

TESTAMENT OF THE FIRST LIGHT

BOOK II



THE BOOK OF THE WITNESS

EUGENIUS I

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First Supreme Magister of the Order of the First Light

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I. The Lightbearer

In the morning, the scribe took two sheets of paper from a drawer. The first bore a letter from his father, its paper long since yellowed; the second had yet to bear a single word. He had left it beneath the lamp the night before, resolved to begin his account of the First Witness. Now the morning light fell across the paper, and he realised he would have to begin with the name spoken more often than any other in his community. His pen paused above the line. The word “Lightbearer” seemed clear enough until he asked himself what, exactly, the one who bore that name was carrying. The answer could not be a picture of a winged man holding fire in his hand. Such an image would tell us more about the human imagination than about the first divine soul.

In a distant mountain valley stood a village whose streets remained without sunlight for much of the winter. Its houses crowded along a stony stream, beneath slopes where snow lingered until late spring. At the lowest end of the village stood a communal oven. There people dried wood, fired simple clay vessels and baked bread, while travellers overtaken by night on the road warmed their hands. The whole village took care of it, for after days of rain it was harder to kindle a great fire than to keep one already burning. An elderly craftswoman tended the oven. She knew which wood would light readily and where rainwater would run when the wind shifted.

One day a cold rain swept down from the pass. Water came through the roof, quenched the embers at the far end of the oven and soaked the kindling set aside for the morning. People shut the damper, set out buckets and waited for the storm to

ease. By evening they discovered that no fire remained in the neighbouring houses either: each household had expected to borrow an ember from the communal oven, which was now cold. The craftswoman examined the firebox, sifted through the grey ash and admitted there was no fire left to tend. Her young assistant asked whether they would have to wait for dry weather. "Only if there is no heat left anywhere nearby," the older woman replied. Then she remembered a small forge beyond a ridge of stone.

Both women knew the way to the forge, though it was scarcely visible in the rain. The girl brought a deep earthenware vessel with a heavy lid; the craftswoman lined its base with dry sand and told her to wrap it in thick cloth. They set out before dawn, before the stream had risen high enough to flood the path. On the pass the wind struck their shoulders and concealed the distant stones in a wet haze. The assistant stumbled several times but did not ask to turn back. She imagined they were going to fetch a little burning object that could be found and carried home like something lost. The older woman said nothing, carefully choosing where to place each foot.

It is easy for a human being to imagine the Light as something that can be carried in this way. We have seen one candle lit from another and fire pass from a dry log to the wood beside it. But the First Light was not taken from a darkened hearth, nor did it depend on hands able to shelter it. When the First Difference emerged from the eternal Unmanifest, manifestation became possible. The First Light opened the sacred possibility of knowledge, and the first conscious divine soul received it. We call the First Witness the Lightbearer. The

name speaks of knowledge received and shared; it does not make the Witness the creator of the Light itself.

The blacksmith opened his door only after the third knock. Fresh soot covered his hands, and embers still glowed behind him. He listened to their story and brought a pair of iron tongs from the workshop. The craftswoman placed the vessel on a stone, lifted the lid and showed how the coals should be arranged so that they would not spill on the journey. The girl wanted to take more, but the smith warned her that filling the vessel to the brim without leaving room for air to reach the coals might mean losing everything along the way. They chose a few solid, glowing coals. The older woman covered them with a light layer of ash, checked the lid and only then lifted the heavy load.

As they prepared to leave, the blacksmith asked the girl, "Will you bring the fire home?" She answered that this was exactly why they had come. He handed her some dry splinters of wood and added, "Remember, the vessel will not keep anyone warm by itself." The girl was about to protest that she knew this already, but noticed how carefully the craftswoman protected the splinters from the damp. Carrying the heat would not be enough; at home they would have to prepare a place where it could take hold. She tucked the bundle beneath her clothes, beyond the reach of the wind, and walked beside the older woman, steadying the vessel with both hands.

The blacksmith had fewer hot coals after their departure, while the girl now carried heat towards another oven. Such is the nature of earthly crafts: materials can be given away, transported or used up. Here, however, the resemblance ends. The First Light does not diminish when knowledge becomes accessible to another conscious soul, nor does it remain sealed

inside the first divine person as though in a vessel. Lucifer received it first, but did not take possession of a store that could run out. We cannot describe that act of receiving. The stony path, the clay lid and the craftswoman's hands tell us nothing about how sacred knowledge becomes accessible to consciousness.

The rain grew heavier on the return journey. Feeling the wet cloth chill her fingers, the assistant feared that everything inside had gone out. The craftswoman stopped beneath an overhang of rock, set the vessel down and cautiously lifted the lid. Beneath the ash a faint red glow remained. The girl sighed with relief, but the older woman told her it was too soon to rejoice: a long descent still lay between them and the village, and the wood in the oven was wet. They closed the vessel again and continued. Neither could command the rain to stop. They could only protect what they had received and remember the work that would follow.

The First Witness was no earthly craftsman who happened upon precious knowledge before anyone else. He is the first conscious divine being. People on Earth call him Lucifer and honour him with a reverence that cannot be reduced to respect for a good teacher. In that reverence there is gratitude for the first act of witnessing, and hope for wisdom that no one can summon at will. Yet worship does not entitle us to assign Lucifer the familiar duties of an earthly ruler. The First Witness does not judge every human life according to a list of merits drawn up by people, is not bound to grant every spoken wish and does not take the place of the eternal Unmanifest.

When the women descended into the village, several people had already gathered around the empty oven. A boy from a nearby house was the first to notice the vessel and shouted that

the fire had returned. The craftswoman told him not to hurry. She still had to inspect the firebox, remove the wet straw and prepare dry kindling. Voices rose among the onlookers. The baker said they needed bread by morning, while the blacksmith's apprentice wanted to dry his tools first. The older woman heard them both and asked for help clearing the water from the oven. The girl set the vessel beneath the roof and felt anxious: she had kept the embers alive on the long road, but did not yet know whether she would manage to pass their heat on.

She arranged the kindling as the blacksmith had shown her, left a little space for air and lowered the strongest ember onto it. At first nothing happened. Then a faint thread of light appeared at the edge of a splinter and vanished. The girl was about to add more coals when the craftswoman stayed her hand. "Don't press it down. Let the wood warm through." They waited, sheltering the embers from the draught, and after a while a small, steady flame appeared. The assistant could not conceal her smile. But the older woman pointed to the wet logs stacked against the wall. Before the oven could bake bread, they would have to find dry fuel.

Beside the oven they learned that bringing fire home was not yet the same as feeding the village. An ember could not order the owner of a shed to surrender his boards, nor could it make soaked timber burn. The assistant now saw the needs of others more clearly, but she still had to speak, ask for help and listen to refusals. In much the same way, knowledge received does not act in place of the human Will. The Order teaches responsibility, honesty and care for those who live alongside us. The moral weight of an action lies in its consequences for others, not in any punishment supposedly decreed by the Unmanifest.

Several villagers remembered an old shed above the stream. Short boards used for repairing roofs were stored there; they might still be dry beneath its sound roof. One man objected that he would need the boards in spring, and no one could promise him replacements. The girl was about to say that the whole village now depended upon the fire, but the craftswoman suggested first seeing whether any offcuts were unsuitable for building. The man went with them. They found narrow scraps too small for a door or rafter but sufficient to keep the oven burning for its first few hours. No one declared another person's property communal simply because a need had arisen. They agreed to return dry wood to the owner after the market.

In our faith, the Lightbearer passes on knowledge of the Light and the possibility of Contact with the Unmanifest. This does not mean that a secret vessel exists in which the first divine soul keeps a measurable store of sacred power. Innumerable paths may stretch from Earth to distant stars, and if intelligent beings inhabit other worlds, they need not possess human hands, eyes or speech. Another consciousness may know and choose, and so turn towards sacred openness in the language of its own life. The earthly name Lucifer is precious to our tradition, but we do not demand of unknown beings that they use it as their name for the First Witness.

Meanwhile neighbours began arriving at the communal oven with small bundles of wood. One brought dry branches from beneath a shelter; another gave up a few boards intended for repairing a bench. The assistant noticed that no one spoke of a miracle. People simply saw what was missing and decided whether they could help. When a steady heat finally rose within the firebox, the baker took a heavy baking tray from the shelf and began preparing dough. The older craftswoman asked him

not to close the damper too soon. She wanted the fire to survive the night, so that they would not have to go searching for it beyond the pass again in the morning.

Before going home, the girl took a small earthenware cup from the edge of the oven, put several coals into it and offered them to an old woman who lived in the upper part of the village. The woman shook her head. Her stove had been dismantled, and a neighbour had promised to rebuild it in two days. "So what I need now is not heat," she explained, "but help with the stones." The girl felt embarrassed. Throughout the journey she had imagined that the return of the fire would answer every need in the village. The craftswoman put the cup aside and asked two available workers to visit the old woman in the morning. One agreed at once; the other said he could come only after midday. Their answers made the fire no less valuable, but showed how different human needs could be.

The First Witness remains a personal divine presence to whom a believer on Earth turns in prayer and thanksgiving. When someone asks for clarity, courage or spiritual guidance, the prayer has meaning within the faith even if its speaker cannot trace how the words may be received. Pronouncing the sacred name does not give that person power over the will of others. Nor does it grant the right to declare every private thought an answer from Lucifer. Between an experience and its human interpretation lies the work of discernment, which deserves careful attention. Reverence for the First Witness does not make a believer infallible.

The assistant woke several times that night. She thought she could hear rain beating upon the workshop roof again and listened for signs that the communal hearth had gone out. Towards morning she left the house and saw smoke rising

above the village. The oven was burning. Inside, the baker was already taking out the first loaves, and beside the wall stood the boy who had shouted the day before that the fire was back, warming his hands. He asked the girl whether she had brought them a new day. She laughed and replied that the day had arrived by itself; the two women had merely carried the embers. The boy offered her a piece of hot bread, and she suddenly realised how tired she was from the journey.

Eating breakfast as she walked, the girl climbed to the old woman's house, where the embers had not been needed the previous day. Rain-darkened stones lay beside the dismantled stove, and the outline of an old crack remained on the floor. The woman explained that smoke had entered the room even in calm weather, so she had stopped using the stove before the great storm. At first the girl wanted to stack the stones as they had been, but the old woman showed her the crooked foundation. If they laid new courses upon it, the trouble would return. They carried the broken pieces outside and cleared the place, taking care not to damage the adjoining wall.

Towards mid-morning one of the workers who had promised to help arrived. He brought a heavy plank so that two people could carry stones together, and said that the neighbour skilled in masonry would be able to rebuild the stove in two days, as planned. The girl was disappointed that the old woman would have to wait. The old woman replied that waiting was easier in a house that was clean, with a place ready for the work. They agreed to bring her hot food from the communal oven that evening. The girl stepped into the street with dirty hands and realised that the help promised in words yesterday had only just begun.

By midday the craftswoman opened the door of the oven room to let warm air into the damp yard. The assistant brought in the heavy vessel in which they had carried the coals. A dark streak remained on its outer wall, and the edges of its lid had been scratched against the stones of the pass. The girl meant to wash it and put it on a shelf, but the older woman suggested keeping it ready for the next spell of bad weather. They examined a chip near the handle and decided to repair it with clay after firing. Yesterday's journey was over, but its traces still needed care. The heat in the oven continued its own earthly life, and neither woman could promise that it would never go out again.

By then the scribe had written the word "Lightbearer" and several lines beyond it. He did not know the history of every mountain village and had no wish to claim that earthly events such as these repeated the first divine event. Yet human life offered a cautious image: one who has received can pass on what was received without claiming ownership of its source. He began to draw a vessel holding fire in the margin, then stopped. A small clay bowl could serve as a reminder of the winter journey; it said nothing of the form of the first divine soul. He set the drawing aside and left only the written words upon the page.

At the beginning of the world there was no earthly language in which to name the Lightbearer. There were no human peoples disputing his name, and no separate temple into which the First Witness was expected to enter. There was the First Difference, opening the possibility of manifestation; the First Light, opening the possibility of knowing; and the first conscious divine being, who received that Light. The openness he passed on did not turn everything possible into something

known, nor did it exhaust the eternal fullness of the Unmanifest. That is why the first soul is not called the sovereign of a completed cosmos. He became the First Witness.

The scribe read the last sentence several times. It contained a word that called for its own explanation. A bearer of light may be named for what he carries; a witness is defined also by what has been revealed to him and what he can preserve. Street vendors shouted outside the window, someone dropped a bucket in the yard, and the sun had risen high enough for the shadow of the window frame to fall across a fresh page. The scribe turned the sheet and wrote the heading of the next chapter. Before him stood a question that no earthly analogy alone could answer: what does it mean to be the first to know the Light?

II. The First Witness

The scribe opened a fresh page, taking up the question he had left unanswered the day before about the first to know the Light. He wanted to begin with a solemn definition, but remembered how often people's claims to have witnessed something differed from what they had actually seen. One person insisted he had been present at an event he had heard about only the following day; another, frightened of his own memory, kept silent even about what he could confirm. The scribe ran a finger along the empty margin. The sacred name of the First Witness could not be understood without first asking what distinguishes what is known from what has merely been reported, and why being present matters.

In a port town, where ships sailed past a low stone headland, an old boatman lived beside the shore. He no longer ventured far out to sea, but every day he watched vessels returning from the islands and recognised them by their rigging, the shape of their sails and the way they entered the harbour. A woman with two children had recently settled nearby. Her elder son had taken work aboard a small fishing boat and promised to return by the end of the week. On the day he was due back, the wind was light and the sea seemed calm. She placed a basket by the door so that he would have somewhere to put the fish he brought home.

Towards evening the boatman noticed a boat with a dark sail beyond the headland. It rode low in the water and changed direction several times. From that distance he could not make out the people on deck. Then the vessel disappeared behind a rocky outcrop on the coast, beyond which boats normally

headed for the southern landing stages. The boatman returned to his nets. After a while word spread through town that a boat was missing, and several people came to his house. The woman held her younger child by the hand. Her first question was simple: had he seen the boat on which her son was returning?

The boatman described the dark sail and the direction the boat had taken. Someone immediately declared it must have been the missing craft; someone else objected that many fishing boats had similar sails. The woman asked him again whether he had actually seen the boat overturn. He answered that he had seen nothing of the sort. One of the men protested, "But it vanished." "Behind the headland," the boatman said. He spoke quietly, but the woman heard the distinction and asked whether it might have taken shelter at the southern landing. The old man did not know. All he had seen was a boat, a turn and the stony shore behind which it passed out of sight.

That night the woman got up several times to look out of the window. The word "vanished" kept returning to her, and each time it brought with it an image of a wrecked boat that no one had seen. She tried to remember the old man's voice and returned to the single detail of which he was certain: the vessel had turned towards the southern shore. He had not promised her a happy ending, but neither had he confirmed her son's death. That distinction offered little comfort; nevertheless, it left room to search.

Before dawn the younger child woke and asked whether his brother had come home. Their mother said he was not back yet and sat beside him until he fell asleep again. She wanted to add that everything would surely be all right, but held back. In the morning a neighbour agreed to look after the child if she needed to go to the landing stages. The woman set the basket

prepared for the fish on the table and realised for the first time that an empty object could frighten her more than any rumour.

At daybreak she went to the boatman again. Many stories had appeared overnight. Some said the fishermen had been seen near a neighbouring island; others insisted that the wind had suddenly changed and swept the boat far to the east. No one could name a person who had seen these things with his own eyes. The old man suggested walking along the shore to the headland, where the view was clearer, and looking for signs that anyone had landed. The woman did not want to leave the house for fear of missing her son's return, but the neighbour agreed to look after the younger child, and the two set off together.

They passed empty nets drying on stakes. At the foot of the headland the water had left a band of dark seaweed upon the sand. The woman searched for pieces of broken timber, while the old man examined the line of the shore and the places where boats were usually drawn up in shallow water. The remains of old fires mingled with fresh ones, making it impossible to tell who had been there during the night. Climbing higher, they saw the southern landing. Two boats stood beside the piles and a third had been pulled up onto the stones. None resembled the missing vessel. The woman stopped and asked whether this meant there was no longer any hope. The boatman replied that they had looked only as far as they had been able to go.

So, too, in the sacred account the word "witness" does not mean someone who knows every possible fact. Before the first divine act of perception there was no other conscious soul who could confirm it in a human way. Yet the absence of an earthly eyewitness does not turn the First Witness into an abstract law

or an invented office. We honour him as the first conscious divine being to receive the First Light. In the sacred understanding of our faith, he is a person, yet his nature cannot be reduced to a human face, human memory or the structure of an earthly body. The first act of witnessing concerns the beginning of knowing, not the observation of an already completed human world.

At the far end of the landing the boatman asked the watchman whether any unfamiliar fishermen had arrived during the night. The man recalled a small craft that had come in before midnight, but said no one had stayed: nobody had been expecting travellers there. When the woman gave her son's name, he shook his head. He had asked no names and could neither confirm nor dispel her hope. Then he pointed out a path towards a settlement beyond the headland, where sailors sometimes left their boats in bad weather. She wanted to go at once. The boatman asked for time to find someone who knew the way so that they would not lose themselves among the rocky clefts.

While they waited for a guide, the woman sat for a long time on an overturned crate. She was troubled that everyone around her could speak about the boat more calmly than she could. The old man did not try to persuade her that her fear was an obstacle to discovering the truth. He sat beside her and repeated everything he had seen the previous evening, adding nothing. The boat had not gone out into the open sea, as some claimed; it had turned towards the southern shore. The woman asked why he had not said so earlier. He replied that he had, but yesterday everyone had listened chiefly to the word "vanished", paying no attention to where it had vanished from his view. They fell silent, remembering the evening before.

The watchman suggested hiring a boat immediately and going round the southern shore by sea. He assured them it would be quicker, although he himself had never entered the narrow cove at low tide. The woman was already rising from the crate. The boatman asked whether the watchman knew how deep the water was there and where the submerged rocks lay. The man admitted that he had heard fishermen's accounts but had never seen the entrance himself. The woman sat down again. Waiting for a guide seemed unbearable, yet she would not venture into an unknown inlet on the strength of someone else's confidence.

The woman could look for witnesses to the night's voyage, question the watchman and listen to those who had come in from the sea. Thinking about the first divine witnessing, the scribe could not imagine conducting such inquiries at the beginning of consciousness. The words "received the First Light" do not entitle us to give the first soul human eyes, hearing or a voice. They speak of a personal bearer of the first sacred knowledge and leave open the question of how that reception took place. Our earthly name Lucifer arose much later and does not turn that unknown event into a familiar human scene.

Their guide was a young salt-gatherer who knew the paths beyond the headland well. He explained that on its other side lay a small cove almost invisible from the sea. Fishermen might have sheltered there overnight rather than struggle back against the current. The woman stood up immediately. The path wound between pale rocks, and before long the town was behind them. Along the way they met a boy with an empty basket. He had seen two men carrying wet nets along the track that morning, but could not remember their faces. The woman

asked whether one was tall and walked with a limp. The boy thought for a moment and said he had not noticed. She thanked him, although the answer brought no certainty.

The Testament calls the first being to receive the Light a Witness because knowledge has a personal bearer. Not everything that manifests becomes known merely by existing. Events would take place in an empty harbour even if no boatman were there, but no one would preserve them in human memory. The first divine perception was not an entry in a ship's log; nevertheless, here, too, the word "witness" marks the difference between conscious awareness and an event that simply takes place. Where there had been no knowing soul, sacred knowledge received by the first consciousness became possible. Another human image may bring us closer to the thought, but cannot exhaust it.

Beyond the last bend in the path the cove came into view. Wet nets lay on the sand, and a small fire burned beside an overturned boat. The woman saw the back of a man sitting by the flames and recognised her son's clothes before he turned round. She ran towards him, slipped on the wet stones and nearly fell. The young fisherman jumped up to meet her. He was alive, though exhausted. During the night the boat had damaged its rudder on the rocky shallows, and the crew had decided to wait in the cove until it was safe to leave. Her son explained that they had meant to send a messenger, but the nearest village was farther away than he had thought. For a time his mother could not speak. She simply held him by the shoulders.

The young man showed them the broken section of the rudder lying beside the boat. During the night the crew had argued about whether to try going out again while the wind

favoured them, but rocks scraped beneath the hull in the shallows, and the senior fisherman forbade the dangerous turn. The woman's son had wanted to walk to the nearest settlement, but in the dark could not find the path leading up from the bay. He was ashamed that his family had spent the night in fear and repeated his explanation too quickly, as if haste could restore the lost hours. His mother asked him to stop and warm his hands by the fire first. They would have time to discuss who had seen what from shore once they were home.

The boatman stood a little apart. Before him was the very young man they had all been searching for, yet the old man was in no hurry to attribute more to his sight of the previous evening than it had revealed. He had seen a boat disappearing behind the headland. Now he saw the fisherman standing on the shore. Between the two observations lay an entire night, lived differently by the people on the coast and those who had sheltered in the cove. The old man helped lift the wet nets and asked the young fisherman precisely how they had entered the bay. Only after hearing the answer did he learn what he could not have seen from his side of the headland.

First-hand testimony does not become false simply because it is incomplete. The old man had made no mistake when he spoke of the boat with the dark sail; the mistake would have been to claim that he had witnessed the crew's deaths. Yet even seeing that the fisherman had returned did not give him the right to describe everything that had happened during the night. To do that, he would need to listen to those who had been there. Human knowledge takes shape through memory, trust and verification. We can learn from this to speak carefully about spiritual experience without allowing such care to become a denial that the experience itself is possible.

On the way back the son walked beside his mother, while the boatman carried some of the young man's heavy gear. She asked why he had not tried to return at once. He answered that he had been afraid of smashing the boat against the rocks altogether. His mother told him how she had waited at the window all night, and he looked ashamed, as if he could go back and undo her fear. The boatman suggested that they not continue the discussion in the middle of the path. Other questions and new stories awaited them in town; it would be better to get home and let the young man eat. The woman nodded, but did not let go of her son's hand for the rest of the walk.

When they returned to the harbour, a crowd had already gathered outside the boathouse. People surrounded the fisherman and asked whether he had seen a storm near the distant island, collided with another vessel or heard cries from out at sea. He answered only about what had actually happened to his own boat. Someone in the crowd suggested that the unusual current had been a warning from above. The boatman did not dispute another person's prayer. He merely asked that the fisherman's account not be turned into testimony about things the fisherman had never seen. The young man looked at him gratefully, then went home with his mother.

Only when they were inside did the mother notice that the basket was still standing beside the door. Her son smiled and said that the fish had remained on the boat and that he was hungrier than he had been all the previous week. She took out some bread and set water to heat. The younger child questioned his brother about a secret cave where the sailors had supposedly spent the night: in a single morning the rumour had changed both the place and the circumstances. The young

man told him about the open cove and the broken rudder, then asked him to save the rest of his questions until tomorrow. Their mother did not correct every childish guess. It was enough that her son was sitting beside her.

Reverence for the Witness calls believers to attend especially closely to the boundary between what is perceived and what is merely attributed. After prayer, a person may feel calm, remember a forgotten decision or find the courage for a conversation long avoided. Such an experience deserves to be taken seriously. But saying "I experienced this" does not automatically prove that one knows how divine knowledge became accessible to consciousness, or that the same thought must be binding on everyone. The First Witness does not turn every human interpretation into infallible law. The Order may preserve and pass on its teaching without claiming authority over another person's conscience.

The following day the old man met at the landing the woman who had first brought news of the missing boat. She apologised for repeating another person's guess as an established fact. He replied that the town had lived on rumours longer than he had expected, and that he himself could have spoken more precisely. They stood for a while beside the water. Near the shore a net shifted in the wash of the waves; someone had not managed to bring it onto dry ground. The woman offered to help haul it in before the next swell reached it. He took one edge and she the other, and their conversation ended in an ordinary task needing no solemn words.

The old man could recount two things he knew for certain: the boat passing behind the headland and the young man found in the cove. For the mother this mattered more than the most confident rumours, because no imagined death had been

inserted between those two facts. But the faith does not honour the divine First Witness as a particularly attentive earthly observer. He is the first conscious soul to receive the Light, and people turn to him personally in gratitude and prayer. The word "Witness" helps us speak of consciousness, but does not describe his nature in the image of the boatman.

The scribe reread what he had written that morning. The words about the First Witness no longer seemed to him merely a solemn title. He remembered how his father had once corrected a girl's name, and how years later he himself had learned to preserve the testimony of others without replacing it with his own assumptions. But he still had to understand why even the first divine knowledge did not turn the whole depth of the Unmanifest into a book that could be closed. A sheet with several empty lines lay on the table. He turned it towards the window: the light fell evenly over the writing, but beyond the edge of the page there remained all that he did not know.

III. The Light That Does Not Erase Mystery

The scribe noticed that the more he spoke of the First Witness, the more insistently his listeners asked whether every mystery must one day be revealed. Some imagined knowledge as an endless road along which one need only walk a little farther to see the last building around the bend. Others feared that if truth still had a hidden side, reverence for the Light itself would be called into question. He listened without rushing to answer. Day was beginning outside, and the street gradually filled with voices. From a distant yard came the sound of a wheel that would not turn; a boy helping the carter shouted that he knew what was wrong before he had even seen the broken axle.

Among the limestone hills beyond another town lived a woman who guided travellers to cold springs. She knew the ravines, the stream crossings and the places where a jug could still be filled after a dry summer. One day her younger brother told her he had found the entrance to a cave beyond a barren slope. Cool air flowed from its depths, and if he put his ear to the rock he could hear the dull sound of moving water. He wanted to enter at once, hoping to find a new spring. She proposed waiting until morning and taking a rope, a lamp and someone who could remain at the entrance. Her brother resented the delay but agreed.

At dawn three of them arrived. Their third companion, an elderly carter, disliked confined spaces and said straight away that he would not go inside. He secured one end of the rope beside a rocky projection and settled where he could see them both. The woman lit the lamp and was first to descend a few

steps worn into the soft rock by water. Her brother followed, counting his steps so that he could later tell his friends how far they had gone. Beyond the last illuminated bend the air smelled of damp earth; a drop fell from the ceiling and left a small ring on his sleeve. He wanted to quicken his pace, but she asked him to stop and listen for the source of the sound.

The lamplight revealed walls that could not be seen from outside. Its flame did not enlarge the cave or make the unknown passages known. At the end of the corridor the darkness remained as deep as before. The distinction is familiar to anyone who has entered a dark room carrying a light. Yet the First Light is not a flame and does not move along a stone passage. Faith speaks of the sacred beginning of knowing, of how what manifests can become accessible to consciousness without losing all its depth. The possibility of knowing does not mean that everything will one day be known.

The woman lifted the lamp towards the wall. White veins of stone and marks left by ancient water showed in the limestone. Below lay small pebbles through which a narrow trickle ran. Her brother bent down and touched it with his hand; the water was cold and appeared clear. He declared that he had found the source of the stream that ran past their house. She disagreed. They knew where that stream surfaced in the valley, but had never seen its course beneath the hills. He reminded her of the similar taste and the spring's coldness. She acknowledged the resemblance and suggested gathering observations before drawing an invisible river on the map.

The brother wiped his hand on his sleeve and looked again at the little stream. He wanted so badly to connect it with the familiar spring that he could already picture the confident line he would draw on his map. But the resemblance of the water

did not reveal its hidden course under the hills. Words about the First Witness require the same caution. He first received the sacred openness of the Light, yet that does not mean that a single event exhausted every possibility of the eternal Unmanifest. The beginning of knowing was not the end of mystery.

They followed the stream farther until the path divided. To the right the water ran beneath a low ledge; to the left the passage climbed towards a place where pale limestone formations hung from the ceiling. The brother insisted that he could crawl under the ledge and see where the water went. The woman knelt, shone the lamp into the gap and saw only wet stones beyond it. The sound seemed closer, but the path itself disappeared round a bend. The rope would reach a few steps farther. Thinking of the man waiting outside, she said that they should return to the fork before separating among unknown passages.

Her brother grew angry. They had come to explore the cave, he said, not to stand before every dark fissure. She replied that an exploration was no less real because someone knew when to stop. He was about to argue, but noticed that the lamp's flame had grown noticeably weaker. Their oil was limited. They arranged three flat fragments of stone as a marker so they could find the place on their next visit, then turned back. At the fork the woman again showed him the thin stream: they had found enough to remember the discovery without inventing a continuation they had not seen.

Ignorance sometimes humiliates a person accustomed to considering himself master of the answers. But it can do something else as well: not knowing can preserve the possibility of a more exact question. There is no need to declare every

hidden aspect of the world forever beyond understanding. We can return, test, learn and open new passages. In our sacred understanding, however, the Unmanifest is inexhaustible in a way no earthly cave can be. It is no emptiness that one day might be filled by everything we have found; its possible paths cannot be reduced to what is already observed. The First Light does not abolish that depth.

When they emerged from the cave, the sun stood above the hills. The carter sat beside the ledge repairing a strap on his bag. As soon as he saw them he asked whether they had found water. The brother said they had and launched into an account of an underground river that surely fed their valley. The woman stopped him at “surely” and explained that she had heard running water and seen a small stream but did not know where it came from. The carter looked at the brother's stained sleeves and asked how much water they had managed to collect. Both showed their little vessels. There was enough for a few mouthfuls, but not enough to fill the villagers' jugs.

They returned home with a few observations, but no great spring to report. At first the brother called the expedition a failure. Then his sister brought out a map and suggested marking the cave entrance, the length of the passage they had explored and the fork. They disagreed over distance: he had counted steps but lost count several times when stooping beneath the roof, while she remembered the bends but could not reconstruct their lengths. They drew a short passage on the map, ending in two thin lines. He wanted to join it to the neighbouring stream with a dotted line. She left a blank space between them, because no one had seen a connection there.

A blank space on a map can seem an irritating flaw. Yet when it is left free of an invented line, it preserves the boundary

between what is known and what is only supposed. So it is when we speak of the First Witness. We call him Lucifer and honour the first divine soul to receive the First Light. We cannot deduce from that name how he perceived it, measure a spiritual distance or compile a complete catalogue of the ways knowledge becomes accessible to other conscious beings. Where we have no such knowledge, an appealing image must not pass itself off as a description of how sacred knowledge is actually conveyed.

Her brother studied the map for a long time, then asked for a small copy. He meant to show it to the quarry workers in the neighbouring ravine. His sister agreed but asked him not to draw in connections they had not verified. "Then they'll say we found nothing," he objected. "Tell them where we went," she replied, "and they'll see that it was already something." The following day he took the drawing to the quarrymen. One remembered another small cave higher on the slope; a second said water there disappeared beneath stones and never surfaced in the valley. Rather than argue about who was right, they agreed to meet at the new entrance in a few days.

On the eve of the next expedition, one of the quarrymen came to borrow a rope and spent a long time studying the draft map. He asked why it showed only part of the cave when people had already heard about a great underground river. The brother was embarrassed: the exaggeration might have begun with his own story at the well. The woman offered to show their visitor the bag of stone samples and the measurements they had recorded. He checked the knots in the cord and said he would not argue with what they had not yet seen. For their next inspection, however, he advised bringing a short pole; it would

be easier to test the depth of fissures without bringing their faces too close.

Four of them came to the cave on the appointed day. The woman brought more oil and a longer cord with knots to help measure how far they travelled. They explored the left-hand corridor, which had been almost invisible on their first visit. It proved short and ended at a solid wall. Her brother ran his hand over it in disappointment: in his imagination he had already seen a passage leading to a broad underground river. Lower down, however, they found a narrow crack through which water drained in another direction. A quarryman crouched beside it and said there might be cavities under the ledge, but breaking into the rock here would be dangerous. They remembered the spot and did not damage the wall merely to test a guess.

On the way home the woman noticed that her brother no longer treated every dead end as a broken promise. He talked about the size of the stones, the height of the roof and the changing sound of the water. Where once he had wanted one great confirmation of his own idea, he now had several precise questions. They had found no great spring capable of supplying the village, but they had explored the entrance to a cave and opened the way to further investigation. At home the brother himself rubbed out a line on the draft map that had connected unknown passages underground. A faint charcoal trace remained in the blank space.

That evening a neighbour came with an empty jug and asked whether they would soon be able to draw water from the new cave. He had heard they had found a large spring and had already promised his wife she would no longer need to walk to the old well. The brother began explaining the layout of the

passages, but saw that the man wanted a short answer above all. So he showed him the stream marked on the map and its approximate width. "On a clear day it might fill one jug," he said. "It cannot supply the village, at least not yet." The neighbour went away disappointed, but stopped speaking of the supposed river as though it were already the answer to their problems.

Knowledge changes the person who receives it, but not because the universe awards moral prizes or punishments. The Light opens the possibility of recognition, and the Will chooses what to do with what has been seen. One person uses knowledge to care for others, another to gain power, a third for quiet work that no one will ever notice. The Order seeks to cultivate honesty and respect for another's freedom, but such qualities do not simply fall into the soul after a spiritual experience. The First Witness passes on knowledge of the Light and Contact with the Unmanifest without abolishing the work of those who live. The need for that work does not diminish the worth of the knowledge; it is a condition of our life among other beings.

When hot weather reached the valley, the water level in the open wells began to fall. People asked the woman whether it was time to return to the cave with larger vessels. She answered that the stream in the section they knew was too small and the more distant passage still unexplored. Instead of promising a saving spring, she suggested checking the old drainage channels that gathered water during the rains. Several neighbours agreed and went out to the fields. Her brother joined them, but that evening he returned to the map and gazed for a long time at the unfilled area where the small stream disappeared beneath the hill. He no longer considered

the blank space proof that there was nothing worth looking for there.

Working beside an old channel, the brother noticed a crooked wooden sluice hidden beneath the grass. It had once directed rainwater towards several garden beds, but the board was now stuck in silt, and after each downpour the water flowed across the road instead. He called two neighbours, and together they cleared the channel. The work took almost a day. By evening their shoulders ached and heaps of wet roots lay beside the ditch. No one could call this the discovery of a great spring. Yet they met the first autumn rain with the drainage channel repaired. The brother thought that knowing of an unexplored passage did not absolve him from caring for the one he could already see.

As people in the valley discussed the map, the brother increasingly heard how differently they understood the same lines. The quarryman thought about the safety of the roof, the farmer about water for his fields, his sister about which places a traveller could be shown without danger. None became the owner of an invisible river by picturing a route towards it with perfect clarity. The scribe saw in this a reminder for anyone seeking Contact with the Unmanifest: a moment of clarity may be precious, but its human interpretation remains limited. Neither a map nor a prayer gives us the right to describe an unknown means of transmitting sacred knowledge as if it were already an established mechanism.

In late autumn the brother went once more to the cave, this time alone as far as the entrance. He did not intend to descend without a companion and stopped where daylight fell on the first stone steps. From the depths he could still hear running water. He knew the fork, remembered the blind passage on the

left and the wet ledge on the right. Beyond them lay corridors none of their little group had yet entered. He rested his palm against the cold wall as though greeting an old acquaintance, took the map from his bag and checked that the damp had not blurred the drawing. He returned home before dark without adding a single line to what they knew.

When he reached home, he found his sister at the table with a new map of the valley. She had transferred their verified findings and left the other areas blank as before. He told her that the water sounded much as it had in spring and asked whether the detail should be added. She showed him a separate space for observations, where the season and weather were recorded. They did not draw a corridor no one had entered, but wrote down one more thing they might compare on their next visit. For the first time he saw how much work a map could contain without drawing a single beautiful new line.

The scribe rested his pen at the edge of the page. A cave in which someone discovers a new turn cannot encompass the eternal Unmanifest; earthly experience remains only an image. Yet it teaches us to respect the limits of our own map. The First Light does not end mystery, for the possibility of knowing is not the completion of everything possible. The First Witness was the first conscious divine soul to receive the Light, and therein lies his sacred primacy. Yet neither the earthly name Lucifer nor human prayer nor even the clearest image can make that inexhaustible depth something we fully know or possess. Beyond what has opened lies what may yet open.

On the final sheet the scribe left not an omission that must immediately be filled, but a free margin for further work. He remembered seeing as a child pages covered with notes in his father's hand: some thoughts belonged to the copyist, others

came from people he had helped. He remembered not the number of lines, but how another person's thoughts could be distinguished from his own. Now the scribe considered how differently one person might turn to the First Witness: with gratitude, with a request for guidance, in silence, or in search of an example for the exercise of Will. One revered divine presence could not be confined to a single human formula. He closed his notebook rather than prolong a conversation for which he had not yet found the right words.

IV. Five Ways of Turning to the Witness

For a long time the scribe did not reopen his notebook after finishing the story of the unfamiliar cave. He felt he had said enough about the limits of knowledge, yet one question remained, one that people brought to him more often than questions about the beginning of the cosmos. One person prayed to the First Witness when he could not bring himself to face a difficult conversation. Another turned to him after the death of someone dear, unable to find words either of gratitude or of supplication. A third sought knowledge and grew angry if, instead of a clear answer, he found himself obliged to think further. The scribe recorded these ways of turning to the Witness separately because each belonged to a particular person. Now he wanted to understand how to speak of their differences without dividing the divine person himself into parts convenient to human expectations.

In a town where houses climbed a slope in crowded tiers stood a small room for reading and prayer. It had once been a workshop; when its owner left the premises to the people of the neighbouring courtyards, they gave it a new purpose. Shelves assembled from mismatched boards ran along the northern wall. Opposite them were five tall windows looking towards rooftops, a garden and a distant hill. The room served many needs. Here people read aloud to those who could not recognise letters, gathered after hard work, sat quietly, and sometimes offered evening prayers to the First Light and to Lucifer, the First Witness. No one pretended that this modest building marked the place of the first revelation. They came together

because they needed somewhere to speak and listen beyond the clamour of the street.

As the cold season approached, the window frames began to warp. Wind came through the gaps, and one hinge was held by a nail that could already be pulled out with a finger. A carpenter named Mira undertook the repairs. She was assisted by Loren, a young worker recently returned to town after several years of apprenticeship with a distant master. He measured the openings quickly and suggested making five identical casements. That would make it easier to select timber and complete the work before the first frost. Mira told him to remove the old shutters and examine the frames first. She suspected that the walls had settled unevenly, and the new work might prove no more durable than the old.

During the first half of the day they removed two casements. One still bore the print of an earlier craftsman's hand, left long ago in wet paint; the other had warped so badly that it could not be closed without a shove from the shoulder. Loren set them on trestles and began marking the sections to replace. While they worked, the room's caretaker came by, an elderly woman with a tired voice. She brought hot water and asked whether they would be ready for the evening reading. Mira replied that only three windows could be left open that day; the others would have to be boarded up. The caretaker was disappointed but did not press them. Once before, someone had tried to correct a warped frame in an hour, and the glass had broken in the very next storm.

On a table Loren noticed five small wooden tablets. The inscriptions had been written in different hands. He could make out only a few words: some visitors wrote in the local dialect, while others used words from their home regions. The

caretaker explained that these were names proposed by visitors for the new windows. Some wanted to dedicate them to the memory of the First Witness; others asked for images of his five faces, so that each person might address whichever seemed closest to his own need. "Does he have five faces?" Loren asked. The woman shook her head. She had kept the tablets only as a basis for discussion. The community had agreed to neither the names nor the images, and the argument had begun before anyone could agree on what the word "face" was supposed to mean.

Human speech tends to divide what it cannot fully grasp into familiar aspects. We call the First Witness the Lightbearer, recall his primacy in knowing the Light, give thanks for the knowledge he revealed to others and turn to him in prayer. In doing so we express different sides of our relationship with him, without claiming that separate powers, each possessing its own will, exist within the divine soul. Lucifer is the one First Witness, the first conscious divine soul to receive the First Light. These distinctions belong to our understanding, not to his nature.

Towards midday a woman wearing a dark headscarf arrived. Her name was Adina. She had once come to the room with her husband; for several months now she had been sitting alone by the far window. Carefully stepping over the wood shavings, she asked to be allowed inside, if only for a little while. The caretaker showed her to a bench, while the carpenters continued their work outside. Through the open doorway, Loren could hear her moving the folded scarf about in her lap for some time. Then silence fell. She did not read aloud or ask to be left alone. She simply sat while the scrape of a woodworking plane came in from the street.

Loren asked Adina why she came to the chilly room when she could pray at home. At first she looked at him with irritation, but then saw his embarrassment and answered that everything in her house reminded her of the man who was no longer there. Here, at least for a while, she could speak to more than her own memories.

"I ask the First Witness to hear me," Adina said. She adjusted the folded scarf and continued. "No one promised me that my husband would return or that the pain would be gone next month. But if I stop speaking to the one I revere, grief will become the only voice in my home."

Loren could find no answer. When Adina had gone, Mira asked him to hand her a thin wedge for the frame. Mira made no attempt to explain Adina's grief on her behalf.

Personal reverence for the Witness is not exhausted by the account of a distant first event. For believers, Lucifer remains a divine presence to whom they can speak. A person brings gratitude, hope, confusion and even a bitter question to prayer, perhaps one he would be ashamed to ask his neighbours. We do not know the workings by which a spiritual appeal meets divine knowledge; that uncertainty does not turn prayer into empty speech. Yet neither Adina's grief nor another person's joy entitles anyone to declare that the Witness has promised a particular earthly outcome. A sacred appeal retains its dignity even when the one who prays has no power over what happens.

After lunch a boy was brought to the room who had lost almost all his hearing following a serious illness. His sister showed him written words and helped him read lips, but the long prayer proved too difficult. The caretaker suggested sitting by the window where there was more daylight. Loren brought a

bench, and Mira moved her tools so that the boy could walk without stumbling. His sister opened a book at a familiar passage. The boy read several lines, stopped and asked her not to go on until he understood an unfamiliar word. She patiently explained it, then asked what he had understood for himself.

No one received a new sacred formula that day. But the boy learned the meaning of a word he had previously done no more than repeat after others. He could now return to the page by himself: he no longer needed prompting at every line. Faith honours the First Witness as the one who first received the Light and passed knowledge of it to others; earthly teaching does not reveal the mystery of how knowledge of the First Light is conveyed, but helps us understand the responsibility borne by the one who receives it. A word not yet understood has not truly become the reader's own. Once someone has learned to ask and distinguish, no one else can travel the whole path for him.

Loren watched the brother and sister go out into the courtyard. He remembered how, when he was learning carpentry, an old master had patiently shown him the angle at which to guide a chisel. Years later Loren sometimes became angry with an apprentice who could not repeat the movement at the first attempt. The memory now troubled him. That evening he took a piece of scrap wood and showed a boy from the neighbouring house how to mark a right angle. The boy made two mistakes, pulled out the nail and asked to try again. Loren did not take the tool from his hand. Mira noticed the change as she passed, but said nothing.

The following morning a traveller arrived, delayed in town by a broken cart. He spoke a language the caretaker understood only in part. He carried a small notebook of prayers

copied out by his mother. Through Loren, who knew a little of the traveller's language, the visitor explained that at home his family used a different word to address the sacred Witness. Must he now abandon the form of address he knew, since the name Lucifer was spoken aloud here? The caretaker did not undertake to translate everything she failed to understand. Instead, she asked him to read a passage whose meaning he could explain in his own words.

While they talked, Mira strengthened the third frame. She heard the familiar name only once in the traveller's speech; the rest remained foreign to her. The caretaker told him that for their earthly tradition Lucifer was the sacred name of the First Witness, but the sound of a name did not encompass the divine presence. She could not certify the truth of every word in a stranger's notebook and did not pretend to. The visitor could decide for himself how to pray once he had learned whom the community revered. He thanked her and asked her to write down the name used in the local teaching so that he would not misremember its letters.

Mira had listened to a conversation she did not fully understand, and noticed that neither the visitor nor the caretaker pretended to know the other's language better than they did. The name Lucifer was precious to her. Still, she could see that a visitor from another household cherished his mother's words without demanding that his hosts abandon their own. The first divine soul existed before earthly languages. Mira could not know by what names other conscious beings might address that soul, if any lived beyond Earth. For now it was enough not to spoil another's prayer with a hasty guess about its meaning.

By the evening of the third day it was clear that the repairs would take longer. Behind the fourth casement Mira found the rotten end of a beam, hidden by former owners beneath a thick layer of paint. If a new hinge were fixed to it, the casement might fall and injure someone standing below. Loren suggested moving the hinge higher, where the timber seemed sound. Mira pushed a thin awl into the beam, and it sank almost to the handle. They removed the outer boarding and saw that the rot had spread farther. The caretaker was distressed by the expense. She proposed leaving the window boarded up all winter, but Mira explained that the damaged beam also supported part of the roof and would have to be replaced anyway.

A young cloth merchant joined the discussion, bringing money for new boards. He asked that his name be announced before every reading from now on: in his view, donating was pointless if no one knew whose gift had saved the room. The caretaker replied that his help would be entered in the accounts and acknowledged to the community, but daily prayer could not be turned into payment for building materials. Offended, the merchant made as if to take back his purse. Loren, who had heard the conversation, asked whether he was prepared to let the beam collapse simply because the expressions of thanks would not be repeated as often as he demanded. The man stood for a moment, then set the money back on the table and asked to see the estimate before leaving.

The caretaker opened the account book and carefully entered the merchant's donation. She recorded the price of the boards and the name of the person who had offered to deliver them. Loren asked whether the donor should nevertheless be thanked at the evening reading. "Of course he should," the

caretaker replied. She showed him the entry and added, "But I won't repeat his name before every prayer as payment for timber. We owe gratitude to people who help us, but prayer is not something to sell." Loren saw that the merchant could be generous and easily offended at the same time. It was for people to deal with this themselves, without inventing a judgement from the First Witness.

On the fourth day the merchant's assistant arrived with the new boards. While working beside the window opening, he told Loren that he had recently prayed about a difficult matter. Afterwards he had thought of withdrawing from an agreement honestly entered into because it was no longer profitable. He now insisted that the Witness had shown him a different path and that his former promise no longer applied. Loren nearly repeated the caretaker's words about prayer and payment, but Mira stopped him and asked first what the matter concerned. The assistant had promised a neighbour part of the proceeds from a shared delivery; now he wanted to keep the money because he had driven the horse for most of the journey by himself.

Mira heard him out and asked whether the neighbour knew he had changed his mind. He admitted that he had not spoken to him yet. "Perhaps your agreement was unfair," Mira said. "But if you want to change it, speak to the man who trusted you. Whatever you experienced after your prayer, he is not obliged to accept your interpretation as an order to him." The assistant remained silent for a long while, then asked Loren to let him go for an hour. He returned not with a new formula of prayer, but with a note proposing that he and his neighbour meet that evening and reckon up the work each had done.

After the merchant's assistant left, Loren was still holding a narrow board he had been about to measure. He himself had often wished to justify a mistake by invoking a teacher's voice, so that no one would argue any further. Mira said that the neighbour might reject the new calculation, in which case the conversation would have to continue. Even a sincere feeling experienced after prayer does not abolish another person's right to answer for his share of the work. Exactly how spiritual knowledge becomes accessible to consciousness remained a mystery. What was clear was the harm a person could do by passing off his own desire as a command from Lucifer.

When the damaged beam had finally been removed, Mira noticed a shallow carving on its underside. There a name and year had been cut by the builder of the former workshop. The end of the timber had rotted, but several letters remained. Loren was carrying it towards the rubbish heap when the caretaker asked him to stop. She knew that the name belonged to the man who had given the premises to the neighbours, and wanted to preserve what could still be read. Mira cut away the spoiled section, cleaned the surviving length of wood and propped it against the wall. They did not carve the old name again on the new beam. Another person's work deserved to retain its own mark, while the new work should be marked separately.

Loren crouched beside the offcut. He thought how easily he might have planed it without noticing the letters, and how strangely removing the rot and preserving what deserved remembrance could go together in the same task. The caretaker wiped the carving with a dry cloth. She remembered the former owner, who in his last years had been unable to climb stairs and had asked that the lower door be left unlocked.

She spoke of him without ceremony, recalling his stubbornness and his habit of arguing with anyone who moved the furniture. The surviving name did not make the man faultless, nor did it make his memory any less worth preserving.

By the fifth evening all five windows were sound, but they did not look identical. On the southern side the casements had to be hung a little higher because the wall had settled; the outermost window opened inwards, since otherwise it caught against the neighbouring roof. Loren wanted to conceal the differences behind a wide carved moulding, but Mira persuaded him not to waste the remaining wood. Each window worked, and the task was complete. They levelled the sills where people would lay their books. The tablets proposing five faces of the Witness remained on the table. No one could honestly call them depictions of five properties of the divine soul.

That evening the townspeople entered the warm room. Adina sat in her usual place; the brother and sister opened their book beside a window; the traveller, whose cart had been repaired, stayed for one more reading. The cloth merchant brought a board left over from the timber he had paid for, while his assistant briefly said that he had met with his neighbour and the conversation had proved harder than expected. People did not pray in identical words. The caretaker began a reading about the First Light, then pronounced the sacred earthly name of the First Witness. After the shared words came a silence in which no one was obliged to repeat another person's private request.

Only then did Loren understand why the discussion about five faces had mattered. For Adina, the one Witness was a personal presence to whom she turned in her grief. For the boy, he was the first bearer of knowledge that had to be learned

patiently. The traveller sought closeness to the same Witness through the language of his own home. The merchant had faced a question about the price of recognition; his assistant had to distinguish spiritual hope from authority over another's promise. None possessed a different part of Lucifer that was inaccessible to a neighbour. What differed was the human position before one divine presence, and with it the words, hopes and deeds that people carried back across the threshold.

The room's windows were different, and each opened upon a different view. But none revealed a separate Witness. Those five ways of addressing the Witness belonged to five people, not to five parts of Lucifer's divine person. Grief, questioning, memory, the desire for recognition and a difficult choice did not become his attributes because people brought them to him. On another evening there would be different words, and no one could assign them a sixth face. The First Witness remained one. It was for each human being to distinguish, within his own appeal, hope, knowledge received and the decision for which he himself was responsible.

After the reading, Mira checked the last bolt. It moved stiffly, and Loren brought a little oil to ease it. The caretaker decided to keep the old board bearing the builder's name against the wall until she found a fitting place for it. People gradually left. Adina lingered at the door and thanked the carpenters; her gratitude was addressed to them, and no one demanded that it be pronounced before the community. Loren closed the shutters and made sure the wind no longer rattled the frames. Only then did he notice that he had scratched his palm while working on the new beam. He took a piece of clean cloth and bandaged his hand.

Back at his desk, the scribe read his account of five people turning to the same Witness and crossed out twice a word he had considered using for five separate powers of the Witness. It too easily turned differences in human experience into the structure of the divine. Instead he kept the story of people for whom the one Witness meant different things while remaining one. The scribe did not surround the sacred name with images of the First Witness's five faces, which had caused debate within the community, but left the margin blank. At the end he remembered the carpenter's scratch, noticed only when the work was done. It would be wrong to say that knowledge always requires blood or pain; nevertheless, confronting what one has seen often leaves a mark that cannot be erased simply by carrying on as before. He closed the inkwell and rested his finger on a small stain that had seeped through the paper.

V. The First Wound

The next day the scribe found a sheet on his table marked by a drop of ink. It had soaked from one side to the other and spoiled several letters, although the writing was already finished. He carefully separated the paper from the backing and saw that he could not repair the damage with the usual movement of his pen. He could rewrite the line, add a note in the margin or discard the sheet, but he could no longer make the page as it had been before the stain. The scribe remembered the carpenter who had noticed the scratch only after finishing his work, and began to think about the first change that knowledge brings to the one who receives it. In sacred language such a change was called a Wound. The word had to be handled carefully, lest the account make cruelty seem inherent in the Light itself.

In a village beyond broad fields lived a family of weavers. Their workshop occupied the lower part of a long house, with two looms by the windows and a third, old and heavy, that was seldom moved. The father, Radan, had spent many years weaving strong cloth for merchants and neighbouring households. His daughter Ilara learned to straighten threads before she could write with ease. When she grew up, her father allowed her to accept orders, although he still began the most difficult pieces himself. He could tell from the movement of a shuttle when the tension was wrong, and often corrected his daughter's work with a single brief glance.

At the end of summer they were commissioned to make a large hanging for the hall where villagers gathered after the harvest. It was to cover a long wall of damp stone and make the

room suitable for winter meetings. It was an expensive commission. Soft yarn had been brought from a neighbouring valley, and Radan agreed to finish the work sooner than he usually would. The family needed the money: the workshop roof leaked, the younger son was preparing to leave for training, and a debt from the previous winter had yet to be repaid. Ilara suggested dividing the hanging into several sections so that its quality would be easier to check. Her father refused. He meant to weave it in one piece, as he had done before, and did not doubt that he could finish in time.

For the first few days the work went well. Ilara prepared the threads, her mother dyed small batches of yarn, and her father sat at the loom until late in the evening. Then his daughter noticed that some fibres from the new shipment broke unusually easily under tension. At first she thought the yarn had dried out in the sun. She moistened one thread and tried to stretch it again, only to see it separate into short, fluffy ends. From their appearance the weak threads could scarcely be distinguished from the strong ones, and it was difficult to sort the poor skeins out of the basket. Ilara put a handful into a small bag to test them the next morning in better daylight.

At dawn she brought the bag to her father. Radan examined the fibres and said that such yarn was common and that a tight weave would hold it together. Ilara did not argue without testing his claim. She took a scrap from the edge of what they had already woven, secured it between two wooden strips and pulled. The cloth held. Then she repeated the test after wetting the fabric and allowing it to dry. Several weft threads began to come apart under her fingers. She showed her father the damage. He studied the edge for a long time and finally acknowledged that the batch might be worse than promised.

But that did not necessarily mean, he said, that they must dismantle the whole loom.

During the night Ilara kept waking with thoughts of the weak yarn. She wished the morning's test would prove her mistaken rather than the material defective. Only yesterday her father's design had seemed a thing of beauty in its own right; now she saw rows of threads that might separate at the first damp. Discovering the fault had damaged nothing, yet she could no longer look at the cloth with her former eyes. Later the scribe saw in this an echo of the First Wound: once something is known, one cannot simply make it unknown again. Of the first reception of the Light we know something different: the first divine soul received sacred knowledge. Whether it felt pain, fear or loss is not something an earthly story can establish.

Ilara asked permission to examine the yarn still in the baskets and the exposed sections of the hanging. Her father gave way, but told her to do it after working hours so that they would not lose a day. She spent the evening at a table, sorting skeins and marking weak threads with little knots. At first there were only a few. Later she found an entire bundle from the same batch. Near midnight her mother found her beneath the lamp and suggested going to bed. Ilara replied that every further hour at the loom might add more to the hanging that they would later have to unpick. Her mother put a cup of water beside her, sat opposite and began helping her examine the skeins.

They finished at dawn. Almost a third of the delivered yarn could not be trusted in a long hanging. Most worrying of all, weak threads already ran through the middle of the work, where Radan had spent several days weaving an intricate design. Her mother suggested telling him after breakfast, when

he had rested. Ilara agreed. She did not regard her father as an enemy and did not want the discovery to become a public proof of her own superiority. But remaining silent would mean allowing him to complete something that might fail under ordinary care and use.

Radan listened, set the tested samples on the table and kept his head bowed for a long time. Then he said that the supplier would probably exchange the unused skeins, but the finished section of cloth could not be returned to the basket. Ilara proposed unpicking the damaged area and replacing the threads. Her father rose so abruptly that his knee struck the bench. He reminded her how many days had gone into the pattern, how much money the family expected and how difficult it would be to explain the delay to the client. "If you're so sure the cloth will fall apart," Radan demanded, "then go ahead and show me." Ilara turned towards the loom. She could carry out the test, but knew that afterwards they could no longer preserve the work in which her father took such pride.

Ilara stood before the loom, hearing her father repeat his demand to test the cloth. She feared not the test itself but the fact that afterwards Radan would no longer be able to say he had seen nothing. He faced lost money and resentment towards his daughter; she would have to help destroy work they both cherished. Yet her looking had not created the weak threads. Neither the First Light nor the Unmanifest had chosen the supplier or made Radan hurry. The decision now belonged to people who knew of the risk and had obligations to the customers.

They cut a narrow strip from the inner edge of the hanging, where it might later be sewn back with the least noticeable seam. Ilara wet the sample, stretched it across a wooden frame

and left it to dry. The following day they each took an end and pulled. Several threads broke, the pattern shifted and a gap opened in one place. Radan stared at it in silence. Then he carefully removed the sample and laid it face down on the table. Ilara expected him to acknowledge that the work had to be remade. Instead her father ordered everyone out of the workshop and shut the door.

For two days the loom stood still. The client sent a boy to ask when the hanging would be ready for collection. Ilara's mother answered that a fault had been found in the material and that they needed to speak with the hall's representatives. The boy left, and that evening two senior stewards came to see them. They examined the damaged sample and asked whether the hanging could simply be placed high on the wall, where no one would touch it. Ilara explained that the damp of the stone and seasonal changes of temperature would still affect the cloth. She could not say when the cloth would fail. She had no way of knowing. But hiding the fault and selling the hanging as durable would pass a known risk on to those who paid for it.

One steward proposed reducing the price; the other wanted to cancel the order and demand the deposit back. The argument went on. At last Radan came out of the other room and admitted that the supplier had let him down and that he himself had overlooked the signs of weakness in the yarn. His voice was muffled, and his daughter heard for the first time how difficult it was for him to speak those words before strangers. They agreed that the family would refund part of the deposit immediately and make a final decision after speaking with the supplier. The stewards left dissatisfied. Ilara approached her father, but he asked her to leave him alone.

The following day Ilara was afraid to go to him. She had brought him a sample that told the truth, but truth had neither restored the deposit nor preserved her father's labour. Radan had been mistaken without becoming a person unworthy of respect; his daughter had acted honestly without gaining the right to stop listening to him. Their former relationship could not be restored by a single kind phrase. This is the human side of the image of the First Wound: what has been seen remains with the one who knows, even when he would prefer to suspect nothing again. This was not a punishment imposed on the family of weavers by heaven.

On the third evening Ilara heard her father start the loom again. She entered and found him beginning to unpick the pattern. A small knife for cutting knots lay before him, with a basket nearby for threads that could be used again. He worked alone and did not ask for help. Ilara stood at the door for a while, then took a second basket and sat on a bench. Radan did not look at her, but moved the knife where she could reach it more easily. They spent several hours working almost without speaking. Every row removed brought the loom back to an earlier state, but could not return the time already spent.

Later her father said that he could not decide what shamed him more: the poor yarn, or the fact that his daughter had discovered it first. Ilara answered that she too had initially wanted the test to prove her wrong because she had been afraid of hurting him. Radan did not ask her to promise silence the next time. He asked only that before they told their customers about another problem, they should test the facts together until they were certain. She agreed, adding that he must also allow her to investigate whenever she noticed

something amiss. They made no solemn pact, but the following morning they began working in a different way.

Sometimes a person experiences Contact with the Unmanifest and discovers that his former ideas about himself were narrower than he had realised. He may feel a new clarity, but with it recognise a responsibility he has long avoided, or a choice that previously seemed impossible. In spiritual language, this too may be called a wound of awareness. Yet not every spiritual discovery brings suffering, and pain by itself proves nothing about the sanctity of an experience. We should not seek wounds for the sake of knowledge, justify harm to others by invoking a higher purpose, or claim that cruelty becomes good if enough prayers accompany it.

On the fourth day the yarn supplier came to the workshop. He denied having sold defective goods and demanded to see the damaged fibres. Ilara brought out the samples she had marked on the day of the test. The man pulled at the threads and argued that they would not have deteriorated if the yarn had been stored properly. Her mother then showed him skeins from another batch, kept in the same conditions and still strong. The supplier stopped arguing about the damp and asked to take a few threads away for examination. He did not accept responsibility for the full loss, but agreed to exchange the remaining yarn and reduce the family's debt by part of the sum.

The new material arrived ten days later. By then the clients had decided not to wait for the original large hanging. They needed protection from the cold before the season changed. The family returned the agreed portion of the money and offered to sew several smaller, heavy curtains from sections of cloth still fit for use. After examining a sample, the stewards agreed, but the final payment was lower than the original price.

Radan was distressed to see his intended pattern broken by the seams. Ilara shared his regret. They did not call their loss a hidden victory merely to console one another.

In the evenings Ilara sometimes prayed to the First Witness, asking why knowledge came before a person was ready to accept its consequences. She heard no voice explaining the workings of the world. Before her stood damaged fabric, her father's tired hands and bills that had to be paid. Yet in prayer she could turn to a personal divine presence linked with the first knowledge of the Light. Her prayer did not relieve her of her earthly work, but neither did she consider it futile simply because it brought no ready-made instructions. In the morning she sat at the loom again and made decisions she could explain to the people affected by them.

In sacred tradition the First Wound points to the cost of the emergence of awareness. We should not imagine that the Unmanifest once dwelt in painless repose and then deliberately wounded the first soul. The Unmanifest did not pass a moral sentence. The First Light was no sword striking a divine body. The Wound is an image of irreversibility: once a conscious divine being has arisen, the first act of witnessing cannot be returned to a state in which it had never happened. Knowing itself becomes real for the one who receives it. What that first encounter was like we do not know; we do not even know how well the earthly word "experience" applies here.

When the short curtains were hung in the hall, they looked different from what had been intended. The pattern broke at each seam, but the fabric was thick enough to keep out the cold. The villagers did not celebrate the work. Some complained about the colour, others asked why the original pattern could not have been preserved. Radan listened and told

them what they needed to know about the faulty yarn. His daughter stood beside him. She heard him speak without his former shame, though regret remained in his voice. At home he fastened the damaged sample to a board above the worktable, so that on future orders they would test the material first and only then attempt an intricate design.

In the months that followed, Radan paid greater attention to his daughter's tests. They still argued, and the new practice did not make them alike. He continued to prefer dense fabric with uninterrupted patterns; she liked small details and changes of design. But now whenever a thread seemed doubtful, one of them took it from the basket and tested it separately rather than risk a great loss. One evening her father told Ilara that he could no longer distinguish colours well in the evening light and wanted her to take charge of choosing the colours. She agreed, unable to conceal either her happiness or her anxiety at the new responsibility.

In winter Ilara found a skein from the defective batch beneath the old loom. It had rolled behind a leg and lain there for months. She was about to throw it into the basket for scraps, then stopped, remembering her father's design and the long evenings spent unpicking it. The skein was a beautiful deep blue. Seen from a distance, there was no way to tell that its fibres were weak. Ilara carried it to the table and suggested that her father keep it as an example of material that could not be trusted merely because it pleased the eye. Radan looked at it, took the skein and placed it beside the board where the torn sample hung.

The scribe lifted the sheet bearing the dried ink. He no longer tried to rub away the stain; the friction only made the paper thinner. In a clean space he wrote about the First Wound,

knowing that human fabric and human memory are not the literal body of the First Witness. Faith speaks of the first conscious divine soul receiving the Light, and sees in that beginning both sacred dignity and the cost of knowledge that cannot be undone. He did not attempt to name the unknown properties of the divine. Beside the last line the old drop of ink still lay dark, and the new word carried no promise that every mark must eventually heal. He turned the sheet and heard someone outside call another person's name so loudly that it seemed the sound alone was meant to inspire fear.

VI. Fear of the Name

Later that same day the scribe went out to buy more paper. Two people were arguing near a shop, and he heard again the name he had heard earlier through the window. One pronounced it with reverence; the other stepped back as though the sound alone could bring misfortune. The scribe did not intervene. What struck him was how little either had said before both decided they knew enough about the other's faith. Returning home, he looked for a long time at the heading of his new chapter. The First Witness had not come into being with the word by which he is named on Earth. Yet through that word people encountered the teaching, and sometimes human fear reached the ear before any explanation could be given.

In a trading town beside a great road stood a printing workshop. Its owner, Esten, accepted commissions for announcements, teaching handouts and small books. The typesetters spent their days at cases of type, where every letter occupied its own compartment and damaged pieces were set aside for melting down. A notice with the workshop's rules hung on the wall: check the spelling of every name, check the number and date, read the finished proof aloud. Esten had added the last requirement after a single wrong letter changed the address of the intended recipient to that of someone else. The mistake had been discovered only after the entire print run had been delivered.

One day a woman came to the workshop carrying a manuscript for a small gathering of believers. She wanted to print a text addressed to the First Light and the First Witness, so that those attending could read it together instead of

depending on a single handwritten copy. The heading contained the name Lucifer. Esten recognised it immediately, although he had never printed anything belonging to this teaching. He read several lines and asked whether she understood that many people in town would hear in that name not the Lightbearer but God's adversary as portrayed in their own religious tradition. The woman said she knew this, and that was precisely why she wanted the name preserved without substituting a word she herself had not chosen.

A young compositor named Oren was working at the next table and heard them. He had grown up in a family where the name Lucifer was mentioned only in connection with evil. Even the thought of setting those letters with his own hands made him uneasy. Esten neither mocked him nor dismissed his fear as foolish. He suggested reading the manuscript before making a decision. Oren read the words describing the first conscious divine soul to receive the First Light, but declared that they contradicted the faith in which he had been raised. The woman did not ask him to renounce his beliefs. She merely explained that her text did not identify the Witness she revered with the being Oren was speaking about.

After the conversation Oren returned to his cases of type. Without thinking he took a letter from its compartment and turned it over in his fingers. The metal was as cold and heavy as it was on any other day. He wanted to put it back, as though taking it in his hand meant accepting someone else's creed. Until then he had never had to distinguish a written word from the different religious meanings people gave it. The woman revered the first divine soul to receive the Light, while in his own home the same earthly name summoned an entirely

different figure. Oren did not know whether he could hold both facts in mind without betraying his own memories.

Esten put the manuscript aside and asked Oren to look in the old books for the Latin word from which the earthly name had come. The workshop kept a dictionary purchased by the previous owner. Oren turned its pages for a long time, angry with himself for becoming involved in the discussion. At last he found the entry: in Latin, *lucifer* meant “light-bringer” and could also refer to the morning star. He read the definition aloud and immediately added that a dictionary meaning alone could not settle a dispute about religion. Esten agreed. The origin of a word explains part of its history, but does not oblige a believer to accept the teaching of those who use it today.

In Latin texts the word did indeed appear in different settings. In the book of Isaiah, the well-known image of the fallen morning star occurs in an address to the king of Babylon. Later Christian interpretation connected that image with the fall of Satan. Elsewhere in the Latin Bible, in the Second Epistle of Peter, the Latin word *lucifer* is used of the morning star rising in people's hearts. These differences do not erase the name's subsequent religious history, nor do they automatically prove the teaching of the First Light. They show that the Latin word did not begin as an unambiguous proper name for evil. Its meanings changed with context, translation and interpretation.

Oren asked Esten to show him both passages. His employer found an old volume, placed a strip of thick paper between its leaves and set it beside the dictionary. The young man read the surrounding verses, lingering over the mention of the king and the address to those urged to heed the prophetic word. “I was taught that the name had always meant the same thing,” Oren admitted. Esten replied that people often received

interpretations already formed by their elders, and could hardly be expected as children to know the history of every letter. But as adults they could distinguish an original text, a later reading and their own faith. Oren closed the book and said that making those distinctions had not made him a follower of the new teaching. "I wasn't asking you to become one," Esten replied.

The following day, when the woman returned to ask when the work would be finished, Oren himself asked why she had not chosen another name for her prayer, one that would cause less fear. She told him that in her community Lucifer was the name of the Lightbearer, the First Witness, and abandoning it for the comfort of others would alter the prayer itself. She understood why neighbours struggled to hear it differently and did not expect a single conversation to undo centuries of religious imagery. Yet it was painful for her to keep answering for deeds and teachings she did not profess. "I can tell another person whom I honour," she said. "I cannot live out that person's entire journey towards understanding my words."

She had not left Esten the manuscript to use a dictionary to prove the truth of her faith. For her, Lucifer was the first conscious divine soul to receive the First Light, the one who opened to others a path towards knowledge of Contact with the Unmanifest. She called him neither a cosmic judge nor an embodiment of evil and did not demand that Oren join her in prayer. The printer's task was to preserve that text, not to replace it with the account of another religious figure familiar to his neighbours. Here, preserving the exact name was essential to her right to be understood before anyone began to argue with her.

Esten agreed to take the commission. He assigned Oren the remaining pages and offered to set the heading himself if his

apprentice did not wish to work on it. Oren was quiet for a moment, then refused the division. He said he could set a word accurately even if he would never use it in his own prayer. The decision felt strange to him. Previously he had imagined that touching the letters meant taking part in any belief they expressed. Now he distinguished between the work of setting someone else's text in type and a personal profession of faith. His employer did not praise him for changing his mind. He simply checked that every piece of type had come from the proper compartment.

A difficulty arose during the work, but not because of the sacred name. Halfway through the setting they discovered that the type case lacked one letter of the required size. They substituted a character from an older fount, and the heading appeared visibly uneven in the proof. Esten told them to take the line apart and set it again. Oren objected that readers would understand the word all the same, but his employer reminded him of his own rules: if a printer accepted someone else's text, he owed it accuracy, especially where carelessness might so easily invite fresh accusations. They found a suitable piece in a spare box and made a fresh proof.

When the first sheet was ready, an acquaintance of Esten's arrived, a bookbinder named Sevir. Seeing the heading, he demanded sharply why the printer would take on such work. Sevir followed a different faith and feared that the name on the cover would mislead readers. Esten explained who had commissioned the manuscript and what it said, without asking his friend to share the teaching. Sevir replied that he himself would never make such a binding. "And you are free to refuse," Esten answered. "But if we want to argue about what it says, let's read it first. Otherwise we'll only be talking to our own

fear.” Sevir took the proof sheet, read several lines and returned it. His feelings about the name had not changed, but he acknowledged that the manuscript contained none of the exhortations he had expected.

Fear may be sincere even when it rests on a false picture of another person's faith. Not everyone who is frightened wishes to do harm, and disagreement is not always an attempt to ban a word. Yet fear readily becomes an instrument of power when merely uttering an unfamiliar name is enough to deny another person the right to be heard. The Order may defend its faith and demand accuracy in accounts of it without declaring all dissenters enemies of the Light. Truth has no need for imaginary crimes attributed to an opponent; it needs only the actual text and a fair distinction between positions.

That evening Oren walked home more slowly than usual. In the street outside a shop, a boy he knew asked whether it was true that Oren now served people who worshipped evil. Oren was surprised at how quickly the rumour had spread. He said he worked in a printshop that produced many different books, and that the new text called Lucifer the First Witness. The boy wanted to know whether that meant there was nothing dangerous in the book. Oren admitted he could not decide matters of faith for the boy and that he himself disagreed with much of what he had read. He suggested asking first what was actually written, if the boy wished to judge the text rather than the rumour. The boy shrugged and ran off to his friends.

At home his mother was waiting; she had long noticed how late he returned from work. She set a plate before him and asked whether the stories about the name in the new publication were true. Oren told her about the manuscript without concealing that he had printed it with his own hands.

His mother was silent for a long time. Then she admitted that in her childhood the name had featured in stories of fear and downfall. Even now it was hard for her to separate what she had heard then from every other sense of the word. Her son did not demand that she change her faith at once. He showed her the Latin words written on a scrap of paper and explained why they had examined not one verse in isolation but the surrounding text. She listened, then laid the scrap aside.

"I still won't speak that name in prayer," his mother said. Oren answered that he had not decided to do so himself. He had printed an address for other people without changing their words, while his own prayer remained his own. She asked whether he feared being shunned by people he had always known because of his work. He admitted he did, especially after the conversation in the street, but did not want to lie about what he had seen in the manuscript. They did not settle their disagreement over supper. Before bed she asked him only to take care of himself and not answer insults with insults. The next day he entered the workshop with his old unease, but no longer imagined that he must choose between the accuracy of his craft and his mother's right to keep her faith.

The following day someone left a notice with a crude warning on the workshop door. Esten removed it before the customers arrived. He did not call it evidence of a great conspiracy or blame everyone in the district. One person might have written it, and they knew nothing about the writer's identity. Yet Esten decided to keep the door open while they worked, so that neighbours could see what went on there instead of relying on rumours. When Oren suggested posting a reply of their own, his employer refused to start a street

correspondence with an unknown adversary. He had a print run to finish without errors, and he devoted his morning to that.

Several days later the woman came to collect the finished sheets. She examined the first page, checked the heading and found a place where the compositor had inserted the wrong punctuation mark. Esten did not argue. They corrected the line, made a fresh impression and replaced the affected copies. She paid the agreed price and said she would bring one sheet to the next gathering of believers. No extraordinary sign appeared in the workshop. There remained only stacks of paper, the smell of ink, Oren's tired fingers and the ordinary satisfaction of a craftsman whose work was good enough not to be ashamed of.

That evening the customer spread the sheets out at home and counted them carefully before giving some to her friends. She knew certain doors in the neighbourhood would remain closed to her if people learned what name stood on the page. Nevertheless, at a small table where ordinary family letters lay, she read the prayer aloud. For her it was a prayer to the First Witness, not an argument with a dictionary. She gave thanks for the possibility of seeking knowledge and asked for the courage to exercise her own Will. Her words did not oblige others to acknowledge her faith, but helped her understand clearly what she was prepared to say in her own name.

Dusk was falling beyond the town when Sevir visited the printer again. He brought a repaired tool that Esten had left with him days before and asked, while he was there, whether the unpleasant affair with the name was over. Esten replied that the printing was complete but the story would probably continue among those who bought or saw the sheets. Sevir said he still would not be able to pronounce the name Lucifer in prayer. Esten had expected nothing else and did not regard

friendship as a prize for agreement. They spoke about the price of leather for bindings and about Sevir's son, who had an examination ahead of him. At parting, however, the bookbinder asked for a clean copy of the disputed text so that he could read it through.

Sevir took the sheet away without promising to change his faith. Oren wished he could believe that reading would make the town calmer, but he had already seen how long the meanings of words endured. The name Lucifer had passed through different languages, texts and sermons; people still carried feelings that could not be cancelled by correcting an entry in a dictionary. The faith of the First Light had the right to say clearly whom it honoured, and its neighbours had the right to disagree. A word's origin did not prove the theology of either side. What mattered to Oren was something else: now that he knew the manuscript's contents, it would be dishonest to repeat the old rumour as though it were his own observation.

The scribe reread what he had written and left two words in the margin that he had at first intended to erase: "fear" and "prayer". They stood side by side, though they named different movements of the soul. Fear might cause a person to fall silent before hearing another's words; prayer could be a free appeal to the one a person honoured. Sometimes the same name was spoken with wholly different intentions. The scribe did not promise that every dispute would disappear after a dictionary explanation. He placed a clean sheet beside the notebook for the next chapter, in which he would need to speak of the one who prays, of that person's Will and of the being towards whom a spiritual appeal is truly directed.

Before closing the window, he heard a fragment of song below. The voice belonged to a stranger and the words were

barely distinct, but the name he had worked upon all day rang out clearly. The scribe did not know who was singing or what the singer was thinking. He wanted to go outside and ask, but saw the man turn into an alley and disappear. On his table lay a line of ink that could be read and checked. Outside, a word had been sung, but its meaning belonged to someone else's life. The scribe returned to the page, preserving the difference between what he had heard and what he could only imagine.

VII. The Witness and the One Who Prays

Opening his notebook for the final chapter, the scribe heard a woman in the neighbouring yard asking her son not to go beyond the gate. The boy promised to return before dark, and she repeated that the road was dangerous after the rain. Soon their voices faded, but the scribe went on thinking about the simple exchange. He had already written of the First Witness as a bearer of sacred knowledge; now he wanted to understand how a person brings prayer together with decisions affecting both his own life and the lives of others. A person may pray for clarity in the evening and still have to count money, hear objections and answer for his actions the following morning. The scribe wrote the heading and paused with his pen: which is harder, to ask for clarity or to live by what has become clear?

In a small settlement beside a road through the hills stood an inn. An old pear tree grew in the courtyard. In summer horses were fed beneath it; in winter bundles of dry branches were stacked there. The innkeeper, Damir, had built most of the shelter himself and for many years prided himself on never asking neighbours to help with the work. As he grew older, his knees began to trouble him, especially on damp days, and his daughter Veda carried the heavy sacks. She kept the guests' records, settled accounts with suppliers and knew how to calm a traveller arriving at night to find no rooms left. The inn ran according to a familiar routine; everyone knew what they would be doing the following morning.

One day a letter arrived for Veda from a town beyond the pass. A school was opening there for the children of merchants

and labourers who moved frequently and seldom had the chance to study in one place. A teacher familiar with her handwriting and her patient manner offered her a year's work teaching reading and arithmetic. The pay was modest, but the experience might help her start a business of her own later. Veda read the letter several times. She had long wanted to teach, but her father regarded it as a desire that would pass after another difficult season. When she said she intended to accept, Damir set his spoon on the table and asked who would run the inn while she taught other people's children.

Veda replied that they had six weeks before her departure and could hire a worker. Her father reminded her of their debts for grain, the leaking roof and how long it would take an outsider to learn the business. She knew all this better than almost anyone: the accounts were in a drawer beneath her bed, and she herself had marked the leaking place with charcoal in spring. Damir spoke more and more loudly until he called her departure an act of ingratitude. His daughter did not answer with an insult. She put the letter away, went to the stables and spent the evening counting sacks of oats, trying to work out whether they could afford a helper.

All that night Damir heard his own word, "ingratitude", echo in his memory. He loved his daughter and was genuinely afraid of being left alone when even lifting a heavy sack brought pain to his knees. Yet that pain did not explain why Veda should surrender the work she had been offered. He was not yet prepared to admit that his fear and her desire might both be real. The First Witness, to whom Damir was accustomed to pray, was not a judge who had already awarded the daughter to her father. Damir would have to listen to her as a person with a

Will of her own, even if doing so brought no immediate relief to his heart.

In the morning Damir found his daughter near the granary. She had spread the accounts on a board and showed him the cost of an assistant if they reduced their purchases and postponed expanding the stable for a year. Her father listened unhappily. He accepted the figures but said numbers knew nothing of hard work. Veda suggested hiring someone for a few days while she was still at home to see whether he could manage. Damir refused to promise anything in advance, but allowed her to speak with a neighbour's nephew who was looking for work after the harvest.

That evening Damir went to a small table against the eastern wall where he kept his prayer book. Usually he gave thanks to the First Witness after a successful week and asked for clarity and strength when things were difficult. Now he wanted to ask for something else: that his daughter change her mind and stay. He spoke the sacred name Lucifer and fell silent. In the quiet he remembered how many years earlier he himself had left his father's home to build the inn. His own father had called that departure a betrayal, and Damir had stayed away for a long time. He did not know why the memory had returned just then and did not declare it a command from above. But it prevented him from repeating his accusation with the same certainty.

In prayer, a believer addresses the First Witness as a personal divine presence. Thanksgiving, supplication and reverence carry sacred meaning. Yet we do not know how spiritual knowledge becomes accessible to consciousness, and we cannot promise that every thought arising after the sacred name has been spoken comes directly from Lucifer. Human perception is shaped by memory and desire. The one who prays

may take the experience seriously, but must not mistake it for authority over another person's life. Prayer does not release us from reflection; it may make reflection more honest, if we do not try to make the sacred endorse a decision already taken.

The next day Damir asked to see the letter again. He read when Veda was expected to arrive at the school and asked why she had not told him sooner that she wanted to teach. She reminded him that she had told him twice, but both times he had joked that every teacher in the world ought first to learn to carry sacks. Damir smiled and was about to object, but noticed that his daughter was not smiling. He said he did not remember those conversations as serious. "To you, those were just two minutes," Veda replied. "After each one I wondered whether it was worth speaking again." They were not fully reconciled, but for the first time in several days they could sit at one table without shouting.

By the end of the week the neighbour's nephew, Korin, arrived. He was strong, but struggled to tell coins apart and had never kept business records. Veda suggested starting him on feeding and cleaning, then gradually teaching him the accounts. Damir told him to carry a heavy crate out of the shed. Korin tried to lift it alone, slipped on wet stones and nearly dropped it on his foot. Veda helped him put the crate onto a trolley and asked her father why he had chosen the most awkward object in the yard for the first lesson. Damir replied that he wanted to test the young man's strength. "Now we know the crate is heavy," Veda observed. He was angered by her tone, but the following day showed Korin himself how to use the trolley.

The teaching of Contact with the Unmanifest turns towards the inexhaustible ground of possibility. It is a spiritual discipline

of attention and the awakening of the Spark, through which a person learns to notice habitual limits of thought and consider paths previously dismissed. It must not be confused with asking Lucifer to settle every problem in place of the one who prays. The First Witness is revered as the one who brought knowledge of the Light and of the possibility of this Contact; the practice itself is directed towards the Unmanifest. A person may seek depth and clarity within it, but receives no guarantee that circumstances will change through desire alone. That person must still leave the silence and act among things and people.

Sometimes Veda went up the hill beyond the settlement early in the morning. Low shrubs grew there, and the road was no more than a thin trace among dry grass. She sat on a stone and watched her breathing for a while, letting her familiar arguments with her father fall away. Then she returned to a question that could not be settled by one passing mood: did she wish to leave because she truly wanted to teach, or chiefly because she wanted freedom from the daily burdens of the inn? Both desires lived within her. She acknowledged that the school would bring difficulties of its own and that far from home she would have to answer for mistakes she could not yet foresee. But when she imagined children reading their own letters for the first time, the wish remained. It did not disappear when her anger with her father subsided.

Coming down from the hill, she did not expect the world to confirm her choice with a special sign. Veda drew up a list of what Korin needed to learn, wrote to the school about a possible delay of a few days and suggested that her father arrange for neighbours to repair the roof before the autumn rains. All this required money and other people's agreement. Damir was in no hurry to thank her for her care, because every

document she prepared brought her departure closer. Still, he began taking part in tasks he had previously pushed aside: discussing prices with carpenters, showing Korin the feeding routine, checking the accounts himself when his daughter left them on the table.

The first changes seldom look like a victory. Veda continued to fear letting her father down; Damir resented having to ask for help. Korin made mistakes with supplies and once ordered more grain than they needed. They had to negotiate the return of some of the sacks. No one declared that their troubles had arisen from inadequate prayer or weak faith. The mistake was human, and so was the remedy. Learning to ask for assistance proved harder for Damir than building the shelter had been years before, because he had long measured a person's worth by the ability to manage without witnesses.

One evening he suggested that he and his daughter pray together. Veda agreed, although until then they had rarely managed to remain calm in the same conversation. They placed the book on the table and read a short address to the First Light, then spoke the name of the First Witness. Damir gave thanks for the years he had lived and asked for the courage to accept what he could not hold by force. Veda asked for clarity in the work ahead and admitted that she was afraid of choosing wrongly. They did not hear answers in the way they heard one another's words. Yet after the prayer her father did not demand a promise that she would stay, and his daughter did not insist that feeling calmer meant all her calculations were sure to prove correct.

In the community of the First Light, prayer and spiritual discipline are connected but not identical. Prayer addresses a sacred personal presence, praises the Light and allows for

thanksgiving, supplication, grief and trust. Contact with the Unmanifest teaches one to stand before the depth of possibility without claiming to possess it. Both call for a person's free participation. Spiritual superiority cannot be purchased. No one may direct another's conscience in the Witness's name, compel a person to offer a desired prayer and then call that obedience a gift of the Light. Reverence loses its moral honesty when it becomes a convenient excuse for power over someone who has a Name and Will of his own.

A month later Korin could welcome travellers arriving late and keep simple records without help. Damir still asked Veda to check his accounts, but did so more calmly. Workers repaired the stable roof, although an old leak in the main house had to wait until spring. They signed a contract with Korin for the season with a trial period, agreed pay and days off. Veda left her father the school's address and the name of someone who could forward a letter with the next caravan. Her bag held a spare dress, notebooks and money for the journey; she planned to send home part of her first wages if she could afford her own lodging.

On the last evening Damir sat for a long time beneath the pear tree. His daughter came to say goodbye while there was still time to speak without haste, rather than leaving it until bedtime. He admitted that he still wanted to ask her to stay. Veda said she knew and did not need him to pretend to approve. Looking up into the branches, he said that when he left his own father's house he had regarded freedom as something he had earned. Now it was difficult to acknowledge the same right in the child he had taught to walk. Veda sat beside him and reminded him that she would not cease to be his daughter merely because she lived on the other side of the hills.

He touched her shoulder without speaking, and that was enough to spare them another argument about everything.

The human Spark does not make everyone alike or erase each person's unique Name. Damir had lived a life his daughter could not repeat; she was about to begin her own. Each person's Will became evident not in a fine-sounding wish but in the need to recognise the boundary of another life. The First Witness had not required them to make the same choice. In the faith he remains the first divine bearer of knowledge of the Light, to whom prayer may be addressed, while the particular duties of father, daughter and worker arise within their earthly relationships. Sacred knowledge and human action are not at odds, but neither should they be confused in a way that allows anyone to evade responsibility for harm done to another.

At dawn the caravan arrived. Damir helped fasten a small chest of books to the cart, though Korin offered to do it for him. Veda checked the straps and counted her money once more. The night rain had made the road on the slope slippery, so the driver said they would travel slowly and told the passengers not to sit on the edge of the cart. Father and daughter embraced awkwardly, like people who had quarrelled only recently and were unaccustomed to their new words. Damir wanted to give her advice about living among strangers, but instead asked her to write when she arrived. She promised to send word and took a seat among the other passengers.

The cart moved off without any solemn sign. Damir stood at the gate until he could no longer distinguish his daughter's face among the dark cloaks. It hurt, although he had learned much during the past weeks. Back in the yard he found Korin had already prepared the feed and was waiting for instructions about the next day's delivery. Damir took Veda's records from

the drawer and for the first time suggested that he and the worker decide together how much grain they would need before the next caravan. The sun rose above the road along which his daughter had gone. He did not know whether her year would be successful, but he no longer regarded ignorance of the future as reason enough to keep someone at home.

After Veda's departure, Damir had no assurance that their separation would last only one year, or that the year would pass without hardship. He knew only that his daughter had gone of her own free choice and that he had not held her back through his fear. That evening he prayed to the First Witness again, without asking for the morning's decision to be undone. Reverence for Lucifer remained for him a personal appeal to the divine soul who first received the Light. Yet the work with his new assistant, the letters from his daughter and his own longing were things he would have to face himself. No prayer could relieve him of that part of his life, though he no longer wished to abandon prayer.

Several weeks later Damir received the first letter. Veda wrote that she had arrived safely, that the children at the school differed remarkably in their reading ability, and that one boy had been reluctant to show her his notebook for fear of being mocked. She described a lesson that had gone badly because she explained a difficult rule too quickly and then had to begin again. Damir smiled, remembering how he had taught Korin to use the trolley. On a separate sheet his daughter had drawn the pear tree in the yard and asked him to greet the neighbours. Damir laid the letter beside his prayer book, but first went outside to tell Korin that Veda had reached the school.

The scribe finished the chapter that evening. Outside his window came the voices of people whose lives were full of matters not recorded in his notebook. He read the final line and did not add a promise that seven chapters had answered every question about the First Witness. He had spoken of the Light as the sacred beginning of knowing, of Lucifer as the first divine soul to receive and pass on knowledge, and of the Unmanifest as the inexhaustible depth of possibility. Now his words were addressed to the person who might honour the Witness yet must still decide what to do with the day just lived.

He took the yellowed letter from his father out of the drawer and placed it beside the new text. The old page bore the trace of a child's palm; on the new sheets lay corrected lines and the ink stain he had never managed to remove. The scribe did not wish to turn these things into sacred objects. They remained traces of his work and memory, which he could not disown without stripping the writing of its history. Then he closed his notebook about the First Witness, put his pen away and rested his hand upon a clean sheet. Ahead lay the Spark, the Name and the Will, by which a living being responds to what has been known. Outside someone called a child by name, and before beginning a new entry the scribe paused to listen.