

## THREE DATES

In the notebook where I still have a record of the observations I made during my visits to Toledo, three dates are mentioned.

The things related to these dates are, for the most part, insignificant. But by thinking about them on nights when I couldn't sleep, I was able to pass the time composing a story that was sentimental or sad, depending on whether my mind was inclined to focus on ideas that were cheerful, or gloomy.

If, on the morning following one of these extravagant nocturnal adventures I had been able to make a written description of the unlikely events I imagine before I finally go to sleep (events which occur in that mysterious mental zone that is somewhere between a state of wakefulness and dreaming), the result would probably be a composition that was as absurd as it was unusual and interesting.

But that is not what I intend to do now. These strange, intangible fantasies are in some ways like delicate moths that would lose the golden dust on their wings if you were to try to hold them in your hands.

Therefore, I am going to limit myself to speaking briefly of three events which serve as an epigraph or a preface to the chapters of my fantastic stories, three isolated incidents that I tend to associate with a series of ideas, like a thread of light; they are three themes around which I have composed many different variations on what we might refer to as the absurd symphonies of my imagination.

### I

In Toledo there is a dark and narrow street that bears the imprint of many generations of people who traveled over it, and it speaks eloquently to the eyes of the artist, revealing to him the things related to the unique characteristics of the ideas and the customs of each century. I would close off this street with a barricade, and on the barricade I would place a sign with these words:

“In the name of poets and artists, in the name of those who dream and those who wish to study the past, everyone is forbidden to touch even one of these bricks with their destructive and mundane hands.”

At the entrance to one end of this street there is a massive arch that leads to a covered passageway. On the keystone of the arch is a coat of arms that has been corroded by the passage of time, where strands of ivy now float over the helmet and crown it like a plume of feathers.

Fastened to the wall below this arch is a picture drawn on a board, and inside an ornate gilded frame there is an inscription that is impossible to read. There is a small lantern hanging from a cord, and some votive offerings made of wax.

Farther back under the arch, bathed in shadows which give them an air of mystery and sadness, is a row of houses with different shapes and colors along each side of the street. Some are made of rough-hewn stones without any decoration except a crudely sculptured

coat of arms above the doorway; others are made of bricks and have a Moorish arch that serves as an entrance; two or three mullioned windows provide an opening in a cracked wall, and above an enclosed balcony is a tall weather vane. Then, there are those houses that do not belong to any particular architectural style but which, nevertheless, contain a mixture of all the others. Some have a wooden balcony protruding from the wall; others have a Gothic window adorned with pots of flowers; then, there are those that have colorful tiles around their doorframe, large nails sticking out of the boards, and some columns, perhaps from a Moorish alcazar, embedded in the the walls.

An opulent palace used as the neighborhood corral, the house of a fakir inhabited by a priest, a Jewish synagogue transformed into a Christian house of prayer, a convent built over the foundation of a Moorish mosque where the tower is still standing; in short, an incredible number of strange, picturesque, and contrasting features from different races, cultures, and times intermixed, as it were, within a short stretch of land.

These are things you would find in this street which has been here for many centuries, a dark and narrow, ill-formed street with an endless number of different features, since all the people built their houses according to their own preference; a street that was full of capricious designs which never cease to offer something new to the one who studies it.

The first time I was in Toledo I went to make sketches of San Juan de los Reyes, and in order to get to the monastery from the inn where I was staying, I had to travel through the entire length of this street.

I almost always traveled without meeting another person, without hearing any noise other than the sound of my footsteps, and without ever happening to see the face of an old woman or some curious young girl peering out of the windows of a balcony, the crack of a door, or the bars of an iron grate. Sometimes it seemed as if I was passing through a deserted city that had been abandoned since the remote past.

One afternoon, however, as I was passing by an old, ramshackle house with several windows of different sizes and shapes, I happened to notice one of them in particular. There was a large pointed arch that was surrounded by a garland of leaves, and inside it was a thin, white wall which looked like it had been recently built. In the center of the wall was a small window with an iron grate, a pot of bluebells, some stained glass, and a curtain of semi-transparent white cloth.

The unusual shape and position of the window was enough to attract my attention all by itself; but the thing which made me notice it was that, as I looked at it, I saw the curtain rise and then fall again. It happened so quickly that I was not able to see the person who was looking out at me for an instant.

As I kept walking, I continued thinking about that window, or about the raised curtain, or rather, about the woman who raised it, because in my mind it was clear: only a woman would look out of that white window full of flowers...; and when I say a woman, it goes without saying that I mean a woman who was young and beautiful.

The next afternoon I went by there again, still thinking about what I had seen before, and I walked firmly, filling the quiet street with the sound of my feet. When I got there, I looked at the window and, once again, the curtain was raised.

The truth of the matter is that behind it I did not see anything, but with my senses I felt the presence of a woman. That day I made two or three sketches. On other days when I passed by that house, each time the curtain was raised, and it stayed up until my eyes could no longer see it.

I was not making progress with my sketches. In the cloister of San Juan de los Reyes bathed in gloomy melancholy, seated on the broken capital of a fallen column with my drawing board on my knees and my head in my hands, I listened to the sound of the wind in the leaves, and I dreamed of that window and that woman. Oh, the impossible stories that filled my mind! I knew her. I even knew her name, and the color of her eyes.

I saw her passing through the large abandoned patios of that ancient house, filling them with the joy of her presence, like a ray of sunlight that gilds some ruins. Another time I seemed to see her in a garden with dark stone walls and some old trees that must have always surrounded that house like a Gothic palace where she lived. I saw her sitting on a stone bench and heard her sigh as she was thinking of... who knows! Perhaps, of me. Did I say perhaps?... Oh yes, surely of me! Oh, how many dreams, how many fantasies, how much poetry, that window awakened in my soul during my visit to Toledo!...

However, the time came when I had to leave the city. One day, sad and regretful, I put my papers and my drawing board in my satchel and, after bidding goodbye to the city, I took a seat in the coach to Madrid.

Then, while the tops of the tallest buildings of Toledo were still visible on the horizon, I stuck my head out of the window of the coach to gaze at it again, and I thought about the street with that window.

As we passed over a hill that hid the city from sight, I sat down again and, since my satchel was under my arm, I took out a pencil and a paper and wrote down a date. It was the first of three, which I call "The date of the window."

## II

A few months later, I had another opportunity to leave Madrid for several days. I cleaned the dust from my drawing board and, after placing it with some papers and a few pencils in my satchel, and regretting the fact that they had not finished constructing the railroad, I squeezed into the coach to start traveling in the opposite direction from the one that was described in the famous play by Tirso de Molina, *From Toledo to Madrid*.

When I finally arrived and settled down in the historic city, I made it a point to return to all the places which had captured my interest during my first visit. I also wanted to see several others that I knew only by name.

So I spent a large part of the time I had at my disposal making several long and solitary artistic expeditions through the older parts of the city, and I took a great deal of pleasure from threading my way through the confusing labyrinth of dead-end streets and narrow passageways, and up and down the steep hillsides.

On the last afternoon I would spend in Toledo during this visit, after traveling through some streets that were completely unknown to me, I arrived at a large plaza that seemed to have been forgotten and was located in an isolated corner of the city.

Spread over it were discarded objects that had been there so long they had become part of the landscape which had taken on the uneven and hilly aspect of a miniature Switzerland. In the hills and ravines formed by its undulations there were weeds that had assumed colossal proportions, groups of gigantic nettles, and clusters of white bellflowers, as well as a garden where some unknown type of grass was slowly waving in the breeze, along with all the other parasitic plants and foliage.

Scattered over the ground, half-buried and almost hidden by the weeds, were hundreds of broken fragments of many different things that had been abandoned there over time and were now forming a collection of items that could easily serve as the basis for a course in historical geology.

Enamelled colored Moorish tiles, the remains of marble and jasper columns, broken bits of different kinds of bricks, large pieces of stone covered with green moss, sticks of wood that had almost turned to dust, the remains of coffered ceilings, shreds of cloth, strips of leather, and hundreds of other formless and nameless objects covered the ground and attracted attention, along with a myriad of sparks that were shining over the foliage like a handful of diamonds lying in a heap which, seen from up close, were nothing more than tiny shards of glass from broken pitchers, plates, and jars, which reflected the light of the sun, forming a microscopic network of stars.

The surface of that plaza was covered in some places with tiny stones of different shades of color, and in others with large pieces of slate which made it look, as we said, like a garden of parasitic plants, or a deserted and uncultivated field.

And the different buildings, which cropped up here and there, were no less strange or worthy of attention.

On one side was a long row of small, dark houses, with chimneys, weather-vanes and tiles on their roofs, their marble corner posts fastened with iron rings, narrow balconies, windows with flower pots, and lamps with a wire net that protected the glass from the stones thrown by neighborhood boys.

Another side had a thick, blackened wall that was full of cracks and crevices where the heads of snakes with shining eyes peered out through the moss. There was also a row of houses built with large stone blocks, with hollow doorways and balconies made of mortar and stone. Forming a right-angle at one end of this row of houses was a brick wall that, in some places, had patches of red, green, or yellow, and was covered with dry hay mixed with the stems of some creepers.

All this was part of the scene which filled my eyes and caught my attention as I entered the plaza, but the real purpose of my visit was to examine the building which rose up at the rear of the plaza, a building that was even more unusual and infinitely more beautiful in its strange artistic design, than all the others which surrounded it.

“Yes, this is what I was looking for!” I exclaimed when I saw it.

Then, sitting down on a block of stone and placing my drawing board on my knees, I sharpened a pencil and prepared to trace the outlines of its irregular shape and strange design in order to preserve them forever in my memory.

If I were able to include a replica of the imperfect copy I made with my pencil, I could save myself a mountain of words, and I could give my readers a much better picture than any verbal description.

Since that is not possible, I will have to try to describe it in the best possible way, so that reading these humble lines will give the reader at least a remote idea of its incredibly wonderful reality.

So, picture a Moorish palace with horseshoe-shaped doors, its walls filled with many interconnected arches that spread over a strip of brilliantly-colored tiles: here you can see the hollow of an arch, divided in two by a slender column surrounded by a framework of elaborate scrollwork; there a watchtower rises up, its enclosed gallery covered with green and yellow tiles and its golden spire that is lost in the void; further away, you can make

out a cupola over a section that is painted with gold and blue, and the enclosed arcades with green, slanted shutters which, when they are opened, offer a view of the gardens, with a row of myrtle trees, clusters of laurel, and raised fountains. Everything is unique, everything is harmonious, although some parts are irregular; it is all characteristic of the luxury and the wonder of its interior, and everything is indicative of the character and the customs of its inhabitants.

The wealthy Arab who owned this building finally abandoned it. The passage of time was beginning to cause the walls to weaken, the colors to fade, and the marble to decay. Sometime later, a Castilian monarch chose this crumbling fortress as his home, and in one place he tore off the canvas covering an arch and adorned it with a border of shields within which there was a wreath of thistle and clover. In another place he erected a massive turret of stone with narrow windows and pointed battlements. In a separate wing he added a number of dark, elevated rooms where in once place you can see pieces of tiling, and in another a row of arches, or a single arch, or a larger, horse-shoe shaped arch that serves as the entrance to an imposing Gothic hall.

But the time came when the monarch also abandoned this residence and ceded it to a religious community whose members reconstructed it again, adding even more unusual features to the original Moorish fortress. They covered the windows with lattices; inside the arches they placed the emblem of their religion carved in granite; where once there were tamarind and laurel trees, they planted dark and melancholy cypresses, and using some parts, and covering up others, they created the most bizarre and unusual combination of features you could ever imagine.

Rising above the entrance to the church where the images of saints, angels and virgins are depicted above serpents, monsters and dragons of stone, you can see a slender minaret adorned with Moorish designs; next to a narrow opening in a wall whose stones are broken is an altarpiece; the hollows are lined with bricks like a chessboard; there are crosses on all of the peaks and, finally, there is a bell tower whose bells ring somberly, day and night, bells that peal under the power of an invisible hand, bells whose distant tolling causes involuntary tears and sadness.

Now that the years have passed, the color of the building has changed so that it has a darker shade that harmonizes with the ivy that grows in its cracks.

Storks have their nest on top of the tower, and swifts, under the eaves of the tiled roof; swallows nestle under the canopies of granite, and owls choose the upper windows for their lair where, at night, they frighten old women and timid children with the phosphorescent glow of their eyes and their strange, sharp hooting.

Only all these changes, together with all these special circumstances, could have ever produced such an unusual building, so full of contrasts and different memories, like the one that greeted my eyes that afternoon, and I am now trying in vain to describe.

I had begun to sketch it on the sheets in my drawing kit; the sun was touching only the tallest steeples of the city, and the evening breeze was starting to caress my brow when, lost in the contemplation of the silent remains of other ages that were more poetic than today's events, which are pure prose, I dropped my pencil and, setting aside my drawing, I leaned back against the wall behind me and gave myself over completely to the dreams of my imagination. What was I thinking? I don't know how I could possibly describe it. I imagined what must have happened when walls tumbled down and others were raised. I pictured some people; that is, I saw some women, who were replaced by other women,

and then both groups were turned to dust. A gust of wind carried away the beauty, the beauty of the secret sighs, and the passions which were the source of so many pleasures. Then... How can I describe it?... In the confusion I saw many things mixed together: dressing rooms of lace and stucco with different aromas and beds of flowers; dark, narrow cells with a prayer stool and a crucifix; at the foot of the crucifix, an open book and, on the book, a skull; splendid halls covered with tapestries and adorned with trophies of war, and many women moving back and forth before my eyes: tall nuns, that were pale and slender; dark figures with red lips and black eyes; women with an elegant profile, a proud bearing, and a majestic carriage.

All these things I saw, and many more that have been forgotten, intangible things that were impossible to describe with words, when suddenly, I sat up in my seat and passed my hand in front of my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming. I straightened up further and fixed my eyes on one of the windows of the convent.

I had definitely seen it, there was no doubt; I had seen it clearly, a pure white hand that was reaching out from one of the openings in the wall and had waved at me several times, as if it were giving me a silent, affectionate greeting. And it was greeting me; I could not be mistaken... Because at that time I was alone, completely alone, in the plaza.

I waited in vain all night long in the same place, without ever taking my eyes off that window in the convent. I returned several times and went to sit on the stone where I had seen the mysterious hand, which had become the object of my dreams at night, and my manias during the day. But I never saw it again...

The time came when I had to depart from Toledo, leaving behind all the useless and bizarre illusions that had filled my imagination. I stored my papers in my drawing kit with a sigh. But before I closed it, I wrote down another date, the second, which I called "The date of the hand." And as I wrote, I looked for a moment at the earlier one, the one of the window, and I could not help but my smile at my madness.

### III

After the strange adventure which I have just described, I did not return to Toledo for almost a year, and during that time, I never stopped thinking about what had happened, at first all the time and with all the details, then, with less frequency, and finally, with so much vagueness that I began to think that I must have been the victim of an illusion, or a dream.

Nevertheless, I had barely arrived at the city which, with some justification, they call the "Spanish Rome," when the memories spread through my mind again, and I began to roam through the streets without any fixed purpose, and without any preconceived idea of where I was going.

The day seemed to be filled with sadness, a sadness that covered all that you see, and all that you hear. The sky was the color of lead, and the buildings seemed to be older, stranger, and more darkened. The wind moaned through the confused and narrow streets, its gusts carrying the sound of some unintelligible words, the ringing of bells, and the distant echoes of faraway music, like the lost notes of some mysterious symphony. The cold, damp atmosphere chilled my forehead, and you could say that it also chilled my soul with its glacial breath.

I walked for several hours through the most isolated and deserted barrios, absorbed in my confused thoughts and, contrary to my usual practice, with my eyes gazing into space, not paying any attention to an unusual architectural feature, to a monument of unknown origin, or to some marvelous work of art. In other words, I looked at none of the things I usually examined in minute detail, whenever I came in contact with a work of art, or a historic location.

The sky was becoming darker and darker, the wind was blowing harder, and I started to feel the chill of drops of frozen rain hitting my face when, without knowing how I got there, since I was not paying any attention to where I was headed, I arrived at the isolated plaza which my readers have already heard me describe.

When I realized where I was, I came out of the lethargy into which I had fallen, as if I had suddenly been shaken out of a dream.

I looked around. Everything was as I left it. No, that is not true: it was even more sad. I don't know if it was the darkness of the sky, the lack of greenness, or my state of mind, that was the cause of such sadness; but nevertheless, between the feeling I had when I saw it for the first time, and the impression I had now, there was the same distance which separates sorrow from bitterness.

For a few moments I contemplated the somber convent, which on this occasion seemed even more somber than before; and I was about to leave, when I heard the sound of a bell, a bell ringing slowly and sounding sorrowful, accompanied by another bell that made a contrasting sound, a bell that rang constantly, with a ringing so sharp and rapid that it almost made you dizzy.

Nothing could be stranger than that building with its black outline silhouetted against the sky like a mountain with several oddly-shaped peaks, a mountain which was speaking with the bronze tongues of its bells that seemed to be moving under the control of an invisible power, one bell like it was crying, and the other with a strident clanging like the laughter of a madwoman.

Now and then, mixed with the confusing sound of the two bells, I also seemed to hear the notes of an organ and the words of a solemn, religious hymn.

I changed my mind and, instead of leaving, I walked over to the door of the church and asked one of the ragged beggars who was sitting on the stone steps:

“What is happening here?”

“A taking of vows,” the poor man said, interrupting the prayer he was murmuring, and then continuing to say it again, after kissing the copper coin I had given him when I asked my question.

I had never witnessed this ceremony, nor had I ever seen the interior of the church of this convent, so both of these things made me decide to go inside.

The church was tall and dark; its naves were flanked by two rows of slender columns leading to a chancel that was located on an octagonal base above which were several tall, arched windows. The main altar was in the rear, under a Renaissance style dome decorated with angels holding shields, griffons whose limbs looked like a profuse tangle of leaves, cornices with gilded moldings, rosettes, and many other elegant designs. Surrounding the naves there was a large number of dark chapels in the rear of which were some lamps that glowed like stars in the night sky. Some of the chapels had a Moorish design, and others were Gothic or Baroque; some were enclosed with magnificent iron balustrades and others with humble wooden railings; some were sunken in darkness with

an old marble tomb in front of the altar; others were brightly lit with an elegantly clothed statue that was surrounded by silver or wax votive offerings adorned with colorful ribbons.

One of the features which contributed most to the mysterious character of the church, which in its artistic confusion was entirely harmonious with the rest of the convent, was the amazing illumination that filled it. From silver and copper lamps hanging under the ceiling, from candles on the altars, and from narrow windows in the walls came streams of light with many different colors: white light from the street came through the skylights in the dome and red light, from the wax candles on the altars; and many different colors entered through stained-glass in the rose windows. All of these different colors that filled the church seemed to compete against each other, with a brilliance that made the darkness of the chapels more obvious.

In spite of the important religious service that was taking place, the number of those who were attending was small. The ceremony had begun some time ago and was now about to conclude. As I watched, the priests who had officiated during the service were coming down the carpeted steps from the main altar, surrounded by a cloud of bluish incense floating in the air, and they began to walk toward the choir where the nuns were singing a hymn.

I leaned forward so that I could look through the iron grille that divided the interior of the church. I was not certain, but it seemed to me that I ought to be able to recognize the woman whose hand I had seen for an instant, and I opened my eyes as wide as possible in order to give them more illumination and strength to look toward the rear of the choir. But it was to no avail, since little or nothing could be seen through the bars of the grille. Like white and black ghosts that were dimly illuminated by the light from the candles, I made out a long row of tall, pointed seats underneath some canopies, and in the darkness beneath them I could just see the indistinct forms of the nuns dressed in their long robes. Standing out in the darkness was a crucifix lit by four candles that looked like the points of light you see in the paintings by Rembrandt, which make the shadows seem to be more visible. Unfortunately, this was all that I was able to see from the place where I was standing.

The priests dressed in cassocks trimmed with gold were preceded by acolytes carrying a silver cross with two candles, followed by others swinging censers that filled the air with incense. They passed in front of the faithful who kissed their hands, or the edge of their robes, until they finally stopped at the railing of the choir.

Until that moment, because of the darkness, I had not been able to distinguish which one was the virgin who would be dedicated to the Lord.

Have you not seen in the last moment of twilight, when a strip of fog rises over a river, over the surface of a swamp, or mountain chasm, looking like a woman whose skirt is trailing when she walks, or like a white veil fastened to the hair of some sylph, or like a ghost who rises into the air covering its yellow bones with a shroud through which you could see the angular shape of its body? Well, a hallucination like that was what I experienced that night when I leaned against the grille and peered into the dark depths of the choir and saw that tall and slender, white figure.

Her face was not visible. She came to stand in front of the four candles of the crucifix, and the beams created a halo of light around her head, bathing the rest of her body in an uncertain shadow.

A profound silence reigned. All eyes were focused on her, and the final part of the ceremony began.

Murmuring some unintelligible words, words that were repeated softly by the priests, the Abbess pulled off the crown of flowers the woman was wearing and tossed it aside. The poor flowers! They were the last flowers the woman would ever wear, even though she was the sister of flowers, like all women.

After that, her veil was removed and the blond hair that dropped like a golden cascade over her back and her shoulders could only be seen for an instant, when a sharp metallic sound filled the silence that reigned over the faithful, and the marvelous head of hair was quickly cut off so the locks that once had been caressed by the air slid down and fell on the ground.

The Abbess murmured more unintelligible words, that the priests repeated, and then all was silent once more. Only some quiet moaning was heard from time to time in the distance. It was the wind blowing through the high arches of the towers as it shook the stained-glass windows.

The woman was motionless, motionless and pale, like a Virgin of stone taken from the niche of a Gothic cloister.

They removed the jewels that covered her arms and her neck, and then they removed her wedding dress, a dress that seemed to be made for a lover to unfasten the clasps with a trembling and loving hand.

The mystical Husband was waiting for his wife. Where? Somewhere beyond this life he must have removed the slab from the tomb and invited her to enter like the timid wife who crosses the threshold of married life, because she fell to the ground like a corpse. As though it were dirt, the nuns threw handfuls of flowers over her body, while they sang a sorrowful hymn. With deep and mournful voices the priests began to recite the mass for the dead, accompanied by some musical instruments that seemed to weep, increasing the sensation of dread which was inspired by the sad words which were repeated.

*“De profundis clamavi ad Te!”* the nuns chanted from the depths of the choir with sad and sorrowful voices.

*“Dies irae, dies illa!”* the priests responded with booming voices, and all the time the bells were tolling so slowly that, with each stroke, the bronze resounded with a strange, lugubrious peal.

I was moved. No... not moved; terrified. It seemed like I was witnessing something supernatural; I felt like they were taking something precious from my life and that around me there was only emptiness; I felt like I had lost something... like a father, a mother, or a beloved woman; and I felt an immense sadness I cannot describe, something that only those who have felt a similar sensation could possibly understand.

I was riveted in that place, with my eyes staring and my body trembling, until the new nun rose to her feet and the Abbess dressed her in a habit. The other nuns took candles in their hands and, in two long rows, they formed a procession that led her toward the rear of the choir.

There in the shadows I saw a light glowing; it was the door to the rest of the convent which had opened. As she set foot on the threshold, the new nun turned around to look at the altar one last time. When the glow from the lights illuminated her, I was finally able to see her face. And when I did, I gave a sharp cry. I knew that woman; I had never seen her before, but I knew her, from having encountered her in dreams; she was one of those

beings whom the soul recognizes, or remembers, perhaps from having known them in some better world and whom, when we come down to this one, we never forget.

I pressed forward and tried to call out to her; then, I don't know what happened; I felt a sensation of vertigo, and at that moment the door closed... forever. The priests shouted "*Hosanna*," incense floated in the air, the organ emitted a thundering torrent of notes, and the bells in the towers began to ring, resounding with frightening urgency.

All that boisterous happiness made my hair stand on end, and I turned to look around, searching for someone who might have been her parents, or a member of her family. But there was no one like that.

"Maybe she was alone in the world," I murmured, without being able to restrain a tear that fell from my eyes.

"May God give you happiness in the cloister that you never had in this world!" said an old woman who was standing next to me, holding on to the grille as she wept.

"Did you know her?" I asked.

"The poor thing! Yes, I knew her. I was there when she was born, and she grew up in my arms."

"Why is she taking vows?"

"Because she was alone in the world. A little more than a year ago, her mother and father died of cholera. When he saw that she was orphaned and abandoned, the Dean told her she should do this. So what else could she do?..."

"And who was she?"

"The daughter of a servant of Count C\*\*\*, whom I also served, until his death."

"Where did she live?"

When I heard the name of the street, I couldn't help but express my surprise. The light of an idea flashed in my mind, a light that rapidly grew stronger and brighter and began to spread through my thoughts, as I started to see its relation to things in my memory. And then I understood everything; or at least... I thought I understood.

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I never gave that date a name, and I never wrote it down anywhere. But then, that is not completely correct, because I have inscribed it in a place where no one else can ever read it, and where it will never be erased.

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Sometimes I think about those events. Today, as I write about them here, I ask myself: at the mysterious hour of twilight when the warm, spring breeze reaches the most isolated places, bringing with it memories of the outside world, I wonder if, alone and lost in the darkness of a Gothic cloister, some woman will sigh, when she remembers those three dates? Who knows!...

Oh, and if she did sigh, where would that sigh be?...