

The Fruit Of Love

By Lanechka Fevola

I

Near moonrise, on the eve of the spring equinox, not long before a new sun was to rise, that would lighten and warm the dark and cold looming over an earth grown desolate, the Great Mother arose from the Nether Regions. For the days of winter had passed, and its chilling winds no longer murmured their sorrow through the bones of the naked trees. She had wandered the twisting, torturous passageways, gliding amongst monstrous crystal formations that stood there as strange and fabulous beings of the Underworld beneath the earth, their eyes of light watching and following her every rising step.

Being huge of limb, she walked with great strides, her ancient, wizened body ascending the vertiginous swirls of rock and earth, studded with raw metals and unusual gems. Around her roamed the spirit-animals and birds on their otherworldly journeys through the hollows of their dark abode where crept myriad forests of roots.

Once at the summit, the Great Mother, crowned in the crescent moon, rose up from that dreamworld as a Cosmic Mountain, all wild with her trees of tangled hair that would bring down the rain to become rivers and flow all the way to sea; trees, whose branches curled into the far reaches of sky in a stream of stars forever weaving the stuff of the universe. Above her, in the silence of the earthly night, shone the light of the Evening Star upon her magnificence.

With a keen eye she looked about, her senses attuned to those of a knowing animal, and her nose, flaring large gristly nostrils, sniffed the air. The night was moving swiftly across the sky and the air smelled of things to come. Planting a torch of fire into the ground, her voice rang out with a thousand echoes crying, "Fly, winds, fly," then with a lift of her knobbly

hand, she summoned the four winds from the four directions who, having felt themselves banished to the loneliness of caves in far off places, were glad to spread their wings once again. Like obedient handmaidens, they came as heralds of change, swirling and moaning about her, to ceremoniously remove the grey veils of mourning she had worn for the performance of her ritualistic dance of the year, the Winter Death. Slowly, slowly, one by one, the veils fell from her and floated away, farther and farther into the distant light of the moon like ragged ghosts to another world.

Her eye was all-seeing. Its sight was as broad as the universe itself, and it travelled faster than the birds of the air. She could even see things that were hidden in the dark hollows of trees, or the tiniest crevices of a rock, or as deep as the silence of the fishes. So being in search, as she was now, of just the right stone, her eye swept over those vast distances. Finding it, she sent out a magpie into the world to fetch it. It flew over multitudes of forests and mountains, to the reaches of tumultuous seas, to the loneliest of marshes and wastelands, these the wondrous things that make the earth.

In a dark, quiet stream lay the coveted stone, a moonstone, cold and distant in a sleep. With gentle fascination, the magpie picked it up with its beak and returned to the mountain and alighted upon the Great Mother's hand, whose warmth brought the stone to life till it glimmered with an uncanny light. With one end she traced a labyrinth on the ground, all the while marking out certain ages of time. Naked, her wrinkled breasts hanging long and loose, she walked the spiral, inward, slowly, so that the earth's energies could rise through her feet. Gradually, as she passed each phase, the ravages of ancientness sloughed from her like the old skin of a snake, and her body changed from that of a Crone to a Virgin, her silhouette carved into the night by the light of the Evening Star. There she sat in the centre of herself, a fertile darkness.

After some moments of silence, she buried the old skin in the deep blackness of the earth, far down amongst the secret roots of memory. One

of those memories still moved within her, the time when the earth came into being. It was a deep wound, though healed. She had squatted across the heavens, her belly swollen and painful with the relentless churning of the primordial seeds of air, water and fire. Screams of terror had come from her throat, but, so, too, the cries of ecstasy, as the cosmic sea that is the ebb and flow of the beginning of things, broke and swirled itself into what became one of her children, the earth. The lands were the flesh of her flesh, the mountains that of her bones, the rivers, from which flowed her blood and milk into the seas, that of her veins and arteries. Spreading herself she had spread her soul. Then the Great Father had come in silence, the sun in his hands, to warm it with the fires of spirit.

Such were the dreams she had imagined with the Great Father, he, penetrating the dark cave of her womb with his light so that his seed would sow the earth. Yet it had been for something more that they had longed and another dream was now growing within her.

II

The eve of the spring equinox was an auspicious night. The energies of the universe were poised in anticipation. The Great Mother wrought her crown of silver light into a cauldron and placed it in the centre of the labyrinth she had created with the moonstone, above the point beneath which smouldered the subterranean fires of the Underworld.

In the cauldron, she put that of her body and blood; wild herbs and plants of every kind, particularly those with magical properties; the bones of her creatures and the eggs of the fishes. She put, too, the songs and feathers of birds and the honey of bees, and also, salt, from the primaeval waters. Her hand brushed across the sky to bring the clouds who cast down the celestial rain till the pot was full. She floated upon the water the iridescence of a pearl, and sprinkled into it the gold of sun and the silver of moon. Beneath the pot she placed some broken sticks of rowan and lit them with her torch. And then she waited.

Soon, there slithered a copper-red snake out of the earth, which coiled itself into a ring around the cauldron till its mouth found its tail and swallowed it. Its bite could administer nectar as well as poison. When its skin began to glow with heat, tongues of flame licked about the pot.

As the brew grew hotter she added a sprinkling of stardust. It bubbled and spit at once. Simmering and glowing, thicker and thicker did it become. Threads of steam began to rise and bind and weave themselves. Then she made a whirlwind to stir and cool it.

Now it was ready. Raising the cauldron to her lips, the Great Mother drank the contents. She opened her legs and straddled the earth, Her enormous feet digging into the fecund soil, feet that had nurtured seeds and severed roots. The moon grew full and white behind her.

She felt the light of the Great Father inside her, making her belly swell hot and round as the sun and the energy leaped up to her forehead. From between her brows, opened an eye that shone a silver light, akin to that of the moon. Memories swirled into the light and she could see herself walking the round of seasons with the Great Father; she, in the raiment of all her creatures, a garland of flower and fruit upon her head, and he, flying to her with a voice of thunder, in a robe of feathers made fiery wings by the sun, the orange-gold garden of foliage that was his hair and beard, aflame in the wind. Her whispering breath sang in each season as she passed, the Great Father lighting her way. Their hearts were a hearth and their passion an all-consuming fire, a love bringing to life creature and plant, who, in turn, would bear fruit, for it was through them these great dreams could be made manifest.

Spring is the song of flower and birdsong; summer, of the sun and ripening fruit; autumn, that of harvest and of the decay that comes, after the rains have soaked the red-gold sun-burnt lands with a damp coldness. With the cry of the crow the earth begins to curl into itself as the Great Mother rages a storm, for she is the bringer of death as well as of life. The hooded, homeless winds wail into the long night to weep for the dying year, the

falling leaves of the trees, the last flowers, the poor plants and creatures, cold and hungry. As the sun descends into the sea, the Great Father goes into the long shadows. And, soon, there spreads a frost to cloak the earth in a necessary silent sleep. His fire still burns though in such as the radiant berries of the holly tree, which spring up around his feet as he walks away. Or in the bright and enchanting colours of strange mushrooms that emerge out of nowhere. For in times of darkness or light, the Great Father's wild presence is always there to protect the earth's fruitfulness. He emerges again with the rising of the sap in spring, the filaments of a bright new sun in his eyes and hair.

So did these memories continue to flood the Great Mother's vision, but as the moon waned to half-light, then to last crescent, then to darkness, the memories vanished. Once again did the Great Mother's voice unleash itself and shatter the air. Her belly contracted and the world reeled. She hoisted her heaviness up and hunkered. With supreme effort she squeezed, the blood that is the sap of life dripping down her legs, till there was torn from the womb of her vast being, a human child, a girl, all glistening and trembling with moisture. Then, some hours later, the Great Mother squeezed again and there was wrenched from her body, another human child, a boy. Around her as an aura of light, shone the great Father, just as the eyes of dawn peered over the eastern horizon.

They embraced as a Being of immense power and beauty. Before the aeons of time, from a deep silence, they had come, sounding a great heartbeat as if from a great heart. From uncreated night, vast and dreamless, from what was Ineffable Mystery, this Being had appeared like a constellation of stars, the Mother and Father of All Living, awakened as if from a great sleep. Together they were One, for hadn't she given birth to him, yet he was before all else? They coiled around each other like two wild creatures, Their breath, an ever-flowing round playing the music of the other. And from this magical duet there had come the beginning of things, the songs of darkness and light, joy and sorrow, heaven and earth; the sounds of the cosmos, spun upon the whorls of sun, moon and planets, and the wheeling rays of the stars, universes within universes, connecting

all into one Great Song, whose melody was deeper than the deepest sea, and higher than the farthest and most unknown star. With ecstatic cries they trembled their throats, the sound breaking as birds from their lips into that marvellous Song.

Spring was on its way and a new moon was in the sky. The Great Mother now rubbed the children's tender bodies with earth, in order that they should know the nature of life and of their humble origins, and the Great Father struck them with the light of spirit to illuminate their hearts. And with their first breath, their hungry cries rang a sonorous bell into the rising dawn, that pricked up the ears of all the world's creatures. The Great Mother then suckled them to her breast to give them their first food.

The girl, called Eve, had been born at the hour of dawn, when the Morning Star appeared. She was given to the spirits of the wood who would be her guardians. Under a great tree, through whose leaves shone the white of the moon, they bathed her in the morning dew. In flower and leaf did they clothe her, her hair braided with violets.

The boy, named Adam, was bright of eye, and born at the hour of noon when the sun blazed at its zenith. He was given to the spirits of the mountains, who bathed him in the melting mountain streams. The feathers of the eagle became his garment.

The earth, being the blood and body of the Great Mother, was bountiful and generous, and provided that which was needed for her children. In all things would Adam and Eve find the Great Mother, for that is the way of seeing her, as she is the rocks and the water, the wind and the trees, and, also, of tasting her, her nurturing milk in the fruits of the earth, imbued with the spirit of the Great Father. And they were bidden to do what the plants and creatures do naturally, being, as they were, their kin, and to look after them and have the freedom to choose their own way. Through the gift of wonder, would they perceive their inner beauty, for the colours of the earth were like those of the heavens, their hearts open to the beauty of love and

life in all its sacredness, and to their own fruitfulness. They were the children of Ineffable Mystery, and through their humanity would shine their divinity.

But since the Great Mother not only bestowed life but withdrew it too, she pronounced an invocation, "From the darkness of my womb have you come, to the darkness of my womb shall you return."

Then, uttered the Great Father, "From the light have you journeyed forth, to the light shall you journey once again."

And with that, the Great Mother wrapped herself in a gown of stars and retired with the Great Father, to their abode of dreams. But, never would they be separated from their children, for that which is whole should never be broken.

III

Adam and Eve grew to know the ways of the earth. Together, they wandered the hills and valleys flowering with trees filled with birdsong, everywhere the eye could follow a wonderment. They listened to the voices of the creatures, the trees and the flowers, the wind and the water, for each had its tale to tell, and revelled in naming them. With sunrise, came the song of the lark and by nightfall, the bewitching music of the nightingale. Such would enchant them. They would watch the autumn red and gold come as a flame across the lands and depart. Then with the drifting away of the last tenacious leaf, there would descend the white dream of winter. When it too was gone, they could see how another white lit up the earth, the first light of an equinoctial dawn, to open the way for a spring greenness. With the appearance of the first stars, they would return to their guardians, she, to the whispering wood, he to the steadfast mountains.

Eve's voice was as deep as the earth and touched with a sadness like that of the autumn wind. Yet, her laughter sang like the birds of the air. In the water, she was a fish, on the land she was a tree or a wolf. She listened

to the wind and became the wind, and as the wind, she could be a tempest or an eerie whistling, over the seashore. As the moon changed shape, so Eve seemed to. And though her eyes were the colour of dusk, a light akin to the Morning Star gleamed in them like a jewel.

Adam loved the mountains and seemed always to be in search of ever-higher places to be closer to the sky. He would climb them to prodigious heights and look up into the heavens with the eye of an eagle, his eyes filled with eagerness. When he cast them down upon the earth, he felt himself to be a great king. And when he saw Eve, his laughter would roll like thunder.

As time passed, however, their bodies as well as their moods began to change. No longer children, a shadow befell them. When, momentarily, their eyes met, they had, quickly, to turn away and a curious sensation would grip them in their bellies. In the seasons of the mating of the beasts, they began now to look upon their lusting as though with shame, as perhaps something forbidden, whereas before, they had watched with fascination. They did not know this, but a strong desire had touched the primal root of their being and was being roused. A sense of fear overcame them, so that in the night, there would come troubling dreams to haunt their sleep. A mysterious aura emanated from Eve, a bright darkness, and she became more reticent. She seemed older and Adam would tremble just to look upon her, as though he were looking into an unfathomable distance, and no longer laughed when he saw her. From Eve's forests and waters there came now, to Adam's eyes, a strangeness, like a light from an unknown planet. He grew more and more afraid of her dark ways, her secretiveness.

One day, they were sitting by the sea. A restless wind was blowing and they watched in a long silence the rolling of the waves. The sun was just beginning to set. Eve was in deep reflection as she looked to the horizon, and she said, "Adam, do you think there is another world beyond this one, there, where the sky and sea touch, where the sun is stepping into the darkness? Her eyes were shining. Adam had often seen her gazing at the

horizon. "Oh, look," she cried, "can you see how the waters glitter when the fish play as though it were filled with a thousand stars? Perhaps they can show me the way." And with a sigh, her soul rushed out to be with that of the sea creatures. It dived through the radiant waters as far as the eye could see, but the horizon just seemed to move far and farther away from her reach. So, wet and breathless, her soul withdrew, and there came over her a deep aching. Adam, his spirit heavy within him, asked, "Where do you go all alone?" Eve turned away from him and didn't respond. Then with a wistful tone in her voice she said, "To where the owl flies and the wolf hunts, to where the light is soft and sweet in the dark." "But, why, Eve, do you like the darkness so much? I sometimes fear the darkness. It is like the vast shadow of a great hand that covers my eyes and makes me lose my way. Whereas the light of the sun makes me glad. It makes my heart beat. Adam became filled with emotion. "Think of it, Eve, what life there is in the sun. It is generous and shines its light on everything! "But Adam," cried Eve, "can you not see how the moon and the stars love the dark. How would we be able to see them in all their beauty without the night sky? The sun is a creature of fire. It is beautiful but it, also, blinds. It shines on me now too brightly for its own sake, burning me. The silver gaze of the night is more gentle and gives me comfort, and tells me of its secrets ." These words rang bewilderingly in Adam's mind. The moon and the stars were beautiful, yes, but their beauty was sometimes coloured in a sinister glow. He looked at her with a hard fixed gaze and said, "You hide as though you were a bird with its head under its wing." Then his eyes softened somewhat and he said, "What has become of us, Eve?" And Eve, her face hooded in silence, watched, with questioning eyes, Adam, as he walked away to where she could not follow.

Adam, growing ever more moody, stayed away from Eve's worlds, her haunted forests and rambling rivers, and became more and more wary of the stars that hung above the sea with their reflections ever-moving upon the waters. Eve, too, though always having regarded the mountains as beings of wonder, now stayed away, for they were of Adam's domain, and she knew she was not wanted. As the creatures had become other to them, so did they become other to each other, and the world, once a magic,

became a babble and a confusion. Yet, deep down, their hearts still yearned and cried out for one another, but neither of them would hear. Thus, alone and confounded, would each venture into their own solitude.

IV

The rain fell like tears and the wind was a cry over the sea. When the moon disappeared every month for three nights, the darkness was a death to Eve, who became increasingly withdrawn, and like the disappearing moon, would search for her own darkness that would hide her face like a veil.

She walked and walked and came to a forest unknown to her; a raw, savage realm, fragrant with strange flowers of unusual shape and colour. Their strong scent and colours tinged the air, making the forest gleam with facets of fiery orange, ice-blue, blood red and a green more green than gems of precious emerald. She moved silently, with the tread of a cat, as the wind curved around slumbrous trees of monumental girth that gripped the earth with knotted, ancient feet. Around her the unseen voices of creatures and birds murmured an unintelligible language from their secret, sentient world, as though in collusion with each other, then would fade away out of hearing. This troubled Eve's heart and she felt a foreboding. Occasionally a bird would fly in from the faraway skies with a cry and ruffle the sleepy leaves. Then would come a hush as though the world had suddenly stopped. There would fly, too, another sound on the feathers of the unknown, an unearthly ringing sound. This sound reached deep down into the valleys of her being and unsettled her.

Sleepily her feet glided through a dappled light, the paths tangled thick with undergrowth and sea-green moss. Deeper and deeper, did she wander, drawn to that part of the wood that lay in shadow. Suddenly, she let out a cry of terror. Birds, with a shriek and a fierce beating of wings, struck out of their secluded haunts into the air, the rush of wind sending the leaves flying, just as a snake guiltily slithered away under a thornbush. Wounded

and in pain from the bite, she ran, as if in madness, as though possessed, her hair blown wild by the wind. She stumbled, her face white as stone. The earth fell open like a great mouth and swallowed her, and soon a desolate winter descended upon the lands.

V

Adam wandered aimless and cold amongst the spirits of the mountain, climbing higher and higher, to where the clouds wrapped themselves about its lofty peak, as though trying to reach the sun, though it was still night. Looking down he could no longer see the earth. Like a tired eagle, he sat and brooded. Thoughts flew about his head like restless birds. With his two hands, he caught one and held on to it tightly, closed his eyes, and pondered. The thought flew from his hands to his mind and flitted brightly in and around its shadowy hollows.

Time passed. The sun had not yet risen. The Great Father was roaming about the mountains but Adam had not seen. He pondered. The stars began to fade and roll away with the dark blue night, so that first light could seep into the sky. And still Adam pondered. His thought in search of answers grew anxious and became a plea. With this, the sun peered above the horizon. And as it grew, like a huge golden flower into the sky, it emblazoned the earth, which glowed as red as a startling sunset. He became feverish, yet still he pondered.

Now the sky was aflame. Its light shone more and more brightly upon the mountain till the mountain became a fiery altar, for the thought was now a prayer. Hotter and hotter did the sun grow, and its power unleashed a terror in Adam's soul, turning him red as the earth, and he could feel himself burning up, as though he were a phoenix on its pyre. When the sun reached its zenith, a great She-eagle appeared across it and flew towards him. The rushing storm of wings swept Adam up as the creature enveloped him. Then came down her enormous heavy head with its terrible beak and swallowed him. When the sun was at its brightest she spit him out, then died.

Adam, eagle-born, clutched the rock with robust claws, his powerful body of feathers extending brilliant golden wings. At last did he turn his eyes, eyes made for the eagle's wilderness, towards the kingly sun. They stared directly without flinching, just for an instant into its brilliance. Adam felt the fire of heaven, the spirit of the Great Father, and soon he was plunged into a blinding darkness. Tormented by fear, he flapped and struggled, as though caught in a trap, then gave up and felt himself drift into nothingness. But slowly there emerged a subtle pinprick of light which grew and resonated into startling visions.

The azure waves of the heavens swirled before him, crested with pearly white clouds, lined with gold. Rain fell from the clouds upon the mountain. The river created, flowed down and over round hills and deep valleys, curving in and out of light and shadow, and there uttered a voice sounding from afar saying "Adam," a voice that seemed to be many voices, as though all of earth were calling out to him. The river ran with all of life to the sea like a child to its mother, making the lands fertile on its way. Where the river flowed, there sprouted blue forget-me-nots near it, their reflections wavering in the waters, and in each blossom, there dreamed the blue watery eyes of the heavens. And he heard the voice of Eve whispering on the wind, which brought to flower, anemones, reddish-purple in colour. Each flower was the wings of a butterfly and in each, he saw the colours of the Infinite. When the whispers of the wind turned cold, away wafted the delicate petals in a scattering of wings into nothingness.

The river flowed endlessly and filled the sea, but never did it become full. Its blue waves fringed in foam, were a heaven of clouds. Then night again descended with myriad stars, and a silver light from a great moon, was cast upon the waters. With deep breaths, did the waves rise to touch the moon, then fall again to kiss the earth. And there came again a voice, as if the moon, the sea and all the stars were calling out to him. Then the moon left the sky, and the stars drifted away. And there, shining in the black of night, was a great yellow sun in a corona of copper-red flames. Adam, as eagle, circled the sun and flew dangerously close to its burning rays. His body seethed with a great strength. In the reach of his wings came a surge

of energy that was akin to the sun's power for creation and destruction, its wonders and its horrors. But there is also in the nature of the sun, magnanimity and a radiant heart, that pulses with the desire to enliven and protect and warm. When his feathers caught fire, flinching with pain, yet exhilarated, he plunged himself into the cooling waters of the sea. Refreshed and moistened by the misty sea spray that was to rise into the sky as clouds, he soared from that dark world upwards, once again into light, eagle and wave as one, and penetrated those clouds that were now hovering above the mountain. They filled with rain which fell like a shower of gold. As he settled upon the mountain, from his loins there surged a power, the power of Creation itself, its desires, its turmoil and its sufferings, its uncertainty and its certainty, but also its bright beauty and its joy, whether it be that of the greatest star or the smallest grain of sand. And now there was nothing more than the thought of Eve. This thought flew, trembling, from his mind to his heart, to nest there as desire. This desire gave birth to love and Adam, with great anguish, cried out, "Eve!". His heart, thus set afire, burned for her and, thereafter, the boy, now a man, went to seek her, a full beard grown upon his face.

VI

Down, down did Eve fall into the gaping earth, a thousand fathoms below, into a dark world. She fell unconscious, away from all that was living. Yet, there melted into that darkness from time to time, a strange pale light, as though there shone a moon somewhere but its source was unknown. It was a world of wandering shadows, of the spirit-creatures, of withered plants and snarling black roots and dead stone; of chasms and deep whirlpools, a world different to the sunlit world. When she roused from her stupor, she heard their laments rise up through the hollows of sleep like dead leaves blown by the wind, a sad music which swept her up with longings for Adam. From this, she learned sorrow.

A shroud of gloom wrapped itself about her. Moss fell in long sighs from the trees. And soon, from between her thighs she felt a moisture. She did not know it yet as the shedding of her first blood. Her breasts swelled painfully. Feeling overcome with shame, for she understood nothing of what was happening to her, she found a pool of water upon which floated pale lilies like stars in a pool of night, and went in to bathe herself. The water was deathly cold and she shivered. For three days the blood from what seemed to her, a wound, flowed into the pool tinting the lilies an earthy orange. The flowers surrounded her like a fire, warming the waters, and from them rose fingers of steamy mist. She could feel a sensation of warmth surge through her body and into her head. Feeling giddy, her face flushed, she crawled out and curled up like a sick animal by the edge of the pool and fell asleep. As she slept, whatever had taken root beneath the waters, had uncoiled and risen upwards into a huge tree, the black branches of which coiled and uncoiled way up beyond where the eye could follow.

When she awakened, Eve saw in front of her, risen from the waters in which she had bled, a tree of hissing snakes. In horror, she sprang backwards like a startled bird and tears fell from her eyes. A great She-Serpent of the Underworld slowly slithered up from the tree's roots and wrapped itself gently around Eve, as though a mother around her child and licked her eyes to wash away her tears with its quivering red tongue. "Do not be afraid," it whispered, "You are home." It swayed sensuously back and forth before her. At first the Serpent's eyes looked as though it might devour her but then softened, and Eve beheld the vision of the Great Mother.

Upon the tree alighted moonlit birds and when they sang, leaves of flame sprouted from the branches, as if the tree were lit from within. Then there came forth water and blood from the heart of the tree flowing like a fountain into the pool. As the song wove and dreamed its melody, opalesque flowers emerged, and then, in time, round blood-red fruits. Within the seeds of these fruits, was contained, not only the birth of forests, but Eve's soul.

“Within you are the roots, the beginning of things. You are a giver of life and a healer, that is your nature, Eve, and your name,” hissed the Serpent. “Within you is the eternal womb that nourishes life’s seeds in your everflowing blood, and in the chalices of your breasts is held the honeyed milk for its first food.” The Serpent’s words were a dancing flame upon its tongue and held Eve’s gaze fixed. “You are desire,” it continued, “the desire that leads one to truth, wisdom and beauty, for you are born of these things, and of a love older than the earth and of time. Look upon the branches that bear the fruit of this life and taste it”. Then slowly uncoiling itself from her, it slithered away into a dark cavern. The fruits quivered with a shining beauty, hanging heavy and succulent with juice. So Eve ate of the tree’s fruit and marvelled at herself. She then rubbed herself all over with earth and began to dance. She moved at first slowly, winding sinuously like a snake, her body getting warmer and warmer. Then she thrust her head back and stamped her feet. Where she stamped small jets of fire sprang up from the ground. She danced without fear, skillfully, between these fires, as though taunting death, ecstatically twisting herself into a frenzy of flame, to the rhythm guiding her, that beat like a drum, faster and faster as the eyes of the chthonic powers watched. And with it came the shaking of the rocks and the cries of the beasts of both land and air and the snarling of the black roots, for all the Underworld began to move with her. The more the passion burned in her, the more she scintillated like a star, her face radiant, shattering the everlasting night of that sleeping world. Then, with a gasp, she fell to her knees as, all around her, the seeds of the fruit scattered from the beaks of many a bird. From this she learned joy.

Soon after, Eve found herself wandering somnambulant about the labyrinthine bowels of the Underworld, made up of infinite half-lit passageways and doorways of rock and earth, worlds full of dreams that, at first, seemed to lead to somewhere, but would end up nowhere. Eve would never know where she would find herself. Now, there would be a sudden turning into a secret doorway, now, a darkened path. So many slopes lifting and falling that would only lead into more darkness. She would come upon a vertiginous stairway of stone that wound itself up into an unseen and

unheard faraway. Or it would venture the other way, down to where, solemn and formidable, was perched a great vulture upon a craggy rock, its black feathers fringed in a fiery aura. Beneath it were strewn the bones of creatures that had died and made their way to this abysmal burial ground, their sighing souls fleeing in torrents of wind to a new life. Farther down into the reaches, there seethed raging fires, where one could fall from an unseen precipice into a bright blood-lit world, the smoky red glow seeping up into the darkness. A monolithic rock might suddenly open before her and there was no way of knowing whether the opening was deep or shallow, where within moved ghostly shadows in their individual trances, without the sound of footfall.

There were twists and turns of corridor after corridor leading to innumerable caverns in a deep twilight, the light being neither that of sun nor moon, icy worlds of stone and mineral that dripped with clusters of stalactites and bloomed with gardens of stalagmites rising like columns or small mountains of ivory or mother-of-pearl, or branching into strange plant-like forms rippled with raw amber and gold. To walk through them was to walk as if through a fairyland, amongst the ruins, perhaps, of one of its abandoned bygone cities. Then there were the monsters of crystals, powerful, beautiful, in their way, who within them were captured the lights of the Aurora Borealis, and glimmered with shades of turquoise, rose and indigo, mesmerising her. There were groves of barren trees with grotesque faces frozen into a sorrow or a fright, as though imprisoned spirits that, as she passed, would turn dreamily towards her, and bend down their twisted boughs. When her hand touched one, it would suddenly bloom into leaf and flower of unreal quality. The leaves would part and there would come the song of a magnificent bird, its melody singing, "Eve." And then a stillness, as if the bird had not sung at all. And Eve trembled, for its sound moved her deeply. She was part of their dreamworld which was her own dreamworld, as each seemed to be creating the other, and she walked in it like a queen unafraid.

The heavy darkness grew lighter, for above her head now there stretched an expanse of sky. From hard, earthen paths, her feet now trod upon alabaster white sands, and though icy to the touch, would melt warm

beneath them. She heard the rushing of waves that rang of the voices of all wild things as the sands met a sea, the sea of the Underworld beneath the earthly sea. Above it curved the night, where dwelt the stars of darkness on their eternal journey, their cold light cast across the waters making them sparkle with a thousand lights. So bright was this sea, that it seemed as though the light originated from it rather than from the sky.

Eve waded in and found herself being lifted up by the waters that formed around her a coracle and she, a wanderer of wind and wave upon it. As she lay down her hair in the currents, it floated a ghostly green seaweed upon which pale shells and pearls attached themselves. Shoals of fish followed. Sharks, attracted by the fish, circled, ominously, the coracle, in silence, their sharp fins, blades, slicing the waves. Beneath the waters glowered the eyes of great jellyfish, their bell-shaped heads sounding a death knell. Long luminous tentacles like tresses of pink and gold and green gossamer began to tangle themselves around the coracle, leaving a wake of phosphorescence behind them. But they soon fled, for there came the laughter of wild dolphins who danced playfully upon their tails to guide her onwards. She sailed dreamlike in a silver world, moving with the stars, on and on, between a deathly night and a morning wind. And soon, before her in the distance, appeared a great mountain, behind which was the waking sun. And a voice called out to her, saying, "Eve." And it was as if the sun and all the mountains of the world were calling to her. As she sailed past it, from beneath the sea, there came again the great She-Serpent. It ascended upwards and cast down torrents of rain. It dived downwards and brought up a curtain of water. It slithered stealthily, appearing and disappearing, twisting and turning around vast boundlessness in which and from which flowed all waters, here, there, everywhere as though trying to find its way. Then coiled itself into a circle. And within that circle were eternity and time held, the secrets of nature and of life and death, joy and pain. Above, shone now, the Pole Star, around which, in a great whirlpool, were voyaging all the stars of the universe. Eve could not tell sky from sea.

Water and sky mingled into a harmony of dreams, the light and the darkness dancing brightly together. And such was their radiance that from

this bright wonder, from the unfathomable depths beneath her, there emerged, on one long slender stalk, two exquisite lotus buds, one from which shone the sun, the other, the moon. As the petals of the two flowers opened one by one around her, so did Eve feel herself open into a single flower of silvery-gold. She found herself being pulled into the sidereal swirl of the heavens, and with the yearning of all the earth, she cried out, "Adam!"

VII

Adam was searching for Eve in an austere empty world, through an endless winter to which no spring would come. He searched for her by the chill light of a silver white moon, in the creeping forests full of the sad singing of the wild birds, blown hither and thither by the wind. He searched for her in the hollow valleys, where once streamed vibrant rivers, but were now channels of ice. He searched for her in fields once fragrant with flowers and grasses, now frosted by a grey mist. He searched for her to the ends of the world, as the sun travels, east to west and back to east.

At last he stood, despondent, before the vast dark melancholic sea. The stars shone brilliant, the sands were dry and chilled. Full of grief, he knelt before the heavy waters and wept, for he thought Eve was lost to him. They rushed icy over his thighs and he shivered. The smell of the sea was in his nostrils, a wild smell. He wanted to taste it, taste the brine and the shells and the fish, the reflection of the stars amongst the fullness of the moon. So he dipped a trembling hand into the shadowy waters and tasted Eve. It was a heady wine. The stars wheeled away from the touch. The sky and the sea grew dark and empty.

Then upon the darkness traced a pale band of light and the waters grew still. Far away into the distance, Adam could see a figure, black, against the light, slowly rise up from the depths as though from a whirlpool of stars. Around it swirled flocks of birds in a sky spreading rose, emerald and indigo, their voices wild with a melancholic joy. And as this figure rose upwards bigger and bigger before his eyes, from feet rooted in the violet-dark sea, to the head reaching to the iridescent heavens, he saw it to

be a woman, the coiling sorceries of her hair streaming wildly into the light. From the shades of death Eve had returned and she moved now with the stillness of the eternal in what were the ever-moving waters of life.

She walked sensuously towards him, her naked body gowned in aurean light, the moon an ornament in her hair, till she stood in splendour before him. Startled, his eyes became aflame with the fire burning ardently in his heart and he could see, in the dark night of her eyes, the light break from the Morning Star. The world sang with a jewel-like brilliance. What was alive in the world was alive within these two passionate beings. As the dawn gave way to the bright new sun, so did their passion brighten. When their bodies touched, naked before all earth and heaven, what was kindled within them was a fire that grew like a tree of flame, whereupon each of its many branches, would sing a bird with a different song. And so the snows melted, the greenness came, and the fragrance of blossoms filled the air, as if the world were just beginning again. Adam embraced her and held her to him. On Eve's lips wafted another perfume and when Adam kissed her, he could taste the sacred fruit. Thus did Adam and Eve come to know each other.

Afterwards, looking with eyes born anew, to the beauty of the earth and up to the deep blue dream of the heavens, to what was their Mother and Father of whom they were kin, so with bowed heads, did Adam and Eve feel, also, to humble themselves before them, they, who were greater than themselves, and to all that was mysterious and unknown. And from their union would come the fruit of their love, a child, whose eyes were all shadow and starlight and wild as the earth, whose voice was the wind, and whose heart burned with the radiance of the sun.

From the seed of the tree uncoils the roots of its offspring out of the darkness of earth into the light. And this life unfolds itself into glorious flowering from which its vital fruit ripens then falls back to earth, to scatter its seeds once again into the darkness, where all things end and begin. Such is the journey of creation. For the ever-flowing Mystery seeks eternally to know and be known, to love and be loved, to dream and be dreamed.