream, and to speed forward ever with a more fierce despair; for surely the end of our lives did be come, and I not to be given power to save Mine Own Maid.

And all the Land did be full of grim and monstrous roarings, and oddwise lower sounds, very deadly. And once I did hear the noise of giants running. And all the night to be Evil. And, in verity, how I did not be slain by some dread Force, I not to know, unless that I did be burned free of all weakness that an Evil Power should have chance to harm me through; for, indeed, I had been dealt a bitter training a monstrous time.

And lo! there to be again the deep and dreadful baying of the NightHounds unto the SouthEast, and to be nearer; and I to know now that no strength of mine should serve to protect Mine Own.

And lo! from the upwardness of the night, where did be the Last Light, there sudden to come downward a strange blue flash, that smote downward into the Land unto the SouthEast. And again the flash to come, and mayhap a score times after; and there to come down out of the height a peculiar crackling sound, that did be less than the thunder of this age, yet more loud than any other sound that you ever to hear. And lo! I knew that the Humans did begin to fight for me, that I bring Mine Own safe unto Home.

And behold! it did be as that all the wakefulness of the Land that had been, did be but as sleep, beside the wakefulness that now to come; for surely the Night now to seem to rock with the roarings of the Monsters, and with the bestirring of Great Forces. And ever there to go over the Land the yowling of that strange and dreadful Laughter, which did come from that hid Country in the night of the lost East.

And lo! there arose constant now the hoarse and dreadful bayings of the Hounds, and made known that a mighty pack did be out. And they to seem to be no more, maybe, than a good mile unto the SouthEast; and I to be all alone, save for the dying Maid that I held in mine arms. And I lookt vainly and with despair for the Hundred Thousand that did be Prepared, and had come downward, as you do know, unto mine aid. But truly, there did be naught to see anywheres, save the strange lights and shadows of the Land; and the movement of monstrous life in this place and that place. And the Hounds to

come nearer with every moment of time; so that indeed, I knew that death did be very nigh.

And I ceased not from my stride; but went forward, and did begin to run; for the Pyramid was not a huge way off in the night; and the shine of the Circle about it, to be plain seen, save here and there, where it did be hid strangely. And I to have a despairing hope that I come yet with Mine Own into the safety of the Circle.

And the baying of the Hounds to come ever the more near; and surely it did be a doubly hideous bitter thing that I lose My Dear One, so nigh unto Home; and the great Mountain of my Home to go upward before me into the night, and to seem so near that surely I did be almost there; but yet, mayhap, two great miles off, even then. And, behold, I called out in vain despair and to no end, why that none come to give me aid in this extremity; for the Hounds did bay now but the half of a great mile, upon my left, and did surely have scent of me, by the way of their dreadful baying.

And, truly, the Millions to have an anguish of sympathy for me; for the spiritual noise of their emotion did be plain unto my spirit; and they surely to have seen and to have interpreted the way that I did look about me and appear to call out in despair; for there came all about me in a moment the companionship of a great and sweet spiritual force, which did be bred of their quick going with me in their understanding and love; and they to have perceived how that I did be unto the end of hope; and the Hounds to be almost upon me.

And in this moment, there came afresh to my hearing the shaking beat of the EarthCurrent; so that I knew the Humans to take desperate means to save. And there came to my view a vast pack of the Hounds unto my left, and they came running at a great pace, and their heads did be low, and they to be so great as horses; and seen plain, and again in shadow, all in the same moment, as they did come.

And, in verity, I knew that we two to be dead indeed ere a minute be gone, if that the Humans not to haste. And I stood where I did be; for there was no more use to run; and I lookt from the Hounds unto the Mighty Pyramid, and again to the Hounds. And again I lookt with my hope gone, unto the Pyramid; for the Hounds did be scarce two hundred fathoms off from me; and there did be hundreds of the mighty beasts. And lo! even as I lookt that last time unto the Pyramid, there brake out a monstrous bursting flame, that did rush downward from the Sealed lower part of the Mighty Pyramid. And the flame smote downward upon the Land where the Hounds did run, and all the Night to be lost from my sight in the brightness and strangeness of that mighty flame; so that I saw no more the Pyramid, or aught; but only the shining and dreadful glory of that flame. And the Flame made a blast in the Night, and a hotness that did seem to wither me, even

where I did be from it. And I perceived that the Humans had truly turned loose the EarthCurrent upon the Hounds, that I be saved. And there went a constant great thundering over the Land, because that the EarthForce did rend and split the air, and did tear up the earth. And the roaring of the Monsters did be husht and lost in that mighty sound; and I to see no place where the Hounds did be; but only flames and broken lands where the EarthForce did strike; and great rocks did be hurled all whithers, with a vast noise; and truly it did be a mercy that I was not slain an hundred times, if this might be, by the failings and burstings of great rocks and boulders.

And lo! in a moment the Humans did cut off the EarthForce, and had it again to their control. And there to seem now a great silence upon the Land, and an utter dark; save that flames and noise came from that part where the Current did strike. And I very speedy to come free of the dazedness that had me, and made again to my running; for, in truth, it to seem now that I should yet be let to win unto safety with Mine Own.

And mine eyes did grow presently unto their accustomed using; and I to look all ways about me, lest there come somewhat upon me even then to work our deaths. And for a good time there to be naught that I did see anywheres, neither there to be the wakeful sounds of the Land, save only the grim and horrid Laughter from afar in the dead East.

And oft as I did run, I to stare hungry hearted upward at the Mighty Pyramid; and surely it alway now to seem to be less bright than before. And in the first, I to set this to the count that mine eyes did be yet dazed by the great Flame of the EarthForce; but soon I to perceive that it did be otherwise; and that there did be truly a less brightness of the light that did shine throughout all the Mighty Redoubt. And this lack I conceived had owing to that great using of the force and power of the EarthCurrent that had been loosed to save us. And I to have this new thing cold upon my heart; for, truly, if that the Force of the Current to be made over low, there to be a danger for all the Humans that did live, even for all the great Millions of the Mighty Refuge. And this, did be surely known by the Masters; and they to have no more power to aid me with the Current, until it flow strong again, lest that they destroy all the Peoples of the Earth. And all this to be plain to me in a moment, as I ran; and I to be but the more desperate to come unto instant safety with the Maid.

And surely, I to be yet in expecting of the Hundred Thousand to come unto me; but they not to come. And all about me the Land to begin again to give out the noises of the Monsters; and to send forth new and peculiar noises, as that there did be more awaked in the Land than did be ever heard by me before. And presently, I saw that there went living things, creeping, between me and the light of the Circle. And I to know that I yet to have to fight bitter, if that I would bring the Maid safe. And I swung the Diskos free, and ran on.

And sudden my Spirit to know that I did be warned of some new peril; and I to look upward into the night, that the Master Monstruwacan should mayhap to tell me the danger, by the Set Speech. But, in truth, there came not the quick flashings of the Set Speech; but only an upward stillness, and a dimness of the lights of the Mighty Pyramid. And afterward, I to learn that the dear Master Monstruwacan made to warn me of danger; but that all the instruments of the Tower of Observation to fail to work, and likewise all the machinery of the Pyramid to cease, even unto the moving of the great lifts, and the moan of the Air Pumps; and all to have been this way for nigh a great hour, until that the EarthCurrent did flow again more full. And surely, this doth show that Death did nigh to come unto all the Millions, because of the great trial that did be made to save us.

But, truly, my spirit did be warned by the trouble of the Millions, and because the Master Monstruwacan called vaguely with his brainelements; so that I went ever more warily, and did look all ways. And lo! sudden I to stare above me into the night; and there to be a pale circle, very quiet and steadfast that did go alway over the twain of us. And I saw that this did be surely one of those sweet Powers of Holiness, that did stand between our souls and some dread Power that came anigh to work our Destruction. And I to have no overfear; but did put my trust in the Force of Holiness, and went forward, running warily.

And surely, I came mayhap so nigh as to within four hundred paces of the Circle; and I to think that I yet to win Mine Own safe and undelayed within the guarding of the Circle. And the light of the Circle did burn dim; so that I had sudden fear whether that it be any more use for a Guard, until that the EarthCurrent to come more free. And all this as I ran, swift and wary and utter anxious.

And lo! in that moment in a dim place there rose up three beastmen from the earth, and came at me, growling. And the first did be so close that I had no room to the Diskos; but beat in the head of the man with the haftpart. And I leaped unto the side then, and swung the Diskos, and did be utter mad, yet chill, with fury; so that the Maid did be no more than a babe in the crook of mine arm. And I came in sudden to meet the two beastmen as they ran at me; and I cut quick and light with the great Weapon, and did have that anger upon me which doth make the heart a place of cold and deadly intent; so that I had a wondrous and brutal judgement to the slaying. And, truly, I slew them as that they had been no more than mice; and I had no harm, neither so much as a touch from them. And, behold! in that moment there came a great Shout of wonder and of welcome from within the Circle. And I lookt swiftly, and began again to run; for there did be men in grey armour all within the Circle; yet came they not to mine aid.

And lo! in a moment I knew why that the Hundred Thousand did have held off from me in mine extremity; for, behold! there did be monstrous Black Mounds all along without of the Circle, and did rock and sway with a force of strange life that did set an horror into my soul as I ran; for truly they did be the visible signs of monstrous Forces of Evil. And did any Human have ventured outward beyond the Circle, then had that man been Destroyed in the Spirit, and lost utterly; so that none had dared to come; neither had it been of use if any had made themselves to be a sacrifice to aid me; for, truly, they to have been of no use, when dead, as you shall say.

And there came a constant shouting from the Hundred Thousand to me, that I haste, and indeed to haste. And truly I did haste with all my strength. And I lookt unto the dear Circle of Holiness that did be above us twain; and it to go steadfast over us; so that I saw we to be surely saved.

And lo! I to be no more than an hundred paces now from the glowing of the Circle. And behold! even in that instant, there must come brutal things to destroy us; for there came an herd of squat and brutish men all about me in a moment from the shadows, where they had been hid. And they caught at me, and caught at the Maid to tear her from mine arm. And truly, it did be as that they surely to have success; for I could nowise in a moment free myself, and yet to guard the Maid and to use the Diskos. And lo! I kickt with my metal boots, and gave from them, and turned all ways in a moment, and wrenched free; and I leaped back; and the herd of horrid brutes after me.

And now I to have space for the Diskos, and a grimness in my heart; and I came round very sudden, and ran in among the men, smiting. And I hit very swift both from the right and the left, and to and fro with a constant quick circling. And the Diskos did spin and roar, and made a strange light upon the faces of the men, and they to have tusks like to the tusks of pigs. And surely I did rage through them, smiting. And they to strike me a thousand times with great stones, so that mine armour rang, and was all fresh burst, and I near to sicken under the blows and new wounds; but they not to harm the Maid, for I carried her above their squat and brutish reach.

And the brutemen to seem without end. But I made alway forward unto the glowing of the Circle; and the night to be full in that place of the fierce shoutings of the Hundred Thousand; and manyas I did learnto have tried to come unto me, but that their comrades held them from so useless a dying.

And, in verity, I to be now scarce fifty paces from the glowing of the Circle; and did be nigh to fall; for I did be so utter dazed and wounded with the fight, and ill with a vast weariness and the despair and madness of my journey, and moreover, as you do know, I

not to have slept, but to have carried the Maid forever through days and nights, and to have fought off.

And lo! the Hundred Thousand stood just within the Circle, and they that were to the front did swing each man the Diskos; and they hurled each the Diskos in among the herd of the tuskt men that did make to slay me. And surely this to save me; for the herd did thin to my front; and I to gather my strength, and to charge with despair, and to smite and never be ceased of smiting; so that there did be dead creatures all about. And behold! I brake through the herd, with Mine Own, and did be upon the Circle. And lo! I stept over the Circle, that did scarce now to give out a Resistance; and a thousand hands did come forward to give me help; yet did none touch me, but gave back from me; for there did be that about me which held them off, as with a little awe; for I to be strange unto them.

And I stood there in a great silence, and the Diskos in my hand ran blood to the haft. And maybe I rockt as I stood; for many again did put out their hands, as to hold me, and again drew back, and were silent.

And I lookt unto them, and they lookt back at me; and I did gasp awhile, and was strangely dazed, and did try to tell them that I had need of the Doctors for the Life of Mine Own Maid, that did be dying in mine arms. And behold, in that moment, there did be a sound of giants running, out in the night. And some then to cry out different matters, to aid me, and to beware of the giants, and to bring the Doctors to attend me on the instant.

And other voices did call that the Holy Light was gone from above; and likewise the Black Mounds from the outer part of the Circle. And there did be a monstrous noise of roarings in the Land, and all to come bewildered unto my brain, which did surely fail now with the grim and utter stress which had been mine so long.

And there to be also a constant noise that came from near and from upward; and truly I to know, as in a dream, that it did be made of the shouting of the great Millions, that did make an eternal and vague roaringsound upward in the night, that did come down from the upper heights, no more loud than a strange and continual murmuring out of the lofty miles.

And surely, I to find my voice in a little minute, and did ask a near man whether there be any Doctors with the men. And in that moment there came forward a Master of the Diskos, which doth be as a Commander of this age. And he made the Salute of Honour with the Diskos, and would have eased the Maid from me; but I to ask again, very slow, whether that there was a Doctor anear. And he on the instant to give an order; and the

great thousands to begin to shape, and did make a mighty lane unto the Great Gateway of the Mighty Pyramid.

And the Master of the Diskos made a sign to certain that did be near; and they stood about me, as I to know dully, lest I fall; but they not to touch me; for I did be as that I must not be laid hand upon; for I did near to choke with despair lest I to have come Home too late; and surely, also, the men to seem as that I did be strange unto them.

And there went orders swift and constant this way and that; and lo! in a little while, there came two big men of the Upward Cities, running; and they had a little man between them upon a sling. And the little man did be a Master of the Doctors; and he aided me gentle to lay Mine Own Maid upon the earth. And the Master of the Diskos made a sign, and the men that did be near, turned each his back; and the Doctor to make examination for the life of Mine Own.

And there to come about that time a seeming of silence in the land. And truly the Hundred Thousand did be utter quiet; and a great quiet in the Mighty Pyramid; for, in truth, all to know, by this, that there to be a fear that the Maid I did bring out of the night, did be slain by the Evil Forces.

And sudden the little man that did be the Master Doctor, lookt up quiet and piteous at me; so that I knew in a moment that Mine Own Maid did be dead. And he to see that I knew; and he covered the face of Mine Own, and stood up very speedy; and he called softly to the men that did be to my back, and he signed to them that some to support me, and some to lift Mine Own Maid, and bear her unto the Great Gateway. And he lookt keen at me; and I to fight a little that I breathe; and afterward did make with my hands, that the men not to come near me, neither to touch Mine Own. And the Master Doctor to understand that I did be truly strong until I die, and did beckon the men from me, and from the Maid.

And I stoopt, in a little, and I lifted Mine Own Maid into mine arms for that last journeying.

And I came down the mighty lane of the Hundred Thousand, all in their grey armour. And they did make silent salute with the Diskos reversed, each man as I passed him, and did be utter silent. And I scarce to wot of aught, save that all the world did be quiet and emptied, and my task to have failed, and Mine Own to lie dead in mine arms. Yet, truly, did it to have failed utter? for I had surely saved Mine Own from the terror of the Second Night Land, and she not to have come alone and with madness unto her death; but to have died in mine arms; and she surely to have been comforted within her spirit, because that my love did be so utter about her. And I to think vaguely and terribly on an

hundred sweet love actions that she to have shown unto me; and sudden I did remember with a dreadful pain how that I never to have waked to discover Mine Own Maid kissing me in my sleep, as I to have meant. And a madness of anguish did flash sudden through the numbness upon my brain; so that I did be blinded a little, and surely went crooked in my walk; for I to know, sudden, that the Master Doctor steadied mine elbow for a moment; but afterward did leave me be, as I to have again control of my spirit.

And lo! as I drew nigh unto the Great Gateway, the lights of the Pyramid to begin to glow again more strong, and the machinery of the Lifts and the Air Pumps to work, because that now the EarthCurrent did grow once more to natural strength. And they to have power now to open the Great Gate, which did be done by great machines.

And there to come forth to meet me a number of the Masters of the Mighty Pyramid; and the dear Master Monstruwacan did come before them all, so eager as that he did be mine own Father. And he to have heard somewhat, vaguely, that there to have been a fear for the life of the maid that I did bring.

And surely, he did be told by one near to the Gateway, that the Maid did be dead in mine arms; for he and all the Masters did pause and stand silent for me to go by, and did reverse each his Diskos; and this to have been an Honour shown, than which there did be scarce any greater.

And there went a constant murmuring up in the night, which did be the speech of the Millions, questioning. And the news that the Maid did be dead, went upward through the miles. And my spirit to know, as in a dream, of the spiritual noise which did go outward through all space, and did be the grief of the Multitudes, as they did hear this thing. Yet, truly, there did nothing comfort me anywise; neither I proper yet to know the verity of my loss; for I did go stunned.

And I came in through the Great Gateway, and the Full Watch did stand there silent in their armour; and they made the Salute of Honour. And I went onward with the dead Maid that I did bring out of Eternity.

And presently, they that were around, did guide me, with the Maid in mine arms, unto the Great Lift. And I took Mine Own Maid into the Great Lift; and the Masters came with me, and did be in their armour; and none did speak to me. And the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors stood silent to the side of me. And there did be everywhere great Multitudes, that I did see vaguely; but my spirit not to wot of them.

And lo! I stood very quiet and dumb as we did go upward through the miles; and the Millions of the Cities stood about the Great Lift, and there did be a great silence upward and downward through the strange miles; save for the weeping of women in dear sympathy, that did sound far and low and constant.

And presently I to know that the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors did look one to the other; and I to be aware sudden that I stood in my blood; for I did be wounded in an hundred parts, and the blood to go away from me. Yet did the Master Doctor be slow to do aught for me, because that he to perceive that I did be slain in the heart; and there to be no pain so dreadful as that he should be like to wake me unto, if that he went hastily.

Yet, presently, there did come whirlings into my head; and someone did surely make to ease Mine Own Maid from mine arms. But I held her, dumbly; and the blood to go the more from me; and they not to know what should be done. And I to look at them. And the dear Master Monstruwacan did be saying somewhat unto me, that I did have no power to hear; but only to know that his face did be very human. And there went a strange noise all about me; and the Master Monstruwacan to seem to hold me up, and to beckon to some that did be to my back. And lo! there came a blackness, and the gentleness of arms about mine armour.

And I to come presently to quietness and to halfdreams; and did alway to seem that I carried Mine Own Maid in mine arms. But truly there did pass three great days, whilst that I did be thus. And I all that while to be laid quiet, and to be tended by the Master Doctor, and aided by all knowledge that did be known of Humans.

And on the third day, as it might be called, I to come full unto my senses; and the pain to take me in the breast; and the Master of the Doctors did be with me, and they that nurst me; and the Master Doctor watched me very keen and gentle.

And I did be in a bed of the Health Room of mine own city. And I gat from the bed, and the Doctor to say naught; but only to watch me. And I walkt to and fro a little, and he alway to watch me; and presently he gave me somewhat to drink; and I drank. And I was gone soon from all knowledge.

And I to come again unto a knowing that I yet to live; and there went a certain strength in my body. And lo! the first that I did see, was the Master of the Doctors; and I to perceive in a moment that he had wakened me, and had nurst my strength for that moment, that I live through the Burial. For he to be very wise, and to have known from that first seeing of me, that I not to live after that Mine Own did die.

And there was brought to me a loose garment; but I to refuse the garment, dumbly, and did look about me very troubled and forgetting. And the Master Doctor lookt alway at me; and lo! in a moment he called one, and gave an order. And there was brought in then my broken armour, and a garment to wear below. And I then to know that I did be content in this matter; and the Doctor alway to watch me. And they drest me in my broken armour.

And surely, as they drest me, my spirit to hear the sorrow and sympathy of the Multitudes, and did know that they went downward by millions, unto the Country of Silence.

And lo! in that moment when I near to be in mine armour, I to mind sudden again that I never to have waked to discover Mine Own Maid kissing me in my sleep. And the Pain gat me in the breast, so that I had surely ended then, but that the Master Doctor set somewhat to my breath, that eased me, and gave something of dullness unto my senses for a while.

And I did be carried then in a sling unto the Great Lift, and there did be a bed in the lift, and the Doctor to have me to lie upon the bed; and I to know that he also to know that I never to need a bed any more; neither should I ever to come upward again in the Lift.

And truly the Mighty Pyramid did be an emptyness; for there did seem to be left only the Stress Masters that did arrange the moving of the Millions. And the Stress Masters did stand about the Lift, as we dropt downward through the great miles unto the Underground Fields. And we came downward in the last unto the Country of Silence, which did lie an hundred miles deep in the world, and did be an hundred miles every way of Silence unto the Dead.

And they that were with me, gat me from the Lift, and did mean to carry me in the sling unto The Last Road. But I stood upon my feet, and made that I should walk, and I held out my hand for the Diskos, which one did carry. And the Master Doctor signed that they should obey me, as my spirit to know. And I walkt very steadfast down the Way that did lead unto The Last Road; and the Master Doctor walkt behind me, a little space off.

And surely, there did be all the Peoples of the World in that great Country; and the Peoples did be spread out forever, so far as my seeing did go; and they to have sight of me; and all the aether did be stirred with the humanness of their sorrow and their kind sympathy. And there grew a murmur, which did be like to a low rolling thunder, and did be the voices of the Peoples. And the rolling of that great husht Sound went to and fro across that mighty Country of Quiet; and there to be afterward an utter silence.

And I saw below me the place of the Last Rest, where did be the beginning of The Last Road; and there did lie there a little figure, covered with a white robe, that did glimmer with the beauteous work of women that had sticht love and honour into that Last Garment. And surely, I to rock upon my feet, and to steady myself with the Diskos; and the Master Doctor to be unto my side in a moment, and gave me again something that I breathein. But, indeed, I to refuse, after that I had taken one breath of the drug; for I to be able to bear my pain the little time that I now to have to live; and I to mean that I have no dimness of my senses for those short minutes that I should have yet near unto Mine Own. And truly the Master Doctor did not press me anywise, but had a perfect understanding, and went quiet again to the rearward.

And I came soon to that place where Mine Own Dead One did lie; and the Master Monstruwacan stood to her feet, and did be clothed in grey armour, and had the Diskos reversed; and this to be for an Honour unto My Dead Maid.

And there kneeled two maids in white, one to the right and one to the left of Mine Own, and they to be for Faithfulness, and did be maids, because that they watched by a maid; and had likewise been matrons, if that the Dead had been wife unto any.

And the place at the Head of the Last Rest did be empty, and did be for me; and he that stood to the head, did be for Love; for it did be the chief, and did hold dominion over and did make to live both Faithfulness and Honour. And this to be the way of the Burial alway.

And lo! I took my courage into my heart; and I stood to the head of Mine Own Maid; and I lookt down upon the wondrous white glory of the garment, which did be white because that Mine Own did be a Maid; yet did be worked with yellow Flowers of Weeping, as we did call them, because that she had died in love. And I to know that no hand had toucht that wonderful garment, save the hands of maidens.

And behold! as I stood there, from far away over the Land, there did come a far and faint sound; and the sound did come more nigh, so that I knew that afar off, beyond the Hills of the Babes, the Millions did begin to sing the Calling Song, where Million did call husht unto Million, and the sound did come onward toward where we did be, and did go over us, and pass onward in a husht and wondrous breathing of sound, as that all the Love that did be ever in this world, did call in a low anguish unto a lost Beloved. And the sound to pass away and away over that mighty Country in the deep Earth, and did hush and hush unto a great and utter silence, save for a faint murmur of countless women weeping, that did be in the air of that Land of Quiet.

And there to be a space of silence, and again the silence to be broken by a far sound; and there to come again from beyond the far Hills of the Babes a strange and low sound, and did be as of a wind wandering through damp forests. And the sound grew, and came across the Hills of the Babes, and did be breathed forth by Million after Million, so that in a little I to hear the Song of Weeping sung very low and sorrowful by the multitudes. And the Song came onward over all that great Country, and past over us, and went onward into the far Land beyond the Dome, and did be caught by the voices of Millions that did be hid in great distances, and so to go onward forever, and to die at last unto a mighty silence.

And the Master Monstruwacan lookt at me from the feet of Mine Own Maid, and I to know that the moment did be come when I to part from the Maid Naani forever and forever, even though I to live in some strange future, and to find her soul in some other sweet child. And I stoopt and laid the Diskos beside Mine Own Maid there upon the Last Rest; and the two maids drew back the light wonder of the Garment, and showed me the face of Mine Own, and she to sleep there forever so sweet and husht as a child, and as oft I to have seen her to sleep. And I lookt a little while, and the pain of my heart did be sufficient, so that I knew I died as I lookt. And once more I lookt, and I set my soul about Mine Own. And I fought with myself, and stood upward, and the maids did cover the face of Mine Own Maid.

And the Master Monstruwacan commended Naani unto Eternity. And he raised the Diskos reversed; and lo! the Road did begin to move upward unto the Dome, and Mine Own Maid did be upon the Road; and I to fight that I keep breathing; so that I not to die before she be lost utter to my sight.

And there did rise now a sound from all that Country that had no order in it; and did be like to a low moaning that did fill all the air of the Land; and there to be also a constant sound, as of a little whistling dree wind that did be in all that Country of Quiet; and truly this to be more than any singing; for it to be the true weeping of multitudes, that did sorrow from the heart, with the grief of this thing that did be.

And I stood utter still, and did draw my breath very even, and lookt unto that small form that did be now afar off where it did lie upon the moving Roadway. And I gazed, as that my soul and all my being did have no power else, even as a man that dies, doth set all his strength to a last movement. And I not to wot that the Master Monstruwacan and the two maids did hold me up, because they to perceive that I did be dying; for I only to see Mine Own Little One lying afar off upon the moving of the Last Road.

And the Maid in that moment to come to the place where the Road did pass into the strange and luminous vapour of the EarthCurrent, which did lie all about the base of the

Dome; and the vapour to be only as a faint shining smoke, scarce seen, yet to be enough to give something of uncertainty to the Dead, when that they did have past inward of it.

And I stared, with all that did be left of my strength; for Mine Own to be gone utter and forever in but a little minute. And the uncertainty of the luminous vapour did cling about her, and to make her to seem unreal to my gaze; for the vapour did be in constant movement, and to give a seeming of shifting to and fro of all that did be in it.

And behold! as I did stare, with my dreadful pain, there did be sudden a strange hoarse noise from the nearer Millions. And lo! in an instant there came a mighty Shout out of all that Country; and the shout did be made again, and did grow into a mighty hoarse roaring from the Millions, so that all that great Country did be filled with the monstrous sound. And, in verity, I to have seen the thing, likewise; but to have set it to the madness of longing of my heart and to that desperate and dreadful pain which did make me to be crazed and lost from all sane thinking.

And the thing that I did see, had been that the Maid did seem to move, there upon the Last Road, where she did lie; but indeed, this to have appeared only to be the stirring of the luminous vapour of the EarthCurrent, which did seem to make things shift, as I have told.

And lo! I now to see truly that the Maid did move where she was laid afar off upon the Road; and I now to know, and to believe that she did indeed live. And my life came into me with a bounding; yet did my heart seem to be a moment stilled in my breast. And the Master Monstruwacan to have signed already that the Roadway be stopt, and brought backward; but I to be now upon the Last Road, and did run as a madman, shouting vainly upon the name of Mine Own. And I to learn afterward that there to have been a dreadful peril that all the near Millions to rush toward the Last Road, and so, mayhap, to have caused the death of many, and to have been like to have crusht Mine Own. But this danger to have been eased, because that the Watch Master did act very prompt, and set the great regiments of his men to keep back the Millions, and did send a signal abroad over all the Country, that there to be calmness, for that the Maid should be succoured. And alway, whilst this to be, I did run staggering most strangely upward of the Last Road; and surely that great roof did ring and boom with the constant and mighty shoutings of the Millions.

And there did run others also along the Road, to my back; but I to have been the first, and to make a good speed, though I did stagger and rock so strange upon my feet; and the Road alway to be moving backward under me; and so I to be come wonderful soon unto where the Maid did be. And she to be upon her back, and to have pusht the Garment from her face, and did be lying with her eyes open, and a look of gentle

wonderment upon her dear face. And she then to see me, and her eyes did smile at me, very glad and quiet; for there to be yet an utter weakness upon her.

And lo! I came with a falling beside her, and I gat upon my knees and upon my hands, and my heart did shake my lips to dry whisperings. And she to look weak and steadfast unto me, and I to look forever at her; and I did alway try to say things unto her; but my mouth to refuse me.

And understanding did come into her, as a light; and she to know in that instant that she to be truly come into the Mighty Pyramid, and I to have gat her there somewise; and she to wake sudden in her body, and set her hands forth all atrembling from the Garment, and in dreadful trouble. And I to see then that the blood did go from me, constant; and the Maid to have perceived this thing, so that she was waked the more proper in a moment from her deathswon.

And surely, I did bleed very dreadful; for all my wounds did be opened with my running. And I to have sudden power with my lips, and did say unto her, very simple, that I loved her. And she to be all in an haze from me; and I to know that she to have come likewise unto her knees, and did have my head upon her breast; and there to be an utter shaking of the air with some great sound, and a mighty spiritual stirring of the aether of the world.

And there to be then the voice of the Master Monstruwacan very dull in mine ears; and the low voice of the Master Doctor; but I never to hear what they did be saying; and did know only that Mine Own Maid did live; and I not to mean to die, but to fight unto living. And even whilst that I made this resolving, I was gone into an utter blackness.

XVII

THE LOVE DAYS

Now, when that I gat back unto life, I to know that I went upward in the Lift, and did be upon that same bed, where I to think I never to need a bed any more, neither to come upward again from out of the Country of Silence.

And I to know vague and strange, that there rose up from out of the mighty depths of the world, the deep thunder of the Underground Organs, and did sound as that they made a strange and utter distant music beyond death; and there to go alway a rolling chaunting, as that multitudes did sing beyond far mountains, and the sound to be somewhiles as a farblowing wind, low in the Deep; and again to come clear, and to be that great olden melody of the Song of Honour. And I knew, as in a dream, that the Millions in that deep Country made an Honour and a Rejoicing over this Wonder of Joy which did be come. But yet all to be faint and half hid from me, and mine eyes to be as that they had no power to open, and I to seem to be lifting alway upon strange waters of unrealness. And there to be sweet and lovely odours, and these to be of reality, and to come from the great Fields, where the flowers did alway to grow about the passage ways of the Lifts; for the Lift even then to be going upward through the great miles.

And mayhap I moved a little; for there came the voice of the Master Doctor low and gentle to me; and bid me rest; for that all did be well with the Maid. And surely, afterward, I did be gone into an haze, and there to be then a seeming of days in which I half to live and half to sleep, and to wonder without trouble whether I did be dead.

And then there to come days when I lay very quiet, and had no thought of aught; and the Master Doctor oft to bend over me in this hour and that hour, and to look keen into my face. And in the end, after strange spaces, there bent over me another, and there lookt down upon me the dear and lovely face of Mine Own, and the eyes did speak love into my soul; yet did she be calm and husht. And I to begin again to live in my body, and I made, mayhap, a little fumbling with my hands; for she to take and to hold them; and life to come from her to me; and she to be ever wordless and gentle; and contentment to grow in me, and presently a natural slumber.

And there came a day when I did be let rise, and they that tended me, carried me to one of the Quiet Gardens of the Pyramid; and they set me there, and did seem to leave me alone. And there came One then around a bush, and lookt at me a moment, as with an half shyness; only that the love that did shine in her eyes, made the shyness to be a little thing. And, truly, I knew that it did be Mine Own Maid; but I never before to have seen Naani drest pretty as a maid. And I lookt to her, and knew that she did be more dainty

than even I to have known. And sudden I made that I rise to come unto her; but she to run quick to me, that she stop me of this natural foolishness; and she then to sit beside me, and to take my head against her breast, and she not to deny me her lips; but to be both a maid and a mother to me in the same moment.

And afterward, she had me to be very still; and we to sit there in an utter dumb happiness, until they that did attend me, were come again. And the Master of the Doctors did be with them, and I to see that there went something of satisfaction in his face.

And after that day I saw Mine Own Maid every day; and I gat better unto health with a wondrous quickness; for Love did mend me. And soon I did be let go downward unto the Fields; but yet to go by private ways, because that the Multitudes should be like to follow me alway; and I to need to be quiet.

And the Maid to be with me; for the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors did agree upon this matter, and had an Officer of Marriage to wed us; and we to be married very quiet and simple; for I yet to be overweak for the Public Marriage, which we to have later; when, truly, the Millions made us a Guard of Honour eight miles high, from the top unto the bottom of the Mighty Pyramid. But this to have been later, as I do tell, and did be a Ceremonial of the Peoples, because that they not to be denied that they give me an Honour.

And surely the Maid to be with me alway, and did be now my wife, and my strength to come alway upon me, and Mine Own to grow again unto a perfect health. And, in verity, we did be now in the Love Days which do be the most beauteous, if that the Love to be True.

And we did wander through the mighty Fields at our will, and walkt in the Love Paths of the Fields, which did be alway anear to those places where did be the villages. And I to hide our name, lest we to be beset by any, out of natural curiousness and kindliness; for we to need to be utter together and quiet.

And we to chose those places for our slumber where beauty of flowers did be most wondrous; and we to carry somewhat of food with us; but also to eat when we came unto the villages which did be here and there in the Fields, which were truly so huge as Countries. And Mine Own did make good her promise an hundred times, as you shall say, and did prepare me a great and hearty meal; and did tease me utter that I did be a glutton, as I did eat, and kist me, lest that I have ever a chance to say aught in mine own

defence. And truly, she did be all that my heart and my spirit did desire; and she to have companioned me with Love, and to have entered my spirit into Joy.

And once we to go downward unto the Country of Silence; but not to stay very long at that time; because that my Memory did return upon me. Yet in the after time, we to wander there oft with Memory, and Holiness of great Thinkings, and with Love which doth hold all.

And as we to leave that Country, I to tell Mine Own how that when she had been suspend of her life by the Horrid Force of the House, I to have minded me with a dreadful pain that I never to have waked to discover her kissing me when that I did sleep. And surely Mine Own Dear One did blush most lovely, and had never known that I did be aware of her sweet naughtiness; and she then to have all thought for mine agony, when that she did be dead, ere the Vapour of life of the EarthForce did set her spirit free of the Silence.

And she to come unto me in dear understanding.

And she then to tell me that the Doctors to say that she had been, as it were, stunned and froze of the Spirit, and all her Being and Life suspend; and the great lifeforce of the EarthCurrent to have waked her spirit, and her body then to live and her blood to flow proper again. And the Doctors had talkt much and searched much of late in the olden Records of their Work; and they to have found somewhat of one such happening in the olden time; but truly, naught such to have been ever through a mighty age of years.

And whilst that we to wander and to rest in the Fields, I oft to tell Mine Own of this matter and that matter; and I to know that she had learned somewhat of odd things, ere I did be come to health; but not overmuch; for she also to have been utter alack, as you shall think; and to have come from her bed, when that I did lie so still; for the Master Doctor to have ordained this, because he to fear that I to be going truly to die, if that he not to do somewhat to awaken my spirit. And in verity, you shall think upon the deepness of my Love as I to know that she did have held my hands so brave and gentle, whilst that she to have scarce power to her feet. And I to say a little holy praise of Mine Own.

And so do I come to mine ending; and have but one more thing that I tell. And this to happen a while later; after that Mine Own and I had gone through the second marriage which did be the Public Marriage. For it did be, that one day My Wife, that did be Mine Own, did take me with a sweet cunning unto the Hall of Honour. And surely, when I was come there, I to see that many of the Peoples did be in that great Hall, and did stand

about in a silence; yet as that they had no meaning to do aught; but yet to be that they did wait upon somewhat.

And My Wife did go forward with me unto the centre place of the Hall; and sudden I saw why that she did bring me so cunning sweet; for there did stand in the midst of the Hall of Honour, in the Place of Honour, a Statue of a man in broken armour, that did carry a maid forever.

And I did be dumb; and how of this Age shall you to know the Honour that this to mean in that; for it did be an Honour that was given only to the Great Dead; and I to be but a young man, and did be so utter far off from greatness; save that I to love with all my heart and with all my spirit, and therefore death to be but a little thing before love. And you to know how Love doth make sweet and brave the heart; and to have understanding with me in my humbleness and my wonder and my natural pride that there did any so think to honour me.

And Mine Own did be weeping with joy and honest pride of her man, beside me. And there to be an utter silence of dear sympathy in all the great Hall of Honour. And they that did be there, to let me go in quietness, with Mine Own, which did be a lovely thing of understanding.

And I to go loving and thoughtful with Mine Own Wife; and she to be very nigh to me.

And I to have gained Honour; yet to have learned that Honour doth be but as the ash of Life, if that you not to have Love. And I to have Love. And to have Love is to have all; for that which doth be truly LOVE doth mother Honour and Faithfulness; and they three to build the House of Joy.