



# ANGELITA

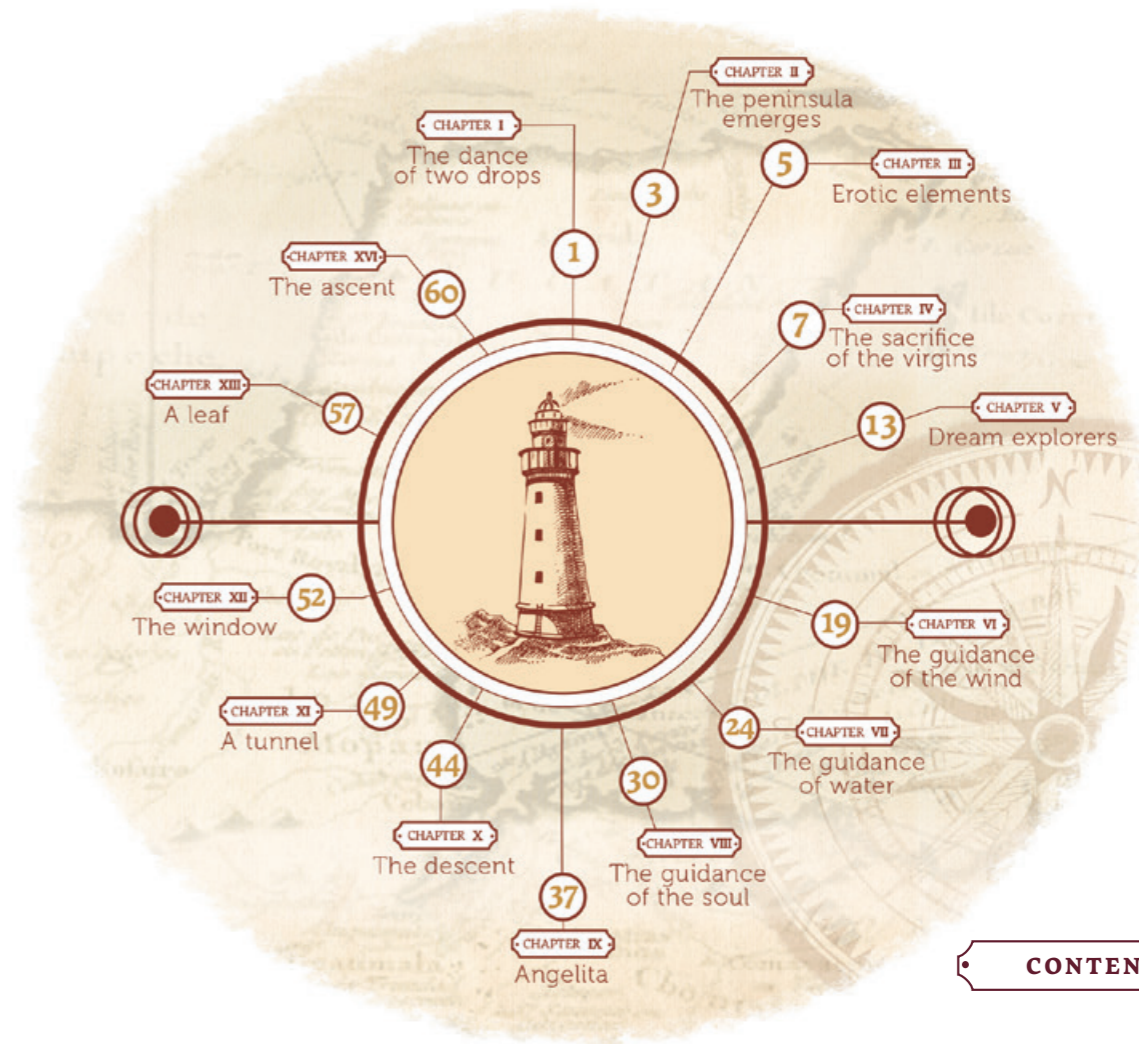
Oniric immersions into the Mayab



José David  
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For Itzi,  
beautiful rain  
who gives life to my fields.

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The whisper of  
the **Mayab**

— PART ONE —





Sea and sky; wind and skin; laughter and tears; water and sand. I am a solitary bird. My wings touch the crest of the waves and wind. Each ebb and flow resonates in my own story. It could not be different. I was born from the wind and raised for the sea. The old ones of the flock have taught me this: It is they who have marked the course of my journey. My wings are stained with magic and float peacefully. The crest of the waves is my nest, though its refuge is short, almost imperceptible; a paradox of continuity; a little eternity.

I approach. The temple of limestone is particularly ecstatic, rises between cliffs. From the air - always restless - The Temple of the Wo-

men with Triangular heads show signs of ecstasy. As if the universe had been formed slowly from them—gravitating rhythmically around them. Harmony. Silence.

Women with triangular heads, covered in their white shawls walk back and forth. From this height they look like ants. Tiny. Always busy. It is clear they must get somewhere though there is no apparent reason for them to do so. Suddenly, I realize how in an eternal becoming, (going back and forth) the women spill sand, white as talcum powder. They pour grains of sand into a hole in the center of the limestone temple.

The women with triangular heads don't know the reason why they do it. They only know - with the same of conviction with which the elders taught me to fly on the waves - that sand should fall there, as if it were a curtain; an infinite waterfall of fine particles.

Each grain of sand seems to be a drop of time; and they waterfall they form, provides a warm coat and shelter for the Master of Time. I discover then the sense of things. I understand how without being aware of it, the Women with Triangular Heads wind up the great machinery of Mayan Eternity. The Gods have willed it so. That this location - this Mayan Temple of Limestone - be the clock which gives life and balance to this flat peninsula.

They fly in circles. Over and over. Again and again. Like a mantra of sand and water I understand. The clock that these women

wind consists of the magic balance between the salty sand and sweet water contained at the bottom of the central hole.

Sand and water dance finding the interaction between time and space. This constant dance gives birth to two drops that touch each other softly. The eternal dance of two drops that touch - sweet and salty - creates a magical flowing bed through the heart of this flat peninsula as the wind and sea cross my heart each incomplete without the other...





I am rock. In me, time remains contained. I am stone of volcanoes and lava; meteors and stars; salt and sand. In my core, the universe converges in silence. I am a witness of the Great Bang. I remember that great ball of fire nearing the firmament. I observe its progress. The sky lights up with a white light that covers everything. The light is a mantle where nothing becomes everything and everything becomes nothing. Light blinds those who try to look at it. I fuse with this great explosion. Sand and salt are rejoined in me with many other sisters. This Fireball touches the heart of the oceans creating behind it the highest and most portentous wave that has ever been seen. The waves are monsters devouring entire continents. Water is fire: is smoke, is steam. All around me explodes, melts,

evaporates, and boils. A huge cloud of ash covers everything.

No more light, no stars, no more sunrises. Darkness seizes each space; corrodes it, mines it, cracks it without mercy. And so, as the movement yields and stops everything cools down quickly. The waves changes their composition, their texture. The water becomes dense, viscous. Ice strangles everything from top to bottom. The cracks are filled with pointy icy swords. I remain quietly buried once more. Silence stands as the new Great Dictator. Tyranny is exercised by the force of solid ice. Long live the Glacier King and its heirs! Long live the silence that covers everything!

But once again time wins the battle of the elements. A ray of light opens a gap in the huge cloud. It is a persistent halo, a bright battalion that gives a swift blow to the dark death of ashes. The planet warms up again: the frozen oceans creak. The wind bears news of the colossal trepidations of the earth while monumental floes collapse.

Earth has given birth again. The young Peninsula lives. It has emerged from the sea and joins the continent. Like me, vast amounts of rocks shape our nature. We are of a callous nature. Our pores filter water and history. The story of each glacial period: the old story of the tyranny of absolute silence. On the emerging peninsula there are no mountains. No reason for rivers to run through its bare plains. The Ice trapped within us slowly comes to life. The ice thawing is the big party causing – what was once a frozen jungle – to break the la-

yers of fragile peninsular soil. Thousands of rumblings tell us of entire trees falling to the bottom of the sweet water.

Promontories of the petrified jungle fall into the interior lakes. The layers of such a complex structure would be baptized as “cenotes” by the Women with triangular heads that one day will inhabit the emerging peninsula. Thousands of channels ebb and flow through serpentine net of limestone. . Like me, each rock filters sediments to decorate their mysterious caverns. Stalactite and stalagmite interweave in capricious, designs, seemingly impossible ones. Water flows in slowly. Its transparency is perfect. I am here, I’m just a small limestone rock. History is filtered trough me and also trough you by the magic of time. Our Creator and Father.





**F**I flow equally in both realms. I inspire the peacocks plumage embellishing his searching song. I touch the layers of each jaranda, taking the youth of each flower. I move among the frenzy of a thousand moving larvas. I am the force of indomitable instinct. I am madness, I am energy, I am creation, lust, I am a song of life. To resist me is impossible. My arts are endless; my purpose one: The Great Preservation.

I procreate by the subtle song of canaries and cardinals. Procreate on the mountain with blood-thirsty Jaguars. I procreate even among the annihilating erotic arachnids. I live in the belly of my disciples. As an intruder, I enjoy the hidden code of every living being; I take possession of the

genes that ultimately make me reign over each of the *Mayab* species.

I accompany the soft latency of the newborn; delineate smiling the tenderness of their immature organs; I give them vulvas and phalluses. I witness the innocence while they awaking to pleasure. Whispered in their little ones lobes the soft phrases of total love for lactating mothers. I enflame the need for sexual possession, the conquest of skin as the disputed territory by a threatening competitor.

I am patient and I smile pleased to warn the awakening of youth. Regardless about of the high pyramid stairs, all youth pays me

tribute. So delicious is the era of awakening, which is erected daily by a temple of sensuality. Like never before I'm taking possession of existence. I am an exquisite obsession. I'm the one that moistens the lips of my devout virgins and who inflame the impetuosity of my faithful subjects.

And finally my town is ready for its millennial bacchanalian experience. I am their Master and Host. They are my slaves and my guests. Their satisfaction is to Praise me. To contemplate me. They rejoice in me and I in them. I govern them as I please. It excites me to hear the jungle howling in ecstasy. I am moved when I hear the singular orgies of the primates. I feel flattered when I breathe in the fragrance of their pollen. While a humming bird slides along the sensual grail of a Tabachin Flower.

It amuses me to listen to the infinite march of beetles ready to fertilize their eggs.

Yes I know. No need to shut up. I am lascivious, perverse, mortuary. But what would be of you without me? Are you savoring that sip of the jungle eroticism. I am pleasure and life. I am in you and you in me. You know it and I know it too.







I am the hope of my people. I am the hope of my people. I am the hope of people. My legs are shaking nonstop. I barely manage to hold myself still while the assistant priest tugs at me. I cry, implore, but my fate has been cast. I was born for this moment, to be the object of ceremony. The sweat of the priest and his disciples slides —drop by drop— along my arms, along my braes, my abdomen, my thighs. They hold me down with rigor. I can't faint. They shout for me to be still. The sacrifice will not last long if I concentrate and repeat, once again, the mantra that the women with triangular heads have taught me: I am the hope of my people; I am the hope of my people; I am the hope of my people.

I start to feel the effects of inhaling burned Copal in an Ocote Trunk. The Prayers, the sound of ripples, the beating of drums and percussion, the intonation of chants, wind on the leaves, my own voice. Everything spins in the hurricane that announces the proximity of death. I am shoved up the steps of the temple. My gaze goes out of orbit; my eyes become agitated and move uncontrollably; they gaze at the traces of blood that other victims, like I, have left on the pyramid steps.

The center of the steps are blood red: colorful traces of bodies that have been ex-

tinguished in honor and anguish. I observe the irregular lines, the dots, the blotches, each forming a density of scarlet, signifying time, anticipating the march of the ascent towards the stone of sacrifices, where the major priest awaits in a trance; savoring the aroma of the last death tremors.

He waits looking at the sky, his arms on the heights, still clutching the bloody dagger. Beneath his feet, a carpet of entrails still pulsates. He is situated in the precise moment of the fusion between the past and the future; in the axis of the major calendar formulated by their fathers and by their father's fathers. Hundreds of generations account for their jade bearer. Hundreds of generations credit his mastery in slitting the throats of each virgin and dressing himself with their skins to pay tribute to the gods

who keep the world turning. There are hundreds of sacrifices that have been practiced since dawn until this moment but here has come the last of the rituals— the essence of the hope of its people.

The prolonged sterility consumes the grandeur of the city. Tulum agonizes. The lack of nutrients in the earth and trees and inhabitants symbolizes the punishment of the gods: the anger of those who inhabit this aqueous interior labyrinth in a town that has forgotten its divine origin. It's time to annihilate it, squash it, asphyxiate it with the slowness of poison injected by a thousand poisonous rattlesnakes. One hundred daily sacrifices will be insufficient to expiate the blasphemy of forgetting the gods. The great Kukulkán —plumed serpent— will be venerated within me.

There are only ten steps to go towards finding the platform of the great sacrifice. The blood of my feet hitting the rocky edge accompanies the river of blood that springs from my belly. A few hours ago, the first -the only one- of my menstruations began. It was the moment when my mother took me to the base of the pyramid: you are ready, she said, with apparent harshness. Then she leaned towards me and reminded me of the meaning of my sacrifice: to be the hope of my people, to bring once again, fertility to our land. I symbolize the seed, the sprout, the flower. I am not death, I am life with its eternal calling.

At last I have reached the zenit. I see the altar through which the high priest awaits me. He is robed for this important occasion. From

the base his penacho lined with quetzal feathers, falls another newly skinned virgin. His eyes are injected with madness. His spirit seems to overflow through the black cheekbones of his wild eyes. There are bits of virgin viscera stuck to his teeth. He gets drunk off of me by ending the last ritual of the day: myself.

I'm lucky. I am the one on the last day of one hundred days of sacrifices, my heart will not be detached, nor will my skin be torn from its muscles. It will be a pure, total, full, sacrifice. My soul and my body will descend to the cenote totally intact. I will only wear polished jade necklaces and bracelets. In the arms of the elder priest I

will fall from the zenit of the pyramid to the freshness of the holy water below. There is the threshold of the world to the gods where I must plea on behalf of my people.

There is no anguish. There is no crying. There is no wait. I am free. I fall down a cool, clean, silent tunnel. I travel to the very origin of my existence. I am one with water. I am hope. I am one with water. Always.







Teachers, guides  
and explorers

— SECOND PART —





To explore the unexplorable: -that is my vocation-. I sensed it since I was a small child, when crawling, I ventured beyond the limits allowed by my grandmother, in that hidden village embraced by the Austrian Alps. In some strange way, my body forming itself found the perfect combination to dismantle and fit the size of the closet, in the boards where only cats could find a way to escape.

When I turned thirteen, my grandmother gave me a special gift. It was Henry's biography the Great-Houdini. Nothing less than the master of escapism of all time. Through the stories of his life, I tried to visualize the key of his magic tricks. I was especially interested in those tricks

that focused on escaping traps submerged in water. With such inspiration, as a teenager I convinced one of my friends to chained me and threw me into a tub of cold water.

The sensation of being only seconds away from death generated in me, more crazy emotions than all the colorful psychedelia of my generation. Yes, mine was the passion to discover and touch the door of the beyond; mock death; caress his skirts and flee his swinging sickle. Every time I submerged myself in chains, I fell into a sort of escapist trance. I knew, as if it were an evolutionary instinct, every precise movement to lock any instrument or vessel that imprisoned me. However,

the passage of time caused that these first experiences were already insufficient. I also needed the most intense darkness, new traps, greater challenges. And so that from the European mountains, I came to the world of tropical caverns.

A backpack on my shoulders and a diary were my companions went through the course of one decade in Southeast Asia. My diary was painted with experiences of searching. A search that sometimes seemed external, and in others, as intimate as my own restless breathing when dreaming of exploring my own life. In my dreams, an intuition, a reflection of myself touched the walls of my soul, perceiving -with my sense of touch- the roughness or softness of my inner skin. It seemed that the intuition of my dreams was personified in a little blind girl, who, like the trees rings, went through the inner walls of

my story. With the palm of her little hand, I understood the textures of the stages of my life; the roughness of my abandonments; the softness of my joys; the toughness of my doubts.

And so, the experience of diving across the seas of Oceania for almost a decade woke up in me, the nostalgia to discover a new type of immersion that would bring me closer to the world of my recurring dreams: the exploration of the Mayab, in the deep heart of Mexico. The decade of the seventies was a few days from extinction, when the Yucatan Peninsula became the geography of all my fantasies. As if it were marching in a procession without limits, for almost three years I dedicated myself to visit hidden villages of the magical Mayan town. Thanks to the time and the friendship that I wove with some of its inhabitants, I was lucky to decipher

the entry way to some hearts that became ambassadors from one community to another in the Yucatan jungle.

And so, the villagers and local families led me to new maps of cenotes with their growing trust. The cenotes were not only ceremonial centers of their ancestors, they were the center of their homes. They represented the mysticism and tradition of their lineage. In this way, between heavy tanks and intricate hoses I managed to glimpse the first meters of a paradise composed of endless interior labyrinths; by authentic underwater cathedrals formed by millions of years of the sculptural work of Nature. With true genius and patience, they took forms for miles and miles of stalactites and stalagmites submerged in the mysteries of that peninsula. Despite the uniqueness of those first explorations of aesthetic contemplation, the most impactful in my years of searching had not yet arrived.

One morning close to the island of the fishermen of Tulum, I made an immersion in a system that had been meticulously mapping for the last six months. With the enthusiastic help of two other young divers from Japan, the magnificent cavern known by the settlers as the Gran Cenote, showed - without hurry - the arts of a thousand-year-old sculptor. The lighting equipment, insufficient and impractical, was the only humanly possible option to tear the bowels of an eternal darkness. Since its formation in the ice age, the intricate cave systems, except for a few cases, had remained untouched by sunlight.

That Sunday morning, for the first time, the light of a small expeditionary team would touch the fantasies of my distant alpine childhood. The Kobe brothers and I had fixed ropes along five levels of depth for more than three hundred meters.

Because of the clutter of the equipment and the narrowness of certain caves, it was increasingly difficult to move forward. We had taken risks before and we knew that looking for a new level represented a point of no return, if something was not as planned.

Suddenly, after an inverted turn, involuntary shoves, scratches to the stalactites and dents of the team, we managed to maintain our buoyancy to direct the light projectors to what appeared before us, like an island in the middle of a lagoon in perfect calm. We discovered ourselves flying over a unique space. It seemed as if that last jump had led us to a parallel universe, where the optic magic overcame immediate reality. The transparency was so perfect that the exorbitant imagination began to trick my capacity for reasoning.

I realized that, for some strange reason I was in the arms of the air, flying over a beautiful volcanic island that emerged in the middle of a lagoon, whose banks faded without a clear limit. But, if I was immersed in water, how could I be seeing an island at my feet? Could it be that I was dreaming? Would I have died diving? Would I really be living something so unprecedented or would it be the alpine nightmare of a child stunned by the avalanche of his parents death? I didn't know, I didn't know it. Deep down, I didn't want to know.

After years of exploring peninsular caverns and decades of self-control, my heart rate got out of control, while oxygen was consumed at a galloping pace. I tried to see what the situation was with the Kobe brothers. I approached, but, even though their

lighting equipment was tied to a rock, they were not by my side. Once again, my pulse galloped out of control. Stireded, I tried to find them using my own flashlight.

After three or four minutes of desperation between nebulous layers of translucent water, I observed the most striking image of my years in the Mayab: the inert bodies of the Kobe brothers lay at the bottom of the cavern. Both divers had stripped their masks, hoses and regulators. His eyes, wide open, showed the anguish of the error they would see a few moment before dying.

Like me they have been confused by the magical transparency of the fresh water, in which a mortuary illusion of salty water, occu-

piated a lower level in the cavern, forming a watery body that seemed to be a lagoon that embraced an island. But it was no more than a beautiful and prominent stalagmite. A beautiful, but fatal optical illusion that would forever mark my life and take that of many other cave divers. Just as Faetusa and Lampetia-the beautiful mermaids of the ancient Hellenes-sang, taking sailors to drown with no possibility of escape, the beauty of the illusions of the submarine Mayab charged-with sweetness and cruelty-the lives of a couple of deluded speleologists.

In this way, among the mysteries of the timeless world of the cenotes was that my life passed and ended in the peace I had so much sought. For more than three decades

and with countless miles of ropes and ties, the world of the caverns took me back to my first memories. Moreover, memories that went beyond my consciousness, but took me in the end to new memory beginning. The caverns were transformed - in my inner world - into a pure and tender dialogue that approached the blurred memory of my own mother. Feeling free in her warm and protective belly comforted the loneliness that always persecuted me. My life in the Peninsula was truly a return to my mother, transformed into the most beautiful underwater sculpture I could have ever imagined.

As I guests from my recurrent dreamos of youth, those years of bubbling silence, while I fixed the ropes that would guide di-

vers from all over the world, through dozens of intricate caves, there was a constant company. A comforting presence that, while I explored the beauty of each formation, carressed my inner skin with the tenderness and care of a daughter. With her little hands, she founds every crack of my emotions, circumnavigating my story, my sorrows and my nostalgia. But also, in spite of its blindness, I found the softness of my illusions and my many joys for the world of the mountains, the oceans and the caverns of my own existence.







Each element of nature is a true guide - old Matias used to say - a French flight instructor settled south of the mountains of Mexico. At the time, out of innocence or arrogance -who knows- the apprentice did not fully understand the dimension of such a simple affirmation. Time - the authentic Grand Master - followed Matías, often dressed in different outfits and thus, offers lessons to the small animated creatures that live in him. And there, behind the scenes, Time, observing himself in the mirror of the dressing room of eternity, chose to interpret a work through the representation of three characters, whose common denominator is to be guides of life: the Wind, the Water and the unconscious.

The first two are deep containers; they are restless layers of biosphere; they are tangible reality; They caress gently the face of a child and have, in turn, the ferocity of the destruction of an entire continent. Dreams, on the other hand, they float close to the edge of consciousness, splashing - as waves do when breaking on cliffs - the foam of imagination, the day-to-day life of the intimate spectator.

The Grand Master and the representation of three guiding characters. Each of them as beautiful and unfathomable as the nature of a great actor. That is why the

Grand Master has initiated students in his performing arts, who, through joys, tears and learning challenges, trough levels of understanding. To become instructors for a new cycle of knowledge, thereby offering, a hand to a new generation.

The life of the apprentice was impregnated by the luck of meeting three guides. The first was the guide of an inflamed candle by the hues of the wind. The second guided me to float on dream gardens. The third gave him the guidance to was to maneuver between the variegated forms of the unconscious. And so that's how the apprentice was given the task of weaving his three stories that - like ropes tied to the sky - would help him to climb to a unique, incomprehensible world.

Matías knew from childhood that his destiny was somewhere between the snow-capped mountains and the clouds that swung on them. From time to time he ran to chase swallows taking flight; he stretched out his arms and, closing his eyes, imagined the sensation of taking off. He was daydreaming, and, with his feet floating, he could not stop drawing a huge smile on his nine-year-old face. And finally, one summer morning, reality seemed to overflow in his eyes! Above the clouds appeared three candles as colorful as the rainbow formed at the end of a great storm. They moved with lightness; as if the wind invited them to be part of the landscape; as if the air enjoyed with tenderness, the primitivness of his instincts to dominate the flight of the birds; a gift exclusive to such precious creatures.

In time, Matías would become a prominent, delta and glider pilot. While the mornings occupied them to float on clouds and alpine rainbows, in the afternoon he was dedicated to a second passion: a radio station in the Mont Blanc Massif. In spite of the moving beauty of the flight over the snowy mountains and the afternoons of philosophizing in the air, the young Matías could not stop exploring new spaces; fill his eyes with fresh images, aspire the fragrance of enigmatic fields; to satisfy the craving for the unknown beyond the mountain ranges of his childhood. This was how, towards the end of the sixties, Matías would embark on a French pavillon boat that would stop at a port on the Mexican Atlantic coast.

The colorful freshly cut tuberose in the indigenous markets of the southeast of the country; the fragrance of wet earth; the views of two volcanoes in love for the eternity of spring; the torrential deafening of the downpours and thunders

-they were all- the paths of seduction that embraced Matías in what without knowing, he looked for: the landscape witnessing the ancestral construction of the Nahuatl world. Xochicalco, Malinalco, Tepoztlan formed - under Teotihuacan mythology - an axis of energy that was a cradle for the gods. Perhaps for this reason, the low clouds of dawn were transformed into cushions, for the slow awakening of the volcanoes and with them, of life in the valley.

During his years as an ultralight flight instructor, Matías was assimilating the silent lessons of the Great Master. He witnessed the joy of each pilot in their first solitary takeoff; but he also witnessed the faces that death would sketch and those that would cross the bonderies of the physical laws . Flying - as the turf\* had testified so many times - meant the thinnest line between this

world and a next one. The playfulness of the wind in both angles of the sails could mark the rhythm of solemn drums; or, to frame an aesthetic approximation, to through the wind and thus, land with the softness of a Swift in its own nest.

In addition to being a flight instructor, Matías was the friend whose dialogues the apprentice needed in those times. The commend to correct the angle of the sail, served equally to find the path towards lightness, which was so necessary to the apprentice. Matías was also the voice that would help him to explore the reasons beyond reason of the Great Master so as not to take his life on that fateful afternoon of January; in which, two souls lightly touched, generating with it a unique and transforming energy. The one that would compact one's time, expanding the other's time. The merry flight

of the swallows on that sunny afternoon at the airfield was drowned out by the driver's sharp blow, which was trying to recover the wing in the full downward sloap of death.

For a moment, time seemed to stop. A few seconds ago, that experience pilot realized his aerodynamic mistake. But everything was already lost: pushing the bar to infinity would not change his luck. In those two seconds of falling he observed his whole life: the fantasies of his childhood, the closeness he felt towards his mother, the cruelty of his confinement, his lessons in flight. But maybe, just maybe, an imperceptible drop of life was dedicated to remembering the apprentice. His mind, already disturbed by the desperate fall, he defended himself from destiny who like an executioner manifested that showed his final hour should not have come. The pilot knew it well: it was the apprentice's turn-not

his-to be wrapped in that fluorescent candle. And it was that moment of memory, that imperceptible eternity, that ignited such a powerful spark that it would unite them forever. The energy of such a colossal blow when crashing on the rocks cracked the continuity of time and fused the soul of two almost unknown men.

The Great Master tells -no doubt- with a chest of mysteries to polish the script of the theatrical work he has written for each living being. The paradox between the ephemeral and the eternal of the encounter between that pair of men was no exception. With this, the Great Master imposed on the apprentice a vital lesson and a painful wound that will never heal. Sometimes, it was a piercing wound, other times a connection of wind and brotherhood.

And as a witness to that singular moment, the good Matthias tried to explain - in words, in flight and a silence of propellers - that for some reason the Great Master had decided to keep him zigzagging in the script of his life. The wind was still whistling at both ends of his wing, making peace in the holy field that meant that beautiful track of takeoffs and souls landing.



• CHAPTER VII •



The water guide

The Grand Master knew it from the beginning: Rod could not stop swimming. His fixation for never giving up, even led him to partially lose his sensibility. It seemed as if each stroke had a synchronization beyond his body. As if for some strange reason his thirsty sinews -were delivered to the water in a desperate embrace. As if in doing so, he acknowledged with nostalgia his own element.

At the rhythm of the movement, he was accompanied by the cadence of his most secret emotions; of his insecurities and longing for family. Unlike the conventio-

nalism of his older brother, Rod was called to break the standards predefined by the provincial society of the Mexican Bajío and seek with it, their own routes of exploration. \* The oceanic swimming, the mountain biking and the long distances running formed the horizon in the discipline of the daily life of this triathlete, always restless and dreamy.

His forays into the world of aeronautics and his passion for marine biology - a career he would soon choose - closed the circle that would be the thread of his life and at the same time, the role that the Great



Master wanted him to interpret .And so, floating in the water and floating in the air offered the balance that his spirit so much needed as a child. As he grew older, the challenges increased and the discovery of diving - and his inner experiences - took him to the weightless thresholds that his soul longed for.

That full moon night on the mountain, it turned the smaller lake into a beautiful mirror of water. The frost seemed to play on its surface, giving it an even more crystalline, magical touch. The challenge of immersion resided in diving as low as possible for the longest time, without falling into a state of paralyzing hypothermia, which would lead to immediate drowning. The dive of that trio of divers friends was planned just before dawn. The moment in which the dawn used to kiss -with maternal delicacy- the texture of the

frozen mirror. The aesthetic of the moment was authentically exquisite: a silver-blue filter tainted the whole place, while the soft wind sang on the leaves of the cypresses along the shore.

Meanwhile, not without the startles implicit in the adventure, the young fellows hurry in assembling their equipment. The descend will take them to a temperature close to the freezing point. In such a hostile environment and without the much needed artic tools, the divers would not stay alive for more than ten minutes. The one getting closer to such a lethal threshold would be the winner and would have the benefit of being financially carried during the next extreme undersea adventure in another location of the country.

Without major protocols, the daring boys gave - to the count of three - a great jump to the water and with their torches already lit, and with the body fighting to conserve its thermal balance, they began the descent to ten meters of depth. The visibility was almost zero. Beyond some muddy formations, they could not see much more. They were the lanterns that each diver had tied to the arm, which contributed to a dreamlike sensation: the halos of light seemed to gently dance a melody with the ascending bubbles, seeking to touch the moonbeams that accompanied the expedition members.

After an oppressive sensation, the body-the limbs mainly-seemed to be suspended over endless razor-sharp knives. Five minu-

tes later, this perception would disappear to become another more compromising: that of the detachment of one's bodily condition; the feeling of emptiness, of lightness; the leisurely distancing of oneself; the fusion of a residual existence with the surrounding context towards a single and indivisible entity. Perhaps, an invisible footprint of the Great Master, directing the work that so much amused him.

Just at that moment seconds before losing consciousness because of the cold-Rod realized that it was his turn to emerge between expansive bubbles of nitrogen and oxygen in a zigzagging race to the surface. Being spit by the lake, Rod saw his companions perched on the edge. One of them

was unconscious and convulsed in more or less periodic spasms. In the midst of the commotion, Rod managed to free him from his tank and throw a blanket on his back, in order to help him recover heat. And so, with the fortune of remaining alive despite their excesses, the three young people could witness in silence, the beautiful sunrise, while the clouds were lethargic a few centimeters from the surface.

That episode marked the beginning of a series of challenges and increasingly demanding projects, which led him, from campaigns of stratigraphic uprisings of sunken peoples, to the maximum achievement of his dreams: the exploration of the cavernous systems of the mythical Mayab. On his first trip, towards the end of the 90s, Rod found a pair of universal explorers - Mike and Chuck - that would open his eyes to the potential of an entire underwater limestone mountain ran-

ge, formed by an endless number of natural passage ways stalactites and stalagmites, deliciously decorated by The Great Sculptor, over millions of years of sediment accumulation.

The encounter with the peninsula would be an act of authentic love at first sight, which with the passage of time would transmit to all their children, through a wealth of incredible anecdotes. Since he found the first cenote, Rod would be captivated by the amazing geological caprices of the Mayan world. As a guide of the water, he would be an interlocutor between the silent world of the submerged caverns and the sound of the ebb and flow of life, there on the surface. As a cave instructor diver, I would learn the art of communicating the peace necessary to explore the texture of central ships and side tunnels of each complex. Transmitting the

necessary balance between technique and meditation, correcting the flotation and knowing how to accompany the new diver in his own exploration was an innate quality of the water guide.

And so it was that the thread of causality led the apprentice to the peninsula of his own inner history. The Mayab world opened its doors to reveal secrets to each new student amazed by the beauty of the sculptures and the illusion of their optical perspectives. As a guide, Rod became the messenger that would lead them through the paths of the divinities of the submerged underworld.

Along with the creative joy of his craft, Rod was also the counselor of those who penetrated the depths in search of corpses of divers, who by their own negligence or

extreme confidence in their false guides, were swallowed by the darkness, prey of a unspeakable despair.

Like a Dantesque boatman, The Great Master led Rod to discover the most raw and deeply human facet of his craft. Just as the wind guide led his pilots through the turbulence of death, Rod - in a certain way - accompanied the divers lost among the labyrinths of the Mayab caves. At times, he wondered if the Great Master would have selected him, not only as a tunnel instructor, but also as a counselor to water gravediggers, who as a team assisted the souls to move from one layer to another of existence.

Among the networks of labyrinths, of optical illusions, of sound distortions, of narcosis symptoms, attacks of anxiety due

to claustrophobia and unspeakable lacerations of one's face, Rod had the intuitive gift, the theoretical knowledge and the physical skill necessary to infer the mistakes of the parth and-once again-guide who descended to the stage of the most harrowing of anguish: death by drowning.

Thus, in the face of the terrible anxiety of relatives to know what happened to their loved ones, Rod explored the log books of divers and the intricate flours of the psyche of each diver reported as missing before the local forensic authorities. And just as in his first dives in the darkness of the high mountain lakes, he drew for the gravediggers, the rock formations that would surely have served as a sarcophagus to each deceased explorer.

He found a way to lead his companions to travel meter by meter, the agonizing route of

desperate lost divers and once found, to embrace their inert and cold bodies to be led - one by one - between natural passages that would take them to the windows of light from the surface of the cenotes. Despite his Dantesque job, Rod retained the integrity and the good spirit to continue with good spirit, the role that the Great Master gave him, as a guide of the water; a guide for dreamers who tried to build their own line and ties to the depth of their own stories. And it would be in that line stretching that one more guide would have to give to another to assist our apprentice of air and water.



• CHAPTER VIII •



The guidance of the soul

After the usual parsimony regarding the authorization of the access to the building, the old guard indicated as always the route to the elevator. A brown cube from the 70s, whose protocol promotions offered the patient the final minutes to finish walking the long corridors of the labyrinthine intimacy and find in it, some skein already ripe to unravel four hands.

The cadence in the modulations of the voice that came from the other side of the door, signladed the close of the previous

session; the conclusions and pending subjects, the nutritive epilogue that gave rise to a new therapeutic cycle. In the furtive crossing of glances and courteous greetings between graduating and incoming students there was a collegial complicity: the frustrating difficulty in following the rules of the analytic method; the complexity in gravitating around a discovery barely discovered; disgust at having to taste the sour taste of a reopened wound; and even, the hard task of mowing the fields to make, through them, a new interior

path; an shortcut to the emotional lacerations of early childhood.

With the dead bolts and the door wide open, Nubia's frank smile framed the long embrace, with which she received her patients. The pampered wiggle of his cat and the pendular movement of the window's mobile represented the sound announcement that a new therapy was about to begin. The combination of aromas of sandalwood and Indian oils with the smoke of American tobacco ignited the network of olfactory neurotransmitters that reminded the patient that the context was ready. A glass of water, a freshly rolled cigarette and a jump to the single chair were the missing ritual to start climbing

the tree of memories. The soul guide was then ready for the ball of yarn game. He was the enthusiastic and keen character that the Great Master entrusted him to interpret very afternoon.

As his oil paintings and engravings, his sculptures and objects of decoration tells, Nubia who smiles empathetically at a few meters from his patient is the cultural and historical synthesis of the intellectual lineage of her time. The coverings of her philosophical texts evoke, with nostalgia, a vital and convulsive facet of searching - sometimes autoimmune - of courageous and contestative youth; of social and family subversivness.

And so, while watching the clumsy ascent up the tree of memories, Nubia begins to take hold of the safety rope brought before her to offer the patient to jump from one branch to another, without fear of falling. Nubia is the anchor that shortens and lengthens the rope; it is the counterweight to crying, to euphoria, to depression; it is the goldfinch that, from its nest in the foliage of the tree, whispers stories almost forgotten; mourning memories; bridges and tunnels of the soul that communicate happiness with anxiety; joy with lamentation; the light with the dark.

But the soul's guidance is also a climber of its own tree, and when observing how

her patients languish and collapse again and again in the attempt, she herself begins the ascent without lines of protection by her own tree of memories. It is her tree, an old and still beautiful willow whose branches drip at the top. Her willow weeps for the pole that is nailed right in the heart of the trunk that gives life to her, because it is his own life that, like water in her hands, runs off. Nubia's willow weeps for her sister's farewell; for the slow goodbye of her mother; for the fading of its memories; by the colors that are extinguished with the constant drizzle of a mind that loses itself.

And there is our Nubia. Guiding the souls in their musings; suggesting steps,



breaks and jumps between branch and branch; while each movement of the patient resonates in herself; in her fears, in her disappointments. Each slip from the top, lifts her from the ground until she is anchored again by her bind, to balance her patient one more.

And there is our Nubia, acting - without questioning - the character proposed decades ago by the Great Master. Right on that couch that seemed to stop time. Right on the couch that, sometimes laughing, and other time compassionate, led her to understand herself and her mission in the old trade of unraveling nuts.

A decade of arid analysis was barely enough to see the tear roll that would activate - forever - the

meaning of her vital contribution to others. Her assignment -as her understood it since then- was focused on opening-sometimes demolishing-floodgates, with the purpose that the strong currents of contained emotions could flow through the newly planted terraces of the souls of her patients.

And so our Nubia and her fearful apprentice, trying to unravel the double nut that this one has taken with her: apprentice of the air and apprentice of the water. You can only find your balance in the tree and continue climbing, if you finally understand, the symbols that the Great Master - behind the scenes - has placed on his stage.

And maybe the true symbol is beyond the air and beyond the water. Perhaps the symbol that the Great Master has given to her is much closer than she is capable of imagining. Maybe the nut will finish unraveling without an answer; because there may not be an answer for her mind. Maybe, just maybe, the answer is somewhere else.







A dream,  
an immersion

PART THREE





Sea and sky; wind and skin; laughter and crying; fresh water, sand salt. Mine is an undulating and weightless universe. In it, my playmates hide and appear with beautiful gifts. A drop of rain runs down my neck. Like crossing a furrow, it runs zigzagging, diluting itself slowly the pores of my skin. The wet wind announces another chapter of the storm. It is a gift wrapped with aromas. I perceive the taste subtly sweet of the zapote and the delicate register of the smell of cocoa seeds. My hands full, I am privileged to have handfuls of twigs and leaves, to create with

them, an enchanted refuge to hide from the hardships and hurries of midwives in the farmland of Los Monos.

I wish my twigs and leaves could build a canoe strong enough to transport me. I would like to find a palm leaf, big and generous to make a sail with it. I would like it to swell with wind to navigate to the other side of my solitude. With its friendly blowing, I would like to finally reach the family I dream of every night. That one, that surely

has looked for me since I was born and that, undoubtedly, follows my trail tirelessly. The midwives with whom I must live do not leave a day without reminding me: I am a poor blind girl. And if the group of harvesters had not found me in the jungle, wrapped in banana leaves that stormy afternoon, a few hours after being born, I would surely have ended up swallowed by a bunch of vultures, larvae and poisonous insects.

I do not understand what the midwives tell me, while they peel the corncrops. They, as always, recriminate me because I am a helpless fool, and grumble as they knead and toss fat tortillas to the burning comal. It smells like firewood. I feel the smoke rising to the sky, making a stop in my nose. Among the aroma of atole, beans and tortillas, I repeat that I am not a fool. I only know that I belong somewhere else; to a

family that I should find. I only know that I must hold on to the idea that my parents must be somewhere; and while they cook their own snack this very afternoon, they surely miss me; They know I'm at some other table far away, missing them as they miss me. One more day passes and the chileros, tired and hungry, return to the camp.

When listening to the raspy and kind voice of tata Pablo approaching, I run to embrace him. I stumble again and again. I always do it. I'm clumsy, but I do not care when it comes to receiving Pablo. Suddenly, as I try to get up from the mud, I feel how, strong and kind arms pick me up from the floor with a kiss. As in a game of tickling, I feel the stubble that stings me between loving hugs. Tata Pablo reminds me every afternoon, how nice and beautiful I have been.

Today he explained something new: tomorrow we will share the same number, only that he will beat me by a little cero to be drawn on the right side of my seven. Tomorrow he will be seventy years old. he is, (they all say in the camp) an old dreamer, who will soon meets the gods of our people. Midwives always whisper about his health. About coufing fits during the early hours when he seems to chock. About how difficult it will be to continue caring for me when he dies. About the decision they will have to make, if I hinders them. I only know that I must continue working on my canoe.

I know -as Pablo reminds me- that life is full of magical moments and it is thanks to them that we exist. I will not worry. Although I am only seven years old, I am strong; I survived envuelita in banana leaves at birth. And though I don't understand yet what it means to be blind, I know that my moment of magic - as Pablo

tenderly reminds me - will come. I know: it will be in the form of a wind, swelling the palm sail, tied to a mast that will rise in the stern of my canoe.

The chicleros camp is about to be raised to move - in a nomadic cycle that follows the Mayab growing seasons. The wind at the end of the storm blows strongly. I'm scared of the trunks colliding with each other; the coconuts falling off and falling in a dry blow on the fallen leaves. Everyone is sleeping. I hear Pablo's abrupt coughing. I crawl in silence to approach him and take his hand. He hugs me and leans me against his chest. I hear the beating of a weary heart. His heart has been my only true home, since I can remember.

Tata Pablo squeezes me, wrapping me in a cocoon of love that protects me from

everything and everyone. I think he does not know I'm still awake listening to his heart. Tata Pablo cries in silence. I can feel his tears, because they roll down my neck while he hugs me. I know your crying is for me. For his frustrating worry about dying without having found someone who protects me and raises me.

Tata Pablo cradles me and whispers again and again my name, with all the love that a grandfather is capable of: --- Angelita, my beloved Angelita. Since I found you wrapped in some banana leaves, I knew you would be a little angel that would guide the souls of apprentices on their way. My soul also guides my little daughter. Guide me and always remember, whenever a magical moment awaits you. You will know the precise moment in which it will arrive, because you will smile like you have never done before.

Remember that this old man will always be with you. Remember that your sight is not the same as the others. Your ability to observe beyond the apparent is a wonderful gift, because you do it inside the skin of the soul. You are, my little one, a healer of souls and I am sure that you will continue to be in this life and also in the forms of life that our deities want to give you. Trust my little angel, in the words of your grandfather ---. Tata Pablo died that morning.

Pablo's soft heartbeat are still alive in my ear. Its aroma is still in my clothes and in my hair. I do not want the amazingly alive memory of him to vanish. I need to do something to keep his heartbeat and his scent in me forever. I grit my teeth to stop myself from crying. A tear rolls slowly down my cheek. I have no time left. I must hurry. I know the bark of each tree that, together,



flank the entrance to the cenote. I know it is a place forbidden by midwives, but I remember the tales of Pablo Tata about the magic that according to the ancestors, takes place in the depths of those mirrors of water. On my walk to the edge, I drag a large palm leaf. It's huge, I almost can not handle it. I'm sure it will work. I smile when I feel calm that it will swell with the wind to take me to the other side, in that moment of magic that the grandfather always spoke to me of; in my own unique moment of magic.

I can feel the closeness of the water. That smell by which fruits, leaves and earth form a whole with the limestone that emerges from the banks of the cenote. I carry the palm leaf there and with the other hand I carry some wands/sticks\* that I found near the shore. In the distance you one hears the singing of a quetzal. Tata Pablo always told me that quetzals are mythical birds of the Mayan sky and that when they sing it is because a miracle is about to happen.

I smile. I hug my big palm leaf. I hold my sapote twigs tightly and feel the wind blowing that gives me the impuls to jump into the water. My jump is so long that I seem to be falling gently from the sky. During the fall I remember the rough texture of Grandfather's hands; I look over his big ears, his round eyes and his grown beards. I remember his thick and benevolent voice telling me every night that my parents love me more than anyone else in the world and that they will surely search for me tirelessly until they find me. The wind blows and in my jump to the cenote, the palm leaf seems to swell.

I'm not afraid. I'm not cold. I hug my wands\* and my palm. I descend from the same contact with water. Down the road, my eyes receive an incredible gift. They are lines that widen and form objects around me. It seems that it is about what warms my

body in the morning; what Grandpa called light. I see - I really see - bubbles that rise while I hug my canoe. I say goodbye to the mirror that is seen there on the surface. For the first time, I manage to observe my own reflection and that of my grandfather who takes me during my descent. I smile, I smile just like he said. I smile because I know that my magic moment has finally arrived. I'm about to find my family; I am forever embracing those I dreamed of, since one afternoon I was found on a banana leaf by a community of Mayab chicleros.( people working with chewing gum trees)

I'm lucky. My moment of magic has turned out to be a grain of time suspended in a mirror of water. My games take place in an enchanted garden, which is submerged in the most beautiful place in the universe. I can climb Mount Thalos and swing on the branches of the old petrified mahogany

tree. I usually walk on its bridge-like trunk and walk through the passageways that form large windows towards the wonderful view of my garden. Floating, I cross the green curtain of sulfurous hydrogen and I enjoy the haloes of light that the sun gives me at a certain time, every morning. My fish scales have changed over time. I see them reflected in the mirror of the water, on the way to the surface, as I approach to eat small roots and leaves near the shore.

This morning, on the surface that bears my name, I approached a diver's apprentice. He was alone and thoughtful, sitting on the wooden platform, waiting for the moment to jump into the water. His breathing was agitated as he watched me drown near. My swimming strocks was soft to not scare him. From his look, he seemed to have come up stumbled on a great answer. He saw me in such a way that I felt we knew each other for

a lifetime. I'm glad I found him. I am sure there is a truth to explore in the skin of your soul. Maybe he's an apprentice who needs my guide. I will accompany him to take refuge and it seems he will find his own moment of magic, just as I have always found it.



CHAPTER X



The descent

There is a fine line between the top and the bottom. It is just a chain of hydrogen and oxygen molecules going hand in hand. It is a strong bond but not a stifling one. The refraction of light, just above the surface line, turns everything into a kind of kaleidoscope, in which the outer world multiplies in psychedelic forms to be later diluted in a new dimension.

When I jump, my memories float a few centimeters from the water. I can not stop

thinking about that fish that, without fear, approached me, while waiting for Rod on the diving platform. I was surprised by his frank determination to swim straight towards me, only stopping to observe me, while the silvery scales of his dorsal fin shone exposed to the beautiful halos of light of the morning that begins.

I'm excited to dive for the first time at the Angelita Cenote! When cave divers talk about it, their eyes often shine in a crystal clear way. But none of them has managed to find for me, the right words to describe their

emotions, to explore each vertex of an experience so intimate, so revealing of their inner self, while they descend.

Looking at that fish, I realize that I am no more than an apprentice of air and water; a beginner explorer of the mysteries of my soul. What I had anxiously awaited for made it hard for me to sleep last night. Tossing in the bed of my hotel, I try obsessively to imagine the sensation of crossing the dense cloud of sulphurous hydrogen at a depth of thirty meters. Cross it as in a dream and continue descending through side caves, to almost fifty meters of dark depth, already in the fullness of nitrogenic narcosis. Beyond the technical characteristics of the adjacent caves that lead to the central cavern, where Mount Thalos and the Great Petrified Tree are located, during the early morning my auditory and visual fantasies

accelerated my imagination and with it, my cardiac rhythm.

In the fall, mask and regulator are firmly attached to my hands. My mind accelerated, it seems like a film camera that advances and retreats a myriad of images of my life, of my feelings and apprehensions. Time is suspended. I see myself as a child playing with a paper boat; I watch myself as an adult, clinging to the drawer of mom's fragrances a few hours after her death; I get lost in dad's deeply sad look, in his confused mind; tormented by twenty years of illness.

And along with those heart-rending emotions, the memory of the green eyes of my beautiful life partner draws a fresh smile in my heart. The magic of her embraces of sen-

sual eternity and love blesses my immersion with enormous joy. Like the other divers, I do not know how to explain the mixed feelings that, diving inside Angelita, mean to me. I only know that my heart opens widely, while I feel - at the same time - the cold water enveloping me in the most important plunge of my life.

I must concentrate. Do a check how well I float (floating check up, floatation check up) under Rod's instructions. I have to verify that the hoses are in place and my hand torch is already on. I feel my pulse quickens. I must relax to not consume more oxygen than necessary for a dive like this. I feel beginner's embarrassment – I fear I would had to abort an experience like that, for having consumed my oxygen tank too soon.

For a few seconds I close my eyes and let myself be caressed by the sweet softness of the sun's rays. It is almost nine o'clock in the morning, and life around the cenote has already started some hours ago. Closing my eyes, I tune my ear and listen to a flock of birds taking flight beyond the thick jungle. But the song of a bird is different. It seems I hear the characteristic tonality and cadence of a quetzal. I open my eyes, and without more, my gaze meets that curious little fish. This time she is about three meters away from me. It seems that she invites me to follow her; as if the surface of the cenote were a playground, for cave diving apprentices, like me. I must stop doing imaginative acrobatics! It's time to concentrate on what Rod calls "going down".



At the count of three I deflate my vest and start the trip. My body perceives the difference of the environment. All my neuromotor alerts are fired at the highest level. My body is looking for ways to maintain thermal equilibrium, while the pressure increases meter by meter. My ears reach their limit. I must equalize every three or four meters to prevent them from bursting. I fall faster than I had planed. As if suddenly, the density of the water decreased and became a new element; an intermediate point between air and water. Three, four and even five times I inject oxygen into my vest to slow down the descent.

Now I can appreciate the low walls of the great central dome. The cavern is like a ordinary well of enormous dimensions. While I go under water, I remember some of the hypotheses about the formation of the cenotes. Among them, the one based on the impact of relatively small rocks, that were detached from Chicxulub, the colossal meteorite more than fifteen kilometers in diame-

ter that hit the Earth right in the heart of the Mayab in such a way, that it caused a great dark missed of plaster and sulfur in the atmosphere. The meteorite caused the extinction of three quarters of the planet's species, more than sixty-six million years ago.

In my descent, I imagine the fire projectiles piercing the porous limestone of the youngest geological layer of the entire American continent. Those rocks of deep space would have forever exposed the incredibly flat Yucatan Peninsula, leaving in its wake, huge round vessels to accumulate water in its different forms, including monstrous masses of ice accumulated over five ice ages.

Between facts and emotions, I enter a dense, green cloud; so dense that it could house a beautiful garden inside. For three or four seconds there is nothing outside that layer of hydrogen. In my monochromatic

fantasy there is no left or right; There is no up or down. Only a persistent emerald tone that fills everything. There is no body. There are no external objects. There is no other. Everything is gone. Only the rhythmic cadence of deep inhalations and exhalations can be heard. Suddenly, all the green vegetation dies to become the most absolute lack of light. Infinite darkness. I have reached the bottom.





The sliding emerald light comes to an end. Without mediating a transition of tonalities, the complete darkness engulfs me towards the Tartarus of my own existence. It seems that jaws of Cumpe caught me. As if the descent in Cronos had awakened the lethargic passivity of the mythological monster, who, enraged by the abrupt awakening, because of an insignificant intruder, took him from the millennial rest to the voracious appetite and dizzy impulse to swallow everything. Each bubble becomes weightless, each halo of light, each particle of space time.

The darkness is so absolute that it seems that the sense of sight has never been present in me. As if with the sudden blow, the fangs of

the bestial jailer of the gods sucked my eyeballs with cruel mastery. As if my captor had appropriated the time and every second had become a million years.

I belong to the world of the blind, moreover, to the universe of dark matter. As I fall into Cumpe's jaws, the integrity of my body dissolves in the ether of blackness. I can not perceive where my limbs begin and end. I ignore where the bubbles that my agitation produce are flowing, in the face of the new chemical element I have become.

I stop for a moment. I try to concentrate on the rest of my senses, or, of what remains of them. My fingers nervously search for

the intricate complex of hoses that, connected to an oxygen tank, keep me alive. They are there. They are aseptic and silent as I touch them, but inside they are used to spill a growing flow of molecules of anguish. The fear that the only thing that keeps me alive, would suddenly stop flowing.

The subtle dance of hoses in the water, added to the symphony of small bubbles interspersed in counterpoint, creates an orchestral environment so that my mind wanders, projecting my own gestation.

I am something more than a blind embryo, who barely perceives the texture of a viscous and moving entity where it gravitates. I sense the presence of something else. Of an environment that contains me and of which, at the same time, I am an integral part.

I grow every second. My body is nothing

more than an effervescent sac in which, millions of cells arise projected, one against the other, causing jumps that shake me from one lip to another of such a malleable container.

Suddenly, from the very heart of the darkness in which I find myself, I perceive an alien object that catches my attention. He has touched what I once would have emembered as my shoulder. Confused by the not knowing wether or not my body has been dissolved or not in the material ether, I trust in the signs that this new being has infused me. Without knowing how, I keep moving what were once my feet, in a rhythmic fluttering sequence.

The movement moves me away from the jaws of the Tartarus keeper, and seems to open the threshold of the interior of my soul. The floodgates creak as they open. The changing temperature of the water

inside leads me to evoke a flood of emotions. A slight cold current calls to the most intimate nostalgia of the deceased mother; to the longing for the sun hiding beyond the maritim horizon; to the stinging loneliness of knowing that he was abandoned on the path.

The primitive propeller that my fins have transformed into, follows intuitively the constant impulses of my shoulder. It is a reminder that my water guide has not let me succumb to the dark. Even if I can not see my hands, I am ascending. I perceive the changes of pressure of one atmosphere to, and mechanically, I equalize myself to be free from the pain in my ears.

The joy of knowing myself more and more, leads me to perceive a slightly warm current and with it, the little fish that explores the cavities of my soul, discovers a luminous stream of emotions long caressed. And so, as I ascend a few

more meters in the cavern, I lose myself in the contemplation of my two parent stars in the sky; I float in the memory of the sensual greenery of a loving gaze of my dream partner.

And among those memories, a soft whiteness tears the hankerchef of my darkness. My eyes cling to that luminous sequence. Now the light floods me. I'm sure something magical awaits me a few meters above. I continue the ascent and with it, my little fish, my dream girl, accompanies me from the surface.



• CHAPTER XII •



Window

Like the tinted brush of a shadow artist, the penumbra smoothly delineates the layers of the ascending tunnel rocks. I discover the rough texture that contains me. At every meter, the tunnel narrows and although I know that on the other side, the light that bathes the cave awaits me, it is increasingly difficult to maneuver. I dont know what is happening to me. I can not move. I am stranded in the upper part of the cave circuit that connects with the great cavern and in it, with Mount Thalos, which

houses the enchanted garden The one that other divers have told me so much about.

As much as I try to go down a few meters and follow a serie of the zigzag, I can not move. My breathing is agitated once more, but I am so cornered in the upper structure of the cavern, that the bubbles of my regulator remain almost motionless on the roof of the tunnel. I do not see the light of Rod's flashlight. I remove a piece of stone and hit it against my tank, to get his attention. I feel

how my vest is inflated to the maximum and I can not evacuate the air to descend a couple of meters and continue on my way. I hear the hoses of my equipment creak, the dry patter of my tank against the rocks of that solid cover; I listen to my own agitated breathing. My desperate gaze moves with enormous frustration from one spot to another, looking for a way to continue.

And suddenly, subtly illuminated by the refraction of the light that slips through a crack between the stones, I see a tiny fin in golden tones. The duality between hope and anguish, power my fantasy and with it, a stream of images runs down the stairs of my mind. My beating tank and the pulsating hoses take stear me away from reality. I am at the edge of light, as I was so many years ago.

Although it pains me to be trapped and die in the absence of oxygen; there is something seductive in that last act of the great masterpiece of life. I turn off the light of my flashlight and I distand my muscles, as if I gave in to a deep sleep. A warm and light spirit embraces me in the waters, convincing me that there is no need to fight; that it is time to abandon myself and put an end once and for all to the persistent exhaustion of existing.

I vaguely remember my walks on the Pacific shore; when as a child I recited e“paratonces” by Nájera, between the majestic tumbo of the waves, when encountering the sand. Since I was little I was amazed at the idea of being one with the sea, just at the moment

of dying. Far from terrifying me, the though provoked in me a loving peace; like that of a close and wise grandfather cradling his smiling grandson. I trust, I surrender.

Between reassuring memories of childhood, my breathing stabilizes. A few meters down, I see a light moving rapidly in circles in front of me. I awake from my lethargy and turn on my flashlight, responding with the same movement. Still drowsy from the flow of images that have accompanied me throug my deep diving, I feel tugs in my vest and, at last, I manage to descend two or three meters, returning to my usual level of flotation. I keep going and without further ado, a large window of aquamarine light is thrown

wide open. I support myself from their lintels and deeply moved, I realize that we have managed to find the riddle that opens the threshold of the enchanted garden.

From the window, I see a majestic, indescribable dream, vast as a horizon . It is a floating garden, flanked by large circular walls of rock. The garden seems to move between an emerald green cloud that shelters the Mount of Thalos: a promontory of sediments that serve as home to the petrified remains of a beautiful ceiba of the millenary *Mayab*.

The cloud of sulphurous hydrogen envelops its trunks, so that life at the bottom of the cenote takes place in a dance that subtly



envelops and reveals every part of the enchanted garden. Excited to have reached at last, the heart of Angelita, I jump from the window and descend nine or ten meters more, to plunge into a nucleus of cloud. I can see how the lower half of Rod's body has disappeared, being swallowed up by the vaporous green of the cloud, and as he ascends I see how his body reconstitutes itself.

I swim right at the edge of the hydrogen trail, while my limbs disappear and appear in a pattern that gives pleasure. I embrace the main trunk of the ceiba tree and from there, I observe the enormous circular walls of the cenote and the framing of its floating garden. With it, I remember the amazing geological formation of the cenotes, while the fragmented stones of the great meteorite pierced the fragile bark imitating the Mayab,

with an equivalent energy to that of millions of earthquakes happening at once.

My mind flies over the darkness that followed the great impact and the ice age that went before it, extinguishing - almost entirely - life on Earth. I imagine this enormous hole of almost sixty meters deep turned into a colossal ice floe and I can hear the roars that millions of years later, the ice broke. With it collapsed portions of the forest, creating the promontories of some cenotes, like Angelita.

Today I am here, and that fish that follows me, hiding playfully among the sediments and the petrified branches, reminds me, like that old teacher, navigator of the soul, who reads and draws me- everything

is in me, and I am in everything. And in that total union of the parts of a whole, I am aware of the meaning of Angelita, like the great inner abyss that is my own soul and how in it, there are small great miracles, like that beautiful fish, that swims through me, giving me the magic moment for which I have waited so many years. Suddenly, the story of my life is compressed in a second, in which the Great Master and his patient guides - of water, air, soul - carry me on their shoulders along the paths of my own existence.

I do not know exactly how much time has passed since I plunged into the water. I also do not know what depth we have reached, what I do experience is a slight, but growing dizziness and nausea, due to

the mixture of gases that reaches my brain. Once again, I feel pressure on my shoulder. I know it is the sign my guide gives me to ascend slowly, stopping at security intervals before emerging. There is nothing more to do but enjoy waiting, while I take hold of a rock of the great circular fortress, and observe the delicious refraction of the halos of light, entering the crystalline water of the cenote, thirty meters above.





The waiting interval seems to become an exquisite singularity, in which, time enters in torrents and is compressed in a very slow flow of photons projected towards a leaf, which continues down its path. A leaf. Yes, it is a tiny and beautiful zapote leaf. Enraptured by the authentic magic of its descent into the serene waters of the cenote, I imagine the blowing of the wind there on the surface; the branches shaking violently, against each other.

I lose myself in the instant in which her little stem is stretched to the maximum, losing at last, the stem to the branch that has held her together with her lobular\* family. The leaf flies perched on

the back of the wind, performing a series of circus swings. Everything has happened too fast. In that mortal fall, he still savors a tiny portion of sap that reminds her she is alive for a moment, united to her branch; and this, in turn, to the entire foliage of an old zapote tree, a chronicler in charge of telling her companions of immersions of other leaves, of other men, of other stories.

The halo of light aboard which descends towards the Mount of Thalos has impatiently waited for eight minutes and nineteen seconds. It was created on the very surface of the Sun. Between titanic explosions that

would vanish the Earth in a fraction of a second. After sprouting between turbulent waves of energy and magnetic fields of that agitated star, the halo started its race at maximum speed.

Over a hundred and fifty million kilometers, he faced an intense tide of gravitational waves and avoided the attraction of two cold planets, to focus on a tiny point on the geography of a blue planet, just north of the Mayab. There, with the most amazing precision of the universe, the halo offers the tiny, freshly cut leaf, a golden carpet in its slow path towards the end of its existence. It is a unique and loving encounter; thought with the perfect synchronicity of the great watchmaker of the cosmos. A meeting projected from always and forever. And I, I have had

the luck of witnessing it -exhausted- between a curtain of bubbles.

Just six or seven meters from me, the leaf stops for a moment its weightless march, thanks to a fish that bites it slightly. I notice. It is that fish that has accompanied me, playing from the surface of the cavern. After biting a piece of the weak stem, the fish seems to show me a series of pirouettes and then hide, once again, under the layer of hydrogen; just to wait for new fresh leaves coming from the surface to be able to feed; or maybe, to be able to communicate.

And if the leaves that descend from the zapote trees were letters, missives that I must interpret somehow? - I wonder. I imagine each leaf as the most beautiful chapter of

nature. I can read in them, the very lines of life; the evolutionary secrets of its species and with it, the history of the nutrients that have fed those trees since the beginning of time.

Everything makes sense now. Through the minerals that form the nutrient broth of that leaf, I am informed -just at that moment- of the formation of my little blue planet; of my majestic universe. I am, I understand it, dust of stars and what at that moment connects me with them, is the admiration for a leaf that descends from the hand of a halo of light.

So I am the mineral and the leaf; I am the star and the light; I am the part and the whole; It's me; I am I, I am you. I realize, thanks to that little leaf, to be one of the multiple ways in which nature becomes conscious of itself. I live in her and she

lives in me. Because she is me, and I am her. Like you who read me and I watch you reading me. It is the most beautiful and essential of confusions. I smile. I had never smiled that way. Someone squeezes my shoulder. It's time to ascend. The surface awaits me.



## CHAPTER XIV



## Ascend

Decompression intervals play with my mind. With a slight dizziness I ascend a few meters to a first security stop, where I have nothing else to do, than to enjoy the curtain of bubbles that escort me up. I stop before some of those bubbles.

Inside, they seem to carry scenes from my life. Memories of childhood, fears, abandonments; but also smiles, joy and fullness. The bubbles are swallows that flit around, like that millennial nest to the center of the Potosiland, from which, every morning, thou-

sands of birds rise in their bustling journey to heaven. Each bubble has its own life and meaning. They are each, the small part of a whole that leads me to ascend-little by little-protected by a whitish blind.

I am only ten meters from the surface. With effort I catch a glimpse of the reflections at the other side. For a moment, I cannot distinguish above from below. I do not know, for sure, if I ascend or if again I find myself racing down. Moreover, I wonder what it is to be on the limit of the surface and what my true existence is.

I wonder if what that enchanted garden represents for me is actually what keeps me alive and if what is on the other side of the surface is just a cluster of mechanical experiences without meaning, that only hide a huge nostalgia for the magic discovered in Angelita. I keep my flotation level a few more moments. A trail of bubbles continues to move its path of light.

I am only three meters away from waking up in an environment that, although it will fill my lungs with pure air, will trap my imagination between bars of cold everyday life. I refuse to cross the boundary towards the surface. I cling to my last bubbles in full expansion. I embrace my most recent dreams meters below: my tunnels, my leaves, my trees, my windows.

Physical laws impose themselves as an insurmountable strength towards of the beauty of what I have experienced down there. With or without my will they force me to cross the threshold. The oxygen pressure in my vest expels me like a foreign object. As if it were the struggle of the body to extract once and for all an invading germ.

Faced with a physical phenomenon as absolutely unstoppable as ascending, I feel an enormous longing for magic; a constant self-absorption for knowing me in an intermediate point. I know myself oblivious to the images I have witnessed; but at the same time, I know that I do not belong at all, to the world of those who live beyond the surface.

With my face already out of the water, I see the sky reflected in the mirror that the cenote offers each morning. It seems that the sky lives on the surface of the water and this, in turn, inhabits the skin of the sky. And between both paradoxes, a small golden fish paints a subtle trail of eternity. In the sky, I hear the song of a quetzal...







## **Angelita, Oniric immersions into the Mayab**

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**A**mong the most beautiful gifts that Mother Nature has given to the Mexican geography, you may find the cenotes of the Yucatán Peninsula. *The Mayab* -as the region was baptized by ancient settlers- is one of the most fascinating sites in the world of cave diving.

In the *tx'onot* -water well or abyss in Maya- magic intertwines with reality in giving way to a new dimension in the imaginary of each explorer. Optical illusions originated by light refraction and sculptures formed by sequences of stalactites and stalagmites are the very refuge of a unique and overwhelmingly beautiful universe.

Upon his first steps in the world of infant literature, *Angelita* embodies David's first novel. It is indeed a fantasy that delicately submerges the reader in the dreams and experiences of an apprentice of water, wind and soul.

