

Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
Ministério Seara Ágape

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Holders of power



Ministério Seara Ágape
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Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
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Thanks to the Lord that, through His Spirit, has given me the strength to resist temptations, overthrowing the false gods of my life and putting Him above them all. I raise the true altar in my heart to Him. I thank the Lord, who has molded me to confront the powerful of this world, giving me security in the strength and in the power of His word.

This book is dedicated to those who feel weak and powerless before their enemies, and need to know the chains where they are caught, in order to find true freedom in Christ.

“You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?” (Jn. 5: 39-44)

Introduction

Stop for a moment and watch your life. Do you feel free, really? Observe your family and your relationships... Are they delightful, pleasant? Is there mutual cooperation, edification and reciprocity? How is your profession? Are you satisfied with it? Do you do what you like? Do you feel rewarded and honored in your work? Do you receive compliment for what you do or are you constantly fighting to prove your potential? Now we come to a delicate subject: how is your relationship with God? Do you simply know that He exists, that He is good and wants your well-being, but 'leave Him alone' without 'bothering Him' for anything? Or do you have a personal relationship from friend to friend, from father to son, talking with Him every day and wishing that He participates in your life and your choices?

Today, we'll talk about the five major gods who most occupy people's lives nowadays. In fact, they are not spiritual entities as we know many out there, but habits generated and assumed by our own flesh, already 'automatic' or unconscious, but that occupy the place of the true God, preventing the flow of the Holy Spirit in His fullness.

In Exodus 20: 2-3, the Lord tells Moses to communicate to the Israelites the Ten Commandments, of which the first is: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."

God made it clear here that it was He who had taken the people from the hands of Pharaoh, showing His power over all the gods of Egypt. Hence, He was expressing His desire of wanting to be unconditionally worshiped above any other god.

As Christians we no longer worship other spiritual entities. However, we can keep ingrained within us other idolatries, which we take on and admit they are just habits, weaknesses of character, family customs or personal tastes, but in fact, they are worldly behaviors of humanity in general, gods that need to be dethroned in order to walk in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. All that binds us and prevents us from following the will of God is an idol. Even some habits such as novella (or series of TV), sex, magazines, excessive care with the house, with the car or with family members, excessive care with work (profession), with the appearance and clothing, vanity of being always informed about everything that happens in order to have something to talk to people, to be always displaying an outward appearance of balance and well-being to say that there is nothing wrong with us, to be always successful in the profession and even in the ministry just to say that we are capable of everything are examples of idolatry that may be in our lives in a clear or disguised way, but they put themselves in the place of God and prevent us from being one hundred percent in His presence.

Thus, the main five idols that most people are putting before God are: money, pleasure, power, fame and knowledge. And behind them all, like an instigator that stimulates and encourages all of them, there is unbridled technology, social networks and digital marketing, the fever of the moment that terribly contaminates people's lives and affronts God Himself, in the sense of stimulating His own people to misuse these resources to preach His word. Fame, anxiety and pressure for sales and the power of artificial intelligence are subtly stealing people's faith and reasoning, as a dirty strategy of this anti-Christian world system. Short messages on social media, written or in video, do not fill the void or edify the soul, and still bring with them the spirit of consumerism and competition, comparison and a false appearance of success; consequently, destroying the self-esteem and personality of the youngest and weakest in faith.

What we see is gossip about other people's lives, instead of self-growth and spiritual self-development. And the pressure of digital marketing, crazy computerization

and money becomes unbearable, forcing human beings to even corrupt their moral values. Anyone who has communion with the Holy Spirit can understand this.

The first god we'll talk about is money. A person can be rich or poor; can want wealth or be content with what he has, but often the spirit of misery or avarice that dominates him takes his soul away from the need to seek God in a deeper way. This makes him act in a possessive or jealous way with what is his and does not let the spiritual truths about the prosperity of God penetrate his heart. He gives externally even to show to others, but internally, his heart is still stingy and miserly. He begins to measure the people around him by the profit or loss that they can give him. He does arithmetical calculations in all situations and no longer believes in God's unexpected provision. He is unable to lend anything that is his, by jealousy of that thing is being used and spent. He lives below anxiety and suffers in anticipation by the possibility of an extra expense. He goes to the church and gives the tithe out of obligation, when he decides to give, for he wonders what the pastor will do with his money. He is unable to sow in God's work using any child of His, because "He does nothing more than an obligation!" He refrains from moments of joy and fellowship in the company of someone because they will spend money. He keeps broken things at home or what he no longer uses. He lives in poverty his entire life to save for old age or for his offspring (there's nothing wrong with that, to think about old age or children, unless that behavior becomes sickly). In this topic, not only misery or avarice comes into play, but also greed and the desire to have more and more money, to buy and consume what the person does not even need. And what stimulates and sustains this is the malignant disease of advertising and aggressive marketing strategy, which invades the limits, to where it has no right to enter. These and other examples can be found when money becomes a God.

Another idol is pleasure, which often impedes the person from seeking God's presence because 'it's tiresome', 'it will take a long time', 'it requires sacrifice, discipline and surrender' or because 'it hurts'. The person lives for the things he likes and just does what he wants and likes and, of course, nothing he does has an affinity with the things of God, only with the things of the world. It is the case of someone who has no commitment to anything or to anyone who may require care or a portion of his time because this would entail some burden and, from his point of view life is always 'light' and enjoyable, without any problems. He is able to bind emotionally to who is not reliable or who is not of God's will because it gives pleasure to be with that person, even if he steals his time of prayer or communion with Him.

The third kind of god that needs to be dethroned is power, which transforms the person who owns it into a real dictator or manipulator, if this power is not in God's hands. The person starts to use it to corrupt, to abuse and to misguide the lives of other people and even his own. He doesn't know how to exercise it in love for the good of others. The word of God says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3: 8) and He used the power granted to Him by the Father to accomplish this. In the bible, the word 'power' has three meanings in Greek. In first and second place, *exousia* (ἐξουσία – Strong #1849; power, authority, delegated influence, jurisdiction, liberty, right, strength – Jn. 1: 12) and *dunamis* (or *dunamei* – δύναμις – Strong #g1411; power to perform miracles – Lk. 24: 49) and it is bestowed by the Holy Spirit. However, there is a primordial condition for this to be exercised, which is love, as it is written in 1 Cor. 13: 1-13. Without the love of God, we cannot exercise His power on earth for the good of His people. The world's power corrupts, but the power of God enables us to perform here everything He did. It's no use asking for God's power, without asking first for His love (Agape) and His wisdom to exercise this power. The power that is mentioned here

is a force directed at a target to exercise divine authority or to perform a specific work such as healing, deliverance, miracles and releasing of potentials and of spiritual gifts. There is a third Greek word, used more rarely (only 9 times in the NT): *kratos* (κράτος – Strong # g2904), which means: great vigor, glory, dominion, might, power, strength, possession generally over something physical, material, as a holding, homestead (Lk. 1: 51; Acts 19: 20; Col. 1: 11; 1 Tim. 6: 16; Heb. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 4: 11; 1 Pet. 5: 11; Jude 1: 25; Rev. 1: 6).

The fourth god who must fall is fame. The desire to be seen and recognized and honored is innate in humans and it is good to keep self-esteem, but when this desire becomes unreasonable or egocentric, occupying or taking the place of others, it should be reassessed and treated. The work for God is usually done in a meek, humble and quiet way, without fanfare, competition and the fame that the world imposes on us, without its help to express our worship. We don't need to do the Lord's work under lights or searchlights; however, when His light begins to shine on us, it is logical that we will be seen. Therefore, we must always ask for divine wisdom and humility to deal with what He gives us so that the glory is only His and not ours, but we should never fail to show our authority and our identity as children and servants of the Most High. It was the Lord Himself who said that He would make us the head, and not the tail. We can see in the gospels that Jesus, especially at the beginning of His ministry, tried not to be seen and even asked for those that He healed not to tell anyone anything, for it was not yet His time to appear publicly and draw the attention of the Jewish or Roman authorities. But over the course of His ministry, we can see that His fame spread through the cities because His light was visible. He Himself told us that we are the light of the world and our good works need to be seen so that others may glorify the Father in heaven. We must keep in mind that the impossible we perform comes from Him alone, not from us. We can even have the desire to heal people and resurrect the dead, but nothing inside us has power to do so. Only when He manifests Himself with anointing on our lives is that we can accomplish these things. Therefore, the fame that a Christian should seek is the fame for the kingdom of God. As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The last god to be defeated is knowledge. It is no use we have knowledge in all subjects if it is just to feed our ego and our vanity or to humiliate people. No kind of knowledge that the Lord gives us is for nothing or for selfish purposes. On the contrary, the knowledge that the Lord gives us are 'talents' to be multiplied to help the brothers and make them happy and conscious of the divine capacity that is already placed within them. The knowledge that He gives us has the purpose to help others to take possession of the kingdom of God and their blessings. Everything the Lord gives us generates responsibility, therefore we should not seek knowledge in order to be above anyone or to compete, but to give Him multiplied what He has put in our hands. Like everything that He gives us, we must also place the knowledge in His hands so that He Himself helps us to use it with wisdom and discernment. We should ask Him to give us only what we can bear and manage, otherwise we'll turn aside by a path of death (Prov. 30: 7-9, for example: "Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God."). All the knowledge we have, our diplomas and professional merits were allowed by Him; it was not by our own strength that we conquered them. He allowed us to have them. And here I speak again of Satan's evil and subtle strategy using media, especially the internet with its social networks and marketing, where worldly, technological and business knowledge, has

become indispensable to be successful, to achieve fame and make people feel new pleasures.

This book is an allegory that will lead us to experience what was explained above, that is, each character will be an example of how things happen. We will use some animals as symbols of these gods, as well as symbol of those who let themselves be enslaved by them.

Here, we're going to find an interesting revelation, which is the psychological meaning of Ancient times in relation to animals. We can remember the permissions and prohibitions from God about eating or not eating some of them. Although the Lord has aimed, above all, to the ceremonial purpose of them, that is, their use in the real worship to Him and not idolatrous worship, the Jews of those times saw the animals as a symbol of sin or virtue. So, they thought that if they ate some of them, their qualities would come into their spirit. Superstition or not, still today we look at certain animals and feel something within us that brings us pleasure or disgust. Those feelings are the expression of what they convey to us, psychologically speaking.

Describing our characters, the god of money will be personified in the rat. Biblically speaking, 'rat' means 'plague, disease and theft.' It's an animal that lays up treasure. It picks up in the sly and leads to its burrow, where it can eat safely, without predators. Here it represents greed, theft, misery, jealousy, a possessive character, manipulation and all deformities of character which arise when money becomes a god. As its personal advisor, we will use a bird of prey (in this case, the hawk), because they usually feed on carrion (corpse), which in itself was forbidden by God and made a person unclean, for it brought sin, and consequently, death to his interior. A bird of prey is a symbol of those who live on the misfortune of someone else, death, sin, theft and extortion. All this is logically connected to money, or rather, the misuse of it.

The god of pleasure will be symbolized by the monkey, for it is a figure of joy, laughter, jokes, clowning, mockery and irreverence. His personal advisor will be the serpent, a symbol of betrayal and seduction. Often, to achieve pleasure, a person can betray someone's trust or use of seduction to achieve his target.

The god of power will be represented by the lion, symbol of royalty, power, authority, leadership, strength, action of spiritual powers over us. In our particular case, we'll show how this power can be misused if its owner is not in the service of God. His advisor will be the chameleon. It has the characteristic of changing its color to camouflage itself and hide from predators. As a strategy of ecological chain, this quality is good for the animal because it was given by the Creator Himself for its defense. However, for us it is not a virtue because it shows our instability and lack of courage in showing ourselves as we really are and to face the enemy 'face to face.' Chameleon symbolizes dissimulation, pretense, fickleness, unsteadiness, unreliability, cowardice and camouflage according to what is convenient.

The god of fame will be personified by the peacock. The correlation between the animal and the characteristic we are describing is more than obvious. It symbolizes vanity, presumption, arrogance and snobbery. As its advisor, we will use the elephant, for to achieve fame and success, one steps on someone else, one passes over the rules without the least subtlety or respect for someone who is below.

The last god of which we'll speak is knowledge or wisdom (human, well understood), here represented by the owl. Although for some people it seems to be an ominous animal, for the Greeks it is a symbol of wisdom. The owl sees more clearly at night, in the dark, than during the day, because its habits are nocturnal and its eyes are better prepared to adaptation to low luminosity. It attacks other birds, grasshoppers, crickets, rats and mice. It lives on hunting. Its greatest enemies are the hawks, snakes

and rats of the woods. It has eyes in front of its face, like humans, with field of vision of one hundred and ten degrees. Because it doesn't have the side view as the other birds, when the owl wants to see in other directions it has to turn its neck, which can be made in an angle of two hundred seventy degrees. Its ears are well developed and it can hear some noises for tens of meters. Like the bat, the owl symbolizes all that reverses the light and darkness, because the bat, besides to live 'upside down', it sleeps during the day and wakes up at night. It is as if the wisdom and human knowledge were inversely proportional to those of God, for there can be distortion for one's own benefit. What is light is turned into darkness and vice versa. Its personal advisor will be the fox, a symbol of experience, cunning, sagacity, subtlety of spirit and malice; things that may influence very well the use of knowledge and wisdom we have. Jesus called Herod a fox (Lk. 13: 31-32), for He knew his intentions toward Him. The fox is from the same family of the dog and jackal, and eat fruit and vegetables, including grapes. Foxes and the little foxes tend to dig around the vines in flower (Song of Songs 2: 15); in this text of Songs it means the small and insignificant things that can infiltrate a beautiful marital relationship, corroding it until the vine of love is destroyed. They need to be caught before causing serious damage. In the relationship between God and His bride the same thing occurs, when the works of the flesh that seem insignificant, suddenly become a sad routine, undermining love and destroying everything that took so long to be built. That's why we must be alert to stay with the fire of the Spirit lit, encouraging us to seek the Lord's presence every day and to take care of this loving relationship as it is done with the spouse. Influencing the wisdom and knowledge, this is what the foxes (cunning) do with those who do not watch over their belongings correctly (God's truth) or do not give the value owed to them. They come and take what is precious to them, beyond what they dig around what was planted, destroying the possibility of the plantation being born again. The long-awaited fruit do not thrive, hope dies, faith in God fades, the love with which the work was made disappears and nothing else makes sense. So the destruction is installed. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after years of attempts and failures make those lives marked and they can no longer expect anything good. The flame of the Spirit is quenched in their hearts.

Continuing to describe our characters, let's mention the 'slaves' of these 'powerful'. For example:

- The mole is an insectivorous mammal that lives underground, undermining it. It represents a person with small eyes (small vision) who blinks constantly; a stupid person and with very short of intelligence.
- Donkey: something stuck; which does not want to change and does not have much reasoning.
- Hen: it scratches the soil and throws the waste behind. It means a person without high goals, who cares just about the worldly things. It lives on corn and ground corn that it feed its chicks, that is, it is content only with the very small things. Its cluck is like a gossip of futile people.
- Chicks: usually go in flocks. They symbolize the kind of person who always follows others, because they have no strength to be alone, only with the support of the group. They need a 'wing of protection' around them. They convey insecurity and frailty.
- Fish: in this context, they are animals that live to feed others or to be placed in an aquarium, where they have no practical use unless beautify the environment. So, they can also symbolize something with no future, with a limited life.
- Dove: symbol of peace and, sometimes, of passivity in the face of certain situations. Its song (cooing) is not a song itself; it seems more like a constant murmur or

complaint, an unnecessary groan that only bothers us. Doves make the place where they alight a bit dirty and may even be carriers of diseases.

- Sheep and lambs: they represent the docility, surrender and sacrifice. The sheep, as well as the lambs, need to be led. They can't see more than nine or eleven yards; they cannot drink water while the stomach is with grass not digested, and cannot swim. Indeed they have fear, because the wool would absorb the water and the weight would make them sink. They are the symbol of the docile and loving people, and willing to surrender and to any sacrifice, but silly and powerless. The sheep are often caught by wolves for not having enough agility and the capacity for self-defense.

- Ant: a tireless worker, with trained intelligence to know what to do as a group, without a competition in the midst of the colony. In other words: it knows its position in the middle of society in which it lives. It knows how to defend itself, if necessary, and build its underground home much larger than one might think externally. They are workers, soldiers etc. The ant can carry a weight excessively greater than its size. It stores in the summer to have food to eat in winter; even so, it continues working during this season. It symbolizes hard-working people who respect others, know how to live in community but, unfortunately, can be exploited by the smarter ones, and they start to carry burdens larger than necessary.

- Bees: are insects that live in community, with which they are concerned. They know what hierarchy and work mean. They produce propolis, royal jelly and honey, which mean love, sweetness and healing of the soul. Although they have the ability to defend themselves, unfortunately, what they produce is stolen by other animals, stronger and more powerful, as the bear, for example. Bees symbolize loving people, workers, who care about the neighbor, who want to fill lives with love and sweetness to lift them up from their anguishes; however, they take the risk of losing what they produced because of the brute force of some. They need the support of the group in order to survive. Without the collective acceptance and the communion with the hive, they are unable to survive.

- Squirrel: it works for a future time. It spends autumn storing hazelnuts, walnuts and chestnuts that it hides in many places, usually in the trees. It doesn't hibernate completely in winter. It often lives in tall trees of dry forests. Its nest, it makes the highest as possible, in trees holes or in a fork of branches. It knows to hide and protect its heritage for the appropriate time. Unfortunately, it is an animal that can enter in process of extinction by the rampant deforestation, because it loses its natural habitat. This applies to people who build their lives in an apparently stable way, but suddenly, by greed and covetousness of the powerful, they lose all that it took many years to be stored. They lose their homes and their natural way of living for the sake of progress and tireless modernization of civilization.

- Cats: they are pets that get special treatment, in most cases. Silent, sly and selfish, they don't bind so much to the owner but to the comfortable environment in which they live. Those who live in houses have more freedom than those who live in apartments, having a more nocturnal life, as it is part of their nature. They symbolize people who want only the superficial things of life, always pampered and well treated, with complete freedom to do what they want and without stronger bonds of dependence with anyone. Comfort is more important to them.

- Dogs are domestic animals that, like cats, receive special care from their owners, often participating in all activities of their lives. They are more attached and more faithful to them than cats. They like attention, care and leisure, and feel jealous of those whom they like, doing whatever they can to defend them. They symbolize the kind of person who wants to have friends, to be cared, to participate in social activities, to have leisure

and, sometimes, jealous of the person who devotes affection to him. His loyalty to people, even to have an emotional return to his unmet needs, can put him in troubles and to do what he doesn't want.

Finally, we get to our 'hero', the eagle, which will bring a solution to the slavery of those people. The eagle symbolizes spirituality, renewal, majesty and the ability to see far and be free. It knows 'to go up' when it's necessary to stay above the small things. This character will talk about his renewal process throughout the narrative.

When I asked the Lord for direction on how to develop the allegory, He spoke to me in Jer. 34: 8-22, when God speaks with the prophet about King Zedekiah, who decided to make a proclamation of liberty to the Hebrew slaves, when he was under the thread of Babylonian invasion; but when the enemy retreated temporarily, the king turned back on his decision to free the slaves in the kingdom. Therefore, the Lord would hand them over, the king, the officials and the priests, to their enemy, Nebuchadnezzar.

Thus, our scenario will be a kingdom where the king decides to be benevolent towards the people, but because of the bad advice and the political interests of the governors of the surrounding provinces, he decides to go back on his decision and makes the people return to slavery. The mixture of government regimes (monarchy and republic) was intentional, in order to add more humor to the narrative. The currency of the kingdom will be called 'Liars', because of rhyme with 'Dollars'. While the story unfolds, showing the game of interests and the action of the 'mighty gods', the Creator already has a destiny traced for them, as well as to deliver His people from the chains of bondage. The slaves begin to know the truth and to free themselves from oppression. Use your sense of humor to read the book.

I hope the Holy Spirit be with you in this reading and teaches the truths of the Father for you to be aware of your own weaknesses and remain alert to the distractions and temptations that surround you. In possession of the truth, may you have the authority over evil and the mastery over your flesh, finding the path to the heights where the Lord wants to put you. May the peace of the Lord be with you.

Tânia Cristina

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [] or parenthesis (), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).

Email: relacionamentosearaagape@gmail.com

1

Summit meeting



He was thinking, *“Ho-hum! I’m so bored! What a king has to do in these times when his popularity seems to be going down the drain?”*

The king was crestfallen at that moment. Nothing seemed to make sense. He, the king of the animals, the supreme authority in that kingdom felt powerless. Suddenly he remembered something,

“What year is this? Thinking better, it is the seventh year of my reign, and the law of the land commands to set free all slaves and servants. Hmm ... I know what I can do to win the support of my subjects and get a re-election. After all, I need to think on my next candidacy. Now, I’ll issue a decree freeing the slaves from their duties and leaving them free to follow their own paths. Yes! That’s right!”



He ran to the throne room and issued the decree. Within minutes, everyone was aware of the news and rejoiced.

“Wilbert! Where are you?”

“I am here, Your Majesty. What did you do? What folly was this? Doesn’t Your Majesty know that you’ve now created another bigger problem?”



“What do you mean?”

“This emancipation will cause controversy throughout the kingdom, in relation to the governors of the provinces, can you imagine? Have you ever thought about it? I’m speaking of the allotment of the land given to the ancient tribes. Now they are no longer

slaves, they will demand their portion of the land in order to live and survive. Oh no! If Your Majesty had consulted me before! See the email sent by other politicians...”

“So what?”

“How is that?! Your Majesty must think of coalitions for the next candidacy. Please, change your strategy. With knack everything can be resolved.”

“But I don’t agree with slavery.”

“I know, but it is better the agreement and the unity among the powerful than to satisfy the rabble. In fact, the governor of the Province of Money sent you a little gift. He asked Your Majesty not to care about the amount; it’s just a little souvenir—”

“Let me see. Hey, Wilbert, what is happening to you? Are you sick? Your color quickly changed to yellow as soon as you smiled. Yes, it was close to brown, was it not? Give me the box with the present. Hmm!... What is this? What does this mean, Wilbert?”

“—they are five hundred million Liars, Majesty. Have you thought about what we could do with that? I have many interesting suggestions. In fact, my wife has always wanted to visit the islands—”

“Enough! I don’t want to hear anything else. Thinking better... Since the present is mine, let me enjoy it. Stop changing color, Wilbert, you make me dizzy. You are green now... How disgusting! Go, get out of here and summon a summit meeting with the four governors. As soon as possible; still today.”

Poor king! Would there be ever a so great struggle between his spirit and his soul? The spirit would like to do something, but the flesh... He thought, *“Ah! What a wonderful color! What a delightful smell of fresh bank notes! It’s like freshly cut grass... I’d better get dressed properly; after all, the powerful are coming.”*



They arrived, and Wilbert the prime minister began to announce them to the king, “Sir Mouse Money, Governor of the Province of Money, and his personal advisor, Sir B. Prey.”

“Nice to see you, Your Majesty!”

“The pleasure is all mine.”



“Sir Presumption Fame, from the Province of Fame, and his personal advisor, Sir Elephant Light.”
 “Majesty!”



“Sir Sapienza and his two personal advisors: Sir Astute and Sir Sagacious, from the Province of Knowledge.”
 “Welcome.”



“Sir Monkey Pleasure and his personal advisor, Miss Seduction, from the Province of Pleasure.”
 “What beautiful garments, Your Majesty! Very appropriate for the occasion.”



“As everyone knows, here is Your Majesty, the King Lion Power, from the Kingdom of Power.”

“Thanks, Wilbert! Let’s sit down, gentlemen. We have a very important meeting, maybe long, on the subject already well known. Forgive me for my haste. I’m undoing the decree and I assure you that it was already revoked. Moreover, before I forget, Sir Mouse Money, thank you for the small souvenir.”

“You’re welcome! If some complement is necessary... Who knows, with the progress of the meeting!...”

“In the first place, Wilbert, take note of which subjects are under the jurisdiction of these gentlemen.”

“Well, Your Majesty! In the first place, under your jurisdiction, the subjects of the Kingdom of Power,”



“Under the jurisdiction of Sir Mouse Money, of the Province of Money, are these subjects,”



“Under the jurisdiction of Sir Presumption Fame, of the Province of Fame, are these subjects,”



“Under the jurisdiction of Sir Sapienza, of the province of knowledge, are these subjects,”



“Finally, under the jurisdiction of Sir Monkey Pleasure, of the province of Pleasure, are these subjects,”





“Allow me, Sir Monkey Pleasure and Miss Seduction! How do you explain the overpopulation of servants in this province?”

“You know, Your Majesty! A few words here and there, a little pleasure here and there... In fact I want to thank the suggestion of the illustrious governor of the Province of Knowledge, Sir Sapienza, for the wonderful suggestion of digital marketing in our case. Through the media, with television, radio and the internet with constant and insistent marketing emails and social networks, we got a great target audience for our online campaign. He gave us an excellent idea on how to create a sales funnel and capture customers by automating a support team with Chat. Our sales machine was wonderful and the marketing cost and sales cost were satisfactory to all investors. We offer great offers on new products and promote amazing events through our partnerships. Social networks invested heavily in ‘call to action’ strategies to promote our products. I think digital marketing is ‘the latest rage’ and should even be adopted by all provinces in the kingdom. It would be a bang. It is essential knowledge to be successful and be able to experience new pleasures... Ah!—”

“Oh, I see! Please, let’s change the subject before I get dizzy. Wilbert, how can we conduct the meeting?”

“If I may, Your Majesty! The governors have a suggestion appropriate to each district in particular.”

“Well, then, speak, Sir Mouse Money! I’m hearing.”

“I was thinking, Majesty, together with my advisor here, to oblige the servants to do the work doubled. Double shift, you know? It is obvious that by the same paltry salary they already receive. It’s too good. We could, of course, lend money at interest if

they need, and, logically, with a pre-determined term to pay. If it happens that they do not pay their debts, there are two possibilities. They will be sold to another kingdom, or else, will be sent to the quarries. What do you think, Your Majesty?"

"Dreadfully ingenious. What was it, Wilbert?"

"Your Majesty was saying, 'Worthy of a genius,' right?"

"As you wish, Wilbert."

"I think Sir Presumption Fame wants to say something too."

"We could give a boost only for the slaves who want to liberate themselves, of course, renting them for certain companies that work twenty-four hours a day with fashion and shows. Thus, a good makeup and appropriate dresses will initially entertain them, beyond what we could teach them some strategies a bit more aggressive to achieve success. In other words, in fact, by suggestion of my advisor, Sir Elephant Light, a little crushing and a little push to the left don't hurt anyone. It is just pretend that one is not seeing who is below or on the sides. Just a detail of the field of vision. What do you think, Your Majesty?"

"Exhausting! What now, Wilbert?"

"Your Majesty was saying, 'invigorating,' wasn't you, sir?"

"Can be!"

"May I speak too?"

"Yes, Sir Sapienza!"

"We could use them to forge banknotes—"

"Hey, wait a minute!"

"—Don't worry, Your Majesty. It is a new knowledge and a well developed technique, and so they learn a profession. Printing companies are yielding much profit lately, beyond what they would only print the fake notes from other realms, used in currency exchange at the border, of course. What do you think, Your Majesty?"

"A disgusting prize! Now, Wilbert! What is wrong with you? Parkinson's disease?"

"His Majesty said that it is a great knowledge and excellent enterprise."

"I'd like to give my opinion, gentlemen."

"Of course, Sir Monkey. What do you have in mind?"

"A spa resort. It is place of beautiful people, but futile, who has no place where to spend the money. Thus, the slaves could work there, and perhaps, stimulate themselves to live more the pleasure, and spread the idea. It is a lighter work but steady, increasingly seeking the improvement of the body and the superficiality of life. After all, we need slaves in all activities of the kingdom. There could even be an interchange among the other kingdoms as a factor to increase the financial profits, which is not bad at all. We provide the training and they pay us with high interest rates, obviously, for our innovation. The know-how is ours, you know? Besides, my advisor has wonderful ideas to enhance the technique. Seduction is an art, it also has a price. What did you think, Your Majesty?"

"Painful! I know, Wilbert! I meant 'delightful.'"

"Your Majesty didn't tell us about your subjects."

"Let me speak, gentlemen. It seems that the king is a bit exhausted today. I, Wilbert, the prime minister, I was thinking about the defense of the realm. We don't hold a census for quite some time to see how many men of war we have. We are planning to build an army trained for combat, with heavy weapons, in the case of some invasions. Everything is under control of our officers. Well! I think that after these comments, His Majesty is free to sanction the decree of law that approves the governors' suggestions, right?"

"Vetoed!"

“His Majesty meant that it was already voted. You are free to act, gentlemen. Meeting closed!”

“Excellent posture, Majesty! We deal later the complement of the ‘souvenir.’ How about more five hundred million Liars!”

“I’m appalled, Sir Mouse Money.”

“See you soon.”

“Majesty it was a great pleasure to be in your illustrious presence today; a true balm for my soul weary of so many rude people around me. How about if we go out later, just the two of us for dinner! ...”

“Maybe another time! The queen is requesting my urgent presence today. Family affairs, Miss Seduction. Your Ladyship will understand, won’t you, how incisive women can be sometimes... Good evening.”

“Good evening, Your Majesty.”

2

Action



Poor slaves! What would they do now? They didn't know exactly what was happening. The bees foresaw that more work was coming. But it is life, isn't it? Earning one's paltry salary is what matters. It was enough being healthy to withstand the day-work and that's it. Life would go ahead.

"May I know what you bees are talking?"

"Oh! Be welcome, ant, you belong to the working class."

"Hey! Can I attend the meeting?"

"Sure, squirrel! Well, folks! We were putting in question this decree. We don't understand very well yet what Sir Mouse Money has in mind, but it seems that the work will be doubled."

"Psst! Keep quiet! There he comes."

"How are you, slaves? Working hard? I have news a bit ... embarrassing ... to give you, but ... you understand, don't you? ... The importance of the financial profit to our province... Here, between you and me! It is through our hard work that we manage to keep the gross domestic product of the kingdom, to control exports and imports and, thus, pay off our external debt. We are true heroes. Therefore, the rules will be given directly to each class by the overseers. Any doubt, talk to them. They are perfectly enabled to answer all questions."

He was gone and they had nothing more to say.

"Ah! Small talk of politician. They are all the same."

"I don't know! Now, it seems that things are serious."



The hard work began for all. The bees were charged for productivity. Ants carried more loads than usual, and the squirrels had to worry about replenish the stock of dried fruit to meet the needs of the powerful. After all, 'time is money!' Mouse Money was

just watching how things worked and counting the profits, while his advisor was in charge of the loans.



“Please, Your Excellency, my family and I need this loan. There is no more food at home. Besides what we need to change our residence, because the deforestation reached our neighborhood and we have nowhere to live...”

Poor squirrel! What to do? Sir B. Prey seemed inflexible.



“You know. I just carry out orders. We cannot hinder the progress of industry. How much do you need of loan?”

“Let me see! I think that some thirty thousand Liars, to build our shack and pay off the other debts.”

“Good! With all calculations of interest and monetary correction already fixed by the king and the term of payment, we would say that your debt is one hundred and eighty thousand Liars to be paid within one month without any extra day of concession, under penalty of confiscation of property and to be sent to the quarries, you and the whole family. You may go!”

What about now? What to do? The little squirrel worked hard, every day more and more, but he couldn't see how to pay the debts. The fatal day came. He was sent to the quarries. As there was a mitigating factor in his cause, for being first-time offender, he

could be released after one month's penalty. However, nothing he had lost would be returned to him. If he wanted compensation for moral damages, he should just resort to Sir B. Prey, giving him a bonus in the folded amount of his loan and the case would be quickly expedited. He needed to think better about it.



In the Province of Fame everything seemed to be okay. The only problem was the quality of cheap labor that Sir Presumption Fame had to deal with.

“How do I make of them something productive and successful? Look at them! They just worry about scratching the ground, eating the worst possible and swimming lonely from one side to another in this aquarium. Oh! Heavens! No glitter at all on the feathers or on the scales. How to put them on social media? They need an appropriate profile,” he thought.



He came with all the pomp to talk to the hens, with the chicks and the lonely goldfish. He would have to use a lot of psychology. If it failed, his advisor, Sir Elephant Light would give a more practical and fast solution. After all, the Province of Fame was closely linked to the others, especially to the Province of money, by the kinship between the noble families.

“Good morning, good people.”

“Good morning, Your Excellency.”

“Do you already know the new direction of work we have? We hired a company specializing in shows to sponsor the development of your professional career. You can’t live like this in anonymity. We’ll have dancing and singing lessons, public speaking, theater, makeup, fashion and everything you need to become a superstar. What do you think? If you succeed, we can also give you some important tips on how to handle the business community, do you understand? It’s just a matter of determination. Whoever is stronger wins. You cannot be too touchy in this area, you know. It is a matter of survival. My advisor, Sir Elephant Light has a special way to deal in this line of business, more than any diploma can achieve.”

He talked, talked and talked for hours and convinced them the best thing that could happen to them was to become famous people. All doors would open for them. Time passed and they changed. However, they did not like.



In the Province of Knowledge things didn’t seem to be better compared to that of Fame. The quality of the servants was catastrophic. They barely knew the first letters of the alphabet. And the mind, then! This was worse than that of a hen. They were content with what they had and what they knew, persevering in mediocrity because it was too hard to have to study and learn; how much more to acquire a successful profession! It seemed a hopeless case. However, for Sir Sapienza and his two advisors, Sirs Astùte and Sir Sagacious, there was not a challenge rejected. The owl began his speech using words more suited to touch the reasoning of the poor servants ahead of him. His advisors were great to use the correct technique. Within minutes, they could understand that it was necessary to develop professionally. They understood what a printing company was and all those machines that were used there. The explanations were convincing. They listened, studied, perfected and began to work.



A printing company printing paper money was a bit strange. They were not Liars; what were they? But after all, the work there seemed to be much more promising than the work they did previously. They worked, the powerful were happy and everything was fine.



There they came, always cheerful, with a smile of happiness and pleasure on the face. How good was to live life this way, without pain or trouble; standing next to beautiful and elegant people, and happy with life!

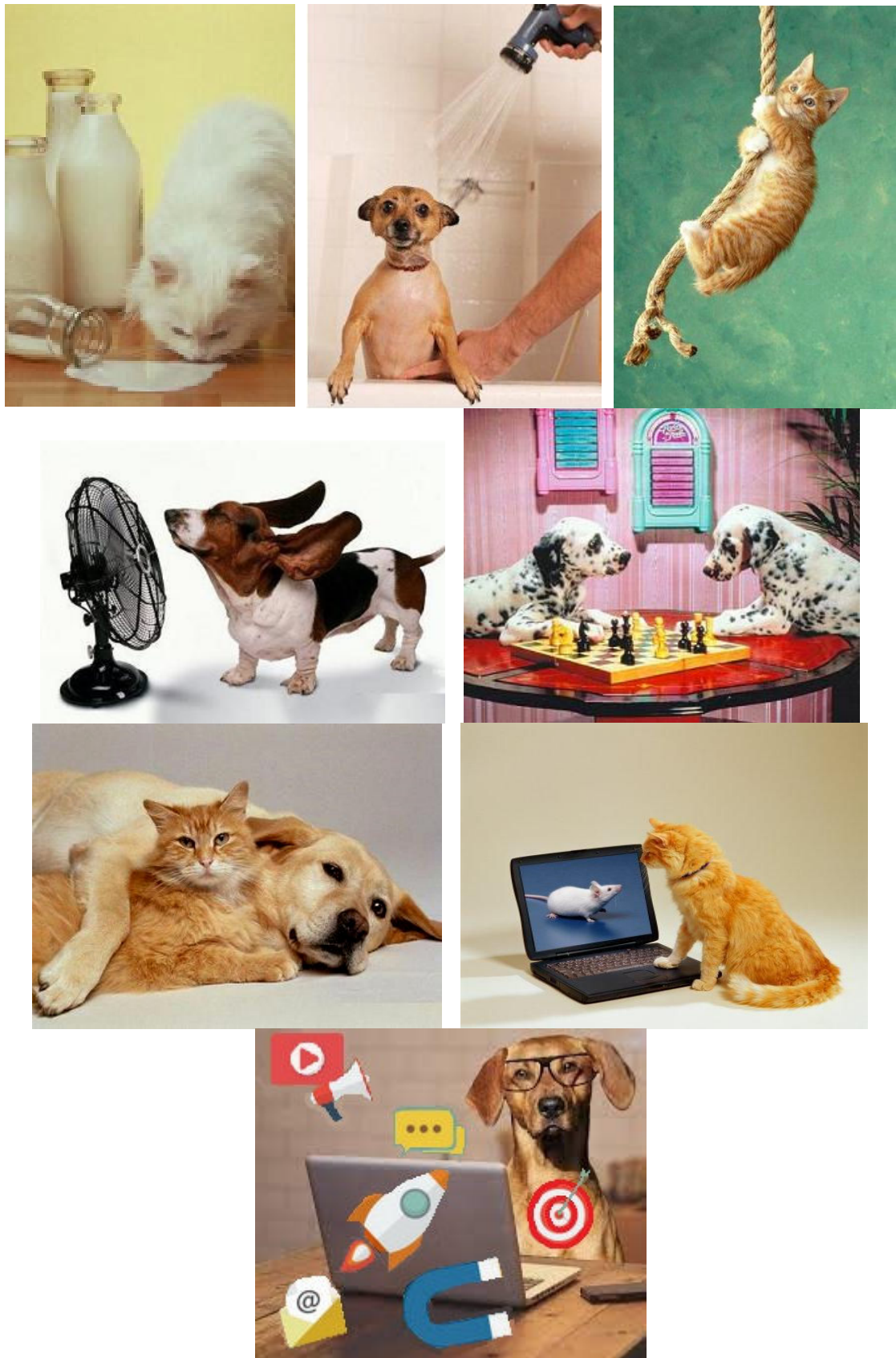
“Well, my dears! Enough of pain and hard work. Now, everything is pleasure. Let’s take you to a training center for happiness so that you can later be sent to other realms. Oh! What a joy to be alongside a so loving and friendly people! Don’t you think, Sir Monkey Pleasure?”

“That’s right, dears! Smile. Miss Seduction will give all necessary instructions.”

“Come, come ... You’ll know what it is to eat in the best restaurants, play a game of chess with friends, whirlpool bath and special showers, besides to enjoy good friendship at night, savoring excellent exotic foods and learning to practice extreme sports. You will be able to share your best photos on social media and teach people how to be happy and successful like you. A good position in the ranking is very important. SEO marketing experts will help you with this. Your profile needs to have very competitive keywords. Come, come...”

They went, fulfilling to the letter, without knowing the plan outlined by the powerful. Really, they were increasingly seeking the improvement of the body and the superficiality of life. Slaves were needed in all activities of the kingdom. The interchange among other kingdoms began, as a factor to increase financial profits. The

Province of Pleasure provided the training and the other peoples paid with high interest rates for the great innovation. The know-how was theirs, after all.



They were very happy with what they did; even digital marketing they learned. It all seemed so gratifying. But the life of pleasure began to tire them, to bring some boredom and routine. Something was missing, but they didn't know what it was. It was better to let the things go on.



Despite the apparent conquests, the king returned to feel depressed. Wilbert didn't understand this reaction of royalty; after all, wasn't everything running as planned? The servants, although didn't show pleasure in their new activity, they were enlisted in the military forces and being trained for combat. They were earning their wage. So what did they have to complain about in life? What most bothered the senior officers was that foolish dove, complaining and murmuring the whole day in their ears. Well! Complying with regulations, it didn't matter that she complained whatever she wanted.



3

Moment of truth



The holidays came and everyone came back home to see the relatives and friends again.

The squirrel returned from the quarries, but something inside him refused to make use of bribery; so he accommodated himself as he could in the house of some relatives till normalize his life again. When that slavery would end?

The others were also feeling like him an inner restlessness, showing that despite the apparent success, life went on without direction and the choices had not been very good.

They decided to meet in the field as they did in the past, when were mere manual laborers. Fortunately, the powerful were busy in their provinces!







The squirrel decided to start the dialogue, “Fellows! I don’t know what you think about everything that happened to us, but I would like a very frank conversation, because I feel very bad about this situation.”

“We, ants, we are tremendously saddened by your fate. We think it was arbitrariness, an abuse of power, indeed.”

“And we, bees, cried of sorrow by the lack of compassion with which the powerful treat all slaves in the kingdom. Actually, we came to a sad conclusion: they do everything for money. We were cheated. We thought we would have some advantage, but it was a big mistake.”

“That’s right! Money does not buy happiness, nor health, peace, joy and good family relationships. My marriage almost went down the drain. My wife thought that we

went to the quarries because of my carelessness, but when she met Sir B. Prey personally she saw the truth very close.”

“We sheep are beings of peace. Just imagine! Be sent for military training! Mrs. Dove didn’t stand long the emotional stress and muttered constantly. She almost had a nervous breakdown. Why are so thoughtful, Mrs. Mole and Mr. Donkey?”

“I think that worse than military training is training as a forger. We escaped prison by a whisker.”

“Yeah! If it weren’t for the personal intervention of Sir Sapienza, who made a deal with the judges, we would not be here right now.”

“Mrs. Mole is right. Now, I understand that I can no longer continue silly and uneducated; it is a very short step to manipulation and slavery by the powerful. I can read, and from now on I’ll learn more about what happens in the kingdom.”

“What about fame, Mrs. Hen?”

“A bad experience! We just knew to cluck; now we sing like nightingales. Our children had a great rock band, but unfortunately, it caused some problems because of the addicts who frequented the bars and nightclubs. They don’t want to know anything about cameras or microphones anymore. Poor Mr. Fish! They wanted to put him in a much larger aquarium, full of movie stars, but he almost died. It was a marine aquarium but he is a freshwater fish. He went straight to the hospital emergency room. He almost died from kidney problems.”

“Is that why he’s so quiet there in the bottom of the aquarium? He seems to have suffered a big trauma. Mr. Fish! Can you hear us? Can you come out from behind the plants just for a moment? Please.”

“Excuse me, but I don’t feel psychologically able to speak very much. I just want to say that fame isn’t worth it. It’s a machine that sucks people’s life and identity. Folks! I think that all of us here, we experienced very futile things. We lost the real meaning of life. I don’t know about you, but I feel a great emptiness inside that I don’t know how to fill. Sometimes I think about going to the next world—”

“Oh, no! What a depressive talk! We lived a very happy career with Miss Seduction and Sir. Monkey Pleasure and laughed a lot, but... I have to agree in part with the testimony of Mr. Fish. We felines and canines, which were so well trained to pleasure in these past few months, we also feel a great inner emptiness. We just didn’t come to the point of wanting to die—”

“Hey, look! What is that?”



“Do you know that I had never looked at the sky with much attention?! We hens just fly so low that we never thought of someone who reaches such heights.”

“The unidentified flying object is flying towards us. What about now? Who will talk to him?”



“Good morning, brothers! What are you staring at? Have you never seen an eagle? And why did you suddenly fall silent? I heard what you were saying. I know how you feel. But I have a definitive solution to your problems, do you know?”

“What is it?”

“The quest for spirituality.”

“For spirit ... what?”

“For the spirituality, that is, the knowledge that goes beyond the material, which you are got used to.”

“Explain yourself better.”

“Let me start by the simplest. When someone is down here, he has a limited view of everything around him. But when he climbs to the heights, he can see the entire landscape.. Do you understand?”

“But sheep, donkeys and fish cannot fly. How do we do to have this view, then?”

“Your bodies can be heavy to fly, but your spirits are light enough to go up and see from on high.”

“Umm! I don’t like this business of spirits... leave the conversation for another day.”

“No! This is the moment of truth!”

“Who you really are, and what did you come to teach us?”

“I’m an eagle, a bird that symbolizes spirituality, renewal, majesty and the ability to see far and be free. I am a prophet and was sent to tell you a secret that will free you from bondage.”

“And who sent you? Does He know that we are in the kingdom of the powerful?”

“I know Him and I know that He is more powerful than all these powerful down here. He is the one who created all of us. Blessed be His name from age to age, for wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. He is the true King.”

“And what do we do to know Him?”

“First, I will leave this book with you. Now that you can read and write, you can understand what I’m saying.”



He continued, “To understand the true meaning of life, what you are seeking, you need to experience an inner renewal as I did. In other words, to leave the things of the earth and want to speak with the Creator.”

“What is this process you went through?”

“It’s what we call spiritual renewal. Don’t you know what happens with my species after attaining the age of forty? The eagle is a bird that has the most longevity, coming to live seventy years. However, around forty years old, if it wants to continue living, it has to go through a renewal process. It begins to feel that its feathers are getting older; its beak is no longer as sharp and strong as before, that its claws are already weakening, and then it decides to take a drastic action. This process begins with the disruption of its routine activities as its flights, its hunting and adventures. So it flies high to the cliffs. There, alone and isolated, it begins by itself, the renovation work, traumatic, and that requires much courage, but finally will give it back the power and grandeur that seemed to be lost. The eagle begins to pluck its feathers with its beak, one by one, until it is fully plucked and disfigured. After that, realizing its beak is weak, powerless and full of scabs, it rubs it hard on the rock until it is raw. Finally, are the claws; it does the same process it did with the beak, hitting its nails with violence upon the rock repeatedly until that callous and aged layer is ripped out and stays also raw. However, after this process of self-flagellation, new, beautiful and bright feathers begin to emerge. A new beak grows, claws begin to sprout with all force and it is completely renewed and revitalized. It gets a new look and descends from the heights to continue its existence. The eagle symbolizes he who managed to discover the greatest secret of life and went through the process of inner renewal by overcoming the ‘self’ and, finally, getting rid of the carnal yokes and burdens that prevent someone from achieving true spirituality and communion with God. The eagle does not stop having its normal life as any animal, for it lives on hunting, but knows ‘to go up’ when it’s necessary to stay above the small things.”

“Impressive. This means a total surrender in His hands, does it not? Now I understand.”

“What does He say in this book to us?”

“Let’s start here, *The invitation from the grace*: ‘Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red

like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

“Do sins have color? And can they be cleansed and bleached?”

“Yes. It is asking for forgiveness and giving the life to Him that everything changes and you will no longer be slaves of the powerful. He begins to be your Lord. That’s when your spirit starts to fly along the paths of true spirituality to reach the heights, as my flight.”

“I think we need to read more of this book.”

“That’s right! While you read it, I will fulfill my mission with the powerful.”

The eagle soared, for it had something important to tell the powerful.

4

Red alert





“Aaaahhhh! (*Yawn*) That sleep! Oh, boredom! Wilbert, come here!”

“Yes, Your Majesty! How can I serve you?”

“Maybe you can change color to cheer me up a bit. I’m feeling bored by having nothing to do. Isn’t there anything new that we can do in the kingdom? Did the slaves return for the holidays?”

“Your Majesty, don’t you need an antidepressant? You’re very crestfallen lately. Is the queen aware of this?”

“She is angry with me for taking that such unpopular measures. She said that all this will end badly. The wife’s curse is dangerous, Wilbert.”

“Nonsense! By the way, Your Majesty! What did you do with the five hundred million Liars that you received from Sir Mouse Money? And the extra five hundred you received after the meeting? Perhaps it’s a good time to use them to have fun and get out of this depression—”

“You are keeping an eye on my money, Wilbert. It is kept in a very safe place, away from predators. What is that thing at the window?”

“I think it’s a bird of prey, Milord.”

“And what does a bird of prey do with a roll of papyrus in its beak?”

“It seems that the eagle wants us to read it.”

“Look! He dropped it to the ground. Run up there and see what it is about, Wilbert. Hey, hey! Why are you blushing? What is happening? What is written there that left you breathless?”



“I’m not feeling very well, Your Majesty, I think I’ll faint.”

“Nonsense! Bring the paper. Let me read it: “How the faithful city has become a whore! She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her – but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water. Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow’s cause does not come before them. Therefore says the Sovereign, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes! I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you delighted; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. The strong shall become like tinder, and their work like a spark; they and their work shall burn together, with no one to quench them.”... “Wilbert, are you still breathing? Do you know who sent this?”

“Does Your Majesty want me to call a doctor? I think we’ll be sick if we don’t take action. Yes, Your Majesty, I know who sent this alert. It is the Almighty.”

“Wilbert, run. Call the governors of the provinces immediately. Red alert, red alert!”



They came as fast as they could because they knew the urgency of the situation. All spoke at once, such was the anxiety.

“Speak one at a time, I command.”

“Majesty! The warning is serious, but what can we do to go back on our decisions? What’s done is done.”

“I think otherwise. We can negotiate. There is always a solution for everything, right? Nothing like the charm of a lady to change the course of decisions—”

“Oh, shut your mouth, Miss Seduction! Are you really aware of who sent the alert? With the Almighty there is no negotiation or bribery. We either change the course of our lives resigning our office or we will be punished.”



“I have no desire to leave the Government Palace. The Province of Money has been very happy with my administration, except for those slaves who rebelled. Nothing like prosperity!”

“I also think we should not be worried. We still have many on our side. I agree with Sir Mouse Money.”

“In the Province of Knowledge, our princes and nobles, surely, are not willing to abandon any of their treasures; after all, the wisdom and knowledge that we have are conquered treasures and, as Sir Presumption Fame said, many are still on our side and being benefited by them. Nor do I wish to resign the office.”

“It’s so good to live a life of pleasure, isn’t it? I’m tired of this discussion; after all, it is the king who must make the decision alone. Authority is for these things. Let’s sunbathe, darling.”

“You irresponsible! All of you are irresponsible. You are complicating the lives of all of us that way.”

“What’s happening to Your Majesty? Did you lose power?”

“He is just a little scared. Aren’t you, Milord?”

“Wilbert, the eagle is coming back and with it there is a cloud of fire and smoke. Look!”



They saw the meteor falling and began to take seriously the words of the Almighty. They had nowhere to flee or hide, because the sentence had already been determined. In a few minutes, the fire devoured the powerful.



The servants watched from afar. They had already made their decision. Now they knew who their true Lord was, the Almighty. The throne of the kingdom was destroyed by fire. But in their hearts, there was a throne that would always be occupied by Him. The smoke slowly dissipated, leaving only the ashes of judgment. They looked at the heaven. Then they heard,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! Amen!”



***"I am coming soon;
hold fast to what you have, so
that no one may seize your crown."***