

DRY LEAVES

The sun had set. The clouds that passed over my head were gathering on the distant horizon. A cold wind, typical of an afternoon in autumn, was blowing the dry leaves past my feet.

I was seated on the edge of a road where more people have departed, than those who have returned.

I don't remember what I was thinking, or if I was actually thinking. My soul was trembling, about to launch into space, like a bird that shakes and flaps its wings, before it starts to fly.

There are moments, thanks to some abstractions, when the spirit withdraws from all that surrounds it and retreats inside itself; then, it begins to analyze and understand all the mysterious phenomena of the internal life of man.

There are others when it slips out of its physical body, loses its personality, and merges with elements of Nature; after that it somehow relates to their mode of being, and is able to understand their incomprehensible language.

I found myself in one of these latter moments when, alone and in the middle of an open field I heard some voices that were talking near me.

It was two dry leaves that were speaking, and this, more or less, is what they were saying:

"Where do you come from, sister?"

"I came here in a whirlwind, enveloped in a cloud of dust with other dry leaves, as we were driven across this endless plain. And you?"

I was floating for some time in the current of a river, until a strong wind blew me out of the mud and the reeds on the banks of the stream."

"And where are you going?"

"I don't know. Who knows where the wind will carry me?"

"Alas! Who would have ever thought we would end up being withered and dry and be dragged over the ground, we who were dressed in such beautiful colors as we waved back and forth in the air?"

"Do you remember the beautiful day when we sprouted, that peaceful morning when, rising out of the bud that served as our cradle, we opened under the kiss of the sun like a cluster of emeralds?"

"Oh! How marvelous it was to see the water of the river that washed against the roots of the aged trunk that sustained us, the clear water that reflected the blue of the skies, so that we felt like we were suspended between two blue abysses!"

"Yes, and how nice it was to look out from the top of those green branches and see ourselves mirrored in the rippling current!"

"How we used to sing together, as we copied the sound of the breeze and followed the rhythm of the waves!"

"We also watched those bright insects buzzing around us, as they unfolded their delicate wings."

"And the white moths, and the blue dragonflies that spun through the air in those strange circles, stopping for a moment on our serrated edges to tell us the secret of their mysterious love that lasts for an instant, until their life is ended."

“Each one of us was a note in the symphony of the forests.”

“Each one of us was a hue in the harmony of their color.”

“On nights when the moon was shining and its silvery light poured over the top of the mountains, do you remember how we chatted softly with each other, while cloaked in diaphanous shadows?”

“And with our soft rustling, we recounted the story of the sylphs that swung from the golden threads that spiders had hung between the trees.”

“Until we ceased our monotonous chatter, to listen with fascination to the beautiful voice of the nightingale that had chosen our trunk as a perch.”

“And its songs were so sad and so sweet that, although we were filled with happiness, it still made us weep when we heard it.”

“Oh!, and how beautiful were the drops of dew which the night spread over us, and how they sparkled with all the colors of the rainbow in the light of dawn!”

“And afterward the band of goldfinches came to fill the forest with the cheerful and noisy chirping of their songs.”

“Then, that pair of lovers came and hung a nest of flowers and feathers next to us.”

“And we served as a canopy that shielded it from the bothersome drops of rain during the summer storms.”

“We also served as a canopy that protected it from the burning rays of the sun.”

“Our life passed by just like a golden dream from which, it seemed, we would never awaken.”

“One beautiful afternoon when everything seemed to smile around us, when the setting sun lit the horizon with glowing clouds, and the pleasant aroma of the flowers rose from the moist ground, those two lovers stopped on the bank of the river at the foot of the trunk that sustained us.”

“That recollection will never be erased from my memory. She was so young, almost a child, so beautiful and pale. He asked her tenderly: ‘Why are you crying?’ ‘Forgive me for this unintentional egotism,’ she replied, as she wiped away a tear, ‘I am crying for me. I am crying for the life that is slipping away. When the sky is crowned with rays of light, and the ground is covered with verdure and flowers, when the wind carries sweet smells and the songs of birds, and one loves and is loved, life is so good!’ ‘And why can’t you go on living this life?’ he insisted, taking her hands. ‘Because that is not possible. When the dry leaves are falling, I will also die. Some day the wind will blow away their dust, and mine, and who knows where it will end?’ I heard that, and you heard it; we trembled and were silent. We’re going to die?... We’re going to die and then be blown away by the wind?... Mute and filled with terror, we kept on trembling until night finally fell. Oh!, what a horrible night!”

“For the first time our beloved nightingale failed to come and charm us with its sweet complaints.”

“After that the birds flew away, and with them, their feathered offspring. And the nest was empty, rocking slowly and sadly, like the cradle of a child who has died.”

“And the white moths and the blue dragonflies abandoned us, clearing the way for the dark insects that came to gnaw on our fibers, and then deposit their disgusting larvae in our bosom.”

“Oh, and how we struggled, while caught in the freezing grasp of the cold night air!”

“We lost both color and freshness.”

“We lost our softness, and we lost our form, and the noise we made, which had been like the sound of kisses, like the murmur of loving words, was converted into a harsh, dry, and disagreeable rattling.”

“And finally we broke loose, and began to fly through the air.”

“Trampled under the feet of an indifferent traveler, then dragged without ceasing from one place to another in the dust and the mud, I was glad when I finally came to rest for a moment in a rut of the road.”

“I have been blown around by the wind, and during my endless pilgrimage I saw, looking distractedly at the dry leaves that were floating in the water, one of those two lovers whose words warned us about the idea of death.”

“She also broke loose from her life, and she is probably resting in a grave where I may have landed for a moment!”

“Alas! She is finally sleeping and resting. But for us, when will this ceaseless journey ever come to an end?...”

“Never!... The wind let us rest for a moment, but now it has started to blow again; I feel myself lifted up, and I am carried away. Goodbye, sister!”

“Goodbye!”

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The wind that had been silent for a moment, began whistling once more, and the leaves were blown in a confusing swirl, until they were lost in the darkness of the night.

And then my mind was filled with things I cannot remember, and even if I did, I could never find the words to express them.