

SOLITUDE

SECTION 5

español 1900
primavera 1982

Dr. Rosenthal
examen final

contiene en español en francés compuestas (25 puntos)

1) Con qué título el niño en el poema "Parísola" que de hecho fue
título "¿Quién sabe al despertar?"

2) Como se llama la película que ha impresionado tanto a Elena (la hija)
en "Las dos hermanas"?


3) La letra esta fuera al final de "En el porfi del amor"?

4) ¿De qué está hecho el alfiler que tiene tanta importancia en "Contemplación
de los arques"?

5) ¿Qué es el rango más alto del alcaide en "Un día de estos"?

6) ¿Cuántos (25 puntos) puntos se le dan a las tres preguntas, escribiendo sus
o tres palabras correspondientes?

*faïves = all female
occurred/occurring = two "s"
St. Pontius Faubourg = St Pontius (no apostrophe)*

by  Víctor Català

translator: David H. Rosenthal

I think this part is wrong to associate with M in lot 2 lines

I: The ~~Ascent~~ Ascent

After passing through

Past Ridorta they ^{had} come across a wagon going their way and
 Matias, who wanted to ^{preserve} ~~husband~~ his ^{strength} forces, asked the driver if he ^{would} ~~mind~~
 mind taking them as far as the ^{chance} foot of the mountain. The peasant,
 beaming at the prospect of a little conversation, ^{set herself down?} made room for the
 man by his side and told Mila to ^{her} make herself comfortable on the
 straw mats behind them. She looked gratefully at that unknown bene-
 factor, for though ^{hardy} strong, she was exhausted. Her husband had said
 the trip from ^U ~~Elisquents~~, where the mailman had left them, to
 Ridorta would ~~take~~ ^{had} less than half an hour, but they ^{had} been walking
 at least an hour and a quarter when they saw the town's blackened
 steeple rising above the green hill. Another fifteen minutes had
 passed before they saw the wagon, and what with the sun, the dust, and
 the rough dirt road, the poor ^{woman's} ~~had~~ ^{sprits were} ~~fallen~~ ^{sunken (tolerably) were} into a very bad temper.

Once settled, with her back to the man and her bundle of clothes
 beside her, she untied the kerchief around her head and, taking the
 ends in her hands, beat it to fan her face. She was hot, and the cool
 breeze flowed over her temples and neck like a gentle ^{though} but slightly
 unnerving caress. But when she stopped fanning herself, she felt
 calmer and ready to look at the pretty sights Matias had so often
 described.

She gazed from ~~man~~ side to side. Behind them, the road ~~man~~ twisted
 and turned, full of holes, tracks, and caked, muddy ridges ^{which} the wagon
 wheels wore down with such excruciating slowness that they ^{not} wouldn't
 be level ^{mid-summer} till the middle of summer. Then the road would become a sea
 of dust till the autumn rains returned.

On the left was a high embankment that ^{jolted} stuck out further at the

top than ~~at the bottom~~, as if about to cave in onto the road, but it was held back by rough^{though}, uneven walls that bulged here and there and were more dangerous than the embankment itself. Above them ~~you could~~^{were} see fields enclosed by rows of ~~agaves~~^{maguays}, whose stiff, fleshy leaves slashed the air like bouquets of swords ^{or} and, in some places, ^{by} swaying tamarisks and rows of buckthorn, whose white blossoms, ^{mixed with} girded by thorns, had just begun to flower.

On the other side, starting a couple of yards from the road, the Ridorta plain began, hugging the base of the hill and divided into small symmetrical patches that looked like a big ~~chessboard~~^{checkboard}. These irrigated fields were the town's riches, divided among its inhabitants by ancient feudal contracts. The brilliant colors of ~~budding~~^{sprouting} vegetables dotted the earth's scorched brown ^{between} among ditches whose water glistened in the sunlight like bright strips of mirror.

Mila was dazzled by such ~~abundant~~^{lushness} lushness. A child of the lowland plains, barren for want of hands, water, and ^{manure} fertilizer, she stared incredulously at what seemed a fantastic mirage: that other little plain which, nestled between a hillside covered with houses and several ^{bleak} harsh, ^{rocky} stony mountains, nourished ^{this} this fertile and ^{happy} joyous existence. Not ^{one} a square foot wasted, not one weed ^{to steal} stealing the earth's goodness! Everything tilled, everything turned upside down by hoes and pitchforks, everything pampered like a lord, everything proudly ^{blossoming} bearing fruit with abundant generosity!

Down below, in Mila's country, people scattered through the fields, with great stretches between them, and ^{were} among ~~the~~ thick hedges of bug-infested bushes, green lizards flashed in the sun and a few emaciated cows, whose ribs ^{stuck} jutted out like bars and whose anklebones were so sharp they nearly pierced the ^{hide} skin, tugged at a few dry ~~weeds~~. Here

weeds. Here ~~one couldn't see~~ ^{no} ~~one~~ such ^{pathetic} ~~useless~~ ^{could be seen} beast, but the people were as close/~~set~~ as ~~the~~ fingers on a hand: a crowd of women, clustered like chessmen on a board, swarmed like industrious bees across the fields, ~~turning up~~ ^{waking} the earth, raising and lowering the chain pump, heaping ~~earth~~ ^{soil} around the vegetables or resting in the shade of a ^{pl or sug.} fig trees, all with their skirts hiked up, kerchiefs ^{on} over their ~~foreheads~~, and bare arms and legs, tan and healthy in the sun.

As she gazed upon them, Mila's ^{countrywoman} farmgirl soul filled with an urge, a ~~gently stifled~~ ^{wistful} longing to leap from the wagon, run into the fields and, like those women, plunge her hands into the warm earth, the wet leaves, the water ~~that sank~~ ^{was flowing} between rushes, whose yellow flowers gravely nodded beside the irrigation ditches.

Matias had been right: ~~the~~ ^{countrywoman} Ridortan was a cheerful place, a town perched upon a hill and ringed by fields. And if the district was so happy, the hermitage above it couldn't be as gloomy as ^{she had} ~~some-~~ ^{heard.} ~~one had said.~~ Mila imagined it as a little nest, and as soon as she stuck her head out the window, she would gaze down upon this whole marvelous vista. Oh, if she could only clear her own little garden and plant it as she liked, she ^{would} never regret ^{leaving} ~~forsaking~~ her village ^{for good} forever!

Excited by ^{ideas} these thoughts, she turned ~~around~~ to share them with her husband, but at the sight of those two backs, the words died in her throat, and the ^{happy thought} hopeful idea that had been about to venture ~~forth~~ scurried back into its lair like a frightened animal.

The two men spoke slowly, without noticing her, and she half-caught the words: "cold . . . gloomy . . . calves . . . too high . . ."

but she never learned what they were ^{to} talking about because her thoughts fled back to the fields. The spell, however, had been broken, and the land, just as beautiful as it had been a moment ago, could not rekindle ^{her} that first enthusiasm. She sadly turned and looked upward: the sky, vast and empty, blazed with blinding light that hurt her eyes. She peered through the crack between the two men: there was something ^{so} uniformly green in the distance, like a splendid carpet . . . She looked again at the two backs: one, the peasant's, was slender and bony like those cows in her district, ^{was} and clad in a cheap shirt, worn thin by many washings, that smelled of sweat and charcoal dust. The other back, broad and soft as a pillow, strained ^{against} to burst the black jacket that stretched from armpit to armpit, as if in constant danger of ripping ^{splitting} ^{across / open} asunder.

a big expanse of green

"How fat he's gotten since we married," thought Mila, remembering how tight all his clothes had become, so that he seemed ^{stuffed} crammed into them like a straw doll in its rags. The felt hat that had previously suited him so well had gradually come to look like a priest's calotte, and ^{his} his ears, which had grown bigger on ^{either} each side of the calotte, were red and translucent like ^{stained} tinted glass. The crease on his starched collar, set against the black jacket and folds of flesh, had the icy pallor of marble.

The two men's shadows fell across Mila like a cool mantle, and she felt snug and happy curled up in her straw nest.

The wagon, meanwhile, advanced slowly, so slowly that one might have thought it merely swayed from side to side with no other mission than to flatten the caked dirt on the road. From the time she saw

a tree ahead to the time they passed it one could have calmly said part of rosary; and that parsimonious rocking filled her with drowsiness. *

She was tired of ^{string} looking at their backs, the sky, and the ^{patchwork} mismatched colors of the fields, and her neck ached from twisting her head so long. She rubbed it to ^{relieve, relax} smooth out ^{the} that painful stiffness and, after seeking a comfortable posture, she remained motionless, her back against a sideboard ~~and~~ as she ~~watched~~ admired the mat ^{is this the correct word?} in front of her: a lovely mat that ^{resembled} looked like a thick silk net, ^{which} sprinkled with gold stars that sparkled in the sunlight. Overcome by that sweet languor, she saw a red curtain, then a blue one, and then a black one . . .

A slap on the back ~~suddenly~~ woke her with a start.

"Hey, what's up?" she mumbled sleepily.

"Come on, ^{time} ~~we have~~ to get off!" replied her husband, standing on the cart, which had stopped.

She pulled herself together, swayed to her feet, and they jumped down.

"So long, pal, and God bless you." *

"So long, hermit, and thanks for the company. See you on St. Pontius' day."

"Come by and have a drink."

"I'd appreciate that . . . Bye now."

"Goodbye."

The peasant's face, bright red like the bottom of a stewpot on the fire, burst into a broad smile. He pulled in the reins as if they were made of rubber, calmly cried "Giddyup!" a few times . . . and the wagon slowly moved forward, leaving husband and wife be-

hind, backed against the dry roadsides ^{does she mean a dry-stone wall?} wall with a dazed ^{expression} look on their faces. *

"Did you hear that?" asked the woman. "He called you hermit."

"Because I told him we were going to the hermitage." ^{look after}

"It gives me a headache . . ." she added, gazing vaguely into the distance.

^{does} "What?"

"All this . . . you know what I mean . . . A young guy shouldn't do a job that's for someone old and sickly." ^{follow}

"Idiot! . . . One job's as good as another."

And the man began stamping his feet to shake down his ^{pants,} ~~trousers~~ which had ridden up on his legs in the course of their journey. ^{isn't this too (20)?} *

With a sigh, Mila also smoothed ^{down} her skirt.

^{When} ^{once} ^{reached} Once his pants again hung around his ankles, Matias pushed a stick through his kerchief, into which he had bundled a few pieces of clothing, and ^{hoisted} ~~lifted~~ it onto his shoulder.

"Well, are you ready?"

She gripped the bundle under her arm.

"Let's go."

A little further ^{along} ~~down~~, there was a break in the roadside wall and a ^{sort of} ~~foot~~ path began. It was a deep, uneven ^{gully} ~~gap~~, carpeted with smooth, loose stones: one of many ^{gashes} ~~creases~~ in the mountain's huge, rocky face, down which the sky's abundant tears flowed during winter storms.

They set out single file: he whistling between his teeth and she turning around every few yards.

They hadn't gone more than fifty steps when she stopped.

"It's so steep!"

"They call it Legbreak Creek. It's real dangerous in the winter."

"More than now?"

"This is nothing."

Seeing her worried look^e, he cheerfully added: "~~Wait~~ Wait'll you see Black Gulch! You really have to watch it there!"

"Are all the paths like this?"

"~~These~~ ^s are shortcuts, honey. The real path starts further up, after Murons, but the shortcuts are handier. You aren't used to it yet, but after a while you'll like going this way. See what I mean? Going up is worse than climbing stairs, but ~~going~~ coming down is ~~great~~ ^{like} swinging on a rope, your feet can't stop and before you know it's ~~all~~ ^I over."

She sighed, and they started walking ^a ~~agin~~. Her feet kept dislodging stones, and the brambles stuck to their clothes ^{bunches} like hand-fuls of barbed hooks. *

He gradually stopped whistling, while her bundle began to weigh ^{her down as if it were} on her like a boulder. Fifty steps further, she ~~leaned against~~ ^{cut down to rest of} ~~the bank.~~ *

Matias, who led the way, turned around.

"What^o again?" *

"I've got to . . . rest."

"We can't waste time. The sun'll set before we know it."

"Is it a long way to go?"

"Sure. We just started!"

She ~~set~~ ^{set} up straight: "Holy Mary! We've been on the road since four this morning!"

He burst out laughing. "We just began climbing the mountain ~~mm~~ . . . Don't worry, we'll get there ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ time." And he turned to pluck a sprig of butcher's ^s ~~s~~ broom from beside the path.

Mila then fixed her gaze upon him, a gaze full of worry and sus-
picion.

"Let's see if they were right to warn me and whether he'll ~~pull~~ ^{make} the wool over my eyes agin," she thought, rising to her feet. ^{a fool of me}

He encouraged her: "Come on now, honey. We'll be there in no time!"

"If it weren't for this bundle! . . ."

But Matias ignored the hint, and they walked on in silence.

The ~~stream-bed~~ ^{gully} got rockier and steeper. They kept slipping on the stones and had to ~~grab~~ ^{grasp} the thickets to keep their footing. Their heavy breathing startled the lizards, who ~~scampered~~ ^{frantically} scurried for cover like things possessed, and broom twigs whipped their red, sweaty faces. Matias had pushed back his felt hat, which now rested against his neck, and his starched collar had turned soft as a piece of tripe. ^{flushed}

The ground beside the path leveled from time to time as they approached ~~a~~ ^{an} little olive grove, but then the banks rose again, hemming them in so they could only see a strip of dazzling blue above their heads. In one grove they saw two oxen resting with their plow beneath an olive tree, while a ~~peasant~~ ^I peasant sat nearby, drinking from a black earthenware ~~gallon~~ ^I jug and grasping a ^{large} big onion. The animals switched their ~~hunched~~ tails and stamped to keep the flies away. The olive branches wove a filigreed silver arc against the sky, and the soil thrown up between the furrows made wide, ^{dark brown} rust-colored ~~whispering~~ stripes.

Mila gazed enviously at the peasant, ^{and} mumbling: "If I dared, I'd ask him for a drink of water. My throat's dry as a bone!" ^{red}

"Me too . . . come on."

They approached him, drank, and talked for a short while. Matias again explained that they were on their way to the hermitage, and

Mila again felt uneasy and ashamed ~~without knowing why.~~

Then they continued their ascent, with those slippery stones beneath their feet, walking between banks of brambles and buckthorn that tore at them like the claws of some ~~furious~~ ^{raging} beast.

Matias coughed, and a little bird, perched haughtily ~~on~~ ^{on} an ~~agave~~ ^{magney}, fled with a bright and penetrating chirrup.

Despite the shadows across their path, the ~~midsummer~~ heat was stifling. Mila's wet shirt clung to her back, and her heart ~~beat~~ ^{hammered} ~~furiously.~~ ^{crazily}

The ~~path~~ ^{gully} suddenly swerved and bent ~~upward~~ ^{forked}, as if to leap ~~over~~ ^{up} some obstacle. Mila cried out in surprise at the light that bathed her body, though her feet and legs remained submerged in the dark stream bed.

The ~~stream~~ ^{gully} branched off in the ~~shape~~ ^{like} of an upside-down "Y": two branches flowed downhill, splitting apart with a great stretch of mountainside between them, while the third, a ~~bit~~ ^{somewhat} obliquely, continued upward. Where the three branches met, a small plateau had been carved out, as sunlit at that ~~time of day~~ ^{hour} as the plain below them.

"We can rest here awhile," ~~he~~ ^{she} said Matias.

Mila didn't wait for him ~~to speak~~ ^{to be told} twice and fell to earth, crushed and ~~exhausted~~ ^{drained}, with the blood pounding in her temples and the soles of her feet.

She looked at her high shoes: ruined! They'd never be the same . . . And she thought if he'd told her what the journey would really be like, she would have worn espadrilles and ~~kept~~ ^{saved} the shoes from their wedding . . . her only good pair.

To stifle her disappointment, she raised her head.

On the right, the ^{gully} ~~mountain~~ ^{fell away} ~~side~~ ^{steeply} descended as precipitously as a well. Mila crossed herself in thanks for having reached the top safely. That was a path for goats and bandits, not people.

On the far side of the ~~mountain~~ ^{gully}, ~~amidst~~ ^{dotted the} slopes and cliffs, ~~stood~~ ^{some} olive trees with ~~shattered~~ ^{scathed} cracked trunks; on the near side was a rocky field ~~dotted~~ ^{some} with carob trees and flowering thyme, whose fragrance the wind carried toward them like an angel's pure breath.

The "Y's" ^{left fork} ~~other branch~~ twisted and turned more, its end hidden in one of the mountainside's many ^(series) folds. And between the two branches, a rounded spur swelled like a woman's breast, made more realistic by the presence of a nipple: a bulge or natural menhir that marked off their plateau, outlined against the bright sky behind it. ^{Just} ~~At the~~ ^{wider} ~~foot~~ of the nipple, there were remnants of some cyclopean steps and, above them, a rusted iron bolt had been driven into the rock.

"Know where we are?" Matias suddenly asked.

"How ^o could I know if I've never been here before?"

"Well, we're standing on Little Rocky. There's three of them, you know: Big Rocky, ^{Middle} ~~St. Pentius~~ Rocky, and this one. That," and he pointed to the nipple, "is what they call the Moor's Boundarystone. They say there used to be ^g a Moorish king whose lookout ^{sat} ~~watched~~ the ~~mountain~~ ^{sat} ~~all day long~~ ^{stayed here} all day long. He couldn't sleep or move on pain of death."

"And where's the hermitage?"

"Down there, behind you, in back of that rock . . . Get up and I'll point it out."

She rose listlessly to her feet, and he turned away from the

* mixed metaphor

plain and pointed southeast.

"On that dark mountain?"

"No, that's Big Rocky. Look closer. You see ~~the~~ how Black Gulch winds around that ridged mountain like a bandage? Well, the gulch starts at St. Pontius' Pass, and underneath is the hermitage."

"Good ~~hmm~~ God! We have to climb up there?"

"No, we take the first path we come to."

"Can you see those pretty fields down there from the hermitage?"

"Not from the hermitage itself . . . This is where you can see them."

Matias crossed the clearing and climbed to the top of the Boundarystone. Mila wanted to do the same, but her legs wouldn't cooperate. Each step was four feet high.

"God, what steps!"

"The Moors built them . . . They say there used to be Moors all around here. Come on, give me your hands . . . Up you get! Now hold on here and look . . ."

Mila almost fainted. An immense void yawned before her, as if waiting to be filled, and only below, far below and far in the distance, stretched the tilled plain, like a wondrous residue of that golden spring evening. Ridorta, another larger plain and many other villages, nestling like turtledoves amidst ^{meadows} ~~dells~~, groves, and pathways. Her eyes lost the farthest ones ^{details, not clear here} in the hazy distance, in the horizon's misty blueness. ^{misty blue of the horizon.}

The woman devoutly clasped her hands.

"How lovely it is!"

"Didn't I say you'd like it?" And he happily told her the names

of all the towns and hills in sight.

Mila gazed in fascination, trying to take it all in and to engrave that magic scene in the depths of her pupils. She would have forgotten to move if Matias hadn't laughed and, leaping from stone to stone, asked: "Haven't you had your fill?"

The question brought her back to earth. But before regretfully climbing down from the Boundary stone, she allowed herself another lingering look.

The trail on the "Y" that led up the mountain wasn't as rough as the ^{first} gully, but ^{their new} path, without pebbles and carved into solid rock, was full of sharp angles that cut her feet more than the stones had.

~~When~~ Their weariness, which had led them to prolong their rest, now ~~killed~~ ^{stifled} any desire to chat. They ~~climbed~~ ^{slipped} silently, bowed with ~~hunched~~ heads, especially Mila who, hearing Matias' huffs and puffs ahead of her, thought how her husband's paunch was beginning to get in his way.

"But he doesn't care! He'll ^{end} wind up looking like a whale! . . ."

And for the first time she sensed that Matias, who seemed fresh as a daisy, would ^{and} wind up suffering from asthma.

This time Matias was the first to stop.

When she caught up, she shot him an angry glance and said:

"If you'd ~~told~~ ^{something} me the trip would take this long I'd have brought a bite to eat . . . I'm worn out."

"Don't give up now! ^{we're} We've almost ^{at} reached the path to the hermitage."

"I know what you mean by 'almost,'" she replied sadly.

He didn't answer, and they started walking again.

But this time Matias had told the truth. A few minutes later they reached the path.

"Let's rest a little ~~while~~ if you want to," he said.

"This is worse than Purgatory," was her only reply.

They sat down. Matias took out his tobacco pouch and rolled a cigarette. The woman took the kerchief off her head, shook it out and, since she was no longer hot, retied it around her neck.

They were halfway up ~~St. Pontius~~ ^{Middle} Rocky, which the setting sun stained red and orange above them, while below the slope dropped steeply amidst shadowy bluish crags and boulders.

There was no hint of a plain ~~mm~~ beneath and the sky's pale gray ~~mm~~ stretched from side to side, ~~orange-tinted~~ ^{flushed with orange} toward the horizon, while mother-of-pearl clouds ~~drifted~~ ^{soiled} slowly from left to right, changing shape and color. As Mila watched them absentmindedly she noticed a black ~~spot~~ ^{dot} like a fly that slowly grew bigger.

"What's that?" she asked Matias.

"It must be a raven."

"Now it's hovering over that side of the mountain . . ."

"Just above the Girl . . . It ~~must~~ ^g smell something the people at St. Pontius threw in the Gulch. There's a farmhouse below the Girl."

"Why do they call it that?"

"Because from some ~~angles~~ ^{points} it looks like a girl's head, with a ~~short~~ ^{little} pigtail hanging down. Someday I'll show you the view above the Roar . . . At dawn it's blue as the sky and pretty as a picture."

Matias fell silent, his gaze lost in the distance, and Mila,

seeing him so gentle and calm, thought that anyone would take him for a perfect saint. But suddenly, as if his mood had ~~been~~ ^{secretly} secretly goaded her, she turned away and shuddered.

With a cigarette between his lips, Matias led her ^{down} up the path. It was narrow and smooth, as if ~~the tracks~~ ^{had been rolled over it} of a colossal wheel had ~~passed~~ ^{rolled} over it for centuries. It led southeast, and after a few steps they sighted Big Rocky's immense volcanic mass; ~~lord of all it surveyed, like an unchallenged sovereign,~~ shrouded in its ~~splendid~~ ^{majestic} mantle of blue-purple shadows that fell ~~majestically~~ ⁱⁿ over caves and dells, lending them an ~~imposing~~ ^{depth} aspect that took Mila's breath away.

unchallenged big supreme lord of all it surveyed fantasy - cant you cut 1 of these (or condense) *

From that big rock, still ^{distantly} far-off, flowed a ^{breath} wave of cold air; a strange wintry breeze that ~~chilled~~ ^{chilling} skin warmed by the spring sun; ~~filling~~ ^{filling} Mila with such a strong urge to retreat that she stopped in her tracks. Then she heard a dull rumble coming from she didn't ^{know not where} know where, like the snore of some ~~giant~~ ^{monster} sleeping ~~beast~~.

"What's that noise, Matias?" she asked uneasily.

"That's the ^{howling} howl of Badblodd Creek. It comes from the Roar."

Those words reminded Mila of everything her husband had told her about the miraculous waters that restored people's ^{health} ~~appetites~~ curing men and ^{beasts} ~~animals~~ of their woes and afflictions: scrofula, herpes, running sores, chronic diarrhea, exzema . . .

And while she was thinking about ^{diseases} ~~illnesses~~ and miracles, the path, climbing and twisting, led them around the mountain, penetrating deep and deeper into ^{its} ~~the~~ ^{icy} ~~city~~ shadows.

Suddenly Mila halted and turned around, astounded: ~~Queen of~~ ^{Holy} ~~Heaven~~ ^{find an English Catholic expression - Holy Mary?}, how far they'd traveled that day!

Beneath them, she saw nothing but waves of mountain, huge

, silent mountains that sloped into the quiet ^{dark} evening, which enveloped them in shadow like a darkening cloud. *is it the mountain or the shadow / shadow / the cloud?* *

Mila searched that blue emptiness for a ^{whiff} of smoke, a hut, a human figure . . . but she ^{saw} found nothing, not the slightest indication that they shared that landscape with other human beings. *

^{How lonely} "What ~~solitude!~~ ^{felt}" she mumbled, stunned and feeling her spirit grow as dark or darker than those shady depths. *

II: Darkness

As soon as they banged on one of the gates with a rock, a furious barking arose within the house, while other dogs barked back all around them.

Startled, Mila clutched her husband's arm, but he only laughed.

There are the
 "They're the fairies, honey. They ^{mimic} imitate everything they hear." *

Mila felt even more terrified by that bizarre explanation, but before she could reply, footsteps approached, muffled by the barking. A pale light shone above the wall, topped with broken glass and nails. Something slid heavily across the door, and after a moment of silence, a voice calmly asked: "Who goes there?"

"Open up, Gaietà. It's us."

"Who?"

"Me and my wife, Gaietà! . . . *Come* Go on, open up."

There was a moment's silence.

"When'd you get here?" the voice within asked.

"Just now. My wife fell down."

Still clutching her husband's *arm,* Mila whispered: "*What's* Why's he waiting *for* so long?"

"He's suspicious . . ." Matias whispered back.

"What're you ~~saying~~ saying out there?" the *friendly* voice asked.

"~~When~~ I'm telling my wife you're scared . . ." And, taking out his tobacco pouch, Matias laughed and added: "Look up, Gaietà. I'll throw our papers over . . ." and *in fact,* he threw his pouch over the wall.

Then they heard a bolt being lifted, the sound of iron striking the earth, the creaking of a big key, and a golden crack appeared between the gates.

"Good evening," said Matias as he pushed.

"May God grant us all one . . ." And the ^{gates} door opened all the way. ~~Behind it~~ they spied a wizened little man with a gleaming sickle in his hand. Nearby, an eight year old boy held a sooty lantern and the tobacco pouch.

Matias laughed when he saw the sickle.

"Ready for anything, huh Gaietà?"

The little man laughed back.

^{Might come in handy} "It ~~keeps me company~~, y'know? . . . And besides, I have to be on the lookout up here, where you see more foxes than ^{wagons} carriages." *

He put down the sickle, which flashed menacingly in his hand, and then slammed the two gates shut with his knee, bolted them, fastened the bolt to a chain that hung from the wall, turned the big key in the lock, and, having done all this, calmly turned to face his guests, smiled again, and rubbed his hands together. *

"Now we can talk . . . I figured you'd get here around now . . . What's the good word?"

is this American?
it isn't English i
recognize *

"What do you think? We're dead on our feet . . ." Matias declared, and, taking his pouch from the boy's hand, he added:

"We had no idea ~~that~~ Baldiret was here."

"You see, hermit, I ^{get} ~~get~~ ^{up} ~~lonely~~ ^{lonely} all by myself in this big house, so I told the kid: "Come on up and keep me company," and I ~~do~~ ^{do} tell him stories, y'know?"

The man ^{grinned} ~~smiled~~ at the lad, who looked ^{at him} back, ^{grinned} ~~smiled~~ ^{grinned back} in return, and then blushingly hung his head. *

Mila, who hadn't said a word beyond "Good evening," peered at everything around her. In the pale light from the lantern, she could barely make out a courtyard surrounded by the high walls of a house. In the middle, she saw a big glass bottle beside a well, whose iron bucket was badly dented, ^{while} in the background a ^{I covered} high porch ran along the wall, ^{till it reached} ~~and beside it~~, ^{some} at the corner, was a stone ^{I steps} staircase ^{that led down to the courtyard.}. She had no chance to see more because the man, still smiling and rubbing his hands together, turned to her and said: "Well, hermitess. He says you took a fall. What ^I happened, did you get dizzy?"

"No. I tripped ^{on} ~~over~~ a pine root; it's nothing." And Mila touched the gash on her forehead. *

"It's still bloody, see? But I don't think ^{we'll} ~~we~~ need to ~~call~~ a priest. It'll ^{mean} soon be all right." *

He turned to the boy: "Pick up ^{that} the sickle and let's go upstairs." And smiling once more at the couple, he added: "I beg you haven't eaten yet."

Matias told him how long it had been and, as they climbed the steps behind the boy, who carried the sickle and lantern, the little ~~man~~ explained that just in case he'd cooked supper. *

"Hermitess, I don't know what you'll think of our ^{grub} ~~cooking~~ . . . unless you're good and hungry! The kid and me are ^{cooks} ~~lousy~~ ^{too call.} ~~cooks~~ . . ."

~~and~~ and he laughed cheerfully.

He'd won Mila's heart, this kind and helpful man. He was short

and skinny, but ~~his~~ his figure was fleshed out by a loose jacket and a dark, heavy woolen ~~pantaloons~~ breeches. Half his face was covered by a woolen cap, and the other half seemed more beardless than ~~the~~ ^{cleanly shaven} newlyshaven. She could hear the taps on his shoes as he walked ~~calmly~~ ^{steadily and deliberately}. Mila ~~imagined~~ ^{reckoned} he must be about forty years old.

Even if ~~she~~ she hadn't known he was a shepherd, she ^{would} have guessed from the strong smell of sheep he gave off. The ~~stink~~ ^{stench} permeated the entire house. She'd noticed it before they knocked at the gate, it had grown stronger as they entered the courtyard, and now, inside the house where the breeze couldn't ^{wave it away} dissipate it, it became even stronger and more offensive.

They ^{had} walked along a terrace and entered the kitchen. It was a big room whose walls and ceiling, ~~darkened~~ ^{drachened} by smoke and shadows, seemed to retreat from her gaze so that ~~throughout~~ only the glint of copper and tin showed what kind of room they were in. Burning coals glowed in the fireplace, with something black beside them, perhaps a pot. With its four legs resting stiffly in the shadows, the long table resembled a headless beast about to charge the new arrivals.

Mila glimpsed a ~~slippery~~ ^{slippery} stone sink, the doors of a cupboard, a flour sifter . . . But everything else remained mysterious, pregnant with surprises.

Still talking, the shepherd lit an oil lamp.

"Tonight you'll be strangers in your own home, and since the hermitess has never been in these parts, ~~we'll~~ ^{she'll} have to ~~show her~~ ^{take} around, won't we? While the kid sets the table, I'll show her the house. Come on, hermitess . . ." But upon turning around and seeing her glancing ^{at} from side to side, he stopped: "You're not afraid of

varmint
~~bug~~
g.A.S.A.

stamp

ghosts, are you? Fear's a nasty little ~~bug~~ we've got to stamp on when we see it, and especially women, but we'll cure you here, God * willing."

And he led her away. Mila looked around for Matias, but he'd stayed ~~in~~ behind in the kitchen.

They entered another room whose only furnishings were a grand-father clock, a couple of tables, and a few chairs. A heavy beam, resting on the wooden floor and propped against the wall, looked like a dead ~~snake~~ serpent. At the sight of that drafty room, Mila ~~shuddered~~ and remembered how lonely it was in those mountains shrouded in ~~black~~ evening ~~in~~ fog.

The shepherd told her that before, on the saint's day, people would dance in that sitting room, but now the floor was so weak that the rector had forbidden it.

she doesn't feel right for a room like at Kandi's country house

One side of the room was windowless, the other had two doors and there was a balcony at the far end.

"Let's look at your room first, hermitess."

There was a bed with a ~~rust-colored~~ ^{dark red} cover, a writing desk, chairs and a washbasin. ~~The light~~ ^{Gaieta's lamp} was almost ~~in~~ ^{blown out} extinguished by a blast of cold air through the paneless window.

"That damaged Rocky with its stinking breath!"

The shepherd closed the shutters and, raising his ~~lantern~~ ^{lamp}, showed her a framed print.

"That's St. Poktius, hermitess . . . A splendid saint, patron of a good health."

The saint was dressed as a bishop, with a miter on his head and a crozier in his left hand. The other hand was held aloft, with two fingers extended in benediction.

They went on to the second room, where there was a bed, unmade this time, a wardrobe, a long table, and seven or eight wicker chairs. In one corner a winding staircase led upward, and in front of them another led down. Someone had ~~stuck~~^{tacked} two scenes from St. Pontius' life ~~on~~^{to} opposite walls, ~~with~~^{identical} an engravings, ~~showing~~^{that showed} the holy martyr between two vases ~~full~~ of flowers.

"Well, hermitess, that's your cage, big enough for a couple of birds and ~~for~~^{some nestlings} ~~little~~^{nestlings} ones too . . . Last time there eight hermits, * between kids and grownups, and each had his ~~little~~^{one with} nest ~~own~~^{own} . . . Now I'll show you the chapel. It's a sight to see, let me tell you."

But . . . a sort of sonar flash suddenly zoomed over the man * and woman, interrupting him and draining the color from her lips. Gaietà laughed so loud the flame on his ~~candle~~^{lamp} flickered.

"What a joke, hermitess! That sure gave you a fright! . . . " and calming ~~down~~^{himself} a little, he added soothingly: "But you shouldn't get upset . . . It's just an owl that roosts ^{upstairs} in the belfry; ~~he's~~^{he's} ~~saying good evening to you~~^{and wanted to say hello} . . . Tomorrow we'll take a closer look at him; we'd never catch him now. ~~But~~^{And} listen, don't be so jittery. I knew it as soon as I laid eyes on you, ~~but~~^{but} you'll have to change if ~~you're~~^{you want} going to ~~stay~~^{stick around} here. Otherwise you'll get sick. You see, people scare themselves. Believe me, Heaven and earth care ~~precious~~^{mighty} little about our doings."

But Mila, smiling to herself, remembered the flashing sickle in the shepherd's ~~hand~~^{hand} and how cautiously he had opened the ~~door~~^{gates} to them.

The floorboards creaked: it was Matias, who approached, calling * out: "Where are you? Where are you?"

He's ~~come~~ to tell them the table was set and he was dying of

hunger. Mila hurried after him, but Gaietà stopped her.

"Before sitting down, we have to visit the chapel. What'll the saint think if you snub him like that?" And he started down the staircase with the ^{lamp} lantern in his hand.

Matias ^{clutched} grumpily ^{gave} clicked his tongue in disapproval, but she ^(too many) smiling ^{shrivelled} resignedly and followed the old man. *

A powerful wave of stuffiness greeted them halfway down, and as they reached the bottom, a sepuchral chill like a damp ^{sheet} cloth enveloped them. Mila shivered and ^{hunched} buried her head ^{shoulders.} between her shoulders. *

At the end of the nave, straight and low-ceilinged as a railroad tunnel and ^{equally} as ~~dank~~ dank, something gleamed ^{dull} dully like a distant star: it was the main altar.

Gaietà had stuck his woolen cap under his arm, and after crossing himself and showing Mila the fount, he slowly advanced, knelt before the altar, and bowed his head. Then he rose again, lifted the ^{lamp} lantern above his head, and moved it from side to side. Beneath the vault, surrounded by ^{dirty} sooty gilding, by angels whose rosy flesh was covered with marks and scratches, by vases filled with ^{dirty} discolored roses, Mila again spied St. Pontius, with his tiny body, his bulging paunch, his long, ashy beard, his miter, his crozier in one hand and the other raised ^{in benediction} with two fingers extended, and, as if a mighty storm were blowing, his clothes all ^{dishevelled} rumpled. A long, pointed ^{resembling} foot hung down, looking like Matias' tobacco pouch when it was empty. That was the third time she'd seen the saint ~~within~~ within a few minutes, and he'd never seemed so ugly, with that tangled beard, that fat lady's belly, and that dangling foot ^{which} that ^{tacked on to} seemed superimposed. *

upon his body. A ^{wierd} ~~strange, disagreeable~~ sensation came over Mila, ^{can't you cut his word?} somewhere between revulsion and anguish, and she could never remember whether she'd finished the Patern ^{premonition?} oster she'd absentmindedly begun to recite.

^{That} The chapel ~~was~~ full of terrors ~~that~~ gave her goosebumps, ^{not a scolding?} seeping into her skin ~~with~~ with sudden contractions.

The shepherd would ~~happily~~ have happily shown her the whole chapel inch by inch, but in view of Matias' impatience he decided to let it ride.

"Some other time, hermitess . . . you'll see it all little by little, ~~won't you?~~" And showing her as they passed the strings of offerings ^{hang} ~~hanging~~ on the walls -- painted boards, arms and legs made of yellow wax, wooden croziers, long braids of discolored hair, ^{all as} stinking and worm-eaten ^{as} like junk ~~left~~ in an abandoned attic -- he led them out through a little door behind the altar.

Mila breathed deeply, like someone who'd just escaped from prison. The door led to a sacristy full of old crates and broken tools, and the sacristy led to another room, also full of trash, dust, and cobwebs. As soon as they entered, they were assaulted by loud barks and scratching noises outside the far door.

Mila stepped backward, and Gaietà shouted: "Hey, Owl, take it easy! [!] Come on boy, calm down ~~now~~." And he unbolted the door.

The dog leapt at the shepherd as if about to devour him.

"Don't step back, hermitess. There's nothing to be afraid of."

But the dog growled at the strangers, whereupon Gaietà grabbed its collar and buried its jowls in the woman's skirts.

"What's this? You're ~~scolding~~ scolding the lady of the house? Take a good whiff, and if you do ~~that~~ ^{it} again! . . ."

...
 ← you need the emphasis

He raised his hand, and the dog stopped growling.

They were in the shed where he kept his sheep. Its hot stench was so strong that the woman stopped breathing, and she saw a vague whiteness ~~in~~ before her, like snow on a dark night.

"This is my school," said the shepherd. "A flock of ~~kids~~ ^{babies} straight out of limbo . . . tomorrow, I'll show you the saint's lambs: the prettiest of all."

At the other end of the shed, you could see the ~~arching~~ ^{too many 'the's} courtyard, ~~outlined by the~~ ^{silhouetted against the} pale ~~high~~ ^{starlight} ~~light~~; a wooden fence kept the animals enclosed.

They crossed the shed, while the dog ~~followed~~ ^{padded} behind them. Mila's skirts weren't long enough to need raising, ~~and~~ ^{under her shoe} ~~and~~ ^{everytime} she felt something soft ~~beneath her shoes~~, an involuntary shudder made her close her eyes.

The flock lay huddled together, ~~in groups~~, but some were still standing and stared dazedly at the light. The ram let out a long, tremulous bleat and took a few steps forward with an inquisitive air.

"What's the matter, King Herod?" asked the shepherd, stopping ~~an~~ moment to scratch between its horns. The ram delightedly lowered its head, and Mila admired those airy spirals.

~~"Is it true they're real fierce?"~~ ^{Are they really so} the woman asked.

"Sure they are . . . if you don't know how to handle them."

The shepherd sent his dog out of the shed, closed the gate, and climbed the stairs.

"It's cold!" exclaimed Mila, shivering and gazing up at the calm sky.

"What? The ~~the~~ weather's been sweeter than a honeycomb, but after that oven, even a sneeze would catch cold."

"It wa^{warm}s ^{(the ~~best~~ shed} hot inside ~~there~~."

"I^{Very} ~~is~~ sure was cozy. I'd rather have my tabernacle with four whisps of straw down there than the best bed upstairs with seven mattresses."

The kitchen had been transformed. A green tin lantern, its ^{panes} glass gleaming like diamonds, cast ^{cut} sparkling cheer ^{a cheerful sparkle} into every corner. The tablecloth was in place beneath a soup tureen and four yellow bowls ~~that~~ ^T shone like burnished gold. The pastor put out his ^{lamp} light and hung it beneath the mantlepiece.

"Well, let's dig in, hermits! I bet you've ^e fasted enough for one day . . ." but he stopped in amazement.

"The tureen's empty! . . . How ^{How is that} can that be, Baldiret?"

The child, swallowing his laughter, smiled and rubbed his ear against his shoulder.

"You mean you forgot it? ^{What a lousy memory} Damn your bad memory . . . We sure can't pour it ^{straight} from the pot; we'd scald our mustaches."

And so saying, he went to the hearth, returned with the pot, and poured the soup into its tureen, ^{from which a} A superb aroma ^{spiraling billow} rose ^T therefrom, along with a cloud of ^{tendrils} bubbling steam, ^{breathed in with delight} making the tureen seem a vase of flowering vines. Everyone inhaled delightedly.

"What ^{wonderful} ~~mmm~~ a smell!" cried Mila ~~n~~ in surprise.

"Shepherd's soup, hermitess," replied Gaietà, returning the pot to its place. "A ~~mmmm~~ ^T garlic clove, a sprig of thyme, a few drops of oil, and let it simmer. We men don't know how to fix fancy dishes like you do."

^T Despite these words, Mila, who found the soup exquisitely ^{se}

seasoned, felt her spirits revive with every spoonful, and when not ^{one} a drop remained in her bowl, she gazed at the wizened ~~little~~ little man with eyes full of tearful gratitude ^{shining with} and wonder: what luck to find such a dear sweet soul there! How ^{could} ^{ever} would she have managed ^{it} everything ~~the first night~~ ^{by herself that} ~~all alone?~~

After the soup, Gaietà brought a pot of rice with codfish. Mila let out a chuckle: every grain was ^{forth} ~~as long as~~ ^{half an inch wide} her fingers were wide.

"Here's something ^{to} that'll make you strong," ^{grow} ^{announced} declared the shepherd. "I lost a whole night's sleep over this dish. I thought: ^{what} ~~What~~ can I give them to ^{on} chew over? . . . I couldn't think of anything good, and while I was puzzling over it, the sun came out. Then I leapt out of bed and, leaving the kid to go on snoring, I headed down to the Girl, found Baldiret's mother, talked it over ~~with~~ with her, and she set me straight."

He stopped to swallow a few forkfuls.

"Anyway, it didn't turn out ^{so} ~~too~~ bad. What ^{do} ~~do~~ you think hermitess, you who know about these things?"

Hunger can work miracles, and everyone thought the rice was ^{delicious} ~~wonderful~~ even though it was overcooked.

The supper ^{dispelled} ~~dissipated~~ much of Mila's sadness. The hermitage ^{no} longer seemed so filthy, nor did the mountains' solitude appear so vast. That unknown shepherd lent the place a ^{homey} ~~familiar~~ ^{familiar} warmth, sweet and welcoming.

She went to bed with that impression, but the strange bed, lumpy and uneven, the very ~~w~~ weight of her exhaustion, the muffled, constant sound of St. Pontius' Roar, which seeped into every nook and cranny of the room, and the ~~hollow~~ belfry owl's piercing cries, kept

her awake for many hours. Finally, in the early morning she drifted into a fitful sleep. She dreamt she was leaving the hermitage and returning home, but the more mountains she left behind, the more

loomed up before her, and she never got through them. ^{crossed} ~~Till at last,~~ ^{Finally,} ~~and she never got through them.~~ ^{in the distance,} ~~Till at last,~~

^{after} walking and walking, she saw a point of light ^{excitedly started} before her. "Thank God," she thought. "It's the shepherd's lamp . . ." ^{toward it} ~~And she kept descending,~~ ~~all excited,~~ but as she drew near, she realized that the lights, of

which there were now two, weren't the shepherd's lamp but St. Pontius' eyes: ~~the~~ ^{she had} same St. Pontius ~~she'd~~ seen in the chapel. He was plowing around an olive tree, holding one hand on the plow, while the

other ~~man~~ raised two stiff fingers aloft, and he dragged that huge deformed foot that looked like Matias' tobacco pouch ~~man~~ ^{behind} beside him.

Mila tried to run ~~from the saint,~~ ^{the saint} but he stopped her and ~~threw little red~~ ^{petted her head} ~~butcher's broom~~ ^{with scab} berries ^{scab} at her head; and, feeling them drop into her

mouth, she thought in terror that her skull must have split open.

But no; they entered through the gash in her forehead, ~~open like a~~ ^{that had opened like a little window} ~~little window,~~ and ~~caused~~ ^{causing} her such acute pain that she begged the

saint for the love of God to stop. The saint, laughing so hard his fat lady's belly shook, ~~sarcastically~~ ^{sneeringly} called out: "Hermitess, her-

mitess, hermitess! . . .," that name she so ~~detested.~~ ^{despised.} Mila felt her

heart breaking and burst into ~~desolate~~ ~~man~~ sobs, but the shepherd, stroking her like a child, dried her eyes and gently murmured: "Don't

worry . . . we'll fix it."

not clear as it stands

*

*

III: ~~Light~~ Daylight

When Mila ventured onto the terrace outside the sitting room, her heart sank: the sun ~~hadn't~~ ^{wasn't} come out! The iron railing ^{was sweating} oozed a rusty liquid, which reddened her hands when she touched it. The flagstones in the courtyard were all wet, and drops of dew sparkled on the broken glass atop those blackened old walls around the hermitage.

The icy morning wind seemed full of tiny needles that ^{stung} raised goosebumps ^{skin} on her flesh. ^{pricked at}

Mila tried to get her bearings: on her left was the door to the kitchen. On her right, at the other end of the terrace and directly above the staircase, was another door she hadn't seen the night before ^{it} was bolted.

"This house is full of bolts!" she thought.

She ^{went back} ~~removed~~ ^{unbolted the door} the bolt, opened the door, and found herself on another ^{broader} terrace, long and wide, that ^{faced} looked due south. Matias had described this terrace to her, but she hadn't imagined it like ^{ke that} this. It was bounded on the outside by ^{along the outer edge ran} a low wall filled with earth, from which masses of tangled leaves sprouted in green profusion. The ^{bedroom} house bounded the terrace on the ^{her left} west side, and in each corner a battered tub encircled by iron bands held a rickety tree [?] covered with dead twigs and just-opened buds. Matias had told her about that wonderful terrace with its spectacular view, but it was merely another disappointment for Mila.

The terrace seemed to ^{sweat} ooze, like the iron railing around the other ^{one}, and one might have thought the uneven walls caked with dark patches ^{were suffering} suffered from some hideous disease. The floor tiles reminded her of a neighbor ^{back home / from her way} in her parts whose teeth were so uneven

stuck out in a different direction
 that each went its separate way. Those tiles were just the same: *
 cracked, sunken, ^{erlen away} gnawed like a cheese the rats had ^{been at} feasted on, ~~dovered~~ *
 with green patches of slimy moss that loosened the cement between
 them.

And the view? Mila looked from side to side. Everything was
 the same color: dull, ashy gray. Gray as that overcast, gloomy ~~and~~
 sky, gray as the mountain that rose to meet it, gray as the thick
 fog that ^{hid} ~~hid~~ everything but the upper ^{peak / upper slopes of the mountain} ~~half of the mountain~~: forms, *
 distances, horizons . . .

Only by leaning over the railing could you see something dif-
 ferent on the ~~steep~~ ^{one} slopes around the hermitage: ^{towering} ~~mighty~~ pines, just *
 beginning to show new growth, clumps of kermes oak, ~~and~~ an occasional
 patch of tangled blackberry bushes ^{grew} ~~grew~~, and a ^{yard / low yard} ~~bit~~ of ruined wall *
 here, another fragment there, were the picture's sole additional
 ornaments.

Mila recalled her uneasiness about the hermitage ^{she} remembered
 the past evening's vague impressions, her dream that night, and . . .
 she fled the terrace before ^{her} ~~more~~ tears could ^{begin to flow} ~~bathe~~ her face. At the
 door, she was surprised by a strange sound, a sort of prolonged ~~noise~~ ^{moving}
 that seemed to come from below but also from the ~~other side of the~~ ^{mountain}
 mountain . . . It had just sounded again. Baldiret was hanging over the
 side of the cistern, with his legs outside it, awakening all its
 indwelling echoes.

"Aaaah!" he cried as loudly as he could, and "aaaah!" replied
 all the sounds around him. And the boy, hanging head-down, wiggled
 his legs ⁱⁿ with delight.

Mila watche ^d him anxiously, ^{afraid} ~~fearing~~ he might fall ^{into} ~~in~~ the cistern. *

But at that point the shepherd's voice rang out from the sheep shed.

"Hey, young fellow, you want a licking?" And the shepherd emerged to ~~softly~~ ^{gently} scold him: "Listen, little tweet/tweet, don't sing while people are ~~sleeping~~ ^{asleep} upstairs!"

"Not everyone, shepherd . . . Good morning!" said Mila, descending the ~~stairs~~ ^{steps}.

"~~Good Lord~~ ^{My Gods!}, is that you, hermitess? Good day to you! I figured you still had your head ~~buried~~ ^{buried} in the pillow . . . But I'll bet you didn't sleep well if you're ~~up~~ ^{so early} and about ~~already~~ . . ."

Mila supposed he had made ~~the~~ ^{her} bed and had no wish to offend him.

"I wanted to see the house."

"~~Oh~~ ^{Oh} well, you won't have to wait long . . . and the hermit?"

"He was so tired he decided to sleep a little later."

"Fine, fine! . . . You're a different sort from him. He always takes things easy, but you're the nervous type. Am I right?"

Mila smiled to hide her sadness that Matias' faults ~~should~~ ^{were} be public knowledge.

"Bad business, those nerves," the shepherd continued. "They can ruin your peace of mind and addle your brain . . . I think your husband's got the right idea. Worries are like kites: the more string you give them, the farther ~~they~~ ^{you're ready for} go . . . But here we are ~~awfully~~ ^{jabbing}, when I bet you want your breakfast. Let's go in."

"I'm not hungry."

"What? You're not on a fast, are you? You've got to start the day with something, and I think the fire's gone out upstairs. Give me that bowl, kid. I'll get you some milk."

Mila tried to protest, but the shepherd ignored her.

SEEK INFINITIVE *

NOT CLEAR
* Whose? his or hers

~~Milchamben...~~

"The kid and I already milked the nanny goat, so today it'll have to be sheep's milk." And seizing ^{a ewe's hind legs} ~~one of their hind legs~~, he started in with a will.

The milk squirted ^{out} in thin, straight jets like ivory needles, first from ~~one~~ teat and then ~~from~~ another, while the bowl quickly filled with steamy white froth. When it was full, the shepherd rose, blew off the foam, and offered the milk ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ Mila, who shuddered with revulsion. The milk stank of sheep, and she could see others had drunk from that same bowl, but the shepherd offered it so kindly that she ^{dared not} ~~hesitated to~~ refuse. Mila took the bowl and emptied it, holding her breath all the while and making a great effort not to screw up her face. ^{We'll}

"Well done! ^{You'll} ~~Soon that bony face will fill out!~~ Now, since the hermit's asleep, ^{let's} ~~we'll~~ get cracking around the house."

"Don't you have to take the flock out today?"

The shepherd laughed. "It's too early! I'll ^{wait} ~~wait~~ till the dew dries. This isn't the plain, which starts ^{to bake first thing in the} ~~baking as soon as the sun~~ rises. ^{the sun} ~~we won't see her up there~~ till ten o'clock." ^{morning.}

"You mean it'll come out at ten?"

"That's what I reckon. I don't ~~mean~~ ^{this so much has been scattered?} we'll get ~~a tan~~, but a few rays ^{will} peek through . . ." And looking up, he added: "Those clouds are thin." ^{not}

"Oh, if only it would shine ^{just} ~~even~~ a little!" exclaimed Mila, clasping her hands. "Everything would seem different. I got so sad watching that ~~fog~~ ^{mist} from the terrace."

The shepherd laughed louder.

."God Almighty! If the ~~fog~~ ^{mist} bothers you, you sure can't be from

I wouldn't use 'fog' here.

^{around here.}
~~these parts.~~ You see, I like the ^{mist} fog; it sets me thinking I like to pasture my sheep up there in the sun and look down on the ~~mist clouds~~ fog below On some paths I hear ~~voices,~~ deep voices, but you can't see a soul, and I guess the fairies must be admiring themselves in some pool ^{so} ~~and washing clothes there~~ The fog's pretty, don't you think, hermitess?" ^{while they do their laundry} Don't you think the ^{looks} mist pretty, hermitess?

As he talked, the shepherd climbed the steps to the kitchen, where he made a fire while Mila threw out what was left of the soup and hung the pot on its hooks. Then they went out ^a ~~again~~, unbolted and unlocked the gate, and clambered after the boy and dog, who ran gleefully ahead, whistling and barking.

The hermitage stood on a slope that ~~ran all the way down to the plain.~~ ^{led from St. Pantaleo} On the right, at some distance, you could see the pine groves ^{that covered} along Big Rocky, and on the left the barren ridge of Middle Rocky. Along the slope were patches of terraced land, with a few olive trees ^{near} at the bottom and ^{closer still} nearer by, some almond trees, clothed in exuberant greenery, as if rejoicing in their recent flowering.

About five feet from the hermitage stood the crumbling walls of a shepp fold, with two wells and big puddles of rainwater close by, and behind the fold, the slope was adorned by clumps of rockrose and flowering rosemary, among which two fig trees like skeletal white coral growths sent forth a thousand twisted, ^{mottled} stippled branches. ~~And~~ Beyond everything, ^{from the ridge} halfway between the Rockies, a smooth, ^{two} ~~parmsquat~~ mountain ^{its} arose like a hump ^{stony} protruding from a long, ^{NOT CLEAR} ~~gravelly~~ backbone.

They descended the steps that led to the terraces, at whose entrance two ancient cypresses leaned against each other, ^{like a} like a couple of drunken giants, ^{clawed} mingling their green tunics ~~ripped and~~ clawed by the nails of time.

NOT CLEAR of the slope or the patches? is it a bit of olive-trees?

see note A.

seen note B.

used this in previous sentence

keep this? you should!

"Look, hermitess: isn't that ~~some~~ ^{some} great farmland? . . . I spent ~~some~~ my spare time plowing it, so the hermit can plant whatever he likes there. If you could have seen these almond trees a few weeks ago, you'd have loved ~~them~~ ^{them}, I promise . . . They looked like ~~a~~ the French mountains in winter, all white . . . See ~~how many~~ ^{all these} leaves? ~~they've got?~~"

See all the leaves they've got? *

But Mila was staring at ~~that~~ ^a hill in the distance.

"What's that strange thing, shepherd?"

"The elephant. People around here call it the Husk, but I like the other name better, ~~better~~ ^{better} likeness, y'know?" And ~~she~~ hearing Mila confess that she didn't know what an elephant was, the shepherd explained ~~it~~.

"The biggest animals on earth, I reckon: each leg as ~~thick~~ ^{stout} as a tree ~~trunk~~ ^{with} trunk, heavy, wrinkled skin, but the strangest part is they have two tails: one like other beasts and a big one hanging from their heads."

Mila looked at the shepherd. He was serious; he wasn't making fun of her. Surprised, she wondered if he was as fond of tall tales as Matias, and her admiration for him ~~weakened~~.

"I saw some once on the road to Murons, with a crowd of people who put on shows in the village ~~squares~~. At first I was scared, ~~you~~ ^{I know} see, but afterwards I wished I had one around . . . Mighty beasts, by God! . . . That's the only time I saw the ~~one~~ ^{ever}, and God knows ~~many~~ ^{how} years ago it was. I was still a bachelor."

Mila stopped, surprised.

"Are you married, shepherd?"

"Widowed, hermitess."

They picked their way along some slippery ~~rough~~ gullies, ^{talk} and he took her hand lest she fall. Then he calmly began to explain: "I'd just arrived in these parts and was working at St. Pontius' farmhouse, where I spied a servant girl pretty as a vase of flowers. I watched her week after week, till finally I got her alone and said: 'Lluci, I need a wife . . . couldn't you use a husband?' So without more fuss, we started courting. Seems like she'd been thinking ^{the same thing} about it too for a while . . . And so we got married . . . She was ^{kin} related to the ^{lady of the house} daughter-in-law, and since I always gave them an honest day's work, they asked us to stay on till we were ready to settle down somewhere, so we stayed . . . They're good folks down there at St. Pontius' ~~farmhouse~~, hermitess! . . . When the day came, I was sorry to leave . . . That's why I'm still pals with them, ^{close to} ~~down]~~ ^{family} at the farmhouse, just like they were kin."

"And what about your wife, shepherd?" asked Mila, seeing that the topic pleased the little man.

"She only lasted eight months, hermitess! Poor girl, she was good as gold!"

The shepherd paused awhile and then continued: "One day she'd swept the courtyard. The wagon was ^{at} standing loaded at the entrance, about to leave, but just as she went through the gate, the horse reared up and trapped her between the gate and the wheel."

"Holy Virgin!"

"They say she screamed and tried to dogge."

*tone wrong - do you mean 'get past', 'get free', 'struggle free' **

The shepherd lowered his head and then added uncertainly: "Everyone came running, but since I was a long ways away, they sent someone to fetch the doctor and the kid went looking for me in the moun-

BIBLIOGRAPHY

tains. The doctor got there first . . . When I arrived, I heard
~~them~~ the moans . . . like an animal being slaughtered . . . It was
 horrible . . . And ^{over her body} above her they showed me a little angel you could
 have held in the palm of your hand . . . ~~sweet as a rose!~~ ^{help} May God
~~see us! them~~ ^{forgive us!} " *

Mila gazed pityingly at the man, whose lips were pursed and
 whose eyes were red.

To say something, she asked: "And you never remarried?"

The shepherd blinked and hesitated: "I never ^{see} had the heart,
 hermitess! I always hear those ~~man~~ moans and ~~imagine~~ that little
 angel ~~before~~ . . . God knows everything, and we're nothing but dust,
 but . . . ^{after those things!} all that!" *

And the shepherd scratched his head, as if he were still
 struggling to ^{accept the news.} adjust.

Mila looked at him differently now. That amiable, ~~cheerful~~
 fellow had also been stung by the viper of grief, and after all those
 years, ^{the} wound had yet to heal.

But even so, he didn't spend his days weeping and lamenting.
 He bravely took life as it came and ^{tried to help his neighbors.} ~~thought about others.~~ He was
 nothing like Matias, and if he said he'd seen an elephant, then he'd
 seen one.

They left the hermitage behind, making their way over crags and
 along narrow gullies.

Big Rocky seemed to hover above their heads, and the far-off
 rumble Mila had heard all night grew rapidly louder, ~~man~~ drowning

out the boy's laughter and the dogs' barks, which rang out sometimes
 ahead and sometimes behind them.

"Where are we going, shepherd?" asked the woman.

"To the Roar, hermitess. I heard you two talking about it, and I want you to see it. ^{Its} The water~~um~~ does you a world of good, much better than ^{at} in the hermitage. I was lucky when that tragedy happened. ~~I'd~~ ^{d got} gotten so downhearted that the doctor ~~him~~ ^{then} in Murons began to worry, but [^] St. Pontius pulled me out of it all by himself . . . A blessed saint, St. Pontius, hermitess . . ."

Mila again recalled her dream and that grotesque saint, with one hand on the plow and ~~throwing~~ ~~butcher's-broom~~ berries at her forehead, ^{with} the other. She shuddered and unconsciously touched the gash.

"It'll get better by itself, hermitess. It's already glosed up, and soon you won't even know where it was." The path twisted and turned around boulders, some of which had fallen in avalanches, and the noise from the Roar bounced from one to another like ^{captives} a caged beast ~~furiously~~ straining ^{against its} ~~at the bars.~~ ^{cage.}

Mila was making her way down a steep slope when she heard the shepherd's dog Owl bounding toward her. She quickly threw her arms around a boulder, ^{just as} ~~and~~ the dog sped past like a bullet, brushing against her skirt. Baldiret saw it all from above and burst out laughing.

Mila turned around, raised her head, and looked up at that ^{sunburned} tan face with its big green eyes. The boy blushed and stopped laughing, while Mila felt a feverish glow in her ^{belly} ~~entrails~~ ^{stomach}. Seeing her there, the shepherd called up from below, and Mila quickly finished her descent.

Suddenly it seemed that the mountain swallowed them or that they ^{had} were entering ^{red} another chapel. Darkness, damp, and chill filled the grotto, at whose end there was a hold: the mouth of a stream that issued mysteriously from the mountain's ^{unchartered} unexplored depths. From that

stream gushed a jet of molten silver, which fell, with ~~great clouds~~ ^{billows} of spray, into a large stone ~~pool~~ ^{basin} it had hollowed out and then poured bubbling into a twisting ~~stream~~ ^{brook}, seeking the larger current that would ~~bear it down to the plain.~~ ^{carry it}

"What clear water!" Mila exclaimed with ~~delight.~~

"None better, hermitess," ~~him~~ replied the shepherd enthusiastically.

"We should have brought some jugs to ~~drink from.~~ But I'd better warn you: never drink water from the Basin . . . Sick people and animals bathe there, and even though the Roar ^a ~~cleans~~ it every day, it can hurt your eyes."

"What's the Basin, shepherd?"

"That big pool there . . . You see how it's hollowed out? That's why I made a little ~~canal~~ ^{channel} to drink from. When you want to fill your jug, put the mouth here . . ."

As if to show what the shepherd meant, Baldiret put his ^{own} mouth to the "little ~~canal~~ ^{channel}" and took some big gulps.

"Won't that make him sick after the milk?" asked Mila.

"I never heard of the Roar hurting anyone, hermitess. It only cures people. You see, St. Pontius knows what he's up to. Study the letters on those paintings in the chapel and you'll ~~find out~~ ^{learn all} about his miracles. It's ~~a heck~~ ^{quite} of a story, I can tell you!"

The boy, whose faun-like face was still dripping, had stepped back from the Roar. Mila stared at ~~him~~ him dazedly, still feeling that glow in her ~~entrails.~~ ^{belly & stomach} (previous note)

"Miracles, miracles!" the shepherd said. "Go ahead!" Bending over and saying a silent prayer, she bravely drank the icy water, which made her teeth ache and took her breath away.

On their way back, Owl's barks were answered, as they had been the night before, by the echoing mountains.

Mila smiled and said: "Last night that sound gave me a start . . ."

"Don't you know what it is?"

"Matias said something about fairies . . . but what are they?"

~~"Ladies who cast spells! I can see the hermit didn't explain much to you. I'll tell you a story later about why they mock everything they hear . . ."~~
make fun of

Baldiret, who had been walking ahead of them, ~~caught~~ *overtake him* the shepherd's words, let them ~~catch up~~ *seized*, and ~~took~~ the old man's hand.

Gaietà laughed.

"Look at the kid. As soon as he hears the word 'story,' he'll ~~cling to you like a tick~~ *cling on stick to you like a leech*. He'd sell his soul for a fairytale, wouldn't you?"

The boy rubbed his ear against his shoulder, smiled, and clung to the shepherd's hand.

"But the story about the Old Man is too long, and we've got to fix lunch. Let's leave it for another day."

Baldiret gloomily hung his head.

The shepherd burst out laughing.

"Don't act ~~so~~ *so* glum, pal! I'll tell you while the hermitess cooks lunch. That'll do, won't it?"

The child's face brightened, and, releasing the shepherd's hand, he dashed after Owl.

"Hey, watch where you're going! Those ~~th~~ buckthorns'll give you a nose like a Jew!" the man shouted, seeing the boy ~~heedlessly~~ *careering after* chasing the dog, and he ~~tenderly~~ *tenderly* added: "He's like a ~~man~~ bat out of Hell . . . One day he'll fall off a cliff, God preserve us! . . . Ah, it's great to be young!"

so many adverbs

"Isn't he from St. Pontius' farmhouse?" Mila asked.

"Yes, hermitess. He's the ~~daughter-in-law's~~ ^{lady's} son. I love him because he's so sweet natured, just like alamb. When I get lonely up here, I always send for him. He'd never leave me, and it's all because of those fairy tales, ~~you see?~~ ^{you know} . . . In the winter, when ~~the~~ I'm shut up in his house, he makes me ~~search my memory~~ ^{rack my brains} for new ones . . ."

They reached the ~~high~~ slope behind the hermitage, and the shepherd raised his head.

"What did I tell you, hermitess? Look how the sun's shining!"

~~Soon we'll get an eyeful!"~~

And in fact, between the Elephant and Highpeak a pale shaft of light, like a faded luminous flower, shot its feeble rays across the icy gray sky.

As they entered the hermitage, sheep and lambs began bleating, ~~and~~ ^{was singing} Baldiret sang like a sparrow, all the doors were thrown open and the house filled with life, but Mila ^{heart sank} felt ~~depressed~~: Matias was still sleeping like a baby, with all his worries tucked ~~beneath~~ ^{under} the pillow.

While the ~~sheep~~ shepherd watched the soup, she went to wake her husband.

"Aren't you ~~a~~ ashamed? It's lunchtime . . ."

But then she heard the shepherd in the sitting room.

"Now that I think of it, hermitess . . . Would you like to see the belfry before lunch?"

"Just as you like, ^s shepherd."

The staircase was narrow, and its ~~unsteady~~ ^{rickety} planks had been ~~gnawed~~ ^{steps} by termites. From time to time, a slender window ~~admitted~~ ^{let in} a crack of light. Peering through those slits, as through the eye-hole in a ~~stenoception~~ ^{calen away}

stereopticon, Mila saw fragmented pictures solely composed ^{only} of sky * and mountain, mountain and sky.

They reached the belfry, which was shaped like a candle snuffer.

Mila ~~she~~ looked up with a twigge of fear at the ~~hanging bells~~ "great black mouths, whose hard, circular lips enclosed those clappers ~~hanging like~~ tongues. But they didn't hang idly. As soon as the shepherd grasped the rope, they burst into wild cries that ~~noisily spread~~ ^{reached} through the surrounding countryside.

"What are you doing, shepherd?" asked Mila, covering her ears.

"I'm celebrating your arrival, hermitess! I had to do something to welcome you; otherwise no one would know we have ~~some~~ ^{carried} new guests . . ." and laughing gaily, he went on, but upon seeing that he was ^{then as he saw} deafening her, he dropped the rope. *

"Your ears ^{had} better get used to that song, because on the saint's day everyone in these hills will have to hear it."

The fragments seen through the slits had now ~~expanded~~ ^{broadened} into ~~a~~ ^{whole} complete picture, ^{empty} devoid of anything but eternal sky and mountain, mountain and sky. *

On one side, they ~~saw~~ Big Rocky, on the other Middle Rocky's massive cetaceous back, and before them a vast slope ^{covered with hills} ~~full of mounds~~, puddles and ~~weeds~~ ^{sands}, beyond which other distant mountains rose, still ^{mist} half-shrouded ⁱⁿ by fog. *

The woman stood there, gazing out with wide eyes and clenched teeth, feeling a strange trembling within her.

The shepherd ~~seemed to~~ notice her mood and said: "When the sun comes out you'll see something beautiful, hermitess. Everything sparkles like rock salt or glass ^{cut} earrings. It ~~seemed~~ ^{looks} like the mountains

~~down~~

This weakens the image

you ^{don't} gaze, previous p.

below/inside?

stones ^{stares}

* down there are lit from underneath, and Rocky looks down ^{at} on them, *
 green with envy. ^{Over} On that side, ~~beyond the hill~~, you ~~come to~~ Murons,
 * a big town, and ~~mm~~ further on ^{you get to} Badblood Creek, ^{where the waters} whose waters are always
 red . . ."

The shepherd interrupted himself: "You know why ~~they're~~ red?" *
 Mila had no idea.

"That hermit should have his ears boxed for not telling you a
^{thing or two} ~~few things~~ about ^{these hills} ~~the mountains~~ . . . That's why you can't see how ^{maybe too early?}
 pretty it all is. You have to hear about past ^{to the} ~~saint's~~ days to look
 forward to the next one. And besides, you should know there was a
 town on the other side of Big Rocky where a Moorish king had a ^{big}
^{mighty} castle. He ruled these mountains and wouldn't let anyone pass through
~~them~~ except girls ~~mmmm~~ from fifteen to twenty years old that his men
 carried off to the castle. If he liked them he kept them, but if he
 didn't, off with their heads, which he tossed into Badblood Creek;
^{that's that's that's} ~~which is~~ how it got its name and why the water's ^{so} red. And ^{every} ~~each~~ ^a ~~mmmm~~
 year if you stand on Punch Bridge at midnight, you'll hear wailing
 * ^{call} ~~and~~ ^{moaning} ~~moans~~ that'll ~~mm~~ make your hair stand on end."

Mila shivered.

"And ^{why} ~~what is it~~, shepherd?"

"It's the heads of ^{those} ~~the~~ dead lasses he didn't want, ^{knocking}
 against the bridge and lamenting . . ."

The woman paled at that ^{gory} ~~horrible~~ ^{tales} fable, but the shepherd's
 cheerful face calmed her, ~~mmmm~~ seeming to say all was not dreadful
 and tragic in those dark mountains. He went on, laughing: ~~mmmmmm~~
 "Why do you keep looking up, like a blind man? You should look all
 around . . . What do you think of that down there?"

She turned to look down.

A great ^{meadow? lawn?} yard stretched before her, surrounded by walls and cy^l

those

* presses even mightier than ^{those} on the terraces, but straight and bushy, *
their trunks white with age and thick as massive columns. Some stone
steps led to a ~~pine~~ pine grove below. As ^{As} ^{admired} Mila ~~noticed~~ that severe and
majestic sight, ~~and~~ she noticed a blue spot making its way ^{among} through
the green trees. Her sharp eyes quickly identified it.

"That's a man, shepherd!" she cried in amazement, as if redis-
covering something she thought ^{to never see again.} ~~was gone forever.~~ ^{SP/IT INF!} *

The shepherd frowned.

"The Spirit," he said, and turning to her ^I ^{gravely} seriously, he added:
"Watch out for him, hermitess. . . He's the ^f nastiest character in
these mountains."

The pale sun had burned ^t the last ^I ^{cuts traces of mist} wisps of fog from Middle
Rocky, ^{whose} ~~and its~~ bald crest was bathed in gold.

up by Trent's a clever generalship.
On the battlefield, we also notice the realistic pre-
sation of Marlow's a description, as in this passage in
which Trent puts Comstock on a war footing:
Més, ordant per tota la ciutat en cadascun carrer
possesson de grosses cabanes, e no les soltesen fins
que del seu palau totes les petites cambres que hi
havia, la qual podien bé servir per tota la ciutat.
Ordant des avant que, de nit, per la poca justícia
que hi havia dita la ciutat, per cause de la guerra,
havia-hi moltes lladres, e que en cadascun carrer la
metat de les cases progressen l'una a les altres
fins a mitja nit, e les altres de la mitja nit fins
que les de dia, e per aquest orde moltes altres cases
reservades, que no les podien robar. E tota dita
lo Capità feta grata après que s'ha de la casa
de l'Empereur, una a mitja nit ell anava per la
ciutat. Passada aquella hora Diabou e Ricard, e alguns
dels altres, grans lo borb de la capitania, e alguns
gent anaven fins al matí, e en aquest forma e orde, la
ciutat era reservada de tot lo mal. En una dita, ordant
ab los regidors de la ciutat que anaven per totes
les cases, e progressen en la plaça quant l'ordant e
ordant e mitja trobaran, e a cada deixaven tant l'ordant

IV: Housecleaning

Mila spent ~~ten or twelve~~ ^{two weeks} days in a state of female intoxication. [?] she was cleaning. With all the doors and windows ~~thrown~~ ^{flung} open, her skirts hiked up and her hair deshevelled, she didn't stop from sunrise to sundown.

She had found everything like a pigsty. The walls, which hadn't been whitewashed for many years, were covered with fingerprints, names, and obscene drawings left by visitors on the saint's day. ~~The~~ ^I spiders, ^{lards} masters of all they surveyed, ^{dangled} hung from the ceilings and had filled every corner with their webs. There was such a thick layer of grime on the floors that one couldn't tell what they were made of, and the woodwork cried out for a carpenter's plane.

Every room in the house had to be scrubbed, but the dirtiest ~~ones~~ ^I of all were the kitchen above and the chapel below.

~~For the moment,~~ ^I the kitchen ~~disturbed~~ ^{bothered} her most, since she'd have ^{the} to ~~am~~ spend the most time there, but who could possibly ~~clean~~ ^{scour} those ^{*} smoke-blackened walls and ceiling? What arms had the strength to scrape that solid filth off the sink? Who could ~~manhandle~~ ^I polish all those brass and copper pots that hung, green and ~~soiled~~ ^{fly-specked} by flies, ^{*} beneath their coating of dust?

Seeing her so discouraged, the shepherd tried to comfort her: "You know, this hermitage is like Heaven, ^I but Heaven wouldn't be ^h heavenly if the people there didn't keep it clean. The hermitess before you was the biggest slut alive. In the ten years she was here, she never touched a broom . . . The ^I ~~her~~ pigs she kept always had plenty of company, and the hens would peck at your plate while you were

eating. I'm amazed I didn't get sick ~~here~~ during the summers . . .

it must be my constitution . . . I ~~mentioned~~ even told the rector at

confession how filthy everything was, and he gave her a talking to,

but he was wasting his breath. People ~~don't~~ ^{won't} ~~change~~ ^{it just} ~~their characters~~ ^{has a day to}

~~so quickly~~ ^{overnight-} The only solution was to throw them out . . . Houses

~~don't~~ ^{don't} turn into homes all by themselves, ~~and~~ ^{and} that hermitess

wasn't ~~the~~ ^{enough} woman to tackle this one, but you shouldn't lose heart ^{so quickly!} ~~in~~

~~such shallow water!~~ ^{so quickly} A little touch her, and there, and everything'll ^{shine}

be like new. . ."

* use this -
 more graphs

Mila closed her eyes and plunged in like a swimmer diving into the sea. Matias, hoping to postpone the monumental house-cleaning that troubled his lazy soul, invited her to Murons and a couple of dozen other places, but ~~Mila~~ ^{she} flatly refused.

"As long as this house is a dung heap, don't talk to me about sightseeing. Go ~~yourself~~ ^{by yourself}, see the rector, and get us some food."

So Matias was forced to act as quartermaster till everything was in order. After all, he preferred that to ~~a~~ ^a constantly fetching water from the well and answering the questions she pestered him with ~~whenever he was nearby~~ ^{continually. Having done ~~the~~ ^{the} kitchen,} Mila decided to work systematically from the easiest to the hardest task and from top to bottom, but she didn't enter the chapel till everything else was so spick and span that the shepherd said it looked like angels had licked it clean.

When her broom and featherdusters ~~stormed~~ [#] the chapel, it seemed the very mountains ~~shook~~ ^{trembled}. The saints ~~trembled~~ ^{swayed} on their altars, terrified rats scurried to and fro, hunks of molding fell to earth, wax arms and legs were snapped in two . . . And amidst the tumult and thick clouds of dust, you could see Mila ardently wheeling, attacking here

This is too much + the end of his sentence - can't you use just a verb - delighting himself

and there, sparing no hole or corner. She abandoned herself to that feverish ~~maniac~~ ^{swept along} onslaught, feeling a voluptuous thrill in her revolutionary furor.

And one afternoon, when she had climbed onto a ledge above the altar and was polishing a candleholder shaped like an angel, she suddenly noticed that the light had dimmed and, upon turning around, spied a man ~~standing~~ in the doorway.

She quickly ~~ran~~ and a little confusedly climbed down, trying to keep him from seeing her legs. She was flushed and agitated; her candid eyes shone beneath their dust-whitened lashes, and the red kerchief around her head made her look like a mischievous boy caught red-handed in some prank.

The ~~man~~ ^{visitor} stood there staring, as if ~~surprised~~ ^{though}.

He was a barefoot middle-aged peasant, misshapen, dressed in a ~~wrinkled~~ ^{washed crumpled} blue jacket and some torn yellow corduroy pants held up by ~~MMH~~ a rope. The man was shirtless, and beneath a beat-up old stocking cap, a bony greenish ridge protruded, holding two tiny deep-set eyes of indeterminate color, ~~which~~ ^{that} stirred uneasily like insects in the grass.

see Note (c)

"Good afternoon," Mila said.

(this is if you don't follow my suggestion)

But the man remained silent, glowering at her from beneath those ~~eyebrows~~.

Mila felt herself blushing and ~~maniac~~ ^{awkwardly} smiled embarrassedly. Then the man seemed to rouse himself and burst into laughter.

"Hoo hoo hoo . . . good afternoon."

His voice was hoarse, and as he laughed that strange laugh, he

closed his eyes and ~~rolled back his tongue~~ ^{rolled back} ~~showing his upper gums~~ ^{tip} ~~and teeth, which were white as pearls, while the gums were reddish-~~ ^{lared,} ~~brown like chocolate.~~ ^{his upper}

The man stuck his hand down his pants and scratched his belly, as if uncertain what to do next. Suddenly he ~~mumbled~~ ^{muttered}, in a singsong voice, that after coming ~~am~~ down from Cockfoot, near Highpeak, he was thirsty and had entered the chapel to ask for a drink of water.

"Okay," the woman cheerfully replied. "Come on up!" And after mounting the steps to the bedroom, she led him through the house to the kitchen.

Mila offered him a chair and a wineskin, but the man preferred to remain standing. His sole wish was to drink, ~~and he drank for a~~ ^{which did at} ~~great length~~ ^{very long while} . . . His throat gurgled rhythmically like a bottle ^{being} emptied, while his huge, ^{pointed} Adam's apple bobbed up and ~~in~~ down. Then he breathed heavily, and, ^{since he was} ~~being~~ covered with sweat, he lifted his cap to wipe his brow.

Mila saw the strangest forehead she'd ever beheld, a forehead that ~~scarcely~~ seemed human: long and pear-shaped, as if the top and sides had been pressed in a vice, and with such prominent brows that they resembled an arching cornice, ~~a~~ ^{that the} bony greenish ridge that ^{stuck out below} ~~protruded~~ beneath his cap.

The man explained that he'd ^{gotten up} ~~risen~~ before sunrise to ^{look for} ~~seek out~~ rabbit holes for his ferret the next day, and that the week before he'd caught six of them in one morning and he reckoned he'd soon catch as many again. He sold them to hotels and gentlemen in Murons, and ferrets were hotter on a trail than any ~~cop~~ ^{sheep hunter} ~~alive.~~ ^{too (20) !}

gamekeeper?
 justice.
 policeman.

It was ~~hard~~ ^{unused} ~~unpleasant~~ ^{conversations} for him to converse, and as he talked his glance ^{wandered} would ~~wander~~ ^{grow} ~~uneasily~~ ^{though} and evasively, while his hoarse voice sometimes became muffled, as if he'd stepped behind a curtain.

Once the man had gone out through the courtyard, Mila crossed the sheep shed ^{and store room} on her way back to the chapel.

The sun poured through the open door, striking the flagstones floor and presbytery steps, ^{dancing} ~~glittering~~ ^{ed?} in reflective patches on all the walls.

As Mila climbed onto the altar to ~~clean~~ ^{scrub} a wooden angel's hand and thigh, a thought tormented her: "Where have I seen that man before? I'm sure I've seen him somewhere. I remember those strange gums and white teeth . . ."

But since her lazy memory refused to aid her, after puzzling awhile she stopped worrying and, eager to attack the saint and those offerings left before him, she forgot all about her guest.

Mila lived in terror of that ~~old~~ ^{sagging}, ill-sculpted saint's wicked glance. His lower ~~eyelids~~ ^{sagging} ~~protruded~~ like those of certain old people, revealing red circles around such uneven ^{eyes} pupils that the whole face seemed twisted into a grimace. That crooked visage, that bulging paunch, and that huge, pouch-like foot recalled her dream of the saint's ^{spiteful} ~~cruel~~ bullying.

this doesn't make sense unless it near the 2 pupils were diff. sizes.

And the offerings, those decrepit little arms and legs that looked like they'd been chopped off dead children, those canes smudged with the dirt of sweaty hands, those heads of hair, that forest of painted boards nailed to the walls and columns, seemed to threaten ~~her~~ ^{her}, like some ~~cynical~~ ^{cripple}, with all the ills they depicted.

other wise DANGLING MOD

And so, as soon as her fingertips lighted upon one of those dusty relics, a violent shudder went through her and she ~~snatched~~ ^{snatched} away her hand, ~~postponing~~ ^{putting off} that unpleasant task, always postponing it, as if ~~she~~ ^{though} hoping someone else ~~would help her.~~ ^{come to her aid.}

And she went back to polishing altars, scrubbing flagstones, and rearranging candles: that flock of candles in all sizes, some as thick as arms or thighs, and all wound round with chains of flowers and gilded letters on brightly colored strips of paper . . .

But when the ~~sparkling~~ ^{shone} peeled, faded gilding sparkled as best it could and the saints, scrubbed as if ~~they~~ ^{though} they were on their way to church, smiled down beatifically from their perches, and all the altarcloths had been mended and the white, aromatic tapers arranged around the ~~presbyterium~~ presbytery, since the desired assistance had not yet materialized, Mila was forced to decide what to do about all those offerings, which hung ~~down~~ ^{bizarre} like stalagmites in a cavern, ~~quietly~~ ^{forgotten} dripping their ~~Bizarre~~ forms ~~forgotten~~ ^{leave this out} by mankind.

"Help me, Matias! There's so much to do, and I'll never finish!" she had begged her husband, her eyes ~~full of fearful anguish.~~ ^{of terror and terrified} But Matias ~~just~~ ^{just} scratched the back of his neck and mumbled that ~~on~~ ^{asked for} that very day the rector had ~~summoned~~ ^{summoned} him.

Mila's frozen smile cut short his explanations.

"Go ahead, ~~go~~ ^{honey}, go see ~~him~~ ^{him}. I bet he gets lonely without you."

And in a blaze of fury, she drew a bucket of water from the well, picked up her soap ~~and~~ ^{and} scrub-brushes, and stormed into the chapel. All alone, and with such speed that her hands seemed to multiply, she set to work. First she took down the votive boards and dusted, scrubbed and ~~washed~~ ^{washed} them till they looked brand new. She was reassured and surprised to see an unknown world revive beneath

her brush: a world of brilliant ~~colors~~ ^{colors}, objects and scenes she
 recognized, of mountains whose sharp, symmetrical ridges were outlined
 against the sky, of women ~~falling~~ ^{falling} down stairs, their hair flowing
 behind them, of red horses frolicking in emerald meadows, of houses
 devoured by flames, of shipwrecked vessels with crews on deck, their
 arms raised ~~heavenward~~ ^{heavenward} like "y"s in a gradeschool primer
 . . . a brilliant chaos of violent tones, the primitive products of
 an extraordinarily vivid and expressive imaginations, childlike and
 innocent, that exhaled a kind of hidden charm, the perfume of a savage
 faith that gradually invaded Mila, smoothing her fears and rousing her
 curiosity, flashes of sympathy, instants of terror that passed and left
 her perfectly calm. From then on, the boards became familiar objects,
 and when they all shone like new and she laid them in the sun to
 dry, they even made her laugh. She compared herself to the Old Story-
 teller, a tall, gaunt man who every year visited her village fair and
 set up his stand in the square in front of the blacksmith's shop,
 from whose walls he hung folded pieces of paper on a long string.
 Those papers, at which she stared in wonder as a child, also depicted
 fires, falls, people dragged behind horses . . . calamities of all
 kinds, and legends even more dreadful than the calamities. The same
 as those votive offerings, the only difference being that the former
 were called "disasters" and the latter "miracles," and while there
 were no saints in the former, every votive picture included St.
 Pontius, surrounded by a circle of clouds, with one hand raised and
 the other on his crozier.

to the saint

That universal devotion was what Mila couldn't understand, though
 she saw it all around her. Often, by raising her eyes to gaze

contemplate him

naive

~~which~~

~~upon him~~ ^{with} and through a great effort~~th~~ of will, she could achieve an attitude of respectful veneration, but some unconscious scepticism always renewed her doubts, making her sense some incompatibility, like a secret feud, between her and the ^{mountain's} district's glorious patron.

"This saint ^{not} ~~doesn't seem~~ like the others," she thought. "It's ^{though} as if he had some grudge against me."

And to dispel that impression, which despite herself she found disturbing, she ^{went back} returned to her work with renewed ^{vigor} ardor.

After the painted boards, it was time to clean the ostrich eggs, brought from the other side of the world and ^{hanging} suspended ~~from~~ ^{on} thick silk cords; and those model ships as covered with pulleys and rigging as full-sized vessels; the heads of hair, rough and crackly like ^{armful} armfuls of wheat, which, though long dead, seemed to still reek of sick room sweat; ^{the} misshapen footwear ^{hoof-like} like hooves that had shod deformed feet; rosaries from Jerusalem, with beads the size of big almonds; and . . . ^{odds and ends} and such a jumble of miscellaneous objects that the chapel looked like a bazaar.

Among all those ^{objects} objects that meant nothing to Mila, she found one that touched her heart. It was an old dress, trimmed with delicate lace. The silk had yellowed, the lace was ^{unravelling} ~~crumbling~~ ^{unravelling}, and the ^{damp air} humidity in that chapel, closed for many years, had turned the dust to hard ^{resin?} gum and ^{makes} ~~made~~ the fabric rigid. Mila tried to dust it but found the folds all stuck together. The dress was ^{stiffened up the fabric} ~~covered with~~ full of holes, as if someone had taken an ice pick to it, and the fear that it would ^{dissolve} ~~disintegrate~~ ^{crumble} like a lump of sugar ~~beneath her touch~~ made her leave it alone. But every time she saw it hanging stiffly from the wall, she imagined the soft flesh, ^{the} anxiously clenched fists, ^{the} big staring eyes and ^{the}

touch

* ^{pouting little lips} ~~little~~ ^{pouting lips} ~~bow-mouth~~ of some girl a few months old. She ^{had} always, even before her marriage, been ~~affected~~ ^{(touching sensitive to) trickles} by such little things . . . *

Finally, when she'd ~~cleaning~~ ^{red} everything, including the votive offerings, and was cheerfully ~~scrubbing~~ ^{scouring} the last basin among the

* Middle Rocky, followed ^{by} his flock and Baldiret. ~~The~~ ^{The ~~best~~ old man} shepherd walked slowly, ^{carrying} ~~with~~ a stout ^{crook} ~~cane~~ tucked under his arm.

Without knowing why, Mila felt a sudden urge to seize his attention and began singing "The Merchant's Daughter" loudly enough so he could hear her. ~~The~~ ^{Gaieta} shepherd raised his head and looked down.

Mila then, also without knowing why, regretted what she had done.

The shepherd let the boy and ~~his~~ his flock continue toward the sheep shed, while he ~~turned right and~~ approached Mila.

* "Good afternoon. I see you're still at it, hermitess. Don't you think you're overdoing things a little? The poor saints aren't used to so much ^{fuss, and} ~~fussing~~. I bet they don't like it, either . . . You ~~should~~ ^{heed my words} ~~pay attention to what I tell you~~ and take things easier; if you tackle everything straight off you'll have nothing left to work at!"
Think about what I say

The shepherd laughed, standing beneath a cypress ~~with~~ ^{with} his legs spread ~~far~~ apart.

Mila, who felt happier than a lark, carefully ~~shoed~~ ^w ~~the~~ ^{him} shepherd everything she ~~had~~ done.

He praised it all with simple words that seemed like courtly gallantries.

"Well, hermitess, I must say St. Pontius never had it so good! Everything shines like gold in the noonday sun. As soon as I laid eyes on you, I figured we were in luck . . . ^{First thing} ~~When I get up~~ ^{morning} tomorrow, I'll

too will 20?
such a fuss make of him

30

go to Murons and tell that rector he ~~should~~^{to} come and look at what you've ~~done~~. I'm sure he'll give you a big hand."

"Oh no, shepherd!" cried Mila. "Don't let him come till the cloths are all washed and ironed; otherwise it won't look right."

"Well then, let's wait till they're ready, if you promise it ~~won't take long~~^{won't be ~~so long~~} . . . because I'm eager for him to see it, y'know?"

And he suddenly added: "Did you clean all the miracles?"

"That's ~~all~~^{what} I've ~~done~~^{been ~~doing~~ up to} these past three days, shepherd! . . ." And with a mischevious gleam in her eye, she added: "As far as I can see, St. Pontius ~~went too far with all those miracles!~~^{did a few too many!}"

"That's heathen talk, and ~~those are~~ the Devil's words! You're a bit of a heretic, aren't you?" asked the shepherd, half joking and half seriously.

"Who, me?"

"I've seen you giving that poor saint dirty looks!" ~~The shepherd~~^{Gaseta} stopped laughing and said: "But it's ~~badly~~^{||} done, hermitess. You should love St. Pontius. If you knew how he helps all those people in distress. You just kneel before him, tell him ~~all~~ your troubles, and the next thing you know it seems like those eyes are staring straight at you . . . and all your ~~worries~~^{troubles} disappear. Oh, that St. Pontius!"

And the shepherd shook his head, looking thoughtful and deeply moved.

Mila felt ~~like~~^{that} he had left her and ~~retired~~^{withdrew} into another world.

But the old man soon returned, with his smile and ~~that~~^a twinkle in his eye.

"You know what I'm thinking now, hermitess? We'll have to go

through the house inch by inch, and you can show me what you've ^{done} been up to . . . " And since she looked at him questioningly, he added:

"Let me find the kid and lock up my sheep. I'll be back in a jiffy."

And he strode off toward the hermitage.

"What a good man! He acts like everyone's father or brother!" thought Mila, seeing first ~~his~~ ^{then} his legs and ~~then~~ ^{then} finally his cap disappear behind the hill. And ^{once} when he was out of sight, she bent to pick up the half-~~scrubbed~~ ^{scrubbed} basin.

It was an old brass basin, around which long letters had been ^{engraved} inscribed, but they were in Latin and she couldn't read them. A blow to the rim had left a dent as big as a hazelnut, and Mila had needed her nails and the juice of a lemon to get the tarnish out of it, but now she could see her face reflected in the bottom, tiny but bright and detailed as a ^{tinted} ^{portrait} color photo.

"How pretty I look there!" she thought, and ^{impulsively} ^{suddenly} bringing the ~~basin~~ ^{inside} basin to her lips, she kissed her own reflection within it.

She blushed ^{immediately} and ^{peered} ^{about} looked cautiously around her.

"~~My God!~~ ^{Heavens} My God! I wonder what's got into me today!" she thought confusedly, feeling her eyes fill with tears. And when the shepherd returned, she ^{gave a shy smile} smiled shyly like a child ^{who's} ^{has} who's broken something.

The shepherd excitedly brandished a thick reed and asked her for a bit of candle. He then ^{cut} ^{took} tore open one end of the reed, ~~and~~ ^{then} inserted the ^{tallow} ^{stub} stub of ~~lard~~ ^{lard}, and led her into the chapel.

"Could you shut the doors please, hermitess?"

Mila went toward the chapel doors and pulled them partly shut, but she was ^{struck} ~~halted~~ by the setting sun, which poured through the crack and hung like a bloodclot on the crest of the furthest mountain.

"How strange, the sun . . . ^{looks} ^{to be} seems like it's dying . . . It's

*

lot of adverbs here

I know this is the translation but it sounds bizarre.

too many adverbs

*
*

sad to have to die! . . ." And like a flash, the idea of death shot through her ^{turbulent} ~~troubled~~, unconscious spirit, making her blood run cold.

When she turned around, she couldn't keep from crying out in amazement. All the ~~mm~~ torches and candles in the chapel were lit.

Amidst a sea of sparkling gold, the little flames flickered in the darkness ^g like a wondrous carpet shaken by ^{invisible} ~~concealed~~ hands. *

The shepherd stood in the ^g ~~l~~ middle of the chapel, holding his reed and looking about him.

"Mother of God! Why did you do that?"

The shepherd slowly approached her.

* "The ~~mm~~ ^g people in these parts are stupid and don't do things ^g ~~right~~. They bring the saint candles and then leave him in the dark all year. They don't even light them on the morning of his day, and as soon as the service is over, ^g ~~they leave him~~ ^{his back} in the dark again . . . and besides, not a soul really worships him like he deserves . . .

^g ~~All~~ they care about is eating, dancing, and making fools of themselves ^g ~~like a bunch of idiots~~ . . . It's sad to see ^g . . . You know, a party for everyone's not a party for anyone. I'd rather celebrated ^g ~~quietly~~, ^g ~~all~~ by myself . . . ^g That way, no one can disturb ^{me} ~~my thoughts~~."

He touched her arm and led her to the end of the chapel, to its darkest nook, ^g beneath the choir loft, and made her sit down beside ~~a~~ him on the stone floor.

"Take a good look, hermitess . . . It's not this bright outside even at midday, but the ^g ~~fools~~ ^{idiots} around here wouldn't get the ^g ~~idea~~ ^{point}. If you only knew how sorry I feel for them sometimes! Poor things! They live and die without ^g ~~getting~~ ^{having} any fun out of ^g ~~life~~ . . ."

He fell silent. Out of the corner of her eye, Mila saw him sitting immobile, as if dazzled, gazing at ^g ~~a~~ ^{that} sea of lights; and she, in ^g ~~that~~

dark, ~~in~~ ^{corner} cozy nook, felt his warm body against her right arm, looked at his ~~shaven~~ ^{beardless} clean-shaven face in the dandlelight, his head full of ~~long, dreamy meditations~~ ^{of daydreams}, and understood once again that he was far, far away . . . wandering through distant and mysterious landscapes.

* And then the indifference that had always surrounded her, like ~~a long, unvaried wall~~ ^{endless/blank}, began to crack, while ~~evil~~ ^{disturbing} and troubling new sensations, secret mountain ~~spirits~~ ^{sprites}, began to ~~filter~~ ^{slowly} through the crevices.

#

Late one afternoon, as Mila was brushing a head of hair -- long, thick, ~~and~~ falling straight as a waterfall -- she saw the shepherd leading his flock and Baldiret down to the hermitage.

They reached her just as, after bidding them good afternoon, she was starting back to the chapel, where she would return the hair to its place. But the shepherd ~~stuck out his cane~~ ^{caught}, caught ~~her~~ ^{with his crooks} her arm, and halted her.

"Hermitess, do you know what you've got in your hands?"

"No . . . what is it?"

"Everyone around here knows . . . It's a ^{wonderful} lovely story, by God." *

"Is it? Then please tell me," begged Mila, whose curiosity had ~~quickly~~ been aroused.

* "It won't take long, hermitess . . ." and turning to Baldiret, he smiled ~~sardonically~~ ^{playfully} and said! "Take these sheep in, kid, while I tell her . . ."

"Hey!" cried the boy, ~~gazing~~ ^{staring} at him ~~regretfully~~ ^{disappointedly}. *

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked the shepherd, ~~winning~~ ^{all disappointed} at Mila. *

"No," ^{replied} said the lad, ~~looking~~ surprised at the question.

"When I heard you shout . . ." And seeing him blush, Gaietà added ~~wanting~~: "Don't worry. I can see you want ~~him~~ to hear the story, right? ~~My~~ ~~friend~~ God ~~help~~ us, I wouldn't want you to get upset over nothing . . . Anyway, a rest won't hurt before the sun goes down . . . and the sheep won't mind, will they? They ~~are~~ ^{the} already had ^{their} a nap on Highpeak."

And seating himself on a low wall that encircled the yard, while his flock scattered, munching the grass between steps and paving stones ~~←~~, he began to speak to the child and woman, whose eyes never left him.

"Hermitess, that's not just any head of hair . . . You should know that many years ago, there was ~~was~~ a ~~financier~~ noble lady with such pretty locks that everyone in Murons called her Goldy. When she ~~put~~ ^{pinned} them up, they glittered brighter than ~~a~~ ^{any jewel} mirror . . . By the time she was sixteen, she had more suitors than there were ~~wrinkles~~ ^{folds} in her ^{flounces} skirts, and remember: skirts were ^{ample} broad in the old days. No one used ~~to~~ to worry about saving cloth . . . but now ~~they~~ they're narrower than a choirboy's surplice . . . Anyway, getting back to the young lady, at sixteen she had more suitors than there are stars in the sky,

And they came in all shapes and sizes: high class and down-to-earth, ^{wealthy} rich and humble, handsome and plain, so old they could hardly walk ~~and~~

^{this is great not it} ~~straight~~ and so young that if you squeezed their chops, mother's milk would squirt out. There wasn't a bachelor or widower within a hundred miles of Murons who ~~wasn't~~ ^{didn't long} dying to make her ~~his~~ ^{marry} wife. But she spurned them all, one after the other, no matter what they offered or how often they bribed her maid. Till finally a rumor started that she was so proud of her beauty that she wouldn't give it to anyone less than a genuine prince. And as that rumor spread, all those jilted suitors

started talking about how stuck up she was. They made fun of the lady, but it wasn't what they thought, you see, because she didn't turn them down out of pride ~~or malice~~ but because she and her cousin were in love and she'd ~~promised~~ ^T promised to be his wife. Unfortunately, that cousin was poorer than a churchmouse and her parents wanted her to marry ~~some-~~ one with a crest above his door, a carriage, and a ^{fancy furniture/chaise longue. *} cushioned dais. You see, old people aren't as flighty as young ones and know two and two makes ^T four. So the cousin sailed for America, ^T where he hoped to make his fortune, and from then on she patiently waited, sure he'd come back ~~one day~~ ^T and make her happy . . ."

"And did he?" asked Mila, her eyes as big as saucers.

"You bet he did, hermitess! She was a good ^{catch} ~~lure~~, that Goldy! But ^{*} you can't collect doubloons like snails on a rainy evening. The cousin took no less than twenty years to fill his pockets. So when he finally came back and spied ^{the} ~~his~~ lady, who was almost forty, she wasn't nearly as fresh and ~~pretty~~ ^T as when he first laid eyes on her.

"He was disappointed, but since his cousin still had those beautiful ~~golden~~ ^T tresses, that made up for a lot. By now people were talking about their wedding day, but the Devil, who's always on the lookout, afflicted him with such a terrible chill that they had to call doctors and healers to examine him. And after examining him, they ^{what} said he'd caught ^{was so} ~~such a~~ dreadful ~~disease~~ ^T that he was at death's door and only a miracle would save him. Imagine how pale the lady turned when she heard the news! And since she didn't want to die an old maid after ~~postponing~~ ^{putting off} ~~her~~ marriage, ^{so long} she knelt before St. Pontius, ^{*} whom she'd always worshipped, and prayed for a miracle. But the cousin went from bad to worse and the miracle didn't ^{happen} ~~come~~. Then the lady m

clasped her hands and, gazing toward Heaven, told the saint⁽ⁿ⁾ that if he saved her beloved she'd give him her most prized possession. And when the saint saw what a fix she was in, he took pity on her and gave her to understand that she shouldn't worry, that he'd straighten everything out. ^g

"And in fact, thanks to his intercession, everything did work out. The very next day her cousin began to mend. ^{When she saw her prayers had been answered} Seeing ~~that~~ ^{her prayers had been answered} ~~manifest~~ ^{intervention}, the lady took up her hoop and embroidered a fine ribbon.

She finished just before the sick man left his bed. The next morning, without breathing a word to anyone, she ^{borrowed} ~~took~~ some sharp shear ^{I had} ~~I had~~ ^{weak} and started up the mountain. She felt ~~firm~~ ^{climbed} as she ~~mounted~~ the slope, and when she made the first cut she almost fainted, But she'd made

a promise and had to keep it if she didn't want to roast in Hell. ^{bargain} You can't haggle with a saint, ^g so after thinking it over, she picked up the shears again and snip . . . snip . . . snip . . . she cut off

every last hair. Then she tied that embroidered ribbon around her tresses and hung them ^{in the chapel.} ~~on a nail~~. When she ^{came} ~~went~~ down the mountain, she ^{wasn't} ~~didn't~~ look like the same woman, and ^g ~~upon seeing her shaved head,~~ ^{when her cousin saw that} ~~that~~

^{which} ~~made her look~~ like a galley slave, ^{he} ~~the cousin~~ stepped back and began to cross himself as if he'd seen a ghost. He ^{went white} ~~paled~~ and nearly got sick again. He tried to steel himself for a while, but one day he ^{slipped} ~~slipped~~

^{slipped} ~~slipped~~ ^{stole} ~~slipped~~ away from ~~Murens~~ and went back to America. When he got there, he sent a letter telling her he'd arrived safe and sound, thank God, but business wasn't ^{good} ~~going well~~ and he'd have to stay ~~there~~ ^g forever, and that after thinking over the marriage, he'd decided that after so many years, they'd better let it drop. When the lady heard that, she swooned like she'd been struck by lightning, and ~~was~~ ^g a month later

she entered St. Clara's convent as a novice . . . And like I said, ever since here ^J hair's been hanging in your chapel, where no moth or anything else has ever touched it. When I got here, it still ^{shone} glittered like a ^{gold} mirror, and the old hermitess used to wash and brush it once a year so it would stay beautiful. But the last one, like I told you, a thousand times, had no business being here and never cleaned it, which is how it got so faded, you see?"

That pathetic story touched Mila's heart and inspired her to imitate the previous hermitess, for ~~in~~ after all, that relic of the ~~lovelorn~~ ^J lovelorn lady, which at first had disgusted her, was ^{worthy} as deserving as anything else in the chapel. Instead of hanging it back up, therefore, ~~in~~ the next morning she took it to the courtyard ^J where she would be undisturbed by ~~busybodies~~ ^J, and slowly untied the ribbon, whose faded silk, brittle as a piece of old paper, crackled and split at the slightest ^{touch} contact. She stayed out in the sun till midday, soaping and rinsing that immense head of hair, which gently swayed in the basin of water like a school of undulating eels. Her heart swelled to see the compact mass ^{swell} grow a little each time she rubbed it, spreading beneath her hands' wise caresses, losing its dull appearance ^J and recovering its former luster and suppleness. Once it was clean, she worked a few drops of oil into it, hung it up to dry, and went in to lunch. Upon her return to the ~~sunlit~~ ^J sunlit yard, she was astonished at the spectacle that greeted her: the dried tresses ~~glittered~~ ^{sparkled} like a ^{diamond} sparkling jewel . . . the shepherd's words had been true! Then she understood why the lady's nickname had been "Goldy" and ^{grasped} understood the magnitude of her ^J loving sacrifice. For certainly, those fair locks had been unequalled in their time. Mila gazed upon them, overwhelmed by ~~waves of joy, here~~ ^J

whelmed by waves of joy, her nostrils trembling and her mouth slightly open, and then plunged her hands into the splendid skein, rubbing it voluptuously against her skin, burying her face in it, winding it around her arms like a warm snake . . . Suddenly, raising her head with female pride and drying her eyes, she muttered ~~passionately and~~ tensely: "I wouldn't have given up something like that for all the men on earth."

V: Counting Days

Mila, who had nearly completed her monumental cleaning job, no longer felt like such a stranger in the hermitage. ^{one might have} Though ~~one~~ ^{without finding} scrutinized it inch by inch, ~~one would find~~ neither a speck of dust nor a neglected cranny. ^{That} The jumble of useless objects ^{once, formerly} that had been piled behind the altar ^{was} ~~had been~~ stored in the chapel basement, and the shepherd had scoured the nearby fields for straw, which he dried in the sun and Mila ^{strawed} spread about the sheep shed. Even the drainpipe beneath the sink had been unclogged with buckets of water, and the ^{wickety} wobbly steps in the belltower had been nailed firmly in place. Matias' shiftlessness obliged Mila to travel often to Murons, for her husband never brought home anything useful, but gradually she stocked the ~~pantry~~ ^{larder} pantry -- now with an eight-pound sack of flour, now with another of potatoes, now with some dried cod -- while she adorned the hood over the fireplace with a thick band of green paper and the shelf for the pots with a few white plates and a half-dozen ~~little~~ cups. In the yard outside the sheep shed, some new rabbits ironically ^{wrinkled} twitched their noses, and in the ^{shadowy depths} dark profundities of that same shed, two hens sat roosting. She had planted a vegetable garden on one of the terraces, and finally, in a brigade of broken pots and basins, red carnations opened their fiery eyes, burst forth in double miracles, and shamelessly offered their cheeks to the sun's kisses.

Mila owed those ^{plants} jeweled bushes, her house's gayest note, to the shepherd's thoughtfulness. One day she had told him she preferred flowers to vegetables, and the next morning he made her follow him to St. Pontius' farmhouse, where he asked the ^{lady, whose name was} daughter-in-law to give her a few cuttings. But ^{Marieta} the woman, who was generous by nature and whose garden was in full bloom, told Mila to choose whatever she liked, while ~~she herself went in search of a~~

* carnations don't grow on BUSHES

Marieta, for

Marieta

she herself went in search of a slowerpot and told her son Arnau
 to carefully dig up the plants.

Mila could still see the lad, tall and straight as a young ~~and~~
 fir, with his legs spread apart and without a worry in the world,
~~wielding~~ his fork so skillfully that not one root was broken. The
 shepherd had told Mila that Arnau, who had come up for military
 service two years earlier, was now courting a girl in Ridorta, and
 that they'd marry as soon as she reached twenty, and Mila imagined
 the healthy buds that would sprout from such a sturdy human plant.

Besides the flowers, they had sold her two fertilized eggs and
 had lent her the hens to hatch them. Mila felt so grateful that often,
 on her way to and from Murons, she couldn't help peeking in at the
 farmhouse, where she said hello to everyone as if though she had known
 them all her life. She always found the grandmother, who urged her to
 rest awhile by her side before the fire, and the daughter-in-law,
 who asked her to do some little errand in town: a pennysworth of
 saffron, a box of cheap matches, some new leeches she needed . . .

The daughter-in-law was a tall, thin woman. People said she had
 once been pretty, but the sun, the frost, the toil of peasant life,
 not to mention nursing eight children, had quickly put an end to her
 youth, and her face was now blotchy, while the skin around her eyes
 and lips was scored with tiny wrinkles that looked as though they had
 been cut with a knife. But her bright eyes, her diligent air and her
 clear, vibrant voice were so full of simple candor and friendliness
 that everyone loved and thought well of her.

Shortly after they met, Mila screwed up her courage and asked:
 "Listen, Marieta, you don't really need so many children to help around
 the house, but I don't have any and could make such good use of one!

How ~~much~~ would you feel about lending me Baldiret forever? He's such a comfort up there!"

The ~~daughter-in-law~~ ^{lady Marieta} smiled. Mila had asked for the nestling, the husband's and grandmother's favorite, and now that it was time to pack him off to school where he'd learn his ABC's . . . But ~~upon~~ seeing how crestfallen Mila was, she ~~yielded~~ ^{relucted} a little and said she could keep him ~~for~~ ^{for} a while . . . till she had settled in at the hermitage.

When Mila reached home that morning, she looked everywhere for Matias and, finding him asleep under the cypresses on a terrace, she roughly pulled his ears.

"Hey lazy bones, haven't you heard? I've got some good news . . . We're going to have a kid . . ."

Matias turned over and stared at her, while his surprised wife blushed deeply and then, placing her hand on his shoulder, seriously related her conversation with Marieta.

"Ah! God ~~only~~ knows what I was thinking! . . ." And Matias stretched a leg he'd pulled up and closed his eyes again.

~~Feeling~~ ^{Feeling} wounded by his indifference, the woman ~~got up and~~ ^{got up} walked ~~away~~ ^{away} without a word, but all day long she ~~was~~ ^{belt} annoyed without knowing why, and the next morning she was still in a bad mood. Her fury returned at the sight of Matias leaving the sitting room ^{with} a bag over his shoulder and a wooden box with a little glass door around his neck. Inside the box, which was lined with red, velvety paper, upon a ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ pedestal ~~decorated~~ ^{decorated} with hackberries and ~~little~~ ^{tiny} seashells, stood a six-inch statue of St. Pontius, bent and yellow as a consumptive, surrounded by dangling scapularies ⁱⁿ, shiny little

vases of painted roses, and rosaries.

"Where are you going with that?" she exclaimed nervously, already knowing the answer.

Matias ^{chuckled} laughed complacently.

"Well, they say he's a real money-maker . . . Yesterday the Spirit told me ^{that} the last hermit could have made ~~up~~ his living just from this."

She burst out: "Let the Spirit say what he likes. Aren't you ashamed, a big healthy guy like you, to go around begging?"

She spat out the words ~~with~~ ^{disdainful} in a fit of fury and ~~disdain~~.

Matias was taken off guard, as he always was when she attacked him.

"Me? Well, ~~well!~~ . . . I have to beg . . . for the saint . . ."

"For the saint! ~~For the saint!~~" and she laughed ^{bitterly} ~~humbly~~ in ~~pained mockery~~. "You know why you want to beg? To keep from getting bored, because even you get sick of lying around all day! . . . God Almighty! Wasn't it enough for you to make me sell my uncle's house, take me away, ~~for~~ and bury me alive in this hole, ^{without making me} and now I have to watch you going around ~~with a sack on your back~~ like a worthless bum?"

Matias felt very downcast. For twenty-four hours -- ever since the Spirit had ^{suggested it incited him} ~~gotten him worked up~~ -- he'd been dreaming about going out to beg and how much fun and money he'd derive from ~~this~~ new profession. But now his own wife cursed him for entertaining such a ~~stupid~~ thought! ^{All the same} ~~Even so~~, he didn't dare to contradict her ~~or protest openly~~.

He knew that Mila, like all those who are meek and long-suffering, could silently nurse her grudges for years, but the day her patience ~~ended~~.

Why did you cut this? It's graphic.

ended, the explosion was ~~big and~~ violent. He feared such explosions, for he was ~~was~~ weak and cowardly, with all the weakness and dowardice of those who are idle. He felt unsure of himself before her, without the wit to dissuade her when she fixed on an idea and without the strength and ~~decision~~ ^{decisiveness} to change her mind when she was in a temper.

So he tried to ride out the storm, but as soon as its fury was spent, his slow, passive determination ~~floated to the surface~~ ^{resurfaced} like a buoy. ^{bobbed back up to the surface} (keep him too) *

That day he behaved as ~~usual~~ ^{was his custom} and, ~~covering~~ ^{ambled} his retreat with a muttered "Go to the Devil," he got out of her way and ~~wandered~~ ^{ambled} gloomily ^{towards} out the door. *

Matias told ~~the shepherd~~ ^{Gaieta} about their quarrel, and seeing that ~~that~~ two days later Mila answered her husband without looking at him, the old man ~~decided~~ ^{tried} to think of some way to reconcile them.

A passing shower had forced him to take refuge in the hermitage before lunch. After settling his sheep in the shed and laying out his things, he entered the kitchen with his usual cheerful expression.

"Y'know, hermitess, since it's cool out, we could have a snail picnic. I collected some monsters as big as chestnuts in Wolf Pass, which is where they grow best in these parts. What do you say?"

Mila was delighted, but she'd just finished making lunch.

"Don't worry about a little thing like that. Keep it for supper and you'll have less work to do. With a bowl of soup and these ~~snails~~, we'll have enough to keep going all day."

Matias also waxed enthusiastic, and the shepherd rubbed his ^{together} hands in satisfaction.

"Wells then, it's a deal; let's go! . . . If the hermitess

doesn't mind lending me her mortar to make some ~~man~~ a'oli, because
 snails without a'oli and pepper aren't worth a ~~hanged man's~~ spit.
 Hermit, get some ^{kindling} twigs from the pile outside the shed and take ^{it} them
 to that flat ^{round} lookout ~~that's round like a table.~~ ^{the south slope that faces south}

Everything stopped for the picnic. As soon as the ~~min~~ a'oli was
 ready, the shepherd ^{spread} dumped it ^{onto} a red terra ^{earthenware} cotta plate and,
 followed by Mila, ^{with} who ^{carried} carried the bread and windskin and the boy ^{who} with
 a ~~snail~~ snail basket, he set out for the south slope. The woman was ^{all} all

^{excited,} excited, ^{enthusiasm} enthusiasm could hardly contain her excitement.

"Those snails ^{are tinkling} tinkle, shepherd!"

"They'll make even sweeter music when we roast them, hermitess."

Matias awaited them on the slope, where he had settled himself
 beside the ^{pile} bundle of kindling, with his legs pulled up, his arms
 crossed above his knees, and his chin on his arms.

"God damn it, man! You ~~man~~ could have laid out the kindling!
 The a'oli'll melt before we're ready to eat. C'mon, make a bed where
 they can rest easy before they die . . . Meanwhile ^I the kid and your
 wife will choose ^{best-looking} the ones ~~that look best~~, while I make the forks. . .
 I brought some heather ^{especially} especially . . ."

He emptied ^{his} the basket onto the ground. Husband and wife burst
 into admiring exclamations. They couldn't believe the size of those
 snails: ^{big} huge, dark, with the swirls on their heavy shells ^{half} as thick
 as ^{half} half a finger. Baldireto filled his hands ^w with the handsomest ones.
 The shepherd looked pleased.

"Pretty good catch, huh? The ones on the plain don't look this
 good, and for taste there's no comparison. If people down there knew
 about the snails on Rocky, the government would have to send troops
 to ^{protect us!} guard the mountain!"

They laid them out on the bed of ~~twigs~~^{handlings} in a spiral pattern, one after the other. Mila and the boy made the selection, while she and Matias set them on the ground, and sometimes, when husband and wife ~~tried~~ to put two snails in the same place, their hands touched and they started laughing, he out of good will, for he wasn't one to ~~hold~~^{bear} a grudge, and she without ~~wanting~~^{meaning} to.

"Get out of ~~there~~^t!"

"~~Wait~~^{they}, mine's bigger!"

When she thought the outer circle was ~~big~~^{large} enough, Mila consulted the shepherd.

"What do you say, Gaietà? Is this enough?"

The shepherd, who ~~lay~~^{squatted nearby} on the ground, sharpening the branches he had just stipped, answered without raising his head.

"Don't ~~be stingy~~^{stint on} with the ~~ammunition~~^{in vittles}, hermitess . . . I can shovel it down with the best of them. I don't like going away half-full, and the kid takes after me. Besides, there's no reason to go easy. We could never eat all the snails around here, and with that shower we just had I reckon I'll find lots more."

"~~All of them, all of them!~~^{Let's go get them all!}" BALDIRET shouted.

"~~You didn't catch my meaning, but I can see you could eat a horse.~~"

So the circle grew, row by row, till it contained all the snails except the ~~damaged~~^{broken or} and dead ones.

"Now leave it to me! . . ." and ~~the shepherd~~^{Gaietà}, who had finished sharpening the sticks, ~~took the remaining twigs~~^{twigs} and spread handfuls of them on top of the snails till they made ~~a thick layer~~^{all they covered well covered}. Then he packed ~~them~~^{the twigs} down with his hands and lit them.

The fire leapt up instantly.

"Come on, kid! Let's see if you can jump ~~over~~ it!"

"Yeah?" replied Baldiret, his eyes aglow with excitement.

"If you can jump ~~clean~~ ^g clean over it without getting burnt, I'll give you the snail in the ~~middle~~ ^d middle, the granddaddy of ~~all the~~ ^{them all.} others. But if you touch the fire or burn your feet, you won't get a story tonight."

The boy took a few steps backward, spat, pulled up his socks, which were always falling down around his ankles, and, after taking ^g a deep breath, broke into a run.

Mila and the shepherd clapped loudly.

"Did I make it?" asked Baldiret, stumbling unsteadily after his leap.

~~"Hurray"~~ ^{ee} Yessir! You were at least an inch above the ~~fire~~ ^{flame}!"
 exclaimed the laughing shepherd. "You won the granddaddy. After you eat it, we'll hang the shell ^{around} on the ram's ^{neck} horn so it'll ~~hiss~~ ^{hiss}."

The ~~flames~~ ^{fire} began to die down, crackling here and there, and beneath the crackle you could hear the sizzle of ~~roasting~~ ^{roasting} snails.

"Listen to ~~them~~ hissing, poor things," Mila mumbled.

"Don't be sad, hermitess. Everything has to die when its time comes . . . and don't think they were having much fun before . . ."

They hadn't eaten in over a month. Come on now, let's get the tools ready; they're starting to smell good . . ."

They gathered ~~the~~ ^{the} bread, wine, ~~aloli~~ ^{aloli}, and ~~the~~ ^{the} four pointed sticks. ^{not needed}

"Let's see how they look now." The shepherd approached the fire, lifted some burning ~~twigs~~ ^{sticks}, and ~~scrutinized~~ ^{peered at} the snails beneath them.

"Those souls in torment are still begging for more ~~fire~~ ^{fire}, hissing

and sputtering like sinners in Purgatory. Take a good look at your side, hermit."

Since the snails on Matias' side were almost done, ^{he} they shifted the fire toward the shepherd, ^{while a}

^{uof} * ^{sharp} The penetrating smell of charred shells and cooking snails spread through the ^{nearby} surrounding fields

When the flames had died down and only an occasional tongue flickered among the ashes, ~~all that~~ remained was a black circle dotted with glowing lumps. *

"Kid, get up close; it's our turn now. Let's see who blows harder."

And on their hands and knees, stretching ~~out~~ their necks and ^{shutting} ~~screwing up~~ their eyes, the shepherd and his lad ~~both~~ huffed and puffed to clear away the ashes and glowing bits of twigs.

"Oh no! They're all burned!" cried Mila as soon as they saw the shells, some of which were whitened and others blackened by the fire, and all of which resembled toy cinnamon buns in a dollhouse.

"Don't be so sure, hermitess. May I never win ^{a better raffle} the ~~lottery~~ if there aren't a hundred good ones here!"

They blew and picked out ^{bits} bits of straw and twigs till the spiral was clean but continuous like a single ^{strip} ~~piece~~, for the snails were soldered together with dark, sticky paste. *

"Dingaling! It's the refectory bell, ladies and gentlemen! Come and get it while it's hot!"

And the shepherd, ^{pushing} ~~throwing~~ his cap back and clapping his hands, sat down beside the circle and crossed his legs.

"Let me have a stick!" cried Mila.

"Where should we put the a^oli?" asked Matias, holding the plate

in his hand.

"Where we all can reach it . . . Here, near the snails . . . Hey, let the kid get that big one in the middle . . . He won it with his leap."

The boy picked up the shell, whose mouth oozed yellowish-green liquid.

"Look! Look!" he exclaimed, holding it out to the shepherd.

"I bet that one cursed a lot before giving up the ghost . . . That's why its mouth is so ^{dirty} filthy . . . But don't break it. Remember: I want to hang it on the ram."

They were all seated, and four hands, one on each side, broke up the spiral. ^{Their} ~~The~~ heather sticks ^{busily} nosily poked around in the shells, skillfully digging out ^{the} those green snails that ended in muddy white twists and that were then dunked in a foli and ^{greedily devoured} ~~eagerly consumed~~.

The outer rings of the spiral quickly disappeared, while Owl, the shepherd's dog, prowled around the four eaters, picking up empty shells, licking them, and ^{crunching} noisily grinding them between ^{his} ~~its~~ teeth. *

"Praise be to God! Fasting sure is healthy . . . can you taste how sweet they are? Kid, if you save those shells, on St. Pontius' Day I'll make a bunch of tiny lanterns you can put out on the terrace.

Mila couldn't help exclaiming [?] ~~with friendly enthusiasm~~: "Shepherd, there's nothing you ^{don't know} ~~can't do!~~"

The old man chortled.

"If you want some more, I'll meet you in Wolf Pass this afternoon. Then you'll see what we can do together . . ."

A piercing warble, like a canary's song, came from directly below them, and the curious picnickers turned to look down.

A man approached, whistling and waving his arms as he walked.
 Matias shouted: "Spirit! . . . Hey, Spirit! . . ."

The man raised his head, peered at them, and then shut his eyes and showed his teeth. Mila immediately recognized the peasant who'd asked her for a drink.

Without haste, the Spirit walked on till he reached them.

"Hoo hoo hoo . . . I knew you were roasting snails as soon as I saw the fire . . . and my nose started twitching like a greyhound's muzzle . . . Hoo, hoo! . . . What a small!"

"Want to try one? They're tasty as can be!" said Matias, moving over to make room for him.

The man hesitated, but encouraged by Matias' second invitation and Mila's laughter, he ~~settled himself~~ ^{squatted} on his heels.

Since there was no stick for him, he pulled out his horn-handled knife, whose short, wide blade was as sharp as a dagger. Though he held the weapon ~~in his hand~~, he almost always cracked the shells between his teeth like green almonds and, after spitting out the pieces, swallowed the snails. This technique turned Mila's stomach, though the man did occasionally use his knife ~~when he wanted~~ to dunk the snails in a'oli, whereupon ~~the woman~~ ^{she} noticed that his hands were long, thin, ~~black~~ ^{thickened}, and covered with thick, uneven hair, as if they ~~had~~ ^{had recently} been scorched ^{in a fire.} ^{though}

As soon as the man appeared, Gaietà fell silent and quietly went on eating, but every time he raised the wineskin his eyes flashed at their guest.

Suddenly Mila cried: "We forgot the soup!"

The shepherd turned to her.

"You're right, by God! . . . Well, that just goes to show we didn't need it in the first place . . . and we sure ~~don't want it~~ ^{won't miss} after a feed like this ~~one~~ . . . I'm full, anyhow."

At that point Mila caught an answering flash beneath the ~~Spirit's~~ Spirit's ^{thick} bushy ~~eyebrows~~, But it died away immediately. The ~~Spirit's~~ ^{man's} eyes were shut and he was laughing that bizarre laugh of his.

"Hoo hoo hoo! . . . Can I have one for ~~the wife?~~"

They stared at him in amazement.

Then he pulled a rope around his chest till a tangled net appeared holding ~~an ochre-colored~~ ^{a tawny} object. It was a ferret he'd been keeping behind his back.

Baldiret's eyes grew big as saucers, and he could hardly ~~keep~~ ^{sit} still. *

The ~~ferret~~ ^{animal} restlessly pawed the net and sniffed, poking its white snout through the holes.

The Spirit crushed a snail, spat out the shell, and offered the meat to his ~~ferret~~.

"It eats snails too?" asked Matias.

"Everything except eggs, ^ycause I'd have to pay for them." The man shut his eyes and laughed, as was his custom.

"Where have I seen him before?" Mila wondered.

"It's fun hunting with a ferret," said Matias.

"That's what they say . . . Hoo hoo hoo . . . Come along this afternoon and you'll see."

Matias began to ~~get excited~~.

"Are you going far?"

"Only to Three Comb Gorge . . ."

"Sure. Why not? There's nothing ~~to do~~ at the hermitage."

Mila's brow suddenly furrowed.

"Weren't you going to work on the terraces today?"

"I'll do it tomorrow . . . we've got plenty of time."

Baldiret clung to the shepherd's shoulder, rubbing against it a little.

"What is it, kid?"

The boy slowly whispered, without taking his eyes off the ferret: "Can I go too?"

The shepherd looked at him seriously.

"That's not for you, pal. When you're older . . ."

"Aw! Let him go, man . . . He can carry the rabbits, can't you Baldiret?" Matias cheerfully interjected.

The boy looked again at the shepherd, who would have liked to say no, but those big green eyes begged ~~him~~ so tenderly that he hadn't the heart to refuse.

"Okay, just this once," he reluctantly agreed, thinking: "I'll make sure you ~~don't~~ ^{want} ask again."

When the last snail had disappeared and the three hunters were on their way down the slope, the shepherd, holding Owl's collar to keep the dog from following them, turned to Mila, who was still seated by the circle of ashes, and said, shaking his head: "We sure messed that up, hermitess! That bird of ill omen is circling round ~~your~~ ^{your} hermitage. I'm telling you ^{again}: watch out, watch out! It's no laughing matter, I can promise you."

"But who is he?"

"Who is he? God knows! Who can tell where that ~~freak~~ ^{bastard} came from?"

. . . They say he used to beg with an old man when he was little, and when the old man died he worked in some of the farmhouses, but they all threw him out for being so ^{sneaky} ~~nasty~~. Now he poaches ~~r~~rabbits instead of working. He'll hunt them all year long till there's none left in these hills. He can't stand me because I won't let him get away with it. When I see he's got his eye on a burrow, I plant a scarecrow in front of it so the rabbits'll get scared and move . . . But I have to look sharp, [↓] cause if he caught me he'd ^{make me pay for} ~~never forgive~~ ^{it} ~~what I've done~~. Look; he used to have a shotgun. I told you I like to walk in the ^{mit} ~~fog~~. Well, one day when I was up on Goblin Crest, which is so clean and quiet you can hear a ^{pin drop} ~~fly~~ a mile away, a bullet whizzed by my ear. I couldn't see a soul, because ~~below~~ ^{me} there was nothing but white clouds, but may God strike me dead if it wasn't that ^{rascal} ~~bastard~~. He finally made so much trouble that the Civil Guard took his gun away, but I still wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. He knows everything that's going on, how to imitate all kinds of animals, and he always thinks he's one or another of them. How else could it be, when you ^{chew the} ~~pull~~ it over? Did you see those monkey paws? He's more beast than man."

^{A thought} ~~Something~~ suddenly struck Mila.

"Wait a minute. Now I know where I've seen ^{him} ~~him~~ ^{that guy} ~~him~~! It's not that I ever laid eyes on ~~him~~ ^{him} ~~that~~ ^{guy} ~~guy~~, but he's got the same teeth and gums as a bitch my ~~uncle~~ ^{uncle} had when I was ^{little} ~~small~~. Exactly the same . . . ~~Now I've got it!~~" and looking at the shepherd in amazement, she whispered: "You're right. He's more beast than man!"

VI: Tales

In the ^{spring} mountain evenings, which were still cool ^{up} at that time ^{in the mountains} of year, everyone gathered in Mila's kitchen. ^{Each} time they threw a new kermes log ^{on} in the ~~hearth~~ ^{fire, a red} ~~fire~~, a ^{fiery} bouquet burst forth, ^{swaying} bending its bright tongues as if before an equinoctial tempest, casting fierce ^{flicking and shifting} and sudden relections upon the shadowy walls, and surrounding the shepherd and his lad with ^{fiery} red auras, like ~~human~~ demons in a mys tery play.

The boy sat by the wood ^{pile}, periodically feeding that diminu- tive inferno, while Gaietà, his hat pushed back, stripped hackberry switches that would later serve as collars for ^{errant} ~~wandering~~ rams, walking sticks for proud farmboys ^{keen} ~~coming~~ of age, and whistling whips for the wagoners in ~~Murons~~. Matias usually stretched out on the bench beside the table, gazing upward with his hands folded behind his head, while Mila bustled around, preparing the meal and listening, or ~~when~~ when she could -- sitting awhile by the fire.

As the shepherd whittled, he told stories to Baldiret, and his soft voice, suffused with the ^{lift} ~~charm~~ of his distant birthplace, filled the cozy room with its simple, Druidic majesty. The first story Mila heard was the one about the fairy ~~whom~~ echoes.

So let it serve as an example.

The shepherd began: "^{once upon a time} Long, long ago, when the animals ^{still} ~~still~~ could talk, an old, old man ^{had} ~~had~~ ^{dwelt} ~~lived~~ in these mountains for centuries. Such was the will of God, who let him live longer than other men because he'd never sinned or touched a woman in all his days. ^{instead} ~~In~~ place of breeches and a jacket, he wore only his hair, which was so long

~~and~~

and thick that it ^{covered} hid his back like a cape, and his white beard, which ~~hung~~ ^{came} all the way down to his knees."

Baldiret cried out in wonder, and the shepherd cheerfully replied: "Now if we went around like that, we'd make a pretty picture, wouldn't we? But to get back to the old man, he was a hermit who did nothing but pray day and night, and he ate only roots, with an occasional ~~hush~~ hackberry as a special treat."

"Hackberries?" asked Baldiret, ^{the boy the boys} whose surprise was now even greater, since he himself often ate them.

"That's what I said! Maybe they were even from that tree in the Ravine, where we cut sticks every time we pass by."

^{Baldiret} The boy ^{The old} marveled at the thought, while the shepherd continued: "That man was so holy that ^{other} people kept ^a away from him, so God wouldn't notice what a big difference there was. One by one, his neighbors ^J all moved down to the plain till finally there was no one left except that old man and the fairies. I already told you how Badblood Creek, Three Comb Gorge and the ~~mountain~~ ^J caves near Flatrock had more ~~fairies~~ ^J a fairies than a dog has fleas. But you can't see fairies, so people would walk right through a crowd of them, thinking they were all alone. Imagine how the little people laughed fit to bust! And don't forget: fairies love to fo~~l~~ around with kids, and that's how all this trouble ^J got started. Because once everyone had left the ~~mountains~~ ^J, they didn't know what to do for fun. They got grouchier ^J and grouchier and lonelier and lonelier till finally they realized it was all that old root-eating man's fault. Determined to get even, they ^{called} held a meeting in that ravine near the Girl. Everyone ~~spoke~~ ^{her} said ~~her~~ piece, but there were so many pieces that they just ~~had~~ ^J couldn't seem

to reach an agreement. ~~Whispering~~ The ~~girl~~ ^{who} fairies are kind of gabby, ^{and can talk a blue streak...} and like to chew their cabbage twice. And they never would have done anything if all of a sudden the ^{littlest} one, who was very naughty, hadn't ^{leapt} ~~jumped~~ up and said: 'Now wait a minute, ladies! I've been thinking how to make a ^{wily} ~~bold~~ man lose his soul, and if you'll leave it to me I'll take care of everything. They all agreed, and ~~that~~ ^{the} very next morning at daybreak, when the old man was saying his prayers, he saw a big ~~shadow~~ ^S in front of him. He ^{looked up} ~~raised his~~ ^{head}, and you'll never guess what he saw! A little golden bird with three feathers on ~~his~~ ^{her} ~~crest~~, as red and shiny as three drops of blood."

The boy's green eyes shone like ^{two} ~~two~~ lanterns, and his hands forgot to feed the fire. The shepherd began to strip another stick.

"The old man was charmed by the little bird and ~~as he stared~~ ^{so long} and ~~stared~~, he forgot his Paternoster. When the bird flew away toward Highpeak, the man scratched his head and wondered: 'How ~~can~~ ^{could} something so tiny cast such a big shadow when the sun isn't even out? And another thing: what kind of bird was that? I've never seen the like in all my years on earth! ~~Is~~ ^{was} it a hoopoe? ~~Is~~ ^{was} it a starling? ~~Is~~ ^{was} it a swift? ~~Is~~ ^{was} it a greenfinch?' But no matter how long he thought, he couldn't ~~recall~~ ^{recollect} anything like it."

The shepherd stopped to cut off a ~~shoot~~ ^{shoot}, which landed in the fire and made it flare up, momentarily revealing his two listeners' attentive faces. Even Matias, who was half-asleep on the bench, stirred, ~~scratched~~ ^{rubbed} his back against the wood, and opened a curious eye to see why the shepherd had stopped, for the human voice's ~~magic~~ ^{enchanting} ~~power~~ ^{us} so affects our ~~consciousness~~ that when it stops, we ~~anxiously~~ long for its return.

But the shepherd's stories were never interrupted for long; they flowed generously, like water from a bubbling spring.

"The old man, who was ^{as} ~~an~~ innocent as a babe in arms, would never have dreamed anyone was ^{trying} ~~trying~~ to fool him. But I bet ^{you can} ~~you've already~~ figured ^{guess} ~~out that~~ those fairies were up to no good. And sure enough, as soon as he knelt the next morning, he saw that same shadow and ^{the} ~~that~~ very same little bird, except that this time it didn't just hop around and chirp but warbled as prettily as the sweetest nightingale. Like I said, this old man was as innoc^{as} ~~ent~~ a kid, and kids are like monkeys: they want to touch whatever they see. So as soon as he could, ~~in~~ ^{he} the old man reached out to touch the little bird, but when ~~it~~ it saw what he wanted, lickety split! It flew off ^{toward} ~~to~~ ~~Minghama~~ Highpeak. ^{And you} ~~Don't ask~~ ^{know} what the old man did then? He forgot to pray, dig for roots, or even ^{chew} ~~gnaw~~ on a ^{dry} ~~dried~~ hackberry. At night, instead of sleeping, he could only think of one thing: that bird, that little golden bird. So while the stars played hide-and-seek, the old man was kneeling in the same spot with a slipknot he'd made, and when the sun came out and that bird returned, he ^{tossed} ~~threw~~ out his rope and . . ."

The shepherd stopped to put down the stick he'd finished and saw Baldiret's huge staring eyes.

"Did he catch it?" ~~he anxiously asked.~~

"Yep. Right ^{around} ~~by~~ the neck, and once he had it, the old man laughed and said:

Well well, little friend,

I caught you in the end.

~~But he almost turned to stone~~ "But he almost turned to stone when the little bird replied:

Please, dear old man,

Spare me ~~if you can.~~ if you can.

~~My promise to you is that I will never touch a woman.~~ "A Moorish king bewitched me and turned me over to the fairies, but the spell can be broken by ^{one} some man who's never touched a woman.'

"The old man's heart leapt up when he heard these words, for he thought ^{ggg} Our Lord wanted him to perform a miracle never seen before. So he answered:

Little golden bird,
You can trust my word.

"I promise to free you, since I'm an old man and have never touched a woman. Now tell me quickly what I must do.'

"Pull two feathers from my crest,' the bird replied, 'and stick them in your eyes.' The old man did as he was told, and ~~now~~ sooner had he stuck the feathers in his eyes than he turned blind as a bat. 'Oh dear, what have I done?' he cried. 'I'll never see again!' But the bird laughed and laughed, and when it had finished laughing, it plucked the last feather from its crest and pierced the man's heart. The light returned to his eyes, and you'll never guess what he saw before him."

Baldiret was so enthralled that he forgot to speak.

"Well, he saw a girl as ^gpretty as the Holy Virgin but as naked as he was. All she wore was a ^{garland} chain of roses that ~~wound~~ ^{wound} around her neck and hung down to her feet . . ."

The shepherd interrupted himself to ask: "Well, who do you think that girl was?"

"The fairy!"

"Right! And the ^gchain of roses?"

Baldiret looked up and down, rubbed his cheek against his shoulder,

but . . . he ~~could~~ couldn't ~~find~~ figure out what those roses might be.

"The slipknot!"

"Darn!" And the boy bit his tongue in annoyance at not thinking of something so simple.

"So what happened?" ~~Mila~~ Mila eagerly asked.

"Listen and I'll tell you. Those fairies know what they're up to, and the poor old holy man had never seen anything so lovely! When he caught sight of that girl standing there ~~and~~ staring at him, he ~~blushed~~ blushed from head to toe, pulled his hair around him, and covered his face with his hands, but he'd forgotten the main thing: to pull ~~that~~ ^{the} magic feather out of his heart. So no matter how he hid his face, it was like his hands were made of glass and he kept seeing that fairy before him till finally she said:

Old man who before me stands,

Now take away your hands.

~~Crunchnoggins~~ 'I mean you no harm, for I, Dawnflower, the smallest fairy in the gorge, have taken pity on you. If you'll come with me, I'll make you the richest man alive. Behind the Roar, we'll find the entrance to my ^{mountain} palace ~~in the mountains~~, all made of stardust and seashells. Its towers are coral, its doors are silver, and its columns are bones from ~~Crunchnoggins~~ Crunchnoggin, the giant my father slew because he wanted to marry me. There you'll sleep ^{on} in a canopied ~~in~~ gold bed in a mirrored chamber hung with jeweled damask, eat fish from underground milky rivers, and drink mead blended daily by the King of ^{Orient's} ~~China's~~ three hundred wives . . .'

"The fairy stopped there, thinking ~~that~~ ^{the} after so many promises,

he had ~~good~~ ^{plenty of reasons} reason to follow her. But the old man, who'd recovered his senses and ~~prayed~~ ^{begged} God to ~~give him~~ ^{for} strength, suddenly turned away and cried: "Get thee hence, wicked witch, for I prize Heaven above ~~worship~~ ^{such} worldly riches!" The fairy shot him a ~~dirty~~ ^{wicked nasty} look and vanished into thin air."

Baldiret's long face revealed his disappointment. How could a man with no more clothing than his hair refuse a palace made of glittering stardust, with coral towers and silver doors?

"So did the fairy come back?"

"The old man hardly knew what hit him. He tried walking from the Roar to the Plunge and from Cockfoot to Roepass, saying his prayers and doing penance as he went. But he couldn't get the fairy out of his mind, with that hair like ~~gold~~ ^{gold dust} and those roses ~~wound~~ ^{wound} around her neck. By midnight he couldn't stand it any more and ~~knelt~~ ^{knelt} in the same place, but although he waited and waited, he saw neither girl nor bird. Then he thought: 'If only she'd come back, I'd cover her with my hair, for no young lady should run about like that.' ~~As soon~~ ^{No sooner} ~~as he had that thought~~ ^{had he thought that than}, she appeared, but instead of giving her his hair, he just ~~glanced at her~~ ^{glanced at her}, lowered his eyes, and started trembling. ~~So~~ ^{Then} the fairy said: 'Though you drove me away yesterday, I ~~felt~~ ^{pity} sorry for you and ~~came~~ ^{has brought me} back. Since you spun my riches, if ~~you'll~~ ^{you'll} come with me I'll ~~make~~ ^{d shall} you the mightiest man alive. I'll give you a firestone suit, a lightning sword, and a horse swifter than the wind. With ~~such~~ ^{thus lady} a ~~suit~~ ^{armed}, sword, and mount, you can conquer the world. Nor will anyone stop you, for if they smite your suit ~~and~~ ^{ed} a ray of fire will burst forth, if they try to flee your horse will ~~catch~~ ^{catch} them, and if they refuse to surrender your flaming sword will turn them to ashes.'

"Her words filled the old man with sadness and ~~confusion~~ ^{doubt}, and seeing this, she asked what he was thinking. The old man took a great leap and said in a terrified voice: 'Get thee hence, wicked witch, for I ~~am~~ ^{prize} Heaven above ~~worldly~~ ^{such} might!' Feeling even more annoyed ^{than} than the first day, she kicked the ground and ~~she~~ ^{she} vanished into thin air."

The shepherd stopped to stretch his arms and scratch his head, but the boy's impatience would ~~not~~ ^{not} let him rest long.

"So . . .?"

* ^{isn't} "Hold your horses, kid. I'm out of breath. You know, storytelling's ~~not the same as horse racing~~ ^{like running a race}. Well, after spurning Dawnflower's second offer, the old man felt sadder than a new widow and spent the whole day weeping and thinking to himself: 'It must be a lot nicer to have a mountain palace, sleep in a canopied bed, eat fish from milky rivers, and drink mead from ~~China~~ ^{the Orient} than ~~to~~ ^{to} sleep in caves or ~~out~~ in the damp, cut your feet on brambles, and live on nothing but bitter roots and water. But I'm just a poor sinner and God has offered me nothing better, for He surely knows how little I deserve.' This idea calmed him for a while, but then ~~he~~ ^{he} thought: 'Even so, it did sound good what that fairy said: to ride through the world ruling ~~the~~ ^{lands} kingdoms ~~that~~ that take my fancy. You can cross these mountains in four days, but the world must be a lot bigger. Maybe it takes ten or ~~more~~ ^{together} twelve days to cross it, or even as many as all my toes and fingers ~~put together~~. When I was little, a crow ~~once~~ ^{once} told me there were as many kinds of men as birds, and each kind spoke a different tongue and had different-colored feathers. That would sure be a sight to see, but I bet that crow was lying. He'd been all over, and I've

never left these ~~mountain~~ ^{hills,} parts. When I was young, I should have traveled and seen a bit of the world . . . It's not much fun spending your life like a lizard in ~~his~~ ^{the} hole . . . And while he ~~thought about~~ ^{chewed} ~~all~~ ^{thoughts} these things that had never crossed his mind before, night fell, and before sunrise he knelt in the same place to await the fairy. He was ~~sure~~ ^{certain} she'd come back and, though he ~~hardened~~ ^{hardened} his heart against her, he also felt impatient, for all men love company."

"And did she ~~come back?~~ ^I" asked Mila.

"Even earlier than the other days. Before daybreak she appeared at his side, sitting there with eyes brighter than Owl's and saying in a voice even sweeter than when she'd been a bird: 'Alas, ~~my~~ dear old man, you must have ~~bewitched~~ ^I me, for despite your cruelty I cannot forsake you. Come what may, I have decided to reward you, and ~~if~~ ^{your kindness} you spurn power and riches, I'll make you the wisest man alive. You'll know everything that happens on earth and in Heaven. You'll see * the sap rise in ~~trunks~~ ^{tree trunks} and how leaves and flowers grow. You'll see * ants burrowing ~~beyond~~ ^{below} the seas and ships ~~on~~ ^{upon} the ocean. You'll see pathways between stars and caverns in Hell, full of vile beasts and souls in torment, ~~twisting~~ ^{go withing} and clawing, and you'll see the plottings of men's minds and children in their mothers' wombs. From East to ~~West,~~ ^{all} ~~everything~~ will be open to your gaze. . . You'll hear and understand everything too: what birds and beasts say, the songs fishes sing, mermaids beneath the sea, ~~from~~ ^I the howling wind, the rumbling thunder, the moaning mountains, and every sound made by anything near or far . . . You'll know all the world's secrets and how to seek good and shun evil.' As the fairy spoke, the old man stared and his heart filled with longing.

"Whatever shall I do?' he thought to himself. "Should I ~~send~~ ^I

heed her words? Should I ^{and} follow her? If I ~~cast her from me~~ ^{refuse} I'll die of sorrow, but if I ~~follow~~ ^{go}, I'll burn in Hell, for I know fairies' powers are nothing but wickedness. Alas, I've already ~~sinned~~ ^{damned my soul} by looking and listening ~~and am cursed forevermore~~. Meanwhile, the fairy watched him and finally said: 'Well, I've offered you everything I possess.

Now tell me once and for all: will you come away or not?' The old man wept and cried aloud: 'Get thee hence, wicked witch, for I can stand ~~no more!~~' And burying his head between his knees, he prayed God to give him strength, but she approached the old man and whispered in his ear: 'Oh beloved, please come, for you have won my very heart and my sole wish is to make you the richest, mightiest, and wisest man ^{alive} on earth.' The old man covered his ears and cried out with all his might: 'No, no! Get away, evil spirit, for I prize Heaven above all this world's wonders!' As soon as he had spoken, everything darkened like ~~the~~ ^{on} Judgement Day, and he thought the fairy had fled again."

"And had she?" asked Mila, whose eyes were ~~big~~ ^{big} as saucers.

"Nonsense, hermitess! She hadn't finished her day's work, and I told you she wasn't one to leave a job half-~~finished~~ ^{done}. When she ~~saw~~ ^{seeing} how ~~steadfast~~ ^{stubborn} the old man was, she put her arm around his neck and said slowly, like she was at Confession: 'Well, I see I ~~shall~~ ^{shall} never sway one so saintly and pure of heart. You ~~had~~ ^{had} won my love and I hoped to make you my husband, but ^{now} you have spurned me ~~three~~ ^{thrice} times, and so I must depart. Never again will you see, hear, or learn of my doings, but first ~~I shall~~ ^{d shall} leave you something to remember me by as long as the world endures. And so saying, she drew nearer, gave him a long kiss, and ~~vanished~~ ^{vanished} into thin air."

"And she never came back?"

"NB, hermitess, this time she stayed away. Otherwise the story would never end." The shepherd looked at Mila's face and laughed.

"What?" she ~~cried~~ ^{in astonishment} "You mean that's all?"

"Everything but the moral. But don't complain till you ~~see what~~ ^{hear how} happened next. ~~As soon as she'd left the old man, the fairy mounted a passing breeze,~~ ^{the joy of end} which swiftly bore her to Deadwoman Gulch. There she ~~spied~~ ^{saw} the other fairies ~~chatting over their knitting,~~ ^{gossiping while they knitted,} and as soon as she ~~saw~~ ^{caught sight of} them, she ~~cried~~ ^{shouted} as loud as she could:

O h fairy sisters on this wondrous day,

Throw ~~that~~ ^{your foolish} knitting away!

Take up your ~~diamond~~ diamond combs of ~~gold~~ old,

Your moon-mirrors of flaming gold,

And your necklaces of serpent-eyes

That provoke the blindman's cries.

Your lily-robcs will now be worn

That you with salmon-scales adorn,

And ~~your~~ ^{you with} satin slippers don,

For men will ~~return~~ ^{come} anon!

"Imagine what a fuss they ~~made~~ ^{all} over this news! ~~All~~ ^{IT} the fairies asked and asked how it had ~~happened~~ ^{exactly what how she'd twisted the old man done.} happened, till finally the ~~littlest~~ ^{Dawnflower} one told them ~~how she'd bested the old man.~~ ^{their ears} The fairies, who couldn't believe it, listened to how she'd tempted him, and hearing that she had vainly offered ~~might~~ ^{trap} riches, might, and wisdom, which usually the best baits to lure a man and steal his soul, ~~and yet that~~ ^{but} their sister had ~~trapped~~ ^{bested} him all the same, they asked what tools, ~~what~~ ^{are} chains, what potions, or ~~what~~ ^{are} spells had done it. Finally she told them: she'd damned his soul with ~~making~~ ^{a single} just one kiss! For ever since the world ~~had~~ ^{began}

began, no potion, ~~magic~~ chain, trick, jailer, or spell could bewitch
 a man like a woman's kiss. Some of the sillier ^{ones started laughing} fairies ~~laughed~~ at
 her ~~wonder~~ words, but just then they heard a ^{low} deep muffled voice, like *
 a ~~crashing~~ ^{breaking} wave that came from far away ^{deep within} in the forest. They listened
 closely till they heard what it said: 'Dawnflower! . . . Dawnflower!
 . . . Dawnflower! . . . ' It was the old man, running to and fro,
 first ^{to Goblin} ~~of Madman's~~ Crest, then to King's Glass, then to Olivebreath,
 searching for the fairy and begging her to return, offering his very
 soul for just one more kiss. The fairies were delighted and fanned
 out through the mountains, ^{ishing} ~~laughing~~, mocking, and repeating his words.
 And that's how they got that bad habit they still have today."

"And what became of the old man, shepherd?"

"He died of a broken heart before the century was out, and since
 he passed away in a state of sin, he couldn't go to Heaven. May God
 pity him! And even now, hermitess, on stormy nights, when Highpeak's
^{Bones rattle} ~~bells~~ ring to show someone's in trouble, you can see his wandering
 soul, like a will-o'-the-wisp in the gorges and gullies, and his voice,
 dark and drawn out like the echo of a wave, keeps crying 'Dawnflower!
 . . . Dawnflower! . . . Dawnflower! . . . ' till daybreak comes.

VII: Spring

The beginning of May was wonderful. The mountains, fragrant with new flowers, bathed in sunlight, and full of birdsongs, lost their savage, millennial aspect and seemd to regain their youth, with all youth's ~~innocent~~ joy in budding courtship. Every morning Mila ~~awakened~~ awoke to some new dlight she hadn't noticed the day before, and moreover, she herself seemed to grow younger with the changing mountains. Her eyes, which had been melancholy, regained their old sparkle, while her lips grew redder than ever before, her breasts swelled like a young mother's, and a light, graceful harmony pervaded her movements. These outward changes corresponded to an overflow of feelings so volatile that at times she felt herself multiplying into dozens of different women. ~~It seemed that a mysterious inner light constantly altered her coloration,~~ like those distant mountains that changed from hour to hour. The others also noted the change in Mila.

One day Gaietà affectionately said: "Hermitess, I bet you don't have a bad word to say about St. Pontius now. It's a miracle how much better you look. You were skinny as a rail when I first laid eyes on you, but now you're the prettiest thing I ever did see!"

Another day, Arnau from St. Pontius' farmhouse went hunting and as he passed the hermitage, stopped in to say hello.

"Anyone home?" he called out from the front gate.

"Who's there? Come on up!" Mila shouted down from the kitchen, and leaving the dishes half-washed, she went onto the balcony and leaned over the railing.

Arnau stopped halfway up the stairs and, after hesitating a

moment, exclaimed ~~in amazement~~: "My God! I hardly recognized you . . .
~~you~~ You look like a new woman . . ."

While he was there, Mila bustled about ~~and never looked~~ ^{without looking} straight at him, but she saw that his admiring gaze never left her.

On still another afternoon so ~~muggy~~ ^{sultry} that it ~~seemed~~ ^{felt} like mid-August, she took her sewing basket ~~outside~~ and sat ~~down~~ ^{down in the shade of} beneath an

almond tree, where she began to mend one of Matias' shirts. In the distance the mountains ~~rose~~ ^{she could see} and far away on her right, the Husk ~~rose up~~ ^{rose up}

~~jutted into~~ ^{loomed above} a brilliant blue sky. Four steps from her on the left, a row of bushes bounded ~~the~~ little orchard, and above ~~her head~~ ^{her} the almond

tree spread its branches, ~~bowed~~ ^{heavy with} beneath the weight of all those nuts the shepherd had ~~foreseen~~ ^{predicted}. Beneath that green canopy, so thick ~~in~~ the

sun's rays could barely ~~penetrate~~ ^{penetrate} it, the temperature was far ~~lower~~ lower than in the ~~sun~~ ^{piene} sweltering fields. ~~That~~ ^{the} coolness soon made

Mila, who had risen early and whom the ~~sultry~~ ^{sultry} heat had affected, want to lie down, and without taking her sewing off her lap, she ~~fell~~ ^{lay} back

~~onto~~ the sloping ground behind her. In her ~~breast~~ ^{bosom}, hot like the day, she felt the buried life stirring, her eyes were dazzled by the dark ~~or~~

greens and ~~translucent undersides~~ of leaves, and a longing to stretch her muscles made her fling her arms wide so that they rested ~~hastidly~~

, palms up, beside her on the ~~the~~ grass, while the sluggish blood flowed slowly through her veins. She dozed off in this position, but

in the course of her nap the god of sleep mischevously tugged at her blouse, whose top two buttons she had undone, and stretched one of her

legs till its foot rested against the other. Her head was thrown back, her mouth was half open, and her white neck emerged from the blouse's

bluish depths, which revealed the softly rounded contours of Mila's

* This reads oddly

for way

^{breasts} ~~burst~~ . . . She slept deeply, motionlessly, but suddenly, as ^{though} ~~if~~ troubled by a bad dream, she began to show signs of agitation. Her body stirred, her brow furrowed, her right arm ^{twitched} ~~jumped~~ convulsively, her face, pale in repose, ^{reddened} ~~blushed~~ slightly . . . Mila opened her eyes, blinked, looked around, and . . . abruptly sat up. Two sparks glinted among the bushes: two ^{as wolfish} ~~wolf-like~~ eyes pierced her like ^{glowing} ~~red-hot~~ needles. ~~■~~

"Hoo hoo hoo . . . The ferret gave me the slip . . . Hoo hoo hoo . . ." And the Spirit, trampling blackberry bushes and laughing that guttural laugh of his, slowly backed away from her till he was out of sight. ^{After} ~~Once~~ he was gone, Mila kept staring into the brambles, listening to her pounding heart, still seeing those glittering eyes and sharp white teeth. Then she suddenly bent forward, buried her head between her thighs, and clutched her knees. A heady mixture of shame, joy, fear and desire crept over her, rising from her feet to her head like a ~~spinning~~ whirlpool and nearly causing her to faint.

When she recovered, she felt groggy, her spine was cold, and the pattern of little holes on ^{her} ~~her~~ thimble was imprinted on her left arm.

She picked up her sewing basket and slowly set off for home.

As usual, Matias had said he was going to visit the rector, and this reminded Mila that she hadn't ~~yet~~ been to Confession and ^{really} ~~ought~~ ought to go. Yes, she should go, but what was there ^{exuberance} ~~to confess?~~ to confess?

For days now, stifled rages, strange flashes of ~~excitement~~ ^{amusement}, disappointments with she scarcely knew what, secret, uncertain shudders had passed ^{over} ~~through~~ her like shooting stars ~~or black bumblebees~~, but were those sometimes vivid, sometimes vague impressions really sins ~~to be confessed?~~ to be confessed? She thought not; they weren't ~~fit~~ fit for a priest but for another sort of person . . . "The shepherd!" she suddenly thought, following the logic of her ^{musings} ~~ruminations~~ . . . But she blushed as soon

as the idea occurred to her: "No! No! Certainly not the shepherd!
 Why not? Well . . . because!" The shepherd was so ~~strange and un-~~
~~worldly~~ ^{unworldly} worldly . . . If she told him about her feelings, he wouldn't
 understand . . . He might laugh, and then again he might look at her
 differently. He thought St. Pontius could cure ~~everything~~ ^{anything}, he shared
 none of her ~~concerns~~ ^{concerns}, he once had called her a heretic, he seemed
 to live in his own ~~world~~ ^{world} . . . No, not the shepherd! Matias would have
 been better, if he were another sort of man, a man like those others
 who really looked at her: with Arnau's admiring ~~stare~~ ^{gaze}, for example,
 or the ~~Spanish~~ Spirit's goatish leer, or even with Owl's ~~wat~~ ^{moist} and
 faithful eyes . . . like a man or beast, but with some kind of response.
 Matias had no distinctive look, she now realized for the first time.

He had no look because peace reigned within him, as in a peaceful
 animal but an abnormal one, more bestial than the others ~~because he~~ ^{was} ~~was~~ ⁱⁿ
 never ~~went into heat~~ ^{was in in rut}.

This abnormality, once recognized, pursued and gnawed at Mila
 like the ~~mercy~~ ^{memory} of some misdeed, something that made her life seem
 sordid and miserable. And with secret ~~shame~~ ^{shame}, though
 unconsciously, she began to bend all her efforts toward making things
 once again as they should be. To her surprise and consternation, she
 found herself acting like a playful kitten, adopting suggestive ~~postures~~ ^{poses},
 feigned languors, seductive intonations, fluttering lashes, quiet
 sighs . . . an entire arsenal of amorous ~~arms~~ ^{weapons} hitherto unused by her *
 and that she now wielded with the bitter fury of a woman scorned . . .
 But ~~And~~ ^{breach} upon seeing that not even those ~~weapons~~ ^{arms} could open the desired *
~~wound~~ ^{wound} and that all remained quiet in the opposing camp, she felt de-
 feated and longed to drag herself along the ground, to bite her own

flesh, to crawl into a corner and starve to ~~death~~, to transform her troubled self into something numb, stony, unaware . . . "If only I could be like them," she thought, standing outside the hermitage and watching the Ridorta women come down the mountain like a ~~thin~~ column of ants, each ~~one~~ bent beneath a bundle of ~~wood~~ ^{live wood} three times her size, without desires, yearnings, ~~awareness~~ ^{consciousness}, or any other thought than the weight they bore upon their backs, but that all the same was not so heavy as the one inside Mila. In her mind, she reconstructed their daily routine: to get up in the dark, gather ropes and sacks, meet the other women and together climb the mountain in the ~~cool morning~~ ^{morning air}, repeating neighborhood gossip, dirty jokes, wonderful ~~stories~~ ^{tales} like the shepherd's. Once there, they would uproot kermes oak after kermes oak, stuff their sacks, hoist those heavy crosses onto their backs and head for Murons, where they delivered their bundles to the bakers and received a couple of pennies ~~each~~ before returning home, exhausted but ^{glad} pleased to have ~~lived through~~ ^{survived} another day.

Mila then stopped short in the middle of her imaginings . . . Despite everything, those women's ~~life was~~ ^{lives were} not sufficiently calm, boring, or dead. Better to be a plant, free of all servitude, need, ^{tril} work and anxiety . . . or better still, a hard, stony mountain like the Rockies.

Suddenly that animal, to which she had always been indifferent ^{or} and even hostile, found a place in her heart. She grew fond of a baby lamb ~~whom~~ ~~wh~~ whose fleece was white as a cloud. She fed it breadcrumbs, while the lamb followed her like a puppy, climbed onto her lap, and took lettuce leaves from her mouth. A shiver of delight ran thorough Mila whenever ~~she~~ ^{face} felt that warm, silky muzzle on her ~~and~~ and smelled

its breath against her skin. The lamb's gaze was as stupid as Matias', but so much more tender and innocent! ^{Whenever} ~~When~~ the lamb looked at her, Mila felt like crying.

Other pets, however, soon displaced the lamb.

One day the shepherd came back ^{acting} ~~looking~~ very upset.

At St. Pontius' farmhouse, they had driven away a cat that ^{ate} ~~stole~~ their chickens and that at last had taken refuge in a nearby gorge, where it hunted wild birds with consummate skill. In that gorge, it bore four kittens as wild and ^{tawny} ~~calico~~ as itself. One day the Sprit saw them, trapped the cat, tortured it awhile for ^{his} ~~amusement~~, and finally kicked it to death. Then he went cheerfully on his way, ~~shutting his~~ ^{squinting} eyes and baring his gums. When the four kittens grew hungry, they approached their mother and sucked ^{at} the dead cat's ^g nipples. The next morning they were ~~meowing~~ ^{meowing} disconsolately.

Baldiret ~~sa~~ ^g saw it ~~all~~ ^{of it all} and told the shepherd, who then repeated the story to Mila: "And I swear I'll make that ^{bastard} ~~scoundrel~~ pay for what he's done. By tomorrow night all the burrows he's watching will be empty. To starve those poor little ~~meowmeow~~ kittens to death!... He should have hit them with a rock and put them out of their misery."

Mila shuddered, and that afternoon she, Gaietà, and Baldiret went to the gorge. As they approached, they heard the kittens panting and saw the four of the ^w, looking as bristly as hedgehogs, flee as fast as ~~they~~ ^g their rickety little legs could carry them. Gentle calls and enticements proved useless. The wild creatures, hidden in the underbrush, refused to be lured forth or to let anyone approach them. For three or four days Mila had her work cut out for her. Every morning and ~~after~~ ^g evening ~~she~~ ^g visited the gorge, where she left gifts of

food for the kittens. ~~One~~ ^{she} refused to eat and ~~died~~ ^{starved to death} of starvation, but
 the other three allowed her to collect ~~the~~ ^{them}, more dead than alive, and
 take them back to the hermitage. Through care and patience, she was
 able to save two, who were more revered ^{the sacred cats of they had been} and exalted than in ancient
 Egypt. Anyone who bothered them would have seen Mila in a temper
 hitherto unknown. But the kittens thrived ~~and grew~~ ^{and grew}, hunted for food,
 played all day ~~long~~ ^{long} and no longer needed her ~~help~~ ^{help}. Then her heart,
 full of affection, felt as ~~wasted~~ ^{barren} as before and again longed to ~~love~~
 and give itself ~~blindly~~ ^{unintentionally}.

One day, as she was trying some suspenders on Baldiret, ~~that~~ ^{the} same
 feverish glow that had invaded her on their visit to the Roar again
 swept through her. She suddenly ~~took~~ ^{seized} Baldiret's ~~hand~~ ^{the boy's} head between
 her hands, ~~rubbed~~ ^{pressed} her face ~~against~~ ^{against} it, and ~~covered~~ ^{covered} him with
 famished kisses . . . The ~~boy~~ ^{lad} blinked and shrank beneath that ~~amorous~~
 tempest, as surprised and disconcerted as a bird fallen from its
 nest. From that day on, ~~the youngest child at St. Pontius~~ ^{Baldiret} illuminated
 Mila's loneliness, and, ~~happier~~ ^{happier} and more pampered than if he
 had been her natural son, he could not say whom he loved most: her
 or the shepherd.

lit up Mila's dark days

VIII: The Festival of Roses

For the first time since^g her arrival, ~~Mila~~^{Mila} took the path she had used to ascend the mountains. She had always gone down the Murons side, but after hearing how good the eggs and lettuce in Ridorta were, she ~~was~~ set out to order ~~them~~^{some} for St. Pontius' festival.

It was early morning, but the sun, ~~was~~ already far above the Husk, streaked the distant hills with its rays.

Taking small steps, Mila ~~was~~ absentmindedly made her way down the gully, as smooth as a ~~colossal~~^{great} wheeltrack, and ~~thought of things~~^{thinking thoughts} as vague and ~~imprecise~~^{the} as drifting clouds.

~~Beneath her~~^{Below} lay the ~~plateau~~^{cleaving} around the Boundary Stone, ~~round~~^{circular} as a frying pan, with its jagged handles ~~the~~^h second stretch of Legbreak Creek -- attached at an angle. When she left the gully to start that second stretch, she remembered ~~what~~^I Matias had ~~said~~^{wants} about it: "Your feet can't stop and before you know it's over." Indeed, Mila felt like she was sliding down a rope, and almost immediately ~~she~~^{transister} found herself where she had stopped ~~the~~^{that} first day. An old man with a dirty sack ~~on~~^{over} his ~~back~~^{shoulder} was resting in ~~that~~^{the} same spot. Mila greeted him and continued on toward the Boundary Stone, eager to see the plain again from above.

Cautiously selecting footholds and rocks to ~~hang onto~~^{hold onto}, she clambered up the steps and gazed out upon the scene below, as majestic and astonishing as it ~~had been~~ before.

The plain was full of rosy ~~blotches~~^{patches clustered so thickly} in ~~such profusion~~ that if one squinted a little it looked entirely pink.

"Holy Virgin! It's ~~still~~ so pretty!" thought Mila, awed once more.

Beneath that bright blue sky, the hill, flecked with spring green, covered with white houses, and encircled at its base by a band of rosy

more gauze, was like a painter's luminous vision than something real and palpable.

But what was all that pink below her? Mila decided to ask the man, who was still resting.

"Those are St. Pontius' roses, my dear, waiting to be blessed. Now the fields are full of ^{them} ~~the~~, but the day ~~is~~ after tomorrow there won't be ^{a single} one left. They'll all go up the mountain."

Mila soon learned that he had spoken the truth.

~~Upon~~ ^I ~~awakening~~ at four, she beheld a ^{trickle} ~~thin stream~~ of early risers, human rosebushes, ^I ~~fragrant~~ bouquets that opened in the morning ~~cool-~~ ^{air-} ~~ness~~. Later, as the day progressed, the bouquets multiplied and grew thicker, coming ~~forth~~ ^I from all sides, ^{along} on pathways and trails, ^{past} in grottoes and ^{over} ~~on~~ crests, ^{by} along brooks and ~~on~~ Cockfoot's cliffs. By ten the entire mountain looked like an immense ~~flowering~~ garden. The bells in the steeple rang frantically, joyously summoning the ~~crowd~~ ^w, and the crowd, feeling that ^{giddy surge} ~~joy~~ pulse through its eyes and hearts, its expansive gestures and resounding voices, kept on, holding those magic roses that garlanded everything with their ~~death-death-throes~~ agony: land, air, and minds.

From the bouquet's dense center, the fields around the ~~hermitage~~, rose a ~~buzzing~~ ^I ~~as from a beehive~~: ~~shouts~~, laughter, whispers, curses, songs . . . ~~the gathering's~~ ^{festivals} ~~sonorous~~ breath. ^{the sonorous fragrance of the gathering}

Everyone in the area, from Llisquents to the sea and from Roquesalbes to the distant plain, congregated ~~in~~ on the barren slopes around St. Pontius, which, unable to hold them all, overflowed toward the Roar, toward nearby pinegroves and streams where ~~people stopped in clusters~~ ^I ~~in~~ restless clumps and picturesque encampments. By mid-morning they were everywhere, mysterious ~~elements~~ ^{parts of} in some strategic plan: circles of

doesn't agony have more powerful meanings than 'death throes'?

stones around fires, baskets and panniers emptied onto the ground, and later, numerous white columns of smoke, cutting through the still air, rose like misty trees in a forest of mirages. The path from Murons could accomodate, though not very well, horses and even rented buggies, provided they were pulled by stout hooves and used by passengers accustomed to bumps and jolts. Vendors came by that same route, with their wares on their backs or packed on mules, bearing pastries and sweets, glazed fruit, white wine and liquor, toasted almonds and pine nuts, perfume bottles and little ~~ghassamin beakam~~ glass jugs, tin soldiers and brass trumpets, games of chance and skill. A blind violinist sang whining melodies about famous crimes of passion, and Cristòfol, the village idiot from Llisquents, grimaced and gesticulated amidst circles of onlookers, for whom he ~~mocked~~ every known beast, from nightingale to hog, from ass to lizard.

The vendors gathered in the yard by the hermitage and, lined up beneath the cypresses, laid out their wares, which they hawked to a gaping, good-humored crowd mainly composed of the old and very young in their Sunday best: stiff jackets and breeches handed down by their fathers, long skirts that kept tripping up the little girls, who wore bright kerchiefs on their heads, while the boys sported caps whose scarlet was so brilliant that the yard seemed speckled with fiery minium.

Mila, who had never seen such a gathering, was dazzled and dismayed. She had visited the steppe a half dozen times to beg them to stop ringing, but although her head was about to split, they paid no attention. A horde of children and teenagers, bored with the stands, grimaces, and ~~showing their way~~ pushing and pulling up and down the stairs to the hermitage, had conquered the belfry, where they reigned despotically. Dangling in swarms from the ropes, they rang ceaselessly, and those who found no m

rope to seize ^{from} hung ~~out~~ the high windows, waving their arms in feigned terror, laughing and ^{calling} crying out to the indifferent multitude. The head of this excited throng was Baldiret, his clothing rumpled and his hair ^{on end} disheveled, ~~his~~ ~~waist~~ belt below ~~his~~ waist ^{with} and a shriek ~~on~~ his lips, who flew here and there. He was so beside himself that upon seeing him, Mila abandoned her plan to scold the lad and try to restore order in the belfry.

She herself felt unnerved by all the noise and ^{scaredly} hardly knew where to turn. She went from balcony to courtyard, courtyard to kitchen, kitchen to terrace, through boisterous mobs that ~~surrounded~~ pursued her, ^{demanding} asking for this or that. From time immemorial, the hermitage had ^{nothing utensils} rented grills at a ~~modest~~ modest price, sold eggs, oil, lettuce, white wine and anisette, and served cooked food to those too lazy to prepare it. Flanked by batteries of pots, casseroles, and saucepans, two cooks from Murons and their assistants, knives in hand, fiercely attacked chickens, ducks, and geese, who squawked and fluttered in terror before surrendering to their fate.

The Spirit had promised to supply the rabbits. The ~~previous~~ previous evening he had brought in eleven, some with ~~heads~~ heads crushed ^{by} rocks or his boots and others with hindquarters gnawed by the ferret. But, aware that a dozen would never suffice, he had promised to bring more the next day. And that morning Mila saw him beneath the hearth, ~~ceaselessly~~ skinning rabbits like a magician who could pull them from a hat.

Sometimes men and women entered the kitchen.

"You couldn't sell us something to eat, could you?"

The Spirit ^{should offer} offered the beast he was skinning, they bargained and paid for it, he kept the pelt, and an instant later, another rabbit hung

by its hind foot from a hook beneath the hearth.

Mila couldn't ~~she~~ help stopping a moment to contemplate that implacable process, for she had never seen such agile hands. With one swift incision, he cut around the hind legs, left them clad in their soft ~~fur~~ rainment, gripped the knife between his teeth, and ~~grasping~~ ~~grasping~~ grasping that gray cassock lined with membrane thin and glistening as a slice of ~~raw~~ onion, quickly pulled it down, leaving muscles and sinews exposed. Occasionally the pelt would stick in a wound, whereupon he gave a tug, a ~~clot of dried~~ ^{dry} blood fell to earth, his knife scraped the spot clean and he went on with his work. When he got to the neck, he seemed to do a trick in which he twisted the skin around his left hand, while his right eased the bloody knife under the fur, cut it loose from the eyes and teeth, and with one pull left the rabbit, bereft of its pelt, dangling from a hook, bright red, without tail or ears, its teeth like tiny staves and its front paws hanging limply. ^{As she saw} Upon seeing them naked with those gaunt bodies and long legs, Mila suddenly thought ~~that~~ they looked like men, men such as had never been seen before but who even in death felt everything that was ^{happening} occurring and grinned with the mocking, death's-head leer of ~~one~~ ^a who has been tortured. ~~And~~ ^{criminally} when the Spirit plunged his knife into their bellies to scrape out the guts, Mila was forced to shut her eyes and an icy shudder ~~ran~~ ^{pierced} through her heart, as though ~~that~~ ^{after} that poacher were a repulsive and cruel executioner whose greatest joy lay in mutilating his innocent fellows. So ^{after} upon hearing that someone wanted her in the ^{parlor} sitting room, she escaped, panting as though she had held her breath, ^{all the while} like someone fleeing with troubled conscience from ~~some~~ ^a forbidden place

where they did things no decent person would wish to see.

The room had taken on an entirely different aspect. Beneath the wildly ringing bells, whose sound poured from the belfry like a ~~turbulent~~ ^{waterfall} cascade and crashed ⁱⁿ through the ~~balcony~~ and wide-open windows, the band from Murons ~~tuned~~ ^{was tuning it} their instruments, while six or seven priests from neighboring villages came and went, shouting, laughing, joking and interrupting, with their ~~solemn~~ ^{gambler} cassocks, the horns' brassy flash. Everyone was getting ready for St. Pontius' ~~Solemn~~ ^{High} Mass.

As Mila entered, she heard the rector from Murons telling Gaietà to sound the first call, and after chasing ^{the} that mob of children from the steeple, he ~~solemnly~~ ^{solemnly} rang the bells. Mila, who had gone out ^{onto} on the balcony, saw everyone around her instantly spring into action, like a squadron of ants surprised by a downpour.

Fowls were hastily plucked, camp fires multiplied . . . and at the last call to ~~Mass~~ ^{Mass}, skirts were brushed ~~clean~~ ^{clean}, bright kerchiefs were tied around heads, voices shouted, feet hurried, and everyone pressed toward the chapel. By the time the rector appeared behind the altar, flanked by priests in liturgical robes adorned with gold and embroidery, the room was packed to bursting. Men, women, and children squeezed together, poked, and cursed each other in whispers as they tried to find a little ~~more~~ ^{more} space to breathe. And since the chapel was too small for so many thousands of worshippers, they filled the yard, stood on steps, sat on walls and even overflowed onto the pine slopes below, stretching their necks to glimpse the ceremony at the altar, and holding up ~~their~~ ^{their} bouquets of roses, which they tried to preserve from the crush.

Halfway through the Epistle, a ~~yellowish~~ ^{waxy} face near the altar sudden-

ly ~~blinked~~ ^{fluttered} its eyelids, which closed over dilated pupils, while the head sank against a nearby shoulder . . . God only knows how they opened a path to carry the woman outside. During the Gospel they had to repeat the procedure with an old man and a child, and by the closing prayers no one in the chapel retained his normal ~~appearance~~ ^{aspect}: all their faces were either flushed or white as sheets.

* The ~~smell~~ ^{fumes of} of incense and burning tapers, the ~~intense~~ ^{beady} ~~scent~~ ^{scent} of flowers and the heat from ~~those~~ ^{from} ~~huddled~~ ^{of} ~~bodies~~ ^{that} ~~made~~ ^{mass} took everyone's breath away. Those bright lights and bobbing red priests around the celebrant ~~dazed~~ ^{dizzied} the onlookers, while the racket from the choir, whose voices ~~gushed~~ ^{poured} forth and then abruptly halted, the prolonged ~~squeals~~ ^{squeals} of the violins, and the cornet's sonorous, echoing tones intoxicated even the most insensitive ears. By the time the service was half over, the crowd had begun to wilt: breasts heaved like bellows, sweat ~~quietly~~ ^{slowly} trickled down brows, hearts beat more heavily and muscles ~~grew~~ ^{grew} slack, but ~~refusing~~ ^{refusing} to give in, they all ~~firmly~~ ^{firmly} stood their ground, awaiting the ~~climactic~~ ^{climactic} moment: the ~~blessing~~ ^{blessing} that would end the Mass.

At last the ceremony drew to an end, and ~~while~~ ^{as} the crowd sang Hail Marys and placed a ceremonial cape on the ~~rector's~~ ^{rector's} shoulders, half of them eddied and shoved to get out of the chapel, while the other half, ~~almost~~ ^{quietly} ~~became~~ ^{hypnotized/dazed}, lined up behind the saint, who had been gently lifted onto four men's shoulders. ^{Then} The procession began. The bells' delirious ~~calm~~ ^{calm} could be heard a mile away. In the courtyard, ~~the~~ ^{the} church choir swelled into a multitude, and the entire mountain burst into frantic acclamation:

"St. Pontius!"

"St. Pontius, St. Pontius! . . . St. Pontius!"

The ~~saint's~~ ^{saint} strange and melancholy ~~figure~~, even older and ~~more~~ ^{shabbier} ~~moth-eaten~~ amidst that explosion of eternal rebirth, had just become visible outside the doorway's dark rectangle, lifted above the crowded heads, motionless in his gilded cage with its four twisted columns, his slender neck contorted beneath the weight of its miter, holding ~~that~~ ^{his} crozier in one hand, while the ~~his~~ ^{sickly} other raised two twisted fingers and offered the ~~seabby~~ ^{seabby} horde his eternal gift of health.

And when that dead and rigid gesture sprang to life and the rec-
 tor raised his aspergillum, ready to invest ~~the~~ ^{those} roses with mysterious ~~and~~ ^{the} hidden powers, the crowd, electrified by ~~that~~ ^{the} sovereign miracle's impenetrable secret, fell silent, humbly knelt, and bowed their heads to earth.

Then Mila, who had returned to the balcony, ~~she~~ ^{beheld} ~~nothing but~~ a ~~man~~ black sea of bodies, above which swaying roses seemed to tremble in ~~excited~~ ^{exalted} triumph, as though a divine breeze passed through their midst, reviving and caressing them. ~~Everything melted into~~ ^{absorbed everything} that sweet-smelling kingdom, except the crowd's senses, which, awakened by the ~~intoxicating~~ ^{heady} spectacle, for a moment rose to ~~an~~ ^{ecstatic} heights of ~~intensity~~.

Mila was also struck by that ~~annihilating~~ ^{devastating} ~~slingshot~~.

She found herself pressed against the balcony railing, her face wet with tears, ~~and~~ ^{trembling/tremor} her heart sweetly shaken by an exquisite turbulence. The earth vanished from before her ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} and Heaven's glory filled her soul.

"St. Pontius! . . . St. Pontius! . . . St. Pontius! . . ." the ~~mob~~ ^{crowd again} ~~again~~ bellowed, and that shout, wildly repeated and passionately

* ^{intended} ~~inflected~~, made her feel for the first time sainthood's great, pure, and lofty ~~empire~~ . . .

After the first blessing, the procession made its way along the right side of the yard. That human sea parted with difficulty before the tabernacle and then quickly flowed together behind the band, whose strident ^{notes} ~~noises~~ clashed with volleys fired by the district's hunters, and beneath a pale noon sky, candles cast white reflections on the ~~worshippers'~~ ^{worshippers'} ~~believers'~~ robes. *of the devout*

* When the procession reached the steps in the middle of the yard, the rector again raised his right hand and blessed the roses, all of ^{them} ~~the~~, both those wilting in bouquets and those opening upon luxuriant bushes.

* Having witnessed that last yearly benediction, St. Pontius made his way around the yard ~~around~~ and, bouncing triumphantly upon those ^{the} ~~four~~ ~~men's~~ ^I shoulders, returned to his chapel, followed by the ~~endless~~ throng.

It's 8 shoulders. Only one ceremony remained, and while each family sliced its bread and browned its rice, whose aromas would have roused even a dying man's appetite, the hermitage shook with the sound of a thousand vibrant voices:

Sooner than other mortals
You left your mother's womb
To mock cunning Satan
Who lurks beyond the tomb.

And those voices' enthusiasm was echoed even more warmly after ^{each} ~~every~~ verse by the refrain:

Since God accorded you
Such blessings and wealth,

Give us, oh glorious martyr,

Life and good health.

Then the roses, seeing their festival at an end and resigning
themselves to a ^{noble} death, ~~down~~ drooped upon ~~the green leaves~~ ^{their stems}
around them and fell to earth, ^{carpeting} ~~covering~~ the mountain ^{with} ~~in~~ a shower
of faded petals.
limp, ~~faded petals.~~
^{with} ~~faded petals~~

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN INVENTING IN

IX: Riot

A pair of
 The long tables stretched from one end of the sitting room to the other -- rented, with cloths and other accoutrements, from a hotel in Murons, and mounted on ~~sawhorses~~ *nestles*. In the bedroom there were ~~two more~~ *contained*, slender and wobbly, while another round one stood below the belfry stairs and still another rested on the well outside, not to mention one in the kitchen, where those from the house or attached to it ~~that day~~ (the Spirit, the cooks, and their assistants) hoped to eat, though in fact their intentions were ~~thwarted~~ *thwarted* by the ~~crowd~~ *crowd*.

By twelve thirty, all those tables -- except the round one, which was reserved for the priests -- were surrounded by hungry and boisterous throngs.

As soon as the hymns in the chapel ended, those without provisions fell upon the ~~house~~ *hermitage* like a conquering army. They surged through all the rooms, poking, ~~sniffing~~ *sniffing*, and demanding everything. They shouted in the courtyard, ~~poured~~ *swarmed* into the kitchen, where they pestered the poor women trying to finish their work, used the ~~corral~~ *corral* as a latrine, forced their way into the sheep shed, beat on the cypresses with sticks, invaded the terrace, ripping up handfuls of flowers, spat in the catch basins, climbed the almond trees, from which they shook down the nuts, threw rocks at curious lambs sticking their muzzles through the door to the shed, and like so many pinheads, left nothing undisturbed.

But as they grew hungrier and wearied of strolling, poking, and defiling, they congregated on the upper floor, where they uproariously besieged the dining room.

Some fought over chairs, while others set upon a wobbly table,

pulling at its cloth to make the glasses rattle. One, clutching a pencil stub ~~in his fist~~, wrote ~~o~~sceneties on the wall in a ~~babyish~~ ^{childish} hand; others clapped and swayed ~~in stupid~~ imitation of a clumsy snake dance . . . Still others made a circle by the window, where, whenever a priest appeared, they would softly begin to chant: ^{that the song about}

A friar and a nun

who slept together . . .

which they embellished with winks and nudges, provoking violent blushes in two devout little old ladies swept along by the tide. Another gang of worthy youths in flashy neckties ^{and} and new caps offered loud wisecracks to the assemblage, whom they glared at as if inviting everyone to applaud their brilliance. As Mila and ^{her} ~~the~~ assistants passed, they stuck out their legs to trip them, pinched their bottoms, and tickled their armpits. The women, ~~artful but glowering~~ ^{artfully}, shot through their midst like bolts of lightning, bringing salads, arranging places, pouring wine and giving unheeded warnings. Matias also had his ^{work} ~~cut~~ out for him. He went from one circle to another, ^{selecting} ~~choosing~~ those with the most skirts and showing off St. Pontius' little chapel lined ~~with~~ with velvety paper, the one that had so enraged his wife. After ~~discussing~~ ^{expounding on} explaining its decorations and the saint's glorious miracles, he sold hymns printed on yellow paper in letters ^{as} big as grains of millet, pictures on transparent sheets that fluttered with every ^{breeze} ~~breath~~, brass medals with pictures of the Rockies in relief, and blessed rosaries and scapulars . . . If no one wished to buy, he would smilingly request a penny for the saint's festival, unembarrassed when people asked which saint he referred to: one ^{the wooden} ~~sculpted from wood~~ or ^{another} ~~one~~ of flesh and blood, nor was he perturbed by the ~~lowd~~ comments about his pretty

wife. He paid no attention, and when Mila scowled at him in passing, she saw her husband cheerfully going about his business, pocketing pennies as avidly as any gypsy at a fair, while a crowd of children clustered around, ^{him} staring or, in the boldest cases, asking for the little chapel. Upon being told no, they ^{withered and kicked} squirmed in their mothers' arms, ^{and} kicking and screaming vengefully that they wanted to go home ^{or} or were sleepy ^{and} or had a stomachache, ^{or} or . . . every ^{other} imaginable whine ^{all} all put together.

The ^{intensity of the meal} delayed meal increased the crowd's noisy impatience. Some threatened to leave, others clucked in disapproval, till finally the the first dish of steaming food ^{suddenly} suddenly appeared in a doorway, held high by a pair of ruddy arms. A great cry went up, chairs were hastily pulled forward, amidst shoves, ^{and} and curses, ^{and} and yanked ^{skirts} skirts, and the ~~crowd~~ ^{tumbled} throng ~~fell~~ ^{tumbled} over each other like figs in a basket. In a flash, the tables were surrounded by ^{two} ~~two~~ rows, as tightly packed as two soldered iron rings. But the dish crossed the room, leaving a tantalizing ^{aroma} ~~smell~~ in its wake, and entered the door to the belfry; it was for the priests.

As it dawned on the crowd that the clergy would be served first, a murmur of ~~protest~~ protest arose, a kind of electric current activating the dormant anticlericalism ~~in~~ in their souls, a ~~secret~~ secret rage, a wave of bitter impotence that quickly led to dirty looks and angry threats.

And when the dishes were finally placed on those long tables and there was abundant food for one and all, that wrath, as though pepperigg ^{palates} ~~palates~~ and heating blood to a boil, quickly filled their ~~heads~~ brains with spiteful red smoke.

The rings were broken and resoldered by those who came and went, the former having waited for a place and the latter having eaten has-

tilly, but the number seated remained the same and the meal went on and on. The ~~sound of chewing~~ ^{smacking of lips}, the gurgle of those who drank in jets from wineskins, the tinkle of glasses and silverware mingled with the sounds of conversation and laughter, filled the rooms, whose air grew thick with the stench of ^{charred} meat, foul breath, wine, indigestion, and pestilent clouds of tobacco smoke. Even before ~~it began~~ ^{beginning}, the meal had taken on a disordered, Saturnalian air. The men's eyes sparkled, their greasy lips parted as they smiled from ear to ear, their eager hands reached out to fondle whatever flesh was within reach, and their ribald comments fell on ears like stones upon a rooftop.

The single women, or those with friends but without ~~any~~ men at their sides, beat a hasty retreat, followed by families tagging behind ^{disgruntled} ~~surly~~ fathers and brothers, and the priests, whose flushed faces cautiously appeared in the doorway and who, alarmed by the commotion, quietly slipped down the stairs to the chapel.

Then the shepherd, who had been observing the scene for a while, stopped Mila at the door and said: "Keep out of there, hermitess; the place is worse than a ~~man~~ kennel . . . Remember what I told you the other day? They're so drunk they can't walk, and they're spoiling for a fight . . . In a little while we'll have to shoo them out with a broom."

Without objecting, Mila returned to the kitchen, where other uninvited guests were still gorging away, while ~~that~~ ^{the} vulgar ^{bacchanal} ~~orgy~~ continued under Gaietà's troubled and scornful gaze, which fell upon those so-called higher animals who bellowed and seethed, drunk on high spirits, ill-digested food, proximity and a little wine: everything that might ~~in~~ inebriate a so-called ^{lower species} ~~lesser animal~~.

Outside in the sunshine, all was serene. Laughter ~~echoed like~~ ^{melodiously} ~~warbling birds~~, red faces beamed beneath a clear blue sky, limbs, with

easeful lassitude, adopted classical poses, unpleasant smells dis-
 sipated in the open air, while pleasant ones hung suspended like
 aromatic caresses. Wineglasses in uplifted hands glittered like opals
 or garnets, knives gleamed as they cut into ripe fruit, and satisfied
 bellies, engendering ~~wit~~ wit and wisdom, inspired a flow of clever
^{anecdotes} stories and popular fairytales.

In each clearing, a family made the most of its holiday, free of
 superfluous members: the idle, the unmarried, all the components of
 that vipers' nest above, caged in the hermitage, where they roared their
 satisfacion with the afternoon's pleasures.

The kings of those clearings were the children, who frolicked and
 squealed, eating till they nearly burst, running their greasy fingers
 over their mothers' faces, squirming and ^{chattering} babbling. Nearby, horses and
 donkeys, still hitched to their carts, looked up ^{pensively} from their
 feedbags, with wisps of alfalfa or straw ^{on} hanging from their lips, and
 watched the excitement from big dark eyes full of inexpressible
 thoughts. Then, with philosophic ^{indifference} detachment, they returned to their meal,
 chewing and switching their tails, while their masters let loose an
 entire winter's pent-up ^{energies} feelings beneath the brilliant May sun.

Profiting from the crowd's sense of well-fed contentment, vendors
 picked their way among them: a one-eyed ^{castilian} foreigner with a box of watch
 chains, sets of cheap buttons, suspenders, pencils, and wallets, an
 old lady selling hazel nuts, her face red and wrinkled as a withered
 apple and her body bent under a heavy wicker basket full of rattling
 wares, the man selling packets of star anise and sweets, half-melted
 in their fly-specked wrappers, the orange vendor, holding a golden orb
 in his uplifted ^{al dx} hand and crying: "Sweet and juicy, girls!" , ~~mmmm~~ a
 shopkeeper from Murons with bottles of ^{fizzy} lemonade and ^{soda} other soft
^{pop} drinks . . . All seductive, insinuating, free with honeyed words and

tempting offers that aroused an irresistible and contagious wish to buy . . .

Parents
~~Fathers~~ and ~~grandfathers~~ *grandparents*

yielding to insistent young voices, purchased gooey treats and laughed to see them popped into children's mouths. The vainer ~~young people~~ *adolescents* reluctantly searched their pockets ~~then~~ before bringing forth ~~the~~ *that* coins to buy those blue buttons that would go so well with ~~that~~ *that* mauve shirt. An enamored fiancé, ~~seeing~~ *beholding* the premature gleam in his beloved's eyes, filled her lap with oranges and in return asked to suck a little where she had bitten.

Meanwhile, in ~~nearby dells and meadows~~ *fields hollows* ~~meadows~~ *hollows*, beneath the resinous scnet

of umbrella pines, and in the shadows of wagons as ~~immobile~~ *immob* as gun carriages

on a battlefield, the men, ~~drowsy~~ *in shirtsleeves, stupified by* after their feasts and ~~in shirtsleeves~~ *gently*

stretched out near their wives, who ~~softly~~ *either* sang lullabies to the ~~iffants~~ *young thing*

in their laps, or within sight of some marriageable ~~girl~~ *lay* who looked back submissively from time to time, as a serf might gaze upon her lord and master.

Behind a wall, strong arms encircled a soft, yielding body, while further off a couple gazed at each other ~~fervently~~ *lovingly*, and still further, hidden behind a rise, a head lay against a shoulder and lips ~~kissed~~ *met* with fierce desire.

In that ~~gluted~~ *aroused* stillness, the race's reproductive instincts, ~~excited~~ *excited* and almost uncontrollable, eluded the ~~man~~ *eyes* chaperons' sleepy ~~watch~~ *watch* and followed their course . . . till the band struck up the first sardana.

Seated on the walls at each side of the chapel door or leaning against them, the musicians, with rigid bodies and ~~grimacing~~ *contented* faces, looked like a row of gargoyles. They solemnly performed a comic pantomime, raising and lowering eyebrows, rolling eyes, puffing out cheeks,

while those metals extensions of their lips rained cascades of notes upon the ~~crowd~~^{crowd}, magically rousing ~~the men and women~~^{the men and women} and calling them forth to dance.

And, like ripples from a drop in a still pond, the throng quickly formed circles and more circles, perfectly concentric, that shifted right and left, weaving ~~their sacred steps~~^{their sacred steps}, mathematically, ~~their sacred steps~~^{fixed} till the nearby pine groves were empty except for an occasional couple, who remained hand in hand, their eyes ~~upon each other~~^{fixed upon each other}. The house also emptied ~~out~~^{at} at the first breath of music, and only ~~the women~~^{a few} ~~remained~~^{remained} to struggle with the dirty dishes or kneel before the chapel's altars, fervently reciting prayers learnt by heart to the saint of their devotion, while a ~~few~~^{handful of} eccentrics who disliked all the commotion and who, ~~holding~~^{held} their berths in hands clasped behind their backs, wandered about scrutinizing the votive offerings, and ~~quietly sounding~~^{quietly sounded} out their ~~monotonous inscriptions~~^{monotonous inscriptions}.

The sun, making its way ~~westward~~^{westward} across ~~the~~^{the} clear blue sky, showered the multitude with golden rays, ~~which~~^{that} glittered on the Civil Guards' ~~in~~ shiny black hats and the band's silver instruments.

Suddenly, no one knew how or why, a cry rang out, followed by a slap and a few terrified screams, whereupon in that same corner of the yard, sticks were hastily raised and the crowd grew thicker.

"What's going on?"

"What is it?" a few frightened voices asked.

"Someone threw a punch," others replied, while the brawl ~~quickly~~^{quickly} spread toward the center of the ~~yard~~^{dance}.

The ~~closest~~^{outer} circles were broken first, followed by the others, and in the middle of the packed ~~throng~~^{mob}, a knife flashed and shots were fired.

An infernal cry arose, a sort of unanimous bellow, dominated by women's screams and sobs, while the musicians, pale as ~~sheets~~^{ghosts}, their eyes frozen in their sockets, hadn't the wit to lay down the instruments they had abruptly silenced.

"Break it up!" cried the pair of civil guards, pushing through crowd. When they reached the ~~middle~~^{center of the fray}, they repeated their command.

No one paid any attention. A heap of men clutched each other and brayed, spitting out curses and insults, while others tried to ~~pull~~^{separate} them ~~apart~~ and women screamed in each other's arms.

"Hey, you scum!" the ~~sargent~~^{sergeant} cried. "Break it up or I'll . . ."

And ~~putting the idea into practice~~^{fulfilling his threat}, he aimed his rifle butt at one of the ringleaders' heads. But then something strange occurred. The brawl stopped ~~cold~~^{short} and everyone turned to face the two guards. There was a moment of hesitation, ~~like~~^{as} when a bull is about to charge, and then a clear and vibrant voice shouted: "Go to Hell!"

The entire crowd sprang into action.

"Go to Hell!"

"Go to Hell!"

"Go to Hell!" cried twenty-five voices in simultaneous protest.

The ~~sargent~~^{sergeant} pulled himself up and glared angrily around him.

"Break it up I said, or there's going to be trouble!"

Another instigator ~~stepped~~^I stepped away from the mass, while the others stood up, encouraged by the mob's support, and glowered back.

One insult led to another, the ~~sargent~~^{sergeant} lost patience and shouldered his weapon while his partner imitated him, and the entire yard turned into ~~riot~~^{eruption}. The furious crowd took the rebels' side and curses

rained down upon the pair, isolated amidst the tumult. Wine and liquer performed their civilizing mission, heating tempers and loosening tongues. At the sight of that gathering storm, mules and donkeys were quickly hitched, while families, vendors, and other peaceful ~~folk~~ folk, hoisting bundles and stuffing leftovers into ^{bags} sacks, hurried down the mountainside as fast as their legs could carry them. The paths and trails were filled with clamor and terrified ~~commentaries~~ ^{discursive commentaries}.

"They stood up to the guards . . ."

"I heard one ~~man~~ guy was shot . . ."

"And ten wounded . . ."

^{sergeant was hopping mad}
 "The ~~sergeant got so mad~~ he started crying . . ."

"But who started it all?"

No one was certain, but they slowly pieced the story together.

Marbles, Lefty, ~~the~~ ^I Catear and Strawberry, the prides of their respective parishes (Llisquents, Riñorta, Murons, and Roquesalbes), all of whom were ^{drunkenly} ~~drunk~~ and recalled old rivalries, had bet on who could dance the best sardana. Each one, declaring himself champion of his village, politely danced the first ^{number} ~~one~~ with his gang of followers. Once it was over, disputes arose over who had won. Then the second ^I dance began, but as no one knew which way ^I to move, some went left and some right, ^{while} ~~whereupon~~ the calmer souls stopped to complain and the more exalted ones declared their champions victorious. The calmer ones' serenity, however, went up in smoke with the first blow, and from then on the brawl ^{progressed just like} ~~went as smoothly~~ as clockwork.

The results: with help from all the authorities and policemen at the gathering, the pair subdued the most intrepid rioters and ~~placed~~ placed them under arrest. Those who had also gotten out of hand but

had no wish to face the consequences disappeared into what remained of the crowd: some hundred men who, still aroused, milled about uncertainly and at last followed the guards and prisoners down the ^{hill} mountain.

By evening, the only visitor left was that poor hazelnut seller, who sat ~~mean~~ in the kitchen, her head wrapped in a bandage, while tears ~~streamed~~ ^{trickled} down her withered-apple face. Somehow she had been caught in the middle of ~~that fray~~ ^{the fray} and, tossed from one group to another, had been shoved through the gate and down the ~~steps~~ steps outside ~~it~~.

Matias had found her afterward, dazed, with a ~~cut~~ ^{gash} in one ear and a dislocated arm. The old woman, between groans and sobs, was still thanking blessed St. Pontius for preserving her, at her eighty ~~and some~~ ^{and} ~~odd~~ ^{odd} years, from broken bones.

Baldireto stood nearby, ^g impatiently waiting for Mila and Gaietà to ~~finish~~ ^{finish} cleansing the woman's cuts and bruises with wine, and upon seeing the shepherd wash his hands at the sink, the lad rubbed his head against his shoulder and ~~pulled~~ ^{tugged at} the old man's sleeve.

"What's up, kid?"

"How about those lights?"

"God Almighty! This is a fine time for ~~light shows~~ ^{lighting lanterns}!" exclaimed Mila, ~~remembering~~ ^{remembering} everything that had occurred. But Gaietà wiped his hands and smiled affectionately at the boy.

"Wait a second! That's not such a bad idea! A little light's just what we need after ^{such} a gloomy afternoon. Why should those bums have all the fun?" And clapping his hands, he cried: "Okay, let's get the oil!"

And while shadows ~~streaked~~ ^{streaked} the earth, as ~~from~~ ^{cast by} a passing flock of

ravens, Gaietà and his friend filled those snail shells they had nailed to doors, balconies, and windows the day before. An hour later, diminutive ^{lamps} lanterns glowed in the mountains' high solitude, where the scent of violence still seemed to ^{linger} ~~heave~~ and flutter, and ^{outlining} ~~outlined~~ the hermitage with tiny points of light, making it look like a fairy palace in one of Gaietà's stories.

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Upon ~~rising~~ ^T the next morning, Gaietà found the front gate ³ un-
 bolted and went out to see who had risen so early. As he looked
 down the slope, he spied Mila seated on a boulder, her arms ~~hanging~~ ^{dangling}
 limply, staring ~~out~~ ^T into the distance.

"What got you up so early, hermitess? ^g You're ~~worse than~~ ^{just like} a
~~little~~ ^I kid! . . ."

Mila slowly turned to face the shepherd. Her gaze was as blank and
 desolate as the day he'd ~~taken~~ ^{shown} her to the belfry, and her pale, ex-
 pressionless face resembled a marble ~~bust~~ ^{head} with painted lips. Gaietà ^{*}
 was surprised. She tried to climb down, but her steps were unsteady,
 as though her legs had been hobbled by an invisible rope. The shepherd
~~reached up to help her.~~ ^{reached up to help her.}
~~met her halfway down.~~

"You aren't sick, are you?" he asked uneasily.

As ~~suddenly~~ ^s ^{swiftly} and unexpectedly as a falcon ~~seizing~~ ^{seizes} its prey, she
 clasped his wrinkled hand in her soft fingers, pulling him toward
 her.

"Look!" she mumbled hoarsely, like one who has just awakened.
 And she pointed to several places in the hollow below them. Though
 Gaietà then understood the cause of her mood, he lacked the courage
 to reply. She again stared ~~out~~ ^T into the distance and nervously bit
 her lip. When the shepherd tried to ~~pull her~~ ^{free} his hand away ^T, she
 clasped it ~~even~~ ^{with} more tightly.

"Oh! And don't think that's all!" Still holding his hand, she
 rushed down the rocky slope, while the shepherd struggled to keep ^{up}
~~pace~~ ^{with} of her, and led him to the fig trees, the orchard, the Roar,
 the pine groves . . . Each time they stopped, she bit her lip harder
 and her eyes grew colder. ^T Till at last ~~the shepherd~~ ^{Gaietà}, placing his other

hand upon hers, halted that overheated machine ^{by crying} and ^{cried} sorrowfully

~~she~~ said: "Now stop that, honey! Don't ⁹ show me any more! I knew about it before you did!"

"Did you ever see anything so sad?" she replied, ~~holding back~~ ^{water} her ~~sobs~~ ^{tears}.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"What can you do, hermitess? . . . For years ⁹ now I've thought folks aren't as nice as they should be, but it's no use banging your head against the wall. That won't solve anything . . . God'll help ~~those who need Him~~ when He's most needed, y'know?"

"They broke all my pots!"

"Well, good thing it wasn't your ribs instead of ~~your pots~~ . . . Ask that old hazel nut lady . . ."

He tried to smile bravely, but her expression stopped him.

"And they didn't even pay for it!"

"Listen: don't think I'm saying I told you so, but remember what ~~we talked about~~ ^{d said} the day before yesterday? I warned you not to trust anyone with as much as a clove of garlic . You're too nice and don't look people over close enough. Someone who's emptyhanded: goodbye and good luck! . . . I didn't let anyone out without paying . . ."

"They all said they'd pay when they brought the stuff back . . . and here's the thanks I get."

"Hermitess, sometimes you act like a babe in arms. Stuff you don't get paid for in advance is stuff you can kiss goddbye. Once they've eaten their fill, ⁹ they'll cram what's left into their sacks, and if they don't have sacks they'll smash your casseroles ⁹ to ⁹ bits, use your ~~wine~~ ^{pitchers} ~~pitchers~~ for target practice, throw your silverware in the bushes, and without ~~wasting~~ ⁹ wasting a cent they've cleaned up their mess!"

"I thought people got scared by that brawl and tried to ~~get away~~ ^{escape}"

~~in a hurry~~, but that afterward they'd come back one by one, and ~~that~~ I'd find all my stuff scattered around, but when I saw it ~~all~~ ^{everything} broken . . ." Mila replied, humiliated.

The shepherd smiled pityingly.

"I could see that's what you were thinking and didn't want to argue, but I was afraid it would turn out like this . . . Well, you'll just have to get over it. And you might as well forget about what they owe you . . . Make like everyone paid and then some thief stole your srongbox."

Mila felt a lump in her throat.

"There's something you don't know: Matias spent everything we had on that festival . . ."

Gaietà looked up in alarm.

"How's that?"

"That house was empty, remember? We bought it all ourselves . . . He said we'd make a fortune . . . and the rector, and the people at St. Pontius^T all said the same. We spent two weeks stocking up on food and ~~stuff to cook with~~ ^{pots} . . . till we were broke. . . You saw us . . ."

"Sure I did, hermitess, and I ~~don't know why~~, but I was worried . . ."

He fell silent for a moment and then shyly asked: "So now what're you going to do?"

Mila stared straight at him, her green eyes filled with the mysterious calm of a deep ^{chasm} gorge.

"Now? Now that we've lost my ~~uncle's~~ uncle's house and all our savings, if they don't pay us we'll be poorer and nakeder than Adam and Eve."

And feeling a savage tug at her heart, she added dully: "Those were some relics old St. Pontius left us!"

The bitterness behind her words made her hardened ^{seam} face look older.

Gaietà ~~stared~~ ^{glanced} at her and thought: "This ^{lady's} poor woman's going to worry herself to death . . . If she doesn't snap out of it, there'll be trouble ahead . . ."

He ~~looked~~ ^{glanced} at her eyes, ~~but they were dry and cold~~ ^{which cold and dry} as flint. *

They surveyed ~~everything and found~~ ^{which} the mountain like an abandoned battlefield: broken pots and smashed glassware, one piece in a hundred still ~~whole~~ ^{up} whole, an occasional cup, fork, or plate that she gathered ^{up}, gritting her teeth, for such remains only ~~added~~ ^{heightened} ~~to her~~ ^{rage.} ~~furor~~. In one spot, hidden by weeds, they saw a handkerchief with a knotted corner, and inside that knot, which Gaietà carefully untied, ~~were~~ ^{up} a couple of pennies.

"Look here, hermitess . . . Some girl must have been fixing to bury her savings . . ."

The kind shepherd tried to make Mila laugh, but her ^g brow remained furrowed.

They also ~~found~~ ^g an espadrille, a new jug, a dirty napkin tossed behind some blackberry bushes, a pocket knife, all surrounded by ~~refused~~ ^{greasy} ~~oil~~ paper, orange peels, squashed roses, well-gnawed spare ribs, bits of chicken covered with black ants, dead campfires . . . all the festival's repulsive ~~debris~~ ^{debris.} ~~debris~~.

~~Up~~ ^d ~~on~~ ^{ropped} their return home, they met Matias, who had just risen and was still stretching and yawning, his eyes narrow, his face swollen, and in no mood to talk. As soon as he spied them at the kitchen door, he ~~fell~~ ^{dropped} onto the bench like a sullen child, rubbing his eyes and grumbling: "Well, where've you been? What happend to my breakfast?" *

Mila was stunned for a moment by that surly ~~man's~~ greeting.

Then she suddenly felt the blood rush to her head like a pistol shot.

Her lips trembled, her eyes flashed like a cat's, her forehead broke out in red blotches . . . She approached her husband with the swift movement of an attacking beast.

"You want your breakfast ~~now~~ . . . huh? . . . Your break . . . fast? Go outside . . . You'll find your breakfast . . . there!"

She could say no more. Her words came forth ^{slowly} like beads on a rosary, one by one, with deep breaths between them.

It was the first time Gaietà had seen her in such a temper.

Matias, who had miraculously awakened with a jolt, now looked at her as though about to flee, his eyes wide and astonished.

Hoping to give Mila a chance to recover, the shepherd hastily explained everything to Matias, who was then even more astounded. Resting his elbows on the table and with a glazed look in his eyes, he spent five puzzled minutes rubbing a crack in the wood. Then he began a series of useless questions, idle suppositions, empty threats . . .

Mila ~~looked~~ ^{gazed} at him with the scornful pity she always felt for his spinelessness, and unconsciously, above his lowered ~~gaze~~ ^{eyes}, her ~~eyes~~ ^{own} sought ~~the~~ refuge in the shepherd's. He stared back at her, and . . . those eyes full of strength, foresight, ^{and} serenity enveloped her in a broad, warm, devoted, ^{and} infinite gaze . . .

Mila felt a sudden explosion in her chest, and the ground gave way beneath her. Darkness fell, as though a lightning bolt . . .

At that moment, Baldiret shouted from outside: "My brother's here! My brother's here!"

And indeed, Arnau soon entered the kitchen with a whip slung around his neck, his pants cuffed at the ankles, and a straw hat shading his tanned face. A breath of youthful vigor seemed to enter with him.

The shepherd and Matias ^{greeted their guest} ~~welcomed him~~ affectionately, while Mila stood silently against the wall as though she had never ^{met} ~~seen~~ him ~~before~~.

Arnau had brought the wagon to collect everything from the hotel ^{cart take back} and ~~return~~ it to Murons.

They all sat down to breakfast, during which they spoke of nothing but the past day's quarrels, ^{and} broken dishes, ~~and cheats~~ . . . till Arnau said: "We had our share too! They stole ~~all~~ my mom's rabbits . . ."

"What? Your mother's rabbits?"

"And they hit the farm below us too . . . looks like ^{suant} there's a mighty ~~fine~~ greyhound sniffing around these hills, ~~the dirty dog!~~"

Everyone read a particular name into Arnau's words: one that had ~~occurred~~ ^{happened} to all of them simultaneously. Mila began to fret, and as soon as the meal was over and the men were loading the wagon with tables and silverware, she went out to the yard by the sheep shed. She had been so anxious about her ~~spots~~ ^{spots} and silverware that she had thrown a ~~handful~~ ^{handful} skirtful of food into a corner without looking around. Most of it was still ^{lying} there. Only two pregnant rabbits, round as balls, twitched their long, ashy ears among the ~~leaves~~ ^{leaves}. She looked everywhere; the others ^{rabbits} were nowhere to be seen. She smiled bitterly. Her morning ~~fun~~ ^{rage} had disappeared, reduced to a cold depression through which she viewed each new setback.



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When the wagon was loaded, ~~the~~ Gaietà left and Matias went to wash up before going to ~~Murron's~~ and settling their accounts. Mila then called Arnau and showed him the empty yard.

"Well, what did you expect? They must have been the easiest!" He laughed. "I bet they escaped!"

And since Mila didn't understand, he searched the yard till he found a hole that had been scratched behind a rock.

"Look! . . . Didn't I tell you?" And ~~sticking~~ ^{pokeing} the handle of his whip through the opening, he insisted: "There, that's how they got away! . . . just like at our place. So ~~now~~ ^g one can say they were stolen . . . the bastard!"

^{So} "That's where he got all those rabbits ~~from~~!" exclaimed Mila. "I couldn't believe he'd trapped them all . . . but why did he make those holes if everyone knows it's him?"

"He doesn't care what people think, ~~but as long as~~ ^{as} they can't ~~prove~~ ^{prove} it, ~~you know~~?"

Arnau's mouth twisted ^{into} a contemptuous sneer. Mila noticed his lips, ^{full} ~~thick~~ and red like some exotic fruit. The ^{bright} ~~clean~~ enamel of his teeth and the brown line of his growing mustache set them off, ~~making~~ ^T them his most ^{prominent} ~~noticeable~~ feature.

Leaping from one thought ^t to another, Mila suddenly asked: "Well, when's your wedding, Arnau?"

"I'm not getting married," he mumbled.

"What do you mean, you're not getting married?" she asked, laughing.

"I said I'm not getting married," Arnau replied, toying with the whip and staring at the ground.



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"I know it's not right away, but . . ."

"Not right away or ever," he quickly replied.

Mila was amazed.

"Come on! You're kidding! . . . I saw you with her yesterday!"

"Well, you won't see us together again . . ."

"Mother of God! Why not?"

Arnau hesitated, blushed, and slowly mumbled: "Cause I broke up with her . . ."

Mila stared at him in disbelief.

"What do you mean?"

But seeing his crestfallen look, she gently added: "What happened, Arnau?"

Arnau, embarrassed, unwound the whip from his ^{knives} ~~grip~~, rewound it, and finally blurted out, with a shrug of his shoulders: "Tsk! You know how it is! . . ."

Mila curiously looked him up and down.

Standing before her straight and tall, he breathed ^{power} ~~strength~~ and good health. Though not exactly handsome, he had ^{the} ~~an~~ seductive charm of his ^{power} ~~strength~~. Finding nothing else to say and remembering how pleased his family had been with the match, Mila wondered: "Why would she leave this poor guy?" And her mute question was followed by another spoken though indirect one.

Vigo ^{you'll be surprised by his strength and subtleness}

"Well, I can hardly believe my ears . . . I thought it was all set and we'd be cutting the cake soon . . ."

"Sometimes people change their minds . . . they think one thing and then another . . ."

Arnau took the whip from around his neck and began ^{to} ~~poke~~ the ground with its handle.

"Everyone said she was crazy about you!"

"She was."

"And so were you . . ."

The lad hung his head even lower and ~~peked~~^{prodded} the ground with renewed energy.

"Maybe . . . before," he finally replied.

Mila was even more perplexed^J.

"So now you're not interested? God Almighty! . . . What did she do?"

Arnau quickly raised his head and snapped back: "She didn't do anything! ~~I've nothing against her!~~ It ^{was} ~~my~~ ^{her} fault . . ."

His words only piqued Mila's curiosity further, and she replied: "Come on, pal! That doesn't make sense! She didn't do anything, it's your fault, and you still broke up with her?"

*
Wrong like
too blatant?

Mila ~~smirked~~^{smiled} the smile.

Arnau glanced at her, raised his whip, and cracked it fiercely, sending the two pregnant rabbits scurrying across the yard.

Since he refused to respond, Mila continued to ^{act} ~~play~~^{innocent} and hotly^J declared: "Sometimes I wonder what you men have in mind! . . ."

Arnau raised his head and seemed to reach a swift decision.

"You want to know why? I left her because you can't love two ~~fun~~ girls at once, ^J and ~~it's not right to fool people.~~ ^{you shouldn't lead people on . . .}"

Mila stopped in her tracks.

"Ah! . . . So you mean . . ."

"You know that song: 'I don't love the one they gave me. The one I love . . .?'" He interrupted himself, and bravely looking her in the eye, added in another tone: "If only she knew how I love her!"
^{much}
^

*
*

Mila received another shock, this time of mingled fear and ^{sadness} sorrow, though not surprise. And at the same time she realized that, without having ~~put~~ ^{put} it into so many words, she already knew ^{that Arnau} the ~~lad~~ ^{boy} had been in love with her ~~for some time~~, that she had guessed the unspoken purpose of his frequent visits to the hermitage, the hidden meaning of those admiring glances. Caution and shame had veiled them in the past, but now, unnerved by that morning's fierce and restless tides, Mila had absentmindedly rent the veil, through ~~which~~ ^{which} the glances ~~now~~ ^{now} shot straight at her, demanding a categorical reply to the declaration she had solicited.

Arnau, standing tall, bathed in sunlight and strong as a young fir, was only two steps away. Mila felt afraid of those penetrating eyes that burned with desire, of those provocative lips, red and voluptuous, of that torso bursting with masculine power, of the heady waves of passion that swept over her lonely, forgotten life.

She instinctively stepped back, ^g lest something ^{irrevocable} ~~dreadful~~ occur.

Arnau, whose fervent gaze never left her, saw the woman hesitate, blush, and then turn white as a sheet. Trembling, he stepped forward as she recoiled.

They stood there, taking each other's measure like two enemy soldiers, ^g overcome by ~~their~~ ^{their} common humanity and a ^{that a sudden} longing to embrace. But it only lasted a second; something ^g ~~suddenly~~ came between them.

Distant eyes, unframed by any face, enveloped the pale woman in a broad, warm, devoted, infinite gaze. And those eyes, as though embodying a force stronger than life itself, made the turbulent wave quickly recede into the distance. Mila ~~recovered~~ ^{recovered} her composure.

She wiped her brow with one hand and extended the other to Arnau.

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childish.
be childish, child silly.

"Arnau, don't act like a kid. If that girl still loves you and you want some good advice, marry her . . . You might not be so lucky next time."

Arnau heard the reproach, the irrevocable command in those friendly words. He took the blow unflinchingly and then hung his head, ~~lowed~~ *I* ~~and~~ unprotesting. But the shock of ~~p~~*p*ain suffused his face so clearly that Mila could scarcely bear to look at him.

"Arnau," she said gently: "They say a proverb's as good as a song, and you know that one about 'a bird in the hand . . .'"

* ~~The boy~~ made a despairing gesture and, ~~hanging~~ *slinging* the whip around his neck, left without looking back.

* Mila watched him recede and felt, with ~~inexplicable~~ grief, that she had just killed something in that innocent ~~and~~ *in . . .* and herself.

Briefly describe all planning and design documents of the project that have been completed to date. Submit any architectural, engineering, marketing or other studies completed. Mark "WIP" if . . .

XI: Cabin Fever

?
hard
difficult
onerous

All summer ~~long~~ a stream of visitors made their way up to the hermitage, ^{rescuing} saving Mila from ^{what would} an otherwise ^{have been a} ~~cruel and languid~~ season.

Sometimes they were hunting parties from Barcelona, wearing new hats, weighed down by luxurious gear, their bodies crisscrossed by rifle slings, ^{leading} followed by packs of sleek purebred dogs whose rolls of fat shook as they ran. Men and beasts charged wildly about, laughing and barking ^{to the despair} of seasoned hunters and filling the air with stray shots. ^{though} Only by miracle ^{did} those model sportsmen occasionally catch something, but they descended ^{upon} the house like a ^{hurricane} ravenous tempest. There were never enough eggs ^{for} to ^{make} the omelettes they ^{ordered} demanded, nor could Mila kill and cook chickens fast enough to satisfy them. And while each ate enough for four, she watched them ~~in~~ having the time of their lives, admiring their handsome outfits and bellicose airs, bragging about their exploits with an eloquence that would have done Cyrano de Bergerac ~~pride~~ credit. She enjoyed ^{observing} watching that ^{gang} of mischievous ^{kids} boys ^{playing hooky} out for a lark, and in her mind she compared them to the local hunters, who returned with one ~~long~~ pant leg and another ^{rolled up} ~~rolled~~ above ^{their} their knees, cartridge belts tied with ropes and worn-out espadrilles, but with blood-stained pouches and ^{muzzles} the ~~mouths~~ of their weapons ragged as lace from ^{years of} ~~spitting so much~~ lethal fire.
- graphic - don't cut.

Other parties were more peaceful and moderate: devout families who, with their parish priest, came to celebrate a Mass at the hermitage in fulfillment of some desperate and hasty vow. Those groups, once the service ended, also ~~in~~ laughed and made merry, but with a

different sort of merriment, calmer and more ~~pleasant~~ pleasant than the hunters'.

Mournful groups also appeared, though infrequently, on Middle Rocky's wooded slopes. Mila recalled one that started up the trail ~~around~~ ^{toward} the end of August. ~~They were~~ ^{It was} led by a dapper old gentleman with a neatly trimmed mustache, followed by a half-dozen people clustered around a horse, on which a ~~hideous spectacle~~ ^{misshapen boy} rode side-saddle like a woman: a teenage ~~boy~~ ^{boy} yellow as wax, stiff-necked, ~~and with~~ his mouth twisted by an old abscess. ~~The young man's~~ ^{his} hand was held, when the path permitted, by a still young and beautiful lady whose eyes, however, were already ~~dull~~ ^{dull} and weary as an old woman's.

Once Mila had welcomed them outside the chapel, the dull-eyed lady explained the reason for their pilgrimage. It was a case of scrofula, and the poor lad, tired of doctors' remedies and despairing of human cures, still retained a vague faith in saints and their miracles. He wanted to bathe in the Roar's waters: those waters so many claimed would purge him of evil humors and cleanse his diseased blood.

And while he rested, shivering with cold in the hottest part of summer, Mila, alone with the servants, learned that the rich lady was a widow with no other relatives than this deformed son, who had been rotten with disease almost from the day of his birth. Together ~~they~~ ^{they} wandered from ~~one place to another~~ ^{town to town}, seeking not a cure, of which they had long since abandoned hope, but some improvement, a slight extension of that painful semblance of life, prolonging the tragic immensity of his torment and sacrifice.

And when she helped them bathe the sick boy, when she ~~grasped~~ ^{beheld} the true misery of that poor shriveled body covered with lumps and sores, displaying its nakedness to one and all with the shameless asexual

in difference of the very ill, the woman suspected for the first time that motherhood, that unquenchable and dreamed-of source of joy and comfort, could sometimes be a ~~kind of~~ ^{kind of} punishment for the ~~worst crimes~~ ^{one's sins in} ~~one might commit in another life.~~ ^{in other lives, other lives.}

Except for those cheerful or gloomy visitors, who always brought distraction and a little money, Mila was alone, spending her mornings around the house and her ~~afternoons~~ ^{afternoons} either in the garden or ~~sewing in some shady spot.~~ ^{sewing in some shady spot.} Baldiret and Gaietà pastured their flock in the mountains, and Matias ~~begged in~~ ^{headed for} the plain, ~~making~~ ^{where he made} the rounds of all the villages.

St. Pontius' festival had left them utterly destitute. In addition to their losses, Mila learned of ^{a multitude of} infinite debts, slowly revealed by Matias: debts for things borrowed from the hotel in Murons, debts in stores and taverns for food and drink he had obtained on credit, debts to the rector for hymns and pictures printed in Girona. An ~~entire~~ ^{petty} swarm of ~~small~~ ^{buzzed and stung} debts that bit like mosquitos and that, as Mila learned of them, provoked endless fear and anxiety. She dreamed of nothing but those debts and how they might pay them, and thus she swallowed her shame about Matias' begging and even agreed to ~~keep~~ ^{use} the proceeds.

"With a little luck, we'll get back on our feet again, and then I'll ~~give~~ ^{pay} it all back, every last cent . . ." she told herself each day to ease her conscience, but her face fell ~~every time~~ ^{whenever} Matias returned from his wanderings, showed her his pouch, and suggested how they might spend the money. She wanted to clap her hand over his mouth, make him feel the infamy of his deeds, and at all costs ~~keep~~ ^{keep} the shepherd from learning of their disgrace and ~~judging them~~ ^{judging them} condemning them. But Matias understood nothing, and Gaietà listened and judged. His judgement was

silent, a judgement she was ~~sure~~ ^{knew} he would never reveal in word or deed, but no less severe and implacable for ~~all~~ ^{her} that. And she, who, without realizing it, would have liked to wear a halo in that man's eyes, saw furiously and despairingly that his judgement ~~defiled her~~ ^{damned} debased her, ~~placed~~ ^{placid} her on a lower level than ~~highwaymen~~ ^{bandits}, for ~~highwaymen~~ ^{bandits} risked their lives to rob men, whereas ~~they~~ ^{she and Matias} stole from the very saints at no risk to themselves.

But that desired stroke of luck, which never materialized, seemed to grow more distant with each passing day, while her burden of shame and worry only grew heavier. As ~~autumn~~ ^{her} autumn approached, the visitors stopped coming, and with them went the better part of their earnings.

In September, when the sun still warmed the meadows at midday but cold winds had begun to chill the shadows, only a few solitary strollers from nearby villages, an occasional hunter who asked for a shot of whisky, or, once in a while, a well-to-do gentleman with his wife, ~~who bore~~ ^{came} a candle in one hand and a picnic basket in the other, climbed the mountain to the ~~hermitage~~ ^{that isolated} hermitage.

The hunters paid for their drinks, and the others, after making her show them everything and wearying her with silly questions, threw a few cents in the poor box, gave her a few more, and ~~went away delighted~~ ^{congratulated} themselves ~~on~~ ^{great} with their splendid generosity.

Finally, even these stopped coming, and with a shiver of ~~fright~~ ^{fear} Mila watched ~~the~~ ^{her} winter sweep down upon the barren mountain, threatening the poor hermitage, with its empty larder, its breadless oven, and its ~~mismatched~~ ^{ill-suited} inhabitants.

Then the woman's placid disposition began to crack, and her black, bitter moods rained down upon Matias, normally the world's calmest and most Devil-may-care fellow, poisoning his good humor and making him

don't need this

uneasy. She was always after him, ~~criticizing~~^{nagging}, ~~grumbling~~^{scolding}, literally shoving him out the door in search of a little cash, while he, both ~~irritated~~^{annoyed} and cowed by that constant pressure, kept yielding till at last he obeyed her almost blindly. He leapt up at the crack of dawn, and with the little chapel on his back, began his long journey down to the plain. The ~~same~~^{blabber} results of this unwonted activity ~~soon~~^{were} became apparent: his lazy fat melted away, the folds on his neck disappeared, his shoulder blades again were visible, the dimples that had made his hands ~~look~~^{plump} like an abbess' vanished, and the rope that ~~sustained~~^{held up} his pants no longer left a red mark ~~on~~^{around} his skin. Even his movements ~~lost~~^{quivered} their weary lethargy, and his face became alert like ~~those~~^{any} of other ~~men's~~^{men's}.

Mila would have thanked God for those improvements, had they been accompanied by others more ~~genuinely~~^{financially} beneficial, but while Matias' obedient zeal waxed, his earnings waned.

"May God punish ~~our~~^{us for} sins," the woman repeated bitterly after each ~~disappointment~~^{fruitless trip}, but the memory of their debts and the pressing need to pay them made her close her eyes to everything and goad him all the more.

Till one evening the shepherd, seeing Matias return after dark, gently rebuked him: "Hermit, this joke's gone far enough! These hills are full of bandits who can smell your money a mile away . . . I know you don't have much, but you shouldn't let them see you out this late."

Matias said he wasn't afraid and that if he hoped to make something, he had to venture further each day.

Mila also thought Gaietà had no reason to be ~~so~~^{pret} worried, but all the same she ~~began~~^{decided} to nag Matias less.

Shortly thereafter, he stayed out all night, and the next day

explained that he had wandered too far afield and had slept at the Spirit's house.

The shepherd ^{glanced suspiciously} glared at him, and when Matias went to put his chapel down in the sitting room, the old man mumbled ^{uneasily}: "Maybe I should have kept my mouth shut the other day . . . Sometimes the cure can be worse than the disease."

"Why?" asked Mila in surprise.

"What can I say? With that Spirit around . . ."

Mila smiled at his fears. She was used to ^{the} that feud between ^{the} two men, but she couldn't understand why someone so wise and serene would pay ^{such} so much attention to a savage beast like the Spirit.

Matias came back, and she thought to herself: "Well, let him poach rabbits, but as for hurting anybody . . . he's too scared of the police."

And neither ^{of them} on that day nor all the others ^{over} that he failed to return did she dare to scold him for sleeping at the ~~Spirit's~~ Spirit's house, lest he use her words as an excuse to stop begging. But after a few more weeks, his two and three-day trips became so frequent that the woman began to ^{worry} fret and decided to speak out. ^{Matias} He seemed taken aback by her first warnings, ^{and afterwards} but then, in the confused, broken words he usually employed, he vaguely promised to improve: "Sure," "Yes, ~~Okay~~," "I'll see to it," "Fine," and that was all; he continued to behave just as ~~he had~~ before. Mila then went from warnings to lectures and from lectures to orders, but the effect was always the same: he seemed to yield, but in fact ^{he} resisted ^{of} her passively like a reed in the wind, righting himself as soon as the tempest had passed. He set out earlier and earlier, and when she made him promise to return before dusk, he readily agreed, but at dusk he was still absent, and often the following day as well. It was useless to try to detain him with some chore around

the house. He slipped away like an ~~an~~ eel, and when she looked for him he was gone. His lethargy seemed to have vanished with his fat, and she found him agile as a ~~chamois~~ ^{swift} and cunning as a fox. She had to admit that the change ~~in him~~ was greater than she had supposed, that something or other had been stronger than herself, that some new element had entered his life, toppling those walls of ~~stupid~~ ^{dull} indifference and estranging ~~him from~~ ^{them} his wife, whom he ~~shunned and rejected~~ ^{even} more than before.

The woman raged against this new defeat, and at night in their ~~an~~ empty bed, she lay on her stomach biting the damp, cool pillowcases.

And to make her rout more complete, she noticed that the more he stayed away, the poorer he returned ^J and the more eager to leave ^{again} again. Finally she asked the ~~shepherd~~ shepherd's opinion, and he replied:

"I try not to think the worst of people, and ~~I'm not sure~~ ^{it's kind of hard to say} . . . but anyhow, I don't think your husband's ~~out~~ begging like he says . . . the other day I was up near Roepass when all of a sudden I spotted two specks in the distance, beyond Olivebreath, near Billygoat Falls. They were too ~~far~~ ^{little away} to make out, but I'd have sworn they were ~~your old man~~ ^{him} and the ~~Spanish~~ Spirit . . . Olivebreath's not on the way to town, and it's ~~no use asking the birds for charity~~ ^{no use of time} . . . so they couldn't have been begging, y'know? I reckon the other one took him along to trap rabbits, and your husband's the kind . . . that doesn't like to ~~make~~ ^{argue} trouble . . . But don't say anything till I know for sure . . . I'll keep an eye out, y'know?"

Mila kept ^f quiet, but her spirits sagged ^b beneath the weight of this new trial, and her loneliness deepened, freezing her soul like a polar ^{ice-cap?} ~~glacier~~ ^{sp} glacier. October ended and the sunsets came earlier and earlier, trimming the brief days with shadowy scissors. Matias only spent two nights a week at the hermitage. Arnau hadn't visited her since that ~~con-~~

~~conversations~~ in the yard, ~~and~~ ~~had disappeared after~~ ~~appeared since~~ St. Pontius' festival. The mountains seemed empty except for those women from Ridorta, always bent beneath their bundles of firewood, nor did Gaietà return for a midday nap as he once had but pastured his flock from ten to four ^{every} day. Then, instead of settling himself in the kitchen, he took Baldiret's hand and led him to Murons, where the boy could receive an hour's ^{of} instruction till the winter came, at which time he would return home and spend all day in the classroom. Gaietà hoped thus to prepare Mila for the shock of losing him, but it did her little good. Alone in the house, ^I ~~all day~~, waiting endlessly in that dark, deserted kitchen, without specific ~~tasks~~ ^{no particular task} to occupy her idle hours, she felt a deep and painful sadness steal over her. That morning she had given Gaietà and Baldiret their lunch; her own was ~~now~~ ^{on} simmering ^{five} beneath the hearth, and free of all necessity or desire to act, she ^{pressed} ~~leaned~~ against the kitchen window that looked out on Middle Rocky or on the railing around the terrace that faced east. Then she saw the flock set out, preceded by Baldiret's cries, guided by Owl's barks, and followed by the shepherd with a sheepskin pouch slung across his dark wool jacket, his ^{cap} ~~hat~~ pulled down, ^{and a} ~~his~~ cape flung over his shoulders, holding out his crook, ^{tramping with} ~~stamping~~ his heavy shoes ^{clogs?} solemnly and slowly, but ^{showing not} without the slightest trace of laziness ^{or} ~~of~~ exhaustion.

The grazing sheep spread across the mountain, covering its ^{black} ~~dark~~, wet earth like a shifting patch of snow. Baldiret ran here and there, turning after each leap to smile back at Mila and call out his good-byes, while the man also usually turned a few times and waved to her with his staff . . . till that patch of snow disappeared in the distance, insubstantial as a cloud of dust, and Mila remained at her look-

^{standing there}
 out, with glistening eyes ^{soon} till at last two tears fell upon her crossed arms. Others followed, flowing in silver ^{violets} ^{tinkles} streams down her cheeks, and finally she burst into sobs, at first timid and tremulous ^{as} a new-born babe's, then more urgent and precipitous, and in the end unbridled hysterical ^g howls and ^g cries of pain, boredom, and longing that went on and on as though emptying a stream in which she was drowning. When they stopped, dying away slowly amidst ^g moans and sniffles, she was left exhausted, and drained, with swollen lids and a great lead weight behind her ^{forehead} eyes. Then, weary and listless, she ^{drifted} wandered ~~itly~~ through house and fields, ~~gazing~~ staring dully at the sad, whitewashed walls, the clear blue sky, the ^{crisply} ^{sharply} neatly outlined mountains, ^g which ~~had~~ ^{that had} ~~were now~~ ^{materialized} begun to turn brown. Pacing like a soul in torment, she seemed to await something uncertain, something disturbing that should have come yet never ~~did~~. Then even her desire to walk vanished, leaving her dozing for hours upon her bed, or sitting at the table, ^{with} her back to the light.

Her decline was swift: she stopped eating and felt the color ^{turned} ~~the color~~ drain from her ^{grew} ~~skin~~ ^{skin}, which lost its softness, while her gaze ^{was as}

^{grew} ~~grey~~ ^{was as} blank and weary as that rich widowed mother's. She lost her taste for everything, including neatness, and went about with crooked skirts and runs in her stockings. She let holes appear ^{at} in the elbows ^{of} on Matias' jacket, while those in his pants ~~and~~ pockets also grew ^{larger} bigger.

Gaietà was alarmed by the woman's state.

"Hermitess!" he cried one ~~ma~~ ^{weeeping} day when he found her ~~in tears~~ and she had to admit that she didn't know why. "You've been sick for a while and we'd better find some ^{can} ~~medician~~ ^{medician}, but not the kind you get from a doctor . . . You're not happy up here, and the only cure is to have some fun, though it's true there's not much to do in these parts. First of all, you can't stay here like a bat in a cave. No one can live without company, y'know? Tomorrow we'll lock the hermitage and you'll

come ~~to live~~ with us. Not a soul ever visits you except your husband, and if he finds you gone he can wait or go back where he came from. ~~We don't need him for anything . . .~~ *He's not much use anymore* ~~to anyone now~~

And sweetening his ^{heavy} solemn words with a smile, he ~~decided~~ ^{announced}, without consulting Mila, ~~to take her with him~~ ^{that she would accompany} the next day: "You'll see it's not so bad . . . and if you don't feel like waiting ~~to find out~~, ask the kid." *why cut this?*

Mila meekly acquiesced, as though her will had been taken from her, and tagged along behind the flock like an obedient child. Gaietà entertained her with his stories, they stopped to eat beneath the Husk, she watched Baldiret shoot his slingshot and later helped him study his ABC's from a primer the shepherd carried in his bag . . .

As they descended Middle Rocky's cetaceous back, while the sheep played tag around them on their way to the hermitage, she realized with amazement that for the first time in many days she hadn't counted the hours. A cool and pleasant breeze, announcing the evening, seemed to dissipate her torpor and rouse her sleeping energies.

XII: Time Past

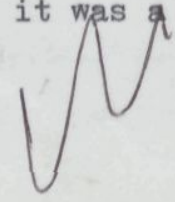
Autumn had come, bringing with it cold weather. One gray day ~~followed~~ ^{succeeded} another, and the distant mountains were so ~~veiled~~ ^{shrouded} in fog ~~and~~ ^{mist} that not a ray of sunlight or sharp outline disturbed their chaste poetry ~~and~~ ^{by gentle waves and} everything seemed ~~soft~~ ^{soften} and hazy as a gentle dream, inviting spirits to ~~smooth~~ ^{soften} their rough edges.

Through those misty landscapes, like animated figures in an enormous painting, ~~Mila wandered with her friends~~, who kept watch over her virginal and perplexed convalescence.

Slowly but surely, she ~~had begun~~ ^{began} to recover, and her reawakening brought many a joyful surprise. As though some divine hand had plucked the stinger ~~from~~ ^{...} her troubles, they no longer pierced her as before but buzzed harmlessly about her head, nor was the hermitage a jail but a haven, a nest where, like a bird, she ~~rested~~ ^{rested} between flights.

Those harsh and ~~lonely~~ ^{deserted} mountains, full of majestic vistas seen from ~~unmarked~~ ^{...} and uncharted trails chosen by whim and ~~for pleasure~~ ^{hobby}, became a setting for restful hours of enjoyment. She now viewed Matias, ~~that~~ ^{her} onetime companion, from the serene ~~heights~~ ^{heights} of her benevolent indifference. She scolded him ~~no more~~ ^{...} and ~~worried~~ ^{troubled} neither ~~him nor~~ ^{...} herself, as though the violent tie ~~through~~ ^{by} which she once hoped to bind him had now broken noiselessly and painlessly, leaving their lives ~~forever~~ ^{...} sundered, and with that unspoken divorce, all the tensions between their ~~incompatible~~ ^{...} natures ~~also~~ ^{seemed to} ~~apparently~~ ^{...} vanished forever. She felt free to act as she liked, and with this secret liberty, harmony reigned in ~~both~~ ^{...} her ~~feelings~~ ^{thoughts} and ~~her~~ ^{...} deeds. Though it was a dull harmony, devoid of

not clear
 who or whose



strength and vibrancy, for this very reason it pleased the woman, from whom it demanded little effort.

~~Mila recovered~~ Like a soldier who has lost blood on a battlefield ~~Mila recovered~~ and must regain it drop by drop, Mila slowly ^{revived} recovered, and just as a dying man may try to seize life by the throat, so the opposite often occurs when life returns to the moribund ^{sick}. Desire, uncertain and afraid to seek an outlet, ^{hesitates} halts hesitantly, and ^{then,} afterward as it awaits ^{renewal} reinforcement, looks backward and instead of acting, remembers the past. As Mila ^{recovered} revived, she remembered.

They usually pastured the flock on some rugged slopes near Goblin Crest where a few rays of light would penetrate the clouds. The sheep scattered across the hills, always facing ^{the sun} that brightness, chewing the weeds that dotted the stony ground like ^{green} tufts of hair. Owl ^{also faced the light} lay in the sun, his eyes half-shut, switching his tail against his ^{while} haunches, Baldiret blew the seeds off elder branches he had brought from the plain or rounded a stone ball he had been working on for months, hammering it repeatedly with an old broken horseshoe, and finally, Mila and Gaietà had long, leisurely conversations.

Forcing her to gaze over ^{each} every steep precipice, teaching her how to twist her body and secure her footing in dangerous spots, making her look down when they were halfway up a cliff ^{and laughing} while he laughed at her terror, he helped conquer her fears, held her when she was dizzy, and guided the woman through her apprenticeship as a mountaineer, winning out at last over her ^{fearful} frightened, fawn-like ~~nature~~ nature. And now she ^{loved that excitement} enjoyed those thrills of pleasure she felt on the ^{these} peaks and the way the yawning depths seemed to suck her soul out of her.

Sitting at the ^{Mountain} top of Nestwatch, thousands of feet above the

plain, her cape thrown back and her legs dangling above the void, watching clouds ~~scurry~~ ^{gallop} overhead like herds of wild horses while Black Gulch's huge, ~~toothy~~ ^{jagged} mouth yawned below her, Mila felt perfectly at home, and perhaps because of those ~~grand~~ ^{grandiosa} surroundings, tender memories returned from her youth.

Her gaze lost in the distant reaches of memory, she talked on and on, while the shepherd, seated beside her whittling something for Baldiret or his sheep, listened attentively without interrupting:

"If you could have seen my ~~own~~ ^{face} aunt . . . she was such a kindly ^{it} soul! Her ~~head~~ ^{face} was tiny, brown as a walnut, and her hair fell straight as a curtain from the part ~~down~~ ^{to} each ear . . . She called the two sides her two armies. When I combed her hair, I'd sometimes make ~~two~~ ^{a big} curls big as pennies on each temple, and then she'd pat my backside, pretending to spank me. She loved me a lot, poor ~~woman~~ ^{dear} . . . No one would have guessed we were only related by marriage. When my mother died -- may she rest in peace -- she offered to take me in ~~right~~ ^{right} away. My uncle had such bad kidney trouble that he could hardly work and didn't want the bother, but she told him: 'How can you turn away your own flesh and blood? What would you do if she was from my side of the family? I'm ~~just~~ ^{only} her godmother but I love her like I'd ~~had~~ ^{lost} ~~her~~ ^{lost} ~~in~~ ^{lost} ~~my~~ ^{lost} ~~womb~~ ^{lost} . . .' My uncle always teased her about the way she chose my name. He said she'd gone through I don't know how many calendars looking for a nice one, and finally ^{chose} chosen Camilla because the girl in the castle was called ~~that~~ ^{that's what}. 'And look,' he used to say to ~~amuse~~ ^{tease} her: 'they'll both have it easy,; one's got that castle and the other'll get my boat . . .' Because my uncle was a boatman, you know? Before they built the bridge, he used to ferry people across the river in a little white boat on a rope stretched from one bank

to the other. Further up there was a ford where the wagons would cross, but the people always ^{used to go} ~~went~~ on his boat. It was nice to watch on Sundays and market days, when the boat was full of peasants in new caps ~~that~~ ^{it was mostly we who} looked like red carnations. On St. Peter's Day, when all the fishermen celebrated, we'd decorate his boat with real carnations, roses, and any other flowers we could find. One year, when I was older and looked after him ~~more than my aunt,~~ ^{fixed} the boys from our village strung flowers ~~all~~ around the boat and tied a big bouquet ^{elastic} on top of his pole with blue and white rubber bands. They did it the night before, and when we got there ^{on} St. Peter's Day, they were ~~all~~ hiding in the bushes, waiting to hear what we'd say! It looked like a procession with all those flowers . . ."

AMBIGUOUS

Mila stopped for a moment, savoring the memory, and then sighed: "Rivers are such pretty things!"

"Everything's pretty if you look at it right, hermitess."

"Some things more than others . . . in my whole life I never saw anything as ^{lovely} nice as that river when the sun was setting. When no one

was around, I'd take the pole, push the boat halfway across, and stop there. The boat ^{would rock} swayed like a cradle, so slowly it almost ^{it almost felt} rocked me to sleep, and as I pushed it back, I'd watch the sun like a ^{me to} burning flower behind ^{those} the big poplars full of ~~him~~ chirping birds, and I'd

listen to the lumberjacks joking as they worked. Everything seemed far, far away . . . and I loved ^{to} watch the wagons ~~and~~ splashing across the ford! . . . I could have stayed forever! . . . What can I ~~say~~ say? . . . I felt good ^{there} there, the way you feel in a big, empty church, and I'd start saying Paternosters for everyone in my family, dead or living . . . but the bridge ruined that river and us too. In two or three years they'd chopped down all the best trees,

people stopped using the ford, and they'd built a factory on the hill
 so that at dusk, ^g instead of all that peace and quiet, you know what
 we heard? The guys who got off work at the factory made straight for
 the tavern, throwing ^{stones} rocks at the birds and singing dirty songs. And
 that poor little boat was sad to see, tied to the dock all by itself
 like a sick ^{dog} animal. My uncle refused to sell it and we sometimes took
 it out for fun -- me, him, and my aunt -- but you couldn't see anything
 with that bridge in the way and my uncle wept whenever he saw the
 people crossing, as if . . . Believe me; it killed him. He already had
 kidney trouble, and when he saw his boat lying there useless, ^g he got
 worse ^{real quick} in a hurry. While he could still get around, he'd go out in the
 morning and make for the river. Since we'd stopped weeding the banks,
 the boat was overgrown with bushes that covered it like an awning.
 He'd hide out there, ^g and ^{a half-dozen} half-dozen people said they heard him sobbing,
 but what's for sure is that he always came back with red eyes and got
 mad if my aunt asked him what was the matter. After a while he couldn't
 get farther than the kitchen, but on St. Peter's Day he had them take
 him to the river in a wagon, ^g and asked us to decorate the boat in
 memory of the other years. But we couldn't! It would have been too
 sad to see that broken-down, mossy boat covered with roses. That day
 he wasn't the only one who cried . . . When he passed away, ^g my aunt
 tried to sell it, but ^g it was too late ^g by then. It had been lying there
 so long and was so ^{neglected/run-down} shabby that it had sprung a dozen leaks. The wood
 was rotten . . . The day they went to look at it, I met Matias ^g he
 was with the manager, ^{who'd} who wanted to buy it, and the whole time his
 boss was bargaining ^g ~~with~~ he never took his eyes off me. It didn't take
 him long to propose . . . He seemed like a good guy, and my aunt

didn't have long to live . . . I'd have been all alone . . . ^{so} I said yes . . . God, if only I'd known what I was getting myself into!"

Mila's reminiscences always stopped short when she reached Matias, and seeing her fall silent and gaze blankly into Black Gulch's ^{Somber} ~~gloomy~~ depths, the sheperd, ^{watched over} who monitored her emotional ups and downs, saw that it was time to spring into action. Laying aside the piece of wood he was carving, he stretched and stood up: "Oof! My whole leg was asleep! It's too cold to stay here. Why don't we take a little turn?" and he smiled cheerfully at the woman.

Mila raised her head to contemplate that dark-clad figure outlined against ~~the peak of~~ ^{Mountain} Nestwatch, his feet on the ground and his head far above her, as though he had suddenly grown taller and now reac^hed the sky. She laughed and also rose. The sheep were scattered far and wide, while Baldiret and Owl played busily ^{together,} ~~with each other.~~

Gaietà quickly surveyed his flock and then made his way slowly down one of the slopes, followed by the woman, who watched him point to place^s near and distant.

"You see that last olive tree down there? A funny thing happened there a while back! There was a mighty lord in Llisquents who did nothing but enjoy himself. His favorite~~m~~ pastimes were ruining young girls, eating and drinking, and going hunting . . . One day he spied a girl named Marialena, who was ~~m~~ sewing in front of her house. His men carried her off, he spent the night with her, and the next morning he ^{turned} ~~threw~~ her out of his castle. When she saw what he'd done, the girl turned around and shouted: 'Lord of Llisquents! You swooped down on me like a ~~best~~ ^{best} bird of prey, and may I ~~see~~ ^{hear} you ~~screach~~ ^{laugh} like ~~one~~ ^{an old owl} before I leave this world!' Then she disappeared, and no one knew what had become of her . . .

Years later, another lord who had a castle in the Rockies invited the one from Llisquents to go hunting. He arrived with all his servants, but in

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the course of the hunt, he lost sight of the others and finally came
 to that olive tree, where he ^{spied} saw the prettiest little deer you ever
 did see, standing right on top of ~~what~~ boulder over there. The lord,
 who ~~had~~ been all over the world, ^{thought} then ~~said to himself~~: 'Well! This must
 be my lucky day! That looks like a roe deer that ~~must have~~ wandered
 down from the Pyrenees. I'll give it to my host as a present!' And
 since the deer didn't move, he loaded his crossbow and shot it, but
 the animal suddenly took a leap and started ^{springing} dashing up the mountain. *
 The hunter thought: 'You won't ^{get} go far with that arrow in your side
 . . .' and he followed it, but the deer ran like the wind and the next
 thing he knew he'd lost sight of his prey. He thought: 'It'll fall
 when it reaches the top. I'll rest awhile and then follow its trail.'
 But just then another roe deer appeared on the peak above him. ~~It~~
~~was~~ 'What's that: doe or buck? It'll make an even better present!'
 He reloaded his crossbow and shot another arrow. It was a sunny day,
 and he saw it pierce the deer's neck, but instead of falling it took
 a leap just like the first one and fled up the mountain till it was
 out of sight. ~~The~~ lord was amazed and ran after it as fast as his
 legs could carry him. He was ^{huffing and} puffing by the time he reached the top,
 but ^{even} ~~if~~ though he looked everywhere, he couldn't find a trace of any
 deer, dead or alive. 'What the Devil's going on?' he exclaimed. 'I
 can't see any trees or rocks where they could hide. Where could they
 have gone? Unless they leapt off the mountain above Billy ^{goat} Falls!'
 But Billygoat Falls was a ^{good} half hour away, and not even a roe deer could
 have run that far so ^{fast} quickly. The lord was beginning to get ^{impatient,} annoyed,
 and he wasn't the kind to think ~~twice~~ before he acted. All he cared
 about was giving his host those deer. And without worrying about how

tired he got or how long it took, he groped his way from rock to rock down to Billygoat Falls, thinking: 'They must be lying there bleeding to death in the gulch, because they couldn't have gone far with those arrows in them.' By the time he reached the falls, he was more dead than alive. He looked all over, but he ~~could~~ couldn't find the deer. He was astonished. If that wasn't a miracle, he ~~sure~~ didn't know what it was! He retraced his steps ^{as carefully} as if his life depended on it, but he still couldn't see a thing. He was about to give up and turn back, cursing Heaven and earth, when he looked up and saw another deer right at the top of Lookout Mountain, stretching its neck to sniff the breeze on ~~each~~ ^{either} side. The lord shouted for joy and took careful aim. Then he noticed that it was unwounded and much smaller than the others. 'It's their fawn! But what the Hell, as long as I can bring it down!' These deer had gotten ~~him~~ ^{to him} under his skin so much that even if he lost the ^{parents} grown-ups, he'd be satisfied with the kid. But since it was so small and far away, he was afraid he'd miss and, rousing his forces, he clambered up the other side. Then he loaded his crossbow and shot it right in the belly. 'I killed that one for sure!' cried the Lord of Llisquets, seeing it stumble, but then it righted itself and ^{sprang} dashed away up Lookout Mountain. 'This is witchcraft!' thought the hunter, ~~shaking~~ ^{what happened} trembling from head to ~~feet~~ toe, 'but if I tell my host about it he'll think I'm crazy or a liar. I've ^{either} got to bring back those deer or never show my ^{face} again in his castle.' He looked at his clothes, which were in shreds from all the thistles, and at his ^{shoes} feet, which were so torn they left a ^{bloody (footprint)} trail of blood at every step, but he still had a spark of courage left, like the last embers in the ^a dying fire. He started walking. Night began to fall, everything turned ashy gray, and

feet - cut
shoes torn

finally he couldn't even see where he was going. He started stepping on burrs instead of stones. He kept ~~falling~~ ^{stumbling} as he climbed, and once he came to a ~~steep gulch~~ ^{cliff} and had to retrace his steps. It was pitch black by the time he reached the top of Lookout Mountain. 'I must be crazy! I'll never spot those deer ~~now!~~ ^{in the dark}' And without ~~another~~ ^{in a faint} the strength to say another word, he fell down and ~~fainted~~. After a while, he was awakened by a distant echo. 'My friends must be searching for me' the lord thought, and that idea gave him hope. He listened as hard as he could, ~~and~~ ^{but} it seemed like the echo was churchbells instead of hunting horns. Then he looked all around and saw a faint glow in the west, all the way down at the ~~low~~ ^{up} foot of the mountain. As he looked, he felt his eyes swell and swell till they were as big and sharp as an owl's, and he saw a convent down below with a procession ~~outside~~ of ~~nuns~~ ^{nuns} outside it. The bells ^{were tolling} tolled for someone who was dying, and the nuns walked two by ~~two~~ ^{two}, holding candles and singing hymns ~~as they went~~. A chill pierced the lord's heart and he tried to shut his eyes, but he couldn't because they covered his whole face and were big as saucers. Then he got real scared and tried to cover his face, but he found that instead of arms he had two big wings covered with feathers that made a sound like the wind when he flapped them up and down . . . He tried to shout 'Help, Holy Virgin!' and all that came out was a long screech that echoed through the hills. He spread his wings and ~~flew~~ ^{flew} through the night till he reached a big gully above the convent. Nearby stood a huge ~~firm~~ ^{almost} tree nearly two thousand years old. ~~After~~ ^{As he} ~~lighting~~ ^{lighted} on one of its branches, he saw a steeple below him, with its bells all tolling and a row of windows from the nuns' cells. One window was open, and through it he saw a white bed ~~on which~~ ^{where} a nun lay, holding

^{little} a statue of Christ in her hands, while a friar in a long ^{white} cloak stood ^{by}
~~at the headboard.~~ ^{by the headboard.} The nun was dying, the friar was hearing her last
 Confession, and the other nuns were singing hymns for her soul's sal-
 vation. As the lord looked more closely, he saw she was that girl he'd
 spent the night with years ago. Then he realized that God had punished
 him for his sins and started shouting from his fir tree: 'Forgive me,
 Marialena! Forgive me, I beseech you!' But he ~~himself~~ ^{could} hardly
 bear the sound of his own screeches, which ^{roused} ~~woke up~~ every man and beast
 in ~~the~~ ^{there} mountains. The nuns stopped singing, stared at the tree, and,
 dropping their candles, ran into the convent as fast as they could.
 The friar fell to his knees and crossed himself, and the dying nun
 turned in terror to look out the window, where she saw a huge bird dark
 as a shadow ^{and} twice as big as the biggest eagle ~~you ever saw in your~~
 life, with gigantic round eyes that shrank and ~~got bigger~~ ^{swelled}, bright as
~~two~~ blazing forges. The lord saw she was looking at him and again tried
 to repent, saying: 'Oh, please ^{take} ~~have~~ pity on my sinful soul, Marialena!'
 And he spread his wings like someone begging for mercy. Then the sick
 nun sat up and clasped her hands: 'Oh Almighty Savior, that must be the
 Lord of Llisquets, who heartlessly ^{turned} ~~threw~~ me out of his castle! Now I
 can die happy, for he stole me from my nest, and now I see him screeching
 like a bird of prey in the night . . .' And having uttered these words,
 she quickly passed away. The next morning, that lord opened his eyes and
 found himself lying on Lookout Mountain, with his clothes all in ~~tatters~~ ^{shreds}
 and his feet caked with blood. Nearby he saw a shepherd looking down
 at him, while the mountains rang with the sound of a hundred churchbells.
 He stood up and started questioning the shepherd, who ~~gradually~~ ^{slowly} told
 him how the night before a wondrous miracle had ~~taken place~~ ^{occurred}: 'A nun

~~I~~ ^I washipped as a saint died and went to Heaven, and ^{all} those bells
 are ringing in her honor . . . She was so saintly that the Devil,
 who'd never managed to tempt her, tried to trap her on her deathbed
 by appearing as a big owl, perching ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ a fir tree, and screeching
 as loud as he could to distract her from her last Confession. But it
 didn't work, and when he saw she'd go straight to her Maker, he got
 so mad there was thunder, ~~and lightning~~ lightning, and a smell of sulphur
^{all} spread through the mountains. That big old fir tree cracked like a twig,
 and the friar and those nuns are still shaking from the sight of
 Lucifer, may God preserve us from his wiles, Amen! [†] Then the lord
 asked the shepherd how he knew so much about it, and he replied that
 he'd heard it from another shepherd down below, who'd heard it from
 a woman who worked ⁱⁿ ~~at~~ the convent and had gotten the story straight
 from the sisters. She was going around telling people in all the
 nearby towns. The lord waited to hear no more and, repenting of his
 sins, he returned to his castle, where he gave each servant a hundred-
 weight of gold. Then he donated all his wealth and lands to the
 convent at Cabrides, and [§] dressed in the clothes he'd worn ^{on} ~~in~~ that
 hunt, followed the trails ^{the} those three roe deer had led him down till *
 he reached the gully, which people had started to call Owl Gully
 because of what had happened that night. Lightning had ^{split} ~~destroyed~~ the
 fir, just like the shepherd said, and instead of roots there was a
^g gaping hole in the ground. The lord made it his home, and even now
 people still call it Hunter's Cave in his memory . . . And the old
 folks say that sinner became such a wife [§] and holy penitent that when
^{the Pope} His Holiness had some difficult question to settle, he'd send a mes-
 senger to him and abide by his ^{decision} ~~opinion~~ . . . Well, that's the end of

the roe deer story, and there's a moral ~~hiding~~ behind the door, as Baldiret would say . . ."

By the time Gaietà had finished, Mila no longer recalled her marriage, nor did troubling memories disturb her peaceful recovery, and since the morrow brought another ~~more~~ tale, and still another the ~~next~~ ^{after} day -- for the shepherd's majestic flow of words seemed inexhaustible as the sea -- Mila finally lost sight of her own ~~stunted~~ ^{cramped} ~~stunted~~ life as a simple human being and entered the mountains' ~~own~~ ^{realm} fantastic existence. Spellbound by her friend's prodigious imagination, she watched the Rockies' ~~narrow~~ narrow confines grow till they encompassed entire worlds, full of visions, dreams, and ~~amazing~~ ^{fabulous monsters} chimeras. From every field, rock, and branch a ~~single~~ ^{and} legend sprouted, and her sense of wonder blossomed into a new ~~higher~~ ^{and} ~~consciousness~~ ^{awareness}. At the same time, she felt an extraordinary devotion to ~~that~~ ^{this} wizened little man, whose ingenuity and kindness had lifted her to such heights.

One day when he had finished talking, she gazed at him adoringly and, putting all her admiration into a few words, asked: "Shepherd, where did you learn so many things?"

Gaietà smiled. "I never try to learn anything, hermitess."

"Then who taught you all those stories?"

The shepherd pushed back his cap, exposing that pale brow crammed with ~~so many~~ glowing thoughts.

"The little ones," he slowly replied, "I heard from Marieta's ~~grandparents~~ ^{the old folks} at St. Pontius, and the rest . . . from Our Lord."

And seeing the woman continue to stare, he ~~clarified~~ ^{explained} his ~~mysterious~~ ^{puzzling} answer: "When I find a new spot in the mountains, I sit down all ~~my~~ ^{by} myself and take a good look at it, and while I'm looking, I can feel

PARLANT AMB FIGURA OBSCURA

my heart begin to warm, and that warmth spreads till it reaches my head . . . And ^{like} ~~as if~~ some voice ^{was} ~~were~~ telling me, I think of everything that must have happened there . . . And that's why I say it must be Our Lord, because who else ~~could~~ could speak inside you when you're all by yourself?"

The creator's eyes shone with a firm conviction entirely ^{David} ~~free~~ of vanity, while Mila felt that before this blessed soul, she was nothing but dust.

Mila Ferrer

XIII: Highpeak

It was time for Gaietà ~~and him~~ to settle in at St. Pontius, ^{farmhouse} where he and his sheep ~~would shelter all winter~~ ^{would shelter all winter} ~~sheltered~~ ^{beneath} by the Girl's blue granite head. Knowing that without him, Mila would be prey to all the worries that had ^{once} beset her, he postponed his departure time and again, but now he could wait no longer. The rains ~~had come and~~ ^{had come} often prevented him from pasturing his flock, obliging him to spend idle hours in the kitchen, ~~in some~~ ^{in some} occupied in some ~~little~~ ^{trivial} task or ~~chatting~~ ^{chatting} ~~talking~~ with goatherds from Murons and Ridorta who had ~~also~~ taken refuge there. In addition, the people at St. Pontius' had begun to complain, ~~ostentatiously~~ supposedly because Baldiret was absent from school ~~in~~ but really because they ~~wanted the manure his sheep would~~ ^{needed that} ~~leave in their barn,~~ ^{the manure his sheep would} and even the Spirit, finding himself alone with Marieta on one of the Skeleton's slippery trails, told her not to expect Gaietà that winter, since with Matias out of the way, the old man had plenty ^{to work to} to keep ~~him~~ ^{do} busy at the hermitage. Marieta, ^{getting} ~~deriving~~ all the leverage she could from this ~~malicious~~ ^{slander} ~~innuendo~~ gossip, repeated it, ^{to} and the shepherd, though he merely chuckled at the time, nonetheless resolved to abandon Mila's house. That night he told her. The two of them and Baldiret were eating supper by the hearth, and Matias either hadn't ^{to} come in yet or -- more likely -- would not return that night.

Gaietà had just piled a few more kermes logs on the fire and, ^{well in place} after bending over to see that they were firmly positioned, he turned to Mila: "Hermitess, you'll need a good supply of kindling when we're gone . . . tomorrow me and the kid'll fight it out with those women from ~~Murons~~ ^{Ridorta} Ridorta."

this isn't clear whose noise it is, change

David H. Rosenthal

The woman spun around in her seat: "Are you going to leave so soon?"

The shepherd wedged the logs in tightly, slapping them with the palm of his hand. "Today's Saturday, isn't it? Well... around the middle of next week."

He wanted to say: "Monday or Tuesday," but his courage failed him. Mila blushed, ~~she~~ mumbled "Oh really?", and felt her eyes fill with tears, while the man thought he saw her wipe them in the flickering darkness and turned away lest he find out for sure.

Baldiret carefully ~~cut~~ the panels from an illustrated broadside the rector had given him and paid no attention to the grownups' conversation.

The woman ~~hearsely~~ stammered: "But how can I live here all by myself? . . ."

The shepherd stirred the fire, which rustled like crumpled paper. Since he didn't reply, the woman wondered if he had heard her. After a short pause, she continued in the same tone: "You promised to show me Highpeak. . ."

This time Gaietà responded: "And God willing, we'll do it! You wouldn't want to miss these mountains' crowning glory! From the Cross, you can see half the kingdom . . ."

"But if you're going to leave . . ."

"We've got a few days left . . . and it'll only take one . . . when would you like to go?"

"Well, with all the work I have to do . . ."

"Tomorrow's no good, cause we'll be ~~in~~ in church. How about Monday?"

It rained all day Sunday, and Mila began to worry, but ~~in~~ toward evening the sky cleared and Gaietà forecast good weather. They would ~~rise in the dark, when the moon still~~

Legbreak Creek - 6
Black Gulch - 7
Moor's Boundary Stone - 18
the Girl - 13
the Boar - 13
Bad Wood Creek - 14
St. Pantini Pass

Highpeak - 39
Wolf Pass - 65, 70
Three Lamb Gorge
680m Crest (Elder)
Flatrock
Cockfoot - 81, 46
Boepass - 81
The Plunge - 81

Deadwoman Gulch - 85
~~Moham's Gorge~~
Kings Glen } 86
Olivebreath }

the hush (la volva) / Elephant - 138
Billygoat Falls
Nestwatch (mountain)

Cookout Mt.
the ~~Sh~~ Skeleton
The Corn (218)
Punch Bridge - leg 822
Lightningbolt Pass - 230

the Jew on windwhistle height - 230
A Capera Springs
St. Pantini Rocky ~~the~~ little R } 10 - Middle
Pear Buds
Gallowseat
the Dragon head

JORGE LUIS BORGES:
"LA FORMA DE LA ESPADA"

rise in the dark, when the moon still shone like a white slash upon ~~the~~ ^{icy} ~~cold~~ firmament. *

Mila had spent a ~~feverish~~ ^{restless} night, and her slightly delirious state, in which she scarcely knew whether she was dreaming or thinking, had left her feeling ~~frightened and anxious~~ ^{tense and fearful.}. As she sliced half a round loaf of black bread upon her ~~table~~ ^{wooden} table, the shepherd warned her to dress warmly, because the early morning would ~~be cold as a dagger~~ ^{cut ^{sharp} like a knife}. *

Baldiret was hunched over near the fire, his hands in his pockets, yawning ~~from ear to ear~~ ^{how is this said in English? to crack his jaws?}. That day, he was lord and master of the hermitage. Since Matias had not returned and the boy had often climbed Highpeak, ~~they~~ ^{Gaietà} told him to gather the flock and ~~lead it forth~~ ^{take it to pasture} if ~~Mila and Gaietà~~ ^{they} were not back in time. *

The stars had ~~nearly disappeared~~ ^{vanished} by the time they set out, making their way across the fields that led to the first pine groves.

Behind them they heard Owl barking for his ~~master~~ ^{owner}, while Baldiret's squeaky voice, calling "godddbye, goodbye" from the terrace, was ~~mocked and repeated~~ ^{mimicked} by the fairies' ~~sarcastic~~ ^{all} ~~echos~~ ^{mocking}.

Gaietà had not been mistaken: the bitter cold seemed even ~~more~~ ^{steeper} intense in the breaking dawn. It still had not snowed, but frost whitened the ground and ~~made~~ it look as though they were treading on splinters of broken glass. Five minutes after they lost sight of the hermitage, Mila's hands began to ache and, imitating Baldiret, she hunched over and buried her head between her shoulders. They approached the Roar, whose noisy waters, swirling in their ~~little~~ ^{basin} pool and then ~~falling~~ ^{plunging} from rock to rock, carried the mountains's icy breath far and wide.

As they ~~came~~ ^{drew} nearer, that noise, multiplied a hundred times by the dark hills, so frightened Mila that she clutched the shepherd's arm.

He walked along ~~wn~~ silence, puzzling over God knows what. Feeling the woman beside him, he turned, but his smile was lost in the tenuous half-light.

"Ah! . . . It's great to be up and about so early, don't you think?" ~~E~~ he gently asked, and ~~wi~~thout awaiting her reply, he ~~looked~~ ^{stared} fixedly ahead of him.

Mila then recalled what she had so often felt before: ~~I~~ that while she was near this man, whose presence she felt so strongly, he was far way, oblivious, ~~am~~ lost in his own ~~mysterious~~ thoughts.

This revelation ^g always took Mila by surprise, making her pull away from him with a kind of ~~self-conscious embarrassment~~ ^{awkward self-consciousness} ~~and thus~~ it was on this occasion. After climbing a piney slope, they turned onto a ~~gully~~ ^{goat path} used by goats that ~~wound~~ wound around High Rocky's craggy base. ~~The~~ woman let him walk before her in the shadows, while she followed close behind.

The first glimmers of daylight seemed to ~~rise~~ ^{materialize} imperceptibly ~~like~~ ⁱⁿ ~~fine dust~~ ^{tiny particles}, and their very pallor, more than the dark, filled the grove with ominous shapes, whose ~~confused boundaries~~ ^{blurred / jumbled / blurred / outlines} and proportions made everything as fantastic as Gaietà's ~~magic~~ stories. Mila, who walked ~~absentmindedly~~, turned her head from side to side, ~~feeling~~ ^{prey to} an irrational fear that had tormented her as a girl. She ~~almost~~ ^{sometimes} felt ~~that her feet~~ ^{she was} ~~were not touching the ground,~~ ^{and sometimes} ~~that~~ every cranny or patch of brambles concealed a skeletal hand that would tug at her skirts. And the pines, those ~~fantastic~~ ^{ominous / bizarre} silhouettes huddled together in clumps, ~~leaving meadows~~ ^{here and there}, seemed like evil apparitions that ~~motionlessly~~ ^{wickedly stole after} watched her pass and then ~~pursued her with wicked intentions.~~ ^{wanted to} She ~~felt like~~ ^{to} fleeing into the woods, ~~trying to~~ escape . . . but ~~she~~ walked on till

bizarre-sounding - bramble twig

suddenly a ~~heather thorn~~ caught ^{on} in her apron, startling her so that she couldn't help screaming and running to the shepherd, who nearly lost his balance, then halted in surprise ^g and asked anxiously: "What's the matter, hermitess?"

"I don't know . . . nothing . . . I must be seeing things . . ." And ⁿashamed of her fear, she ~~flushed~~ blushed from head to toe.

Gaietà quickly regained his composure.

"Still scared of the dark, huh? . . . I didn't know what to think, with that ^{noise} cry . . . So you haven't recovered yet? You're a sad case, I declare . . ."

And as though regretting his previous neglect, he stayed by her side. The path was so narrow that their bodies sometimes brushed, and, ~~shivering with pleasure~~ ^{thrilling} at that warm contact in the chilly air, she pulled her shawl even more tightly around her shoulders. They walked silently, white clouds of steam issued from their mouths and noses, and the ^ucruch of their footsteps was the only sound audible ^g.

The trees began to thin out and the ~~gully~~ ^{path} became still narrower, like the ~~mm~~ cleft between two breast, as it made its way through the Rockies, which rose like cyclopean walls on either side, as though yearning to join and crush those human specks who dared to disturb their ^{peas} sleep.

~~Mila~~, who ^{Feeling} felt trapped and suffocated in ^{the} that crevice, ^{Mila} turned her gaze toward the bushes spotted with white lichens, and then higher till she saw the sky's dark canopy. Near that patch of ~~stippled~~ ^{deep} blue, she suddenly sensed, like a sonar ^{wrong tone!} phosphorescence, a restless chirruping that seemed ~~suspended~~ ^{to hang} overhead, hovering above St. Pontius' Pass without the force to sink earthward.

"They call that the birdhouse," said Gaietà, looking up. →

"Don't go near the top of it now or at sundown. The birds'll peck your eyes out. There are thousands of them, y'know? . . . They swoop down on the wheatfields ~~below~~ and eat everything in sight . . ."

A little beyond the Birdhouse, the wall on their right parted as though cut ~~open~~ by scissors, and two toothlike rock formations stood out from the others, resembling ~~two~~ huge ~~prehistoric~~ ^{prehistoric} claws.

"What's that?" asked Mila as ~~soon~~ as she spied them.

"The Combs. Those two are the big ones, and there's a small one on the other side. You can see all three of them lined up from the top of Lookout Mountain, and since there's a gorge below, they call it Three Comb Gorge. In the old days, people say they were made of tarnished silver, and the fairies dipped them in a pond where they'd bathe kids they didn't like so their hair would turn white as snow before their time."

Gaietà, who was in no mood to talk, didn't expand upon this explanation, and they walked on in silence ~~until~~ a new and ~~strange~~ ^{strange} sight piqued Mila's curiosity.

~~Until~~ then, ~~the~~ ^{path} ~~gully~~ had gradually descended, and right beneath the Combs, Mila and Gaietà reached its lowest point. The walls on either side spread outward like a "V," formed by ~~crusty~~ overlapping rocks that ~~resembled~~ resembled a monster's scaly skin. Water poured down them, as though it had just rained, and their shiny ~~grayness~~ reflected the pale sky's bluish light. The breaking dawn above their heads made the path seem even darker.

"It's so scary!" whispered Mila, gazing ~~all~~ around and crossing her arms over her chest.

"We're in Lightningbolt Pass. If anyone's out to get you, keep away from this place, ^v cause if they roll a rock down from the Combs

it'll flatten you like a pancake. I stopped bringing the flock this way a while back . . . You have to ~~look~~^{watch} out . . ."

The shepherd's brow furrowed as he uttered these solemn words. Mila, whose eyes had ~~become~~^{used} grown accustomed to the darkness, looked closely at the man's strangely ~~superimposed~~^{gnarled} features, which had assumed a hitherto unknown expression. She suddenly ~~thought~~^{wondered}: "What if he's talking about himself and will suddenly turn against me?" The idea made her feel faint, and she stopped in her tracks. Thinking it was the narrowness of the gully, Gaietà calmly walked ahead. His red cape, thrown over his shoulders, covered his neck and back, and the bulging pouch beneath the wool made him look like a hunchback. The woman's eyes, still large with fear, remained fixed on that back. No; the shepherd wasn't out ~~to~~^{to} get her. She trusted him implicitly, but . . . and her suspicions ~~flowed~~^{took} along another, more ~~indirect~~^{circutious route} path till once again she began to wonder, for . . . even the best men sometimes stumble and fall, swept away by passions that ~~overturn~~^{defy} their ~~consciences~~^{best intentions}. Everyone's a thief when he had the chance, the saying goes, and they were alone in that ~~rocky~~^{rocky} abyss. Only God knew they were there and could witness their deeds, but the wicked care little about hiding from God. They only worry about other people . . .

Mila shuddered and saw again, in Lightningbolt Pass' darkness, the broad, warm, devoted, ~~immense~~ infinite gaze that had blotted out Arnau's red lips, breaking the current of attraction between him and his beloved. That look had seemed a ~~marvelous~~ revelation, a promise . . . So ~~what~~^{why} would ~~it~~^{it} be so strange if . . .? Her blood ran cold, and she ~~admitted~~^{realized} that something ~~unexpected~~^{unexpected} might occur.

It was another moment of instinctive terror, but abruptly, as

vast

though a door had been flung open to reveal a grand ballroom, her eyes were dazzled by a blinding light and tumult filled her ~~eyes~~ ^{ears.}

She looked into the depths of her soul and felt, without the shadow of a doubt, that if ~~that~~ ^{it} were to happen, she would surrender without a fight. No: if that kindly man, high in the mountains or in the gorge's tempting darkness, were to approach and take her in his arms like a newborn baby lamb, she would not cry out, ~~try to~~ flee, or utter a word of resistance . . . No, no; she would meekly, joyously let herself be taken and cling to that sheltering bosom ~~as~~ as she had so often longed to do. She would happily give that friend the light of her eyes, the fervor of her lips, her body's ~~wasted~~ ^{unused} riches . . . Lost in that wondrous fantasy, she tasted his loving embrace and felt herself transported to those mysterious worlds he visited by himself.

* The ~~shepherd~~ ^{go home} shepherd turned around: "God Almighty, are you ready to ~~turn back?~~"

Mila had fallen behind and finally stopped altogether. The man's words startled her like ~~an unexpected~~ ^a pistol shot. She tried to smile and stared at Gaietà with the astonished gaze of one who contemplates something ~~incomprehensible~~ ^{never seen before.}

A dozen steps further on, he awaited her, calm as always and with a smile upon his lips.

The woman felt bitterly ridiculous in her own eyes. How could he want to hurt her? He would never be swept away by a ~~mad~~ ^a wave of passion or try to bend her to his will! What nonsense! . . . The evidence of her delusion slapped her in the face like ~~some~~ ^a shameful ~~secret~~ ^{fast faint}. She knew she was beautiful, ~~exciting~~ ^{alluring}, desired and ~~man~~ desirable. First those ~~hunting companions from Barcelona~~ and their vicious beasts at

the festival, then the hunting parties from Barcelona, and her own ~~ceaseless~~ ^{restless} longings had clearly proven it. So why did neither of those two men -- Matias and Gaietà, ^{to} to whom she would have ~~freely~~ given her ~~love~~ ^{body} not ~~sink their teeth into~~ ^{lovingly devour eagerly devour} her like a sweet, ripe fruit? Matias considered her just another habit, devoid of charm or interest. No spark from the sacred fire had kindled that cold spirit, drawing the magic flame from its indifferent depths. And the shepherd? The shepherd neither felt nor wished to feel such a flame. Before, after the festival, he had treated her like Marieta, Baldiret, or even his sheep, acting as a sort of ~~beneficent~~ ^{benevolent} providence, sheltering everyone equally without distinctions.

Suddenly, ^{this} that providence touched the woman's arm, making her ^{Jump} start with surprise.

"What're you so scared of? Anyone would think you were made of quicksilver! Try to be less jittery! . . ." and the old man threatened her affectionately with his ~~hand~~ leathery hand.

"I was daydreaming," ~~the woman~~ ^{she} confessed.

"I reckon you were! And when you're daydreaming you don't see or hear a thing. When I'm in some out-of-the-way place, I'd rather use my eyes than my tongue. You can't be sure who's watching, y'know? ~~It's~~ ^{it'll be} different ~~now that~~ ^{once} were going to be out in the open."

Mila then noticed two things she had missed before: first, the sun had risen, and second, they were about to emerge from St. Pontius' Pass. Twenty steps ahead, ~~from the~~ the wall on the right abruptly ended ~~and the pass stopped short like a dead-end street~~. Beyond it, she saw a patch of sky bright as a mirror, and atop the cliff, just before it vanished, a rugged crag ^a rose, proud and airy as the tower on a

medieval castle.

"That looks like the Moor's Boundary Stone," said Mila, pointing to it.

"There's quite a difference, hermitess!" the shepherd replied. "The ~~Boundary Stone~~ Boundary Stone's a grain of sand compared to that Jew on Windwhistle Heights . . . It must be ten times higher than the steeple at your hermitage, and if a man stood up there he'd look tinier than a mosquito. I ~~climbed~~ ^{scaled} it years ago and almost lost my footing. It's as smooth as a pole and twice as hard to climb!"

Beyond ^{the} that pass, the landscape rolled away into the distance, ~~flowing over~~ ^{toward distant} far-off mountains tinged with the ~~transparent~~ ^{iridescent} rainbow ~~hues~~ ^{iridescence} of Venetian crystal.

"How pretty the light is!" thought Mila, feeling her heart ^{born of the} ~~expand~~ ^{swell} like the space before her and shaking off these demons ^{who had} ~~who had~~ ^{gorgonized by the} bred in the darkness. She raised her head, ~~now clear of evil fantasies,~~ and breathed in the cool splendor she beheld all around her. The morning air, which cut like a razor at those altitudes, attacked her head on, clinging to her face like a metal mask.

The shepherd stopped and leaned on his crook.

"See what a ~~lovely~~ ^{nice} day it is? Not a speck of fog on earth or a wisp of cloud in Heaven. Lord love us, we ~~couldn't~~ ^{couldn't} have picked a finer morning! When we get to the top, we'll be able to see all creation . . ." And fascinated, he slowly gazed from ~~one~~ ^{side} side to the other, ~~within~~ ⁱⁿ the majestic serenity of a king born to the purple.

"You'll never guess what I feel when I'm up this high," said Mila, closing her eyes and throwing back her head.

"Mother of God! I'm sure I wouldn't know," replied the shepherd. "They say women are always full of strange feelings."

"Yes, it is pretty strange . . . I can't see straight and the sky seems to spin like a water wheel, and when it's way down at the bottom ^g like a reflection in a pond, I feel like diving in ^{and} a drowning in the sky."

Gaietà looked at her curiously.

"I feel that way too, y'know? Except I want to fly like God's birds instead of sinking like a stone."

And they went on zigzagging up ^{the mountains,} ~~those pathless mountains,~~ seeking easy trails ^{through} among the frosty scrub, kermes oak and rosemary, which looked as ~~though~~ ^{if it} they had been dusted with ^{icing} powdered sugar. Occasionally, Gaietà turned around to encourage his companion. ^{icing sugar is the very finest kind of sugar.}

"Enjoying yourself, hermitess? Don't give up now; we're almost ^{there} ~~at the top!~~"

"Listen, I'm no tireder than when we first started out, and the weather today's just perfect for walking!"

And in fact the woman, spirited as a soldier marching beneath his nation's banners ^g, climbed vigorously, feeling a warmth in her breast that made the ~~air's biting coolness still~~ ^{chilly air even} more agreeable.

Galls like empty thimbles fell from kermes oaks as she ~~approach~~ passed, and rosemary branches brushed against her skirts, showering them with tiny crystals.

Mila then recalled her first ascent with Matias: so sad, so weary, so full of misgivings. How different from this one, which was so pleasant and refreshing, despite the winter cold, her poverty, and her blighted marriage! In a few months, everything had crumbled around her, yet only recently had she begun to feel strong and ~~ambitious~~ ^g self-assured, claspng something that, willy-nilly, kept her afloat.

"It's so important to have a friend!" she thought, gazing, ~~though~~ ^J more calmly ^J at that bent figure before her. The shepherd faltered again.

"Look: there's King's Glass!" and he pointed down like a guide who knows the landscape by heart.

"God! It looks like a paper cone!" exclaimed ^J Mila in amazement ~~mm~~ . . . Hey! Isn't that the Girl? And the farmhouse, and Punch Bridge . . .?"

"It sure is, and there's Pear Rock, and Gallowseat, and Olivebreath . . . All the places you pass on your way to Murons."

"They're so far from each other, but from here they look so close!"

And so they did. At the bottom of the cleft where the three Rockies met, piled like the ^{a J} remains of a wine pressing in a funnel, was a miniature Nativity scene full of ^{grottoes} ~~caves~~, trails, peaks, and modest man-made embellishments that seemed to await their admiring comments.

* ^{light brown} "See that tan ball that looks like it's rolling toward Olivebreath? That's Pear Rock. If you put your ear to the ground there ~~when~~ it's just been raining, you'll hear a roar underneath like a raging ^{lion} ~~beast~~ . . ."

"And what is it, shepherd?"

* "Who knows, hermitess! Folks say these hills are ^{as} full of caves and tunnels, ^{as} like a giant anthill, and that noise is the sea, which echoes ~~all~~ through the mountains."

Once Mila had drunk her fill, they ~~slowly~~ ^J made their way up the slope on their right, sometimes advancing and sometimes seeming to ~~retreat~~ ^J, but always climbing, climbing, and as they climbed ever higher, the Rockies opened ^J ~~out~~ before them, revealing all those places in the shepherd's tales. Perhaps they were not as fair and ^{grandiose} ~~imposing~~ as in his ^J ~~grandiose~~ stories, but the day was so sunny, the hour so enlivening, the ascent so ^{pleasurable} ~~enjoyable~~, that Mila found everything delightful.

Once, as they were making their way eastward, a sort of green velvet cape suddenly appeared below them, with its ~~bottom~~ ^{hem} crumpled * against the mountain's base ~~a~~ ^{and} grayish half-circle like a thrown-back hood, and, ~~at the neck~~ ^{around that hood}, a short, reddish ~~fringe~~ ^{border}.

"Does that look familiar?" asked Gaietà, pointing to the cape. The woman scrutinized it for a while.

"Hey, that's the hermitage!" she shouted ^{with} in childish ^{pleasure} glee. "It looks so ~~cute and~~ little! There's the terrace and the roof on the kitchen . . . and the belfry, long and white ^{like} as a goose's neck . . . and the yard and the pine groves . . . Which are those thick ones: the first or the second?"

"The first ones, honey! Can't you see the Dragon's Head, sticking its nose through the trees by the Roar?"

"Of course, of course! I can even hear the water . . ." She turned to the shepherd and asked: "Why didn't you bring me here before? It's the ~~nicest part of the~~ ^{prettiest spot in these} mountains . . ."

"Well, you see all those ~~black~~ ^{black} kermes oaks? The goatherds from Murons ~~set fire to~~ ^{single} them so there'll be more buds in the spring, but that means the animals can't eat the leaves in the winter. That's why I always go up the other side. It's more peaceful over there, and I don't get into so many fights. . . "

Mila ^{stared} looked at him ^{fixedly}.

"What do you think the kid's doing now?"

"Milking the sheep so he can have breakfast," Gaietà replied, and then added: ". . . or toasting some bread on the fire . . ." ~~can see~~ ^{there is} a wisp of smoke rising from the chimney . . ."

And both of them, he and she, ~~swept up~~ ^{enveloped} in a wave of tenderness, imagined that child whom for the first time they had abandoned, per-

haps impelled by an unspoken wish to be alone together.

In fact, during those long, erratic wanderings that had marked Mila's recovery, so full of secret pleasures and intimate yearnings, Baldiret had more than once been a source of irritation, with his ill-timed eruptions, deafening shouts, and naughty pranks. Without having diminished, her love for him had become less urgent, as though womanly feelings had supplanted her maternal instincts. Unconsciously, she had often longed for one of those idylls far from everything and everyone that lovers dream of, and doubly so since instinct, if not calculation, seemed to suggest that only thus could she break down that wall of reserve, forcing something important and irrevocable to occur. But events rarely conform to our fantasies, as she now had to admit concede. She and her beloved had been alone, in sweet isolation, yet despite all her hopes and fears, nothing had happened. Except for that brief moment in Lightningbolt Pass, when she had surrendered to dark imaginings of which she now felt ashamed, their hike had been exactly the same as all the others, perhaps calmer, more innocent, freer of unuttered passions. Yes, that was all that had really occurred! But yet even so, her heart felt lighter than ever before.

The shepherd seemed to answer her thoughts. Tired of watching her stare down at that bird's-eye view of her home, he clapped his hands loudly to break her trance, exclaiming: "How about starting back, hermitess? You looked so dreamy I hated to disturb you, but the sun sets early this time of year and if we stay too long, we'll never get back in time."

"Yes, you're right. Let's go . . . and whenever I stop give me a good pinch. This mountain's put a spell on me!"

take things as they come ~~and not fly off the handle~~
 "Didn't I say it would, back when you were moping around? . . .
 You have to ~~pull~~ ~~things~~ ~~over~~ ~~before~~ ~~getting~~ ~~so~~ ~~upset~~ . . ."

"Can I help it if ~~am~~ I'm not as slow as you?" she ~~quickly~~ re-
 orted, amused by her own ~~sharp~~ ^{sharp} tongue.

The ~~shepherd~~ shepherd laughingly replied: "That's the way I like to
 see you, not with your head tucked under your wing like before! Thank
 God you've ~~am~~ finally come to your senses!"

"That's your doing," she answered, serious ^{our} once more.

"Come on, don't make me laugh! . . . It was ^{our} glorious St. Pontius!"

"Forget about St. Pontius; he couldn't care less. You did it with
 your stories, which show the good side of everything . . . If it
 wasn't for you, I'd have died in these hills and been buried beside
 that old hermitess under a ~~flagstone~~ ^{flagstone} in the ~~countryard~~ ^{countryard}."

Gaietà didn't reply because a few yards away he saw a young man
^g with lowered head ^g who was climbing the rocky slope, holding a switch
 in his right hand ^g while the left swung back and forth like a pendulum.
 Behind him a herd of goats with mischevous faces and twitching beards
 kicked up their heels and straggled among the rocks.

As they passed, the shepherd said: "Hiya, kid."

^g "Good ^g morning, Gaietà."

"You're out early today."

"I ^{can't} ~~couldn't~~ help it! They kick up such a fuss inside!"

"Well, that's how they are . . . Take it easy."

"So long, Gaietà."

And he receded into the distance, humming to himself.

"I'd love to be a shepherd!" Mila exclaimed.

"Like him?" the man scornfully replied. "Those loafers think ^g

it's a way to live without working. If I could just set ahold of them . . . I hate to see those ~~leaf~~ ^{beasts} ~~leaf~~ ^{no-goods/} lying around in the shade in summer and the sun in winter, napping in some field as if they were sick, without a care in the world or a thought in their empty heads. They either starve ~~the goats~~ ^{their flocks} to death or let them eat till they burst, and not only that, but they throw stones ~~at~~ ^{at} them too . . . They're good for nothing, ~~you~~ ^I understand? . . . It's a shame to let young people carry on like that ~~in~~ ^{cause} the way they are now is how they'll be all their lives!"

And the shepherd's usually benign visage grew solemn and severe.

Then they spied King's Glass again in the west, though from a far greater height and looking slightly altered, but still like a deep cleft with a Nativity scene at the bottom, and the Three Combs, jutting up into the clear blue sky, and then Lightningbolt Pass, like a huge gash beneath ~~the Jew of~~ Windwhistle Heights, and far away, a jumble of muddy colors that were the fields on the plain.

Mila stopped a moment to ask: "Tell me, shepherd: is there another way to reach the top?"

"Sure there is! These mountains are full of trails and you can take any one you like . . ."

"Without going through Lightningbolt Pass?"

"Only if you don't mind climbing straight up, but that's not for ~~a woman~~ ^{ladies} or you can try the pass at Corbera Springs . . . over there in the east, on the other side of the Rockies . . ."

"Really? Then let's go down that way."

"Well, okay, if you want to, but it's a pretty straight drop and you won't get many views."

9 "I don't mind. I'm sure I'll like it anyhow."

The shepherd laughed: "I can see what you're up to! You want to know these mountains inside out."

"That's it, shepherd."

"All right; then let's do it . . . You're strong enough, and you might even enjoy sliding down the Skeleton."

Mila wanted to avoid Lightningbolt Pass, the only ~~stain~~ ^{blot} on that ~~splendid~~ ^{wondrous} day. She ~~didn't~~ ^{wouldn't} mind gripping the rock with her fingernails, if by so doing she could avoid those troubling thoughts that had ~~shamed and tormented her during~~ ^{dashed} their ascent.

* And they went on climbing, turning left and right. The woman's eyes, ~~desirous of~~ ^{eager for} horizons, beheld Middle Rocky's broad ridge and looked beyond it, lighting briefly on the distant plain. The Husk, like a meteorite fallen from ~~Heaven~~ ^{Heaven}, grew smaller and smaller till it seemed a tiny mound, as did Little Rocky with its smooth plateau around the Boundary Stone. The golden sun beat down brilliantly upon the columned cliff before them, which the shepherd called the Organ because of its thick pipes. Finally, when at last they ~~could~~ ^u look out on all sides, Gaietà stopped, peered at something, and motioned her to be still.

Mila obeyed, watching with surprise as ~~the shepherd~~ ^{he} searched for a round stone and, after choosing one, assumed a slinger's graceful pose and brought his right arm ~~swiftly~~ ^T through the air. The stone whizzed away, and where it landed something brown leapt ~~three~~ ^{up} feet and then fell to earth. All this happened in a flash, and when Mila realized what ~~had occurred, the shepherd~~ ^{Gaietà had done, he} was holding a furry animal by the neck.

"God's with us today! Look at this fat hare I caught napping! He's about to molt and'll be ~~soft as a leaf of lettuce.~~ ^{tender as they come}"

Held by its ~~cold~~ ^I ears, its head split and ~~veered~~ ^{covered} with blood, the animal, still shaken by spasms, ~~twisted~~ ^{leeked} its hind legs wildly. The wind ~~parted~~ ^{blew back} its fur ~~in places~~, exposing lines of skin beneath the pelt, which was an inch long and fine as thistledown. Gaietà thumped the beast a few times on the ground to ensure that it was dead and told the woman, who was ~~staring in amazement,~~ ^{still} about the customs and character of hares.

"Strange beasts! ~~As~~ ^{lightning} quick as they ~~come~~ and even jumpier than you are. They're scared of their own shadows, and if anything startles them they're off like a shot. But sometimes they get tired of running away all the time, and then one of ~~them~~ ^{them} will leap right into your * path. When a hare's worn out, it'll find a spot with a good view, curl up by a rock or bush that'll keep off the wind, and sit there so still you'd think it was dead. They can't see or hear a thing . . . Lots of times I've gotten close enough to touch them and they haven't budged an inch. ~~It makes me sad to kill~~ ^{I don't like killing} animals, but since if I don't do it someone else will, I forget about that and aim a rock at their heads . . ." And he laughed, but ~~upon~~ ^I seeing the woman's troubled expression, he added: "Come on now, don't be a crybaby! After all, it's no worse than your mother-in-law's funeral, and when you ~~wink~~ ^{wink} your teeth into one of those thighs, you'll agree it was ~~better off dead.~~ ^{walk better dead} There's quite a difference between a slice of toast and roast hare for breakfast . . . and I reckon this one'll be sweeter than a sixteen-year-old girl."

Mila quickly recovered, and they decided to cook the hare when they reached the Organ. As the animal grew stiff and cold, they walked

and talked together. At every few steps, Mila laughed without knowing why, and her gaiety ^{rang} echoed ^{the} through hills and valleys like the sound of rushing water.

They soon ^{reached} ~~arrived at~~ the Organ, whose ^{we less geological word here} striated rock had been ^{scored} ~~carved~~ by many rainfalls. Facing east, the cliff offered ~~shelter~~ shelter to the couple, who had been walking in the shade, touched by only a few rays of the sunlight that now beat down upon them with magnanimous abundance. As soon as Mila felt that caress upon her cold-reddened hands, she recalled a similar impression on her first trip up the mountain: her arrival at the Boundary Stone after the trek up Leg-break Creek. But it had been spring then, and however ^{pleasant} agreeable the warmth, it was far more ^{enjoyed} ~~delightful~~ now, amidst the icy blasts of winter. As soon as Mila stopped, she happily shut her eyes, stretched her neck, and with a joyful moan, offered first one cheek and then the other to the sun, which kissed the smooth skin above her well-wrapped body.

"Looks like you're having a good time!" said her companion, ^{watching} ^{beholding} ^{seeing} her ^{ecstasy.} ^{delight.} ~~so blissful.~~

"Ooh, that feels wonderful!" she replied. "When we were walking, I thought nothing could be nicer, but I didn't realize how cold I was getting. My feet are frozen . . ."

"Well, no wonder . . . the ground's wet, and with those flimsy shoes you women wear! It's hard to ~~hardly~~ believe they're really made of leather! . . . Y'know what you should do? . . . While I build a fire, take off your shoes, leave them in the sun, and rub your feet till they start to warm up."

Mila quickly followed his advice. She removed her shoes, rubbed her white feet with her socks till the skin turned pink, and sat barefoot on the warm ground, soaking up the sun's rays while she

enjoyed the tingling sensation in her veins. Resting on ^{the} ~~that~~ plateau, she watched Gaietà gather firewood and held the hare's legs while he knelt to skin it. *

Never in her life had Mila felt so happy. Her lips, eyes, soul, and the mountains around her all smiled in unison. Till, amidst that ~~upsure~~ ^I of joy, she suddenly longed to kiss someone . . . Involuntarily, tremulously, she turned to the shepherd, whose ~~hatless~~ ^{bare} head, bent over the hare, offered its brow to her lips, but . . . before she could complete the action, something made her stop short. Without knowing why, without having heard the slightest noise, she and Gaietà ~~both~~ ^I looked up in alarm. They gasped. There, above the Organ's pipes, another head peered down at theirs, hastily ~~retreating~~ ^{recoiled} and vanished without a trace. It all happened in a flash, as if they had imagined it, yet the pair remained ~~rigid~~ ^{frozen} and unblinking for more than a minute, still ~~seeing~~ ^{seeing} that dark head with its white jackal-~~teeth~~ ^{fangs}, as though its image had been stamped upon the sky.

Gaietà was the first to rouse himself. His face ~~twisted~~ ^{hardened} with the cruel resolve of one who fights to the death, ~~he~~ ^{he} gripped his ~~hat~~ ^{cap} and gnashed his teeth to cool his first murderous rage. Then he looked into the woman's eyes.

"Did you see that?" he slowly asked. "All morning long I've been expecting him. I was sure he was following us. But . . ." and his ~~calm~~ ^I face suddenly flushed, "he'd better keep away or I swear ~~to God~~ ^{to God} I'll kill him!"

And with one deft ~~slit~~ ^{slash}, he ripped open the hare's belly.

XIV: On the Cross

All their happiness had fled with that apparition.

~~After~~ After skinning the hare, Gaietà made a circle of stones, over which he laid a grill of woven branches from a nearby tree, and on that grill he placed the hare, spread open like a book and ~~carefully~~ ^{seasoned} ~~anointed~~ ^{rubbed} with garlic and a little olive oil. The animal cooked in ~~that sauce and~~ its own juices, while the picnickers sat staring at the ground, lost in their own thoughts. They devoured it hungrily but joylessly, and that breakfast, which the shepherd had proclaimed sweeter than a sixteen-year-old girl and which would have indeed been so without the ~~grim~~ ^{shock} experience that had preceded it, was merely the satisfaction of a physical need.

From time to time, Mila raised her head to see whether ~~that~~ ^{the} spy had returned till at last ~~the~~ ^{Gaietà} shepherd said: "Now for God's sake, stop ~~worrying!~~ ^{fucking} He won't bother us again today, and even if they searched this whole mountain, they wouldn't find his nor hair of ~~the~~ ^{him} Spirit . . . He sneaks around ~~following~~ ^{after} people as long as no one spots him, but as soon as you ~~catch sight of him,~~ ^{they do} it's like the earth swallowed him up . . . Look how he's stayed away ever since he stole those rabbits . . . But someone's got to put a stop to it, and if he doesn't come to me, ~~then~~ ^I I reckon I'll have to go out looking for him . . ."

Holding a piece of meat she was about to bite into, Mila exclaimed: "Shepherd, for the love of God, leave that man alone! Don't say anything to him . . ."

"Go on, eat, and put it out of your mind. This is my business . . ."

"What makes him so nasty? He never ~~bothered~~ ^{frightened} me before, but now

I'm starting to feel scared."

"You've got nothing to worry about as long as I'm alive. He's always been as terrified of me as Satan is of crosses, and ~~him~~ ^{with his} he's never ^{even} dared to look me in the eye . . . He doesn't mind taking your rabbits, since Matias is his pal, but he'll keep away from you because he knows I'd ~~never forgive him!~~ ^{make him pay for it}"

Gaietà spoke in anger, but his words went straight to ~~Mila's~~ Mila's heart. Feeling her throat tighten, she could only reply: "Oh shepherd . . ." while two big tears ^{rolled} ~~trickled~~ down her cheeks.

The shepherd blinked in bewilderment, like a sleeper awakened by the morning light: "What's the matter, hermitess? Don't fuss so much or you'll make me mad!" And forcing ~~himself~~ ^{to} to laugh, he added: "You pay too much attention to what I say and don't take things like ^{to} I mean them . . . Sometimes a guy can forget he's talking to a woman . . . But look, why don't we ^{think} ~~forget~~ ^{talk} ~~all about it?~~ ^{about something else} Put away those napkins and let's get going, or they'll come looking for us with lanterns!" And after throwing away the bones and stamping out the fire, he crammed everything into his pouch and was ~~ready~~ ^{to} all ready to go.

"He loves me, he loves me!" the woman thought to herself. "He's too shy to say so and ~~he~~ ^{to} doesn't want me to know, but he loves me!"

With tears in her eyes, Mila imagined what her life would have been like if she had only met ^{to} this man before the other one. But the die was cast, and what might have been happiness was now nothing but a ~~sin~~ ^{up to} ~~and~~ ~~indeed,~~ ~~a~~ ~~failing.~~ ^{cast} Yes: ever since they had seen the Spirit's head, this cruel thought had tormented her. What had they been doing wrong beneath God's blue sky? Nothing, of course. Yet all the same, she was so unnerved by the Spirit's evil leer that she would

have given half her life to escape it. His eyes had sought to ^{violate} ~~penetrate~~ what he ^{let her} ~~thought~~ was a stolen moment. They had nothing to hide, but he ^{let her} ~~assumed~~ that they did, and Mila felt crushed by his suspicions, as though ~~in~~ she had been caught in a real ^{sin} ~~crime~~. Perhaps what most disturbed her was the fact that she had half-committed one, ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ thought if not in deed, for a sinner is ^{he} ~~also~~ one who bears the seeds of sin within him. ^{yet} ~~But~~ even so, by what quirk of fate should something now be wrong that in another time and place would have been pure and ^{useful} ~~holy~~? And, her mind hopelessly adrift in a sea of confusion, the woman ~~strained~~ strained to grasp the hidden laws behind ^{the} ~~that~~ ^{event} ~~phenomenon~~. She could ^{discover} ~~not find~~ ^{them}, nor could she free herself from fear and ~~distress~~ ^{uneasiness}. One thing, however, was clear: the joy of loving freely was denied her, and pleasure seized on the sly was filth and wickedness . . . It was almost better ^{to neither} ~~not to have~~ ^{or} ~~or~~ desire such pleasure! Better to love fruitlessly as they loved, ~~unhappily~~ ^{unfulfilled} and distantly. Though their love was ~~incomplete~~, it was ^{at least} ~~also~~ clean and honest . . .

And now Mila, again buffeted by ~~her~~ ^I turbulent emotions, admired ~~those~~ ^{what} ~~qualities~~ ^I of Gaieta's ~~that~~ ^{Gaieta} she had cursed in Lightningbolt Pass: the reserve with which ~~he~~ ^I chastely veiled his inner feelings. Because he loved her, he loved her! ~~Alas~~ She neither would nor could doubt it! His eyes had not deceived her that morning after St. Pontius' festival ~~he~~ ^I loved her! He cherished her above all else and sought to shield her from harm! . . . And intoxicated by this ^{thought} ~~notion~~, she repeated it to herself, fixing it in her mind as a drowning sailor might clutch a plank.

After walking awhile, they reached another ledge near the top of Big Rocky, though they were still on the north side of the mountain. They made their way around some cliffs, and upon gazing upward, beheld the ^{huge} ~~large~~ Highpeak Castles above an abyss of waterfalls and ~~treacherous~~

escarpments: a ferocious cornice of stone worn smooth by the centuries, like a ruined barbican atop Big Rocky's ancient fortress. Mila ^{cautiously} ducked ~~her head when~~ ^{as} they passed beneath the Castle, as though fearing to see those cliffs weighing ~~thousands of tons~~ ^{that weighed} come crashing down from their precarious ~~balance~~ ^{poach}. But ~~nothing happened~~ ^{and} the Castles remained as they had been for centuries, firm and motionless, seeming to laugh at her fear of those narrow paths ~~that~~ ^{cut} across the sheer rock beneath their ornate towers. The one in danger of ~~falling~~ ^{falling} was Mila, who ~~upon turning~~ ^{turning} a sharp corner, saw the ground fall away, leaving nothing but sky.

She ~~jumped~~ ^{leapt} back, while the shepherd smiled at her fear.

Mila felt that one more step would send her hurtling down that steep slope, at whose edges weeds and rosemary bushes bristled darkly like ~~combs~~ ^{combs} seen against the light. Where was the rest of the mountain? Where had the world gone? They had been sucked into the brilliant void, which seemed to ~~threaten~~ ^{lug at} her too, as she ~~was~~ stood at its brink with Gaietà beside her.

A sense of free-floating emptiness such as she had never known ~~before~~ came over her.

"Shepherd! . . . Shepherd! . . ." she screamed, holding out her arms and feeling her head spin.

But before she could open her mouth, Gaietà had gripped her arm.

"Hey, watch it! This is no place to fool around! From here to the top, the ~~narrow~~ path'll be open on one side, and any nonsense will send you tumbling straight down that cliff . . ."

Mila quickly adjusted to the change, and following the shepherd's advice, ~~climbed in silence~~ and kept her eyes on the ground. She felt the void, sometimes behind her and sometimes at her side, while her ~~eyes~~

* eyes glimpsed ^{dizzying} vertiginous ^{ravines} gorges full of mirages, but she forced herself not to look at ~~them~~ ^{down} and ~~then~~ ^{she} picked her way among ~~burnt~~ ^{the burnt} charred kermes oaks, whose charred branches brushed her skirts and clawed at her legs.

They didn't stop till the shepherd sighed and then exclaimed: "God Almighty! Here we are!"

They were at the Cross. A great rocky plateau crowned the mountain, flattening it like the top of bushel of grain. At first Mila, who stood facing the center of that plateau, saw nothing more than stony ground dotted with the usual ~~kermes oak, rosemary, and~~ stunted bushes. A gust of wind ^{jerked} pushed her forward ^{and} disheveling ^{ed} her hair.

"Mother of God!" she anxiously exclaimed.

"There's nothing to break the wind here; that's why it sweeps across so fast. But now that it's passed, take a deep breath . . . Everything smells like incense, pretty girls, and the sea . . ."

Indeed, the mountaintop smelled sweet as a rose. From time to time, invisible clouds enveloped them, drenching their senses in delightful aromas. Where did they come from? From the mountains and valleys, from the world below, which sent forth its purest ^{breath} odors while ~~drowsily~~ ^{drinking} reabsorbing its more poisonous smells. But where was ~~that~~ ^{that} world?

Gaietà seized her shoulders and spun her around.

Mila clapped her hands over her eyes and felt the roots of her hair tingle. Her memories of the Boundary Stone, Nestwatch, and all the mountains' other peaks: how small and pathetic they seemed to her now! This was vastness, this was ~~immense~~ ^{boundless} immeasurable immensity!

She scarcely need ^{ed} to ask if that tiled patch of ochre and siena was Murons, the ancient town crisscrossed by dark streets. The smoke from its chimneys, mingling with the air, hung like a bluish cloud

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~~above~~ ~~over~~ the rooftops. Those rectangles in every shade of green were its fields and orchards. ~~That that~~ The silver strip beyond them was the river, a

diminutive Nile that gave the town its fertility, and ~~those parallel~~ ~~fringes by its side~~ ~~were rows of~~ naked poplars, beyond which she saw a stretch of brown wheat fields. And ~~beyond those fields~~, she spied

* ~~the gray and amber mountains~~ around Roquesalbes. ~~Those hills~~ sprinkled with white hamlets like tiny grains of aniseed ~~veered~~ right and ended in a high cliff. ~~On the left~~, the range met another ~~and~~ darker and loftier one, which in the distance seemed to fill the entire south.

* That dark barricade's summit was ~~clocked~~ with patches of pinkish white so brilliant that they seemed to ~~fill~~ the woman's eyes.

"That snow never melts," Gaietà replied to his ~~companion's~~ question. "No matter what time of year you ~~see the Rockies~~, they're ~~always covered with snow~~ . . . They're worth the climb all by themselves."

But Mila was less enthusiastic than the shepherd. She preferred the miniature scenes she could ~~recognize~~ recognize below her.

From that plateau atop Big Rocky, the highest peak in the area, she quickly spotted Little Rocky, like a cap lying at its big brother's feet. A band of fields encircled Ridorta, perched upon its pretty hill, while a patchwork quilt of orchards, roads, and valleys led to Llisquents' terraced slopes, ~~distinguished~~ ^{landmarked} distinguished from afar by the glittering bell in its steeple. She saw Torrelles' cylindrical columns, ~~blotches~~ ^{patches} blotches of sandy lowland, and ~~so much~~ ^{much, much} more in that limitless panorama . . .

* They walked till they could gaze upon the steep ravines below them, and Middle Rocky's long, furrowed crest, like an intestine ~~protruding~~ ^{sticking out} protruding from a huge stone stomach. Beyond it a dusty plain led to more pale blue mountains, and a few steps further, they were

looking out toward the east.

Dazzled by a sudden flash as from a mirror, Mila shut her eyes. What was that long strip of blinding light on the horizon? Gaietà replied with a single ~~magic~~ word:

"The sea!"

Mila ~~felt~~ ^{stopped} ~~back~~ ^{turned away} as though someone had struck her.

Could that really be the fathomless sea she had heard of so often?

She blinked and rubbed her eyes; then she ~~looked~~ ^{turned to} again, forcing herself to endure that brilliant glitter.

The sea! The sea she had always longed to behold! The sea of fish, shipwrecks, mermaids, conches and rainbow grottoes! . . . She remembered the votive offerings in the chapel, Gaietà's stories, those sayings and tales she had listened to as a child, everything about that sea ~~so exalted~~ ^{celebrated} by men . . . A sense of disappointment ~~chilled her from head to foot.~~ ^{crept through} ~~chilled her from head to foot.~~ ^{mystery}

Gaietà saw the disillusionment in her face and ~~tried to cheer~~ ^{kindle} her with his ~~commentaries.~~ ^{enthusiasm} Mila politely pretended ~~to be convinced,~~ ^{to be convinced,} though she could not grasp the connection between all those words and a ~~slender stream~~ ^{narrow} that looked like a giant's sword in one of the old man's fairy tales, nor did it resemble the mighty sea of her dreams, full of portentous legends. Losing interest, she began to stroll about once more, examining the ruins of the convent at Cabrides, the Moorish kings' ancient castle, ~~which seemed to crumble down its rocky slope toward Murons, the inaccessible, jagged, pitted slopes on the side near the plain, and the wreath of olive trees around Middle Rocky's veiny base . . .~~ ^{that} ~~which seemed to crumble down its rocky slope toward Murons, the inaccessible, jagged, pitted slopes on the side near the plain, and the wreath of olive trees around Middle Rocky's veiny base . . .~~ ^{awaken} Suddenly she remembered something and asked

the shepherd: "But where's the Cross? I ~~still~~ haven't seen it."

He replied: "The Cross? ^{Once upon a time,} ~~From~~ it stood on that peak."

"And now?"

The man looked at her in surprise.

"Now it's nowhere. But you must have heard about the Cross!"

And seeing Mila shake her head, he briefly told the story.

"Five or six hundred years ago, there was a terrible plague in Murons. Jesus Christ bore away half the souls living there. People died like flies in the streets and squares, but no matter how many they buried there were always more corpses. They did everything they could think of to ~~ward off~~ ^{drive away} the plague! . . . ~~Perfumes~~ ^{dunse}, processions, it was all a waste of time. But since nothing lasts forever, one day the plague ~~disappeared~~ ^{stopped ended}. Then the survivors decided to thank God for sparing them and gave what they could to make an iron cross so big ~~that~~ you could see it ~~on Highpeak~~ from every village in these parts. Once it was ready, they swore to bring it up here themselves, and to please God even more, to follow the paths along these cliffs. And that's just what they did. Yellow and gaunt ^{sickly} ~~as they were~~, some from the plague and others from ^{grieving} ~~worrying~~, rich and poor, great and humble, they all got together and, taking turns, they carried ^{the} that cross right to the top. They stopped when the sun went down and spent the night eating, praying, and watching over it. It took them five days to climb the mountain, on the sixth they planted their cross, and on the seventh, which happened to be Sunday, they held a big celebration. There was a guy in Murons who didn't believe in God and was so ^{wicked} ~~mean~~ that everyone ^{no one wanted to be his friend.} ~~tried to steer clear of him~~. He went to the party and, ^{standing right} ~~in the middle of the crowd~~, said something was missing: Jesus Christ,

but he'd fix that in a jiffy. And before anyone could stop him he'd climbed the cross, while the ~~people~~ ^{shoved} all yelled and ~~pushed~~ ^{pushed} below him, and hung a mule's skeleton on it for everyone to see."

"Sweet Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," Mila sighed ~~in dismay~~.

"But his ~~punishment~~ ^I punishment was swift, hermitess! As soon as he'd defiled the cross, while the bones were still ~~clanging~~ ^{rattling} against each other, though the sky was as clear and calm as today, a huge lightning bolt came down with such a mighty clap of thunder ~~that~~ that everyone fell to the ground and covered their eyes. And when they slowly raised their heads, ~~one by one~~, they saw no trace of that heathen or the cross he'd defiled. All that remained was the mountain and a mighty stench of ~~sulfur~~ ^{sulfur}. And that's how the Highpeak Cross was put up and knocked down. Nowadays, when people find some old whitened bone and can't tell where it came from, they bury it deep underground, sayin' g: ^{go} "Oh heathen bone, ^{and} make Hell your home." But if they find pieces of iron, they think they're from the Cross and hang them above their beds to ward off evil thoughts. I don't have a bed, y'know, so I keep a piece in my pouch . . ." Then Gaietà ~~and dug into~~ ^{dug around in} his bag, pulled out a rusty lump of metal, and showed it to the woman.

She asked skeptically: "You mean to say that's from the ~~cross~~?"

"Everyone around here says it must be . . . I found it on the ground one day and I've kept it ever ~~since~~ . . . Who knows? . . . At least it won't do me any harm . . ."

Mila wondered if Gaietà's serenity might not ~~come~~ ^{derive} from that amulet rather than his own nature.

"What no one can doubt is the ~~noise~~ ^{rattling} from the ~~skull~~ ^{of} skeleton. Now and then it makes a sound just like ~~when~~ he hung it up there, whenever something bad's about to happen in these hills. I've heard it twice:

once when my wife was about to die, and once when a piece of the Girl slid onto the ~~corral~~ ^{stable} at St. Pontius, ~~covering the stable and burying~~ ^{burying} the cows alive.

Mila smiled, and her winking eyes betrayed her incredulity. Sometimes Gaietà behaved like an overgrown child who believed all his own tales.

They walked on till at last, tiring even of splendid views and sweet aromas, the man asked if she would like to sit awhile before starting downward.

"It's about nine o'clock now. We can rest a little, go through the pass, and be home by ten."

Mila's eyes widened. "Only nine? How can that be? . . . We've been walking so long . . ."

The shepherd calmly ~~sat down~~ ^{seated himself,} with an arm around one knee, ~~while~~ ^{and} his other leg stretched out before him on the ground.

"Well . . . what time do you make it?"

The woman vainly tried to ~~arrive at an estimate.~~ ^{calculate.}

"Don't worry, I'll figure it out for you. Coming straight up here ~~without stopping~~ ^{was} takes a little less than two hours. All the rest ~~has been~~ looking and stopping for breakfast."

Mila couldn't believe her ears. Altogether, they had been gone some four hours, though she would have guessed at least six or seven.

She ~~also~~ ^I sat down near the shepherd, still troubled, as he was, by the ~~spirit~~ ^I Spirit's appearance above the Organ. They gazed ~~down~~ ^{regular} absent-mindedly at Murons, ~~which~~ ^I surrounded by its ~~pattered~~ ^{regular} fields, ~~neatly~~ ^{been} outlined in charcoal. Now that breakfast had ~~ended~~ ^{consumed ends}, the wisps of smoke had ~~also~~ ^I vanished; only occasional long columns the color of whisky and water remained, like ~~in~~ ^{on} palpable ~~stibnite~~ ^{eu} pillars ~~from~~ ^{on} some fabulous

no more familiar word?

temple bereft of its portico, dome, and pediments. Beneath the sun, which still cast long shadows, they saw tiled rooftops like scalloped shells in the distance, while figures no bigger than fly-specks made their way ^{across} ~~through~~ the squares.

Mila's sharp eyes sought the places she knew best: ~~the~~ France ^{street}, where she sometimes went shopping, the open market, the ^{big} ~~main~~ church, ~~the~~ the rectory, the promenade, the fairground where livestock was bought ~~and~~ ^{and bartered} sold. . . The church stood out because of its size and because it faced the sun. With its squat twin belltowers, its two round windows, and its red door ^{among the} ~~amidst~~ gray shadows, it bore a certain resemblance to a ^{huge} colossal barnowl. As they looked, ~~among~~ nine slow peals wafted upward from ^{the town.} ~~Murons.~~

Mila suddenly wondered if Matias could be down there, and she quickly repeated her thought to Gaietà.

The shepherd shook his head. "I doubt it . . . he's probably ~~still~~ asleep."

Mila was surprised: "Asleep at this time of day? . . . You must be kidding."

The shepherd looked at her and seemed to hesitate.

"Well, you see . . ." he finally mumbled. "I didn't want to tell you because I ^{thought you'd take it badly} ~~knew it'd make you sad~~, but . . . maybe you should know . . . since I won't be around."

"What is it, shepherd?" exclaimed the woman, alarmed by ^{this} ~~that~~ preamble.

"I told you I'd keep an eye on your husband, ^{didn't I} ~~remember?~~ Well, I kept my word and . . ."

"And?" she anxiously repeated.

"And he's not begging for the saint."

"Is that all? I already figured he wasn't. He tags along after the Spirit . . ." she replied with a forced smile.

"Sure he tags along after him . . . but not to hunt rabbits . . . Listen: when I ^Tgot to Mass on Sunday I can find out anything I want to know . . . just by asking the right questions, however ^{well} ^{hidden} ~~deep~~ it's buried. . . Your husband, nowadays, is a gambler by trade. All night he rolls the bones till the sun begins to shine, and then he sleeps all day in ^{no-good} ~~that~~ bastard's den." *

Mila was astonished.

"Matias ^{you} a gambler?" *

If anyone else had said so, she would have called him a liar, but this was the shepherd, ^T and he wasn't ~~just gossiping~~ ^{one of those who talk one's hand to gossip}. She knew how carefully the old man weighed his words. *

She stared at Gaietà, waiting to hear more ^D details.

"You remember how he used to be before? A brood hen, a loafer you couldn't smoke out of his nest . . . If you hadn't been there, the moths would have eaten him . . . I swear, every time I saw him I used to start worrying . . . But one day he slung that chapel over his shoulder, went out begging, and a week later he'd changed more than if they'd baked him again from scratch."

"That's true!" Mila exclaimed.

"I was afraid that change wouldn't be for the better, and when I saw him working for the Spirit ^T I ^{reckoned} ~~he~~ ^{he} was a goner. The Spirit knows how to sing all kinds of songs for his supper, and not only that ^T but he can smell money a mile away. Your husband was like an empty house, and he moved right in. They drank up what they made

selling rabbits and slept it off at his place . . . Matias was an easy catch . . . The Spirit's a born crook, and lucky too . . . Matias won a few rolls, and from then on they've been partners."

Staring ~~at the ground~~ ^{down}, Mila listened and also followed her own thoughts: Matias' deeds, words, fears and confusions, ~~bits~~ ^{bits} of his life that had seemed ~~trivial or strange~~ ^{or trivial and} but that only now fell into place ~~confirming Gaietà's revelations~~.

"A gambler! But he was ~~such a lazy good-for-nothing!~~ ^{such a lazy good-for-nothing!} so lazy and ~~sluggish!~~ Who would have thought . . .?"

The shepherd also gazed down, as though bewitched by the town below them. "Your being too sick to care didn't help either one of you . . . You might have bullied him into holding off for a spell . . . but I'm not even sure of that, because when you're as big a sucker as he is . . . Anyhow, you gave him all the rope he needed . . ."

The woman clasped ³ her hands and stared at him despairingly.

"What could I do? I was more dead than alive!"

"Now, now, hermitess. I'm not trying ^{to} ~~put the blame on~~ ^I you. I just said what I thought . . ." And those calm eyes ~~freely~~ ^I offered her unconditional absolution.

They fell silent again. Matias, the Spirit, that hermitage . . . laziness, quarrels, penny-pinching, loneliness . . . ~~poisonous~~ ^{painful} memories swarmed ~~through their~~ ^{through} ~~heads~~ ^{of} that a moment ago had been cooled by Highpeak's pleasant breezes . . . till the shepherd, whose gaze was still fixed upon Murons, said uncertainly: "Those damn towns are the cause of it! ^{all} Dens of iniquity ^{vile} . . . I'd rather have one rock in the mountains than a hundred houses down ~~there~~ ^I below . . ."

and without them you'd have less souls in Hell and less families in trouble . . . Those narrow streets make me feel like a lost sheep ^{searching} looking for a patch of sky. When I was still young, ~~long~~ ^I after my wife died, they asked me to run a ~~butcher~~ butchershop. It ~~was~~ a good ^{living} deal, but I wouldn't ~~even let them finish~~ ^{hear of it} . . . though it was nothing ^{asking} like now: thirty-five years ago there weren't so many houses of ill repute . . ."

Surprised, Mila asked: "Did you say thirty-five years ago? How old are you, shepherd?"

The man turned to her and smiled: "~~What's your name?~~ ^{What's your} ~~name?~~ would you guess, hermitess?"

"Me? Well, I would have thought . . . around forty . . ."

Despite his mood, Gaietà roared with laughter.

"God Almighty! That's not ~~many~~ ^{much}, is it? Ha, ha, ha! . . . but you're ~~kidding~~ ^{joking}, right?" And seeing her puzzled expression, he laughed even harder. "May St. Lucy improve your eyesight, and meanwhile, if we see someone selling glasses, I'll buy you a pair with nice, thick lenses."

"What do you mean, shepherd?"

"Either you missed by a mile or ~~you can't count very well~~ ^{you've forgotten how to count} . . ."

"Well then . . ."

"God willing, I'll be sixty-four next ~~Jan~~ ^I January."

That day, Mila had ~~suffered~~ ^{endured} every kind of strong emotion, but ~~perhaps~~ ^I none, neither her fear in Lightningbolt Pass and beneath the Organ, ^I nor what she had learned about Matias' doings, had struck her with such force. Nor could she feign indifference. The color drained from her cheeks, ~~as though she were about to faint~~ ^I, and she stubbornly refused to believe the shepherd's words. Mistaking her protests for

simple amazement, he counted the years on his fingertips, citing ~~many~~ dates and recollections.

The woman heard nothing, while troubling thoughts winged ~~furiously~~ through her head, beating more ~~silently~~ ^{silently} than the fiercest summer dust storm.

What strength! What peace of mind! What a ~~healthy~~ ^{sturdy old man} existence!

She clutched and unclutched her hands, ^{grotesque} feeling the blood pound in her knuckles. ~~Sixty-four!~~ ^{grotesque} What a ~~horrible error~~ ^{terrible mistake} . . . And as long as they were on Highpeak, she remained trapped in this ~~sin~~ vicious circle.

After ~~telling a few stories about himself~~ ^{reminiscing more a while longer}, the man returned to Matias, about whom he ~~cautioned~~ ^{tried to} and advised her.

"Don't lose hope . . . you never know . . . try pampering ~~him~~ instead of scolding . . . ^{beg} him not to leave you alone. Maybe he'll ^{decide} think . . ."

Mila heard these ^{counsels} exhortations without understanding them, and the stiff wind that whipped her apron quickly scattered them far and wide. Finally, Gaietà noticed her distraction and, seeing her shudder from head to toe, asked:

"Are you feeling sick, hermitess?"

"Yes . . . no . . . I'm a little chilly . . ."

He immediately rose to his feet.

"My God, why didn't you say so? I'm not a mind-reader, y'know? . . . Come on, let's get going."

The sea flashed in the distance like a ~~strip~~ ^{band} of gleaming steel. Mila glanced at it and looked away, thinking bitterly: "You can't believe ^{anything} ~~anyone~~ . . . it's all lies and fairytales."

They started down the east slope. There was not a flat inch in that network of ridges and gullies. People called it the Skeleton

because its protruding layers of rock resembled the bones on some ~~colossal~~ ^{monstrous} ribcage. The peasants went there to pick medicinal herbs, with which they made teas and poultices for themselves and their livestock.

On that slope the Spirit had met Marieta as she returned with some herbs and had sought to ^{poison} fill her mind with ~~poisonous~~ gossip about Gaietà and Mila. The shepherd ~~now~~ remembered, ^{As} and his desire for revenge flared up like a bonfire ~~blazing~~ ^{fanned} by a sudden gust of wind.

Mila followed close behind ~~him~~ the old man, whom her eyes never left. Shocked by her recent discovery, she had quickly regained her eyesight and no longer needed glasses of any shape or kind. The ridged slope allowed her to scrutinize his head three or four feet below her, and although his beardless face ^{and} short chestnut hair ^{and} ~~muscular~~ ^{wiry body} agility were deceptive at first glance, if one looked more closely his age was perfectly obvious. That same hair had grown dull and faded with the years. ^{His} skin clung to the bones, and between them was as wrinkled as ~~crumpled paper~~ ^{old parchment} -- in the hollows of his cheeks, for example, or the folds behind his ears. His nails were hard as a raven's claws, and his joints were slightly stiff. No, there was no doubt: he was not what ^{he had seemed} ~~she had thought~~.

She compared him to her husband, who was young ^{seemed} but old in spirit, while the other was an old man who looked much younger than his years. Both were ~~abnormal~~ ^{freaks}, and ~~abnormality~~ ^{freakishness} never ceased to pursue ^{the bones} her, ~~cursing~~ ^{existence, blighting} and destroying the very life within her . . . She again ^{breast} felt the black despair of one unfairly ~~punished~~ punished. Everything was hopeless! . . . And she bit her lips till they bled, while her head spun dizzily.

Why not miss her footing and end it all, hurtling down that rocky slope? ~~she wondered,~~ ^{But} though even as the thought crossed her mind, she

monsters? monstrousness

carefully took one step and then another . . .

In certain especially dangerous spots, the shepherd took her hand. The contact so revolted her that she nearly jumped back. How ~~ignominious~~ ^{sordid} her ~~sinful~~ ^{to her} longings in ~~Lightning Bolt~~ ^{exhausted} Lightningbolt Pass now seemed!

She arrived home ~~drained~~ ^{exhausted} and with a splitting headache. All that remained of their outing was torment and depression.

"An old man! . . . And ~~an~~ ^g old man with one foot in the grave!"

XV: The Fall

Mila's feet once again rested firmly on the ground. Fallen from the nest of ^{her} illusions, she found herself face to face with reality. The vague ^{of} dreams, hopes and fears that had bedeviled her were gone, and the shock she had received on Highpeak left her ~~perplexed and disoriented~~ ^{feeling}. As time passed, ~~this feeling~~ ^{perplexity gave way to} a flat, calm resignation. The day after Gaietà's and Baldiret's departure, Mila cleaned the hermitage, which she had neglected since the beginning of her illness, and after dusting, mending, and weeding the ~~vegetable~~ ^{out} garden, she set ~~off~~ to buy food in Murons. On her way she stopped ~~in~~ at St. Pontius' Farmhouse, where she had not been seen for many ^{of} weeks.

It was nearly eleven, and before ~~the door~~ ^{as she approached} she spied Arnau unhitching the wagon. ~~She hadn't~~ ^{then two of them had not} spoken with him since that day in the yard, and he looked ~~skinnier~~ ^{At first} and less robust. He didn't notice Mila, and when he ~~finally~~ ^{saw} beheld her a few feet away, he quickly turned and ~~bent~~ over as though to search for something on the ground. She stopped for a moment, disconcerted. Then, understanding that he hoped to avoid her, she sadly entered the house, where another unpleasant surprise awaited her. Seated as usual by the fire, the grandmother was slicing something into a casserole that lay on the floor ~~in front~~ ^{at her feet} of her. Bright flames from a pile of logs filled the hearth, ~~outlining~~ ^{and ed} the old woman's ^{her figure} in red. A dark gray cat rubbed against her skirts, sniffing and meowing.

"Good morning, granny! How've you been?" Mila asked cheerfully as she entered.

The old woman, who was bent over, ~~glanced~~ ^{glanced} toward the

door, without removing her hands from the casserole.

"Oh, it's you!" she mumbled and returned to her work as though nothing had happened.

Mila stopped in her tracks. She had expected a warmer welcome from the grandmother, who had always been ^{the} ~~kindest~~ ^{kindest} than the other members of that family. But ^{as} ~~since~~ the old lady was known to be temperamental, Mila thought she was in a bad humor or perhaps angry ~~with~~ ^{at} her for not ~~visiting~~ ^{visiting} more often. She therefore approached ~~the woman,~~ ^{her,} laughed nervously, and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Well, how've you been keeping since last time I saw you?"

"Right now, thank God . . . I've never been worse! . . ." she answered without raising her head.

"I sure ~~did~~ ^{missed} miss you . . ." Mila added, not knowing what else to say.

An unpleasant croak, ~~which was supposed to be~~ ^{intended} a sarcastic laugh, ~~preceded~~ ^{meant as} the old woman's reply: "I bet! Well, let's not talk about that . . ."

Mila saw that she was in the way and awkwardly excused herself. When she was outside, her chin trembled as she held back the tears. What was going on there? Why had they treated her so coldly? She could understand Arnau's reaction: rightly or wrongly, he was probably still hurt, but ~~the~~ ^{the} grandmother? She couldn't imagine what the old lady might have against her.

~~"She's just in a bad mood!"~~ ^{feeling} she finally decided. But since ~~she was~~ ^{she was} unsure of her explanation, she visited them two or three times during the next week. She was quickly convinced that their feelings toward her had changed. Marieta ~~still~~ ^{still} welcomed her ~~with the same simple~~ ^{as sweetly as ever}

~~kindness~~, but even she could not hide a certain involuntary ^{distance} reserve. *

The grandmother and Arnau, however, made no effort to hide their feelings. He turned ^{round} away and ^{made off} disappeared as soon as he caught sight of her, while the old ^{woman} ~~lady~~ clucked quietly in disapproval if Marieta was present, and otherwise simply turned her back on Mila. *

Mila wracked her brain, trying to understand why she had fallen from ~~her~~ favor in that house. Had they learned that she was the cause of Arnau's broken engagement? Had they heard about Matias' doings?

One day Gaietà took his flock up the mountain and stopped ~~in~~ at the hermitage to greet Mila, who couldn't help asking about Marieta and the others.

"Listen, shepherd: what's ^{up} ~~going on~~ with Arnau? Is he getting married or not?"

"Is he getting married? . . . ~~Of course he is!~~ ^{I'll say he is!} . . . Before harvest time we'll have a new ^{young lady} ~~daughter-in-law~~ at St. Pontius."

"Thank God! Everything's all right!" the woman thought, feeling ~~as though~~ ^{that} a weight had been lifted from her shoulders, but then what ~~was~~ ^g on earth was bothering them? And she told Gaietà how they had behaved in her presence.

"Don't worry ^g about it, hermitess . . . Did you do something wrong? . . . Well, ^g then, keep ~~your~~ ^I chin up . . . It's ~~all~~ ^{just} gossip, but sooner or later the truth will out, and then . . ."

"But why are they acting like that?"

He reluctantly replied: "They're good people at St. Pontius, y'know? . . . but they think I care more about you than them, and . . ." The old man suddenly lost his habitual composure and bitterly exclaimed: "That bastard's got an evil tongue . . . just wait'll I ~~cut it~~ ^{it's} out!"

cut it ~~out~~! . . ."

~~When~~ Mila inquired no further. Crushed and astonished, she understood at last. She would never ~~go back to~~ ^{set foot in} St. Pontius!

Fortunately, Baldiret was a child and immune to such suspicions. The first Sunday after he left her, she heard him run across the courtyard and ~~dash~~ ^{dash} up the stairs. She hurried out just as eagerly to welcome him.

When they met, the boy threw his arms around her legs and silently ~~rubbed~~ ^{buried} his head ~~against~~ ⁱⁿ her skirts. With tears in her eyes, she led him into the kitchen, where she sat down on the bench with Baldiret between her legs and her arms around him, while the two of them chattered away like a couple of ~~chirruping birds.~~ ^{excited songbirds.}

"Do you still go out with Flock? . . . How do you like school? Do they tell you bedtime stories? . . . Don't you ever miss me? . . ."

The boy ~~pulled~~ ^{plucked} at her w~~o~~l~~e~~n shawl.

"I can do my multiplication tables, y'know? Yesterday a kid couldn't ~~get~~ ^{get} six times six right, and the teacher whacked him on the ~~back~~ ^{back} of the head . . . ~~Gradama~~ ^{Grada} wanted me to go to ~~Catechism~~ ^{Catechism} today . . . but heck, this is the only time I could come and visit you . . . My ~~mother~~ ^{mouth} gets dry from so much ~~talking~~ ^{reciting} . . . Our teacher said next month I'll be able to write . . . but I have a hard time remembering all those words in Castilian . . ."

Seeing Baldiret scratch his head ~~furiously~~ ^{furiously} as he talked, she combed his hair and looked for worms. Then she gave him candy and toasted almonds she kept for visitors, and a piece of gold trim ~~on a~~ ^{on a} Christ Child he had been eyeing covetously for a while. Since he

had ~~not~~^T been away for ~~a few days~~^{a while}, she showed ^h in the flowers on the terrace and the cabbages in the garden, whitened by frost, their dead leaves flattened against the ground . . . When it was time for the boy to go, she accompanied him most of the way home, and he promised that next Sunday he would tell ~~his grandmother~~^T the same ^b ~~file~~^T and come ~~see her~~^T again.

After those two visits, ~~she~~^T spent ~~one day after another~~^T by herself . . . She had done her very best to make Matias see reason, ^g but she quickly found that it was ~~no more fruitful than~~^T talking to ~~the wall~~^T. He was lost to her forever. Miraculously cured by that revelation on Highpeak, which had dispelled her stubborn blindness, she saw that her ~~own~~^T neglect had allowed him to slip beyond her grasp. The new element she had sensed in him had ~~completed~~^T its ~~task~~^T. The brood hen, the loafer, as Gaietà had put it, had been transformed into a compulsive gambler. Pale and gaunt^g after sleepless nights, his brow furrowed and his glance shifty, he had the air of a beast ^{furtively} ~~furtively~~ wolfing down its prey in some cave but ready to turn and defend its spoils to the death if need be. She had thought him a born idler, but in fact he was born to gamble, nor would he ever change his ways. His education was complete!

^g ~~After~~^T ~~realizing~~^T this, Mila ceased to struggle. All her efforts had been for nought, she was alone in the world, and she could expect no help from anyone or anything . . . And accepting this state of affairs, she acquired the tempered strength of one who, throwing down his last coin and playing his last card, knows he has nothing ~~else~~^T left to lose. She had been feeling this way for a couple of weeks when early one afternoon the sky, which had been calm, suddenly ~~became~~^T

no punctuation here?

clouded over.

~~overcast~~ Luminous white ~~cloud~~ castles ~~towered~~ ^{appeared} above Highpeak and spread across the mountains, blackening till within an hour ~~a~~ ^g great ~~claps~~ ^{thunderclaps} of ~~thunder~~ burst forth. It was the first big storm since Mila's arrival and, ~~feeling as bristly as~~ ^{bristling like} a cat, ~~whose hair stands on end,~~ she ~~curiously~~ roamed from one window to another.

After a mighty rumble that rolled across the heavens, as though a bass drum were announcing the tempest's arrival, ~~sheets~~ of rain beat against the ~~windows~~ ^{panes} like a shower of gravel. Mila, whose nose was pressed against the bedroom window, saw a gray curtain descend, obliterating Big Rocky's dark silhouette. The curtain, shaken ~~at times~~ ^I by sudden gusts ~~from the east or west~~ and ripped periodically by ~~jagged~~ bolts of lightning, quickly became impenetrable. Mila ran ~~from~~ to the little window in her kitchen. The water poured down Middle Rocky's slopes, forming streams as it went, falling ~~in sheets~~ upon the house ^{and} filling the sink's ~~open drain~~ ^{gutter}, from which it flowed in foamy eddies. The sound was deafening, and the pounding rain on the rooftop was accompanied by howling winds that battered the hermitage, rattling frames, ringing bells in terrified confusion, and whistling down the belfry stairs as though about to invade the house. Calmed and delighted by that tumult, Mila stopped up the kitchen door, beneath which water gushed as from a row of open faucets. After mopping the little bedroom, she placed basins in the big one to catch the drops ~~that fell~~ from its leaky ceiling . . . As she worked, she remembered that she had hung an apron on the balcony outside the sitting room. God only knew where it was by now! She hurried to see if it ~~was still~~ ^{had blown} ~~there.~~ ^{away.} Fortunately, she had tied it to the railing. With one broken string, it ~~did~~ ^{was flapping} flapped wildly in the wind, but if she didn't hurry ^{crazily} the other would ~~ms~~ snap as well, and undoubtedly that would be the end

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of her apron. As soon as she unbolted the doors, a mighty gust that nearly ~~knocked~~^{bowed} her ~~down~~^{over} smashed them against the walls ~~three or four~~^{several} times till all the panes were ~~now~~ broken. Panting as she tried to breathe in the wind, Mila stuck her head and one arm out to untie ~~the~~^{catch her} apron, but the knot was soaked, while the rain stung her face and she felt a few cold ~~drops~~^{slowly} trickle down her back. Just then, she heard something ~~tinkling~~^{rattling}.

"Oh my God!" exclaimed the woman. "It's the beggar from Murons!"

The mute beggar in Murons wore a bell around his neck. He often visited the hermitage and was very fond of Mila, who would give him not only a slice of bread but a ^{glass} drink of wine as well.

She hadn't seen him for a long time, and ~~upon~~^{when she heard} hearing his bell, she thought he must have been ~~now~~ⁱⁿ caught ~~by~~ the storm.

"Hold on, mute! I'll be down in a second!" she shouted, forgetting that the man could no more hear than speak, and reentering the hermitage, she grabbed one of Matias' mufflers, wrapped it around her neck, and returned to the balcony, where she again struggled to untie the apron. With a great effort, she managed to lean over the railing and glance around. The mute was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh ~~no~~^{dear}!" she mumbled. "I was sure that was him." And after ~~having~~ loosening the apron, she stepped back to the door and suddenly heard the hollow tinkling again, ~~clearer~~^{louder}, more ~~distinguishable~~^{distinct}, and seeming to come from the sky. She broke out in a cold sweat, her grip loosened, and the apron flew away. Then she feebly bolted the doors, held onto the walls as she crossed the sitting room, found some matches in the kitchen, and after entering the little bedroom, made her way down the steps to St. Pontius' chapel. It was flooded too, but she

scarcely noticed. She lit two candles on the altar, fell to her knees, and opened her arms before the blessed saint's portrait.

"Oh St. Pontius! ~~Glorious St. Pontius!~~ ~~Don't~~ Don't let him be hurt! Don't let them catch him! Spare me from this shame!" And writhing like an epileptic, she fell upon the ~~presbytery~~ presbytery stairs.

On the shepherd's last visit, they had discussed Matias, and the old man, shaking his head, had said things looked bad for her husband.

"People in town have been complaining . . . orders have come down, and a trap's been set and baited. If they don't stop gambling -- and I'm sure they won't -- you can bet your last ^{penny} ~~cent~~ they'll all wind up in jail . . . and your husband'll be the first to go. He's the ^{most} ~~blindist~~ ^{reckless} ~~blindist~~, since he usually wins, and he hangs around there ~~every~~ ^{every} day and ~~every~~ ^{every} night."

Mila, who had grown indifferent to Matias' fate, had paid little attention to the old man's words, but now, hearing that strange clanking on Highpeak, it was a ^{3/} ~~stroke~~ ^{had fallen} ~~stroke~~ upon her like the wrath of God. Because she was certain that it was the skeleton and that the trouble would be hers as well.

Her tearful eyes again looked prayerfully toward St. Pontius, while she begged: "Don't let him be hurt! . . . Don't let them catch him!"

Never had she felt such pure devotion, and in apology for asking the saint ^{to} ~~of~~ help one who had robbed him, she explained that Matias was her husband, that he was foolish but not wicked, that their fates were ^{linked} ~~united~~ and the shame would be ~~theirs~~ ^{theirs} to share . . . They would be thrown out of the hermitage. What would they do without money, shelter, or anywhere to go?

He would keep gambling in a corner of some tavern, but what

* ~~about~~ her? . . . And again she pleaded: "Don't let them catch him! Don't let them catch ~~him~~ Matias! If you ~~want to~~ ^{must} punish him, make him sick or something that won't shame us!"

* She left the chapel holding one of ^{the} those candles. It was barely four o'clock, but night had already fallen. The thunder still rumbled, the wind still howled and bellowed, ~~the~~ sound of rushing water came from all sides, and ~~greenish~~ lightning bolts occasionally ~~ripped~~ ^{rent} the darkness. But when, after supper, the woman crawled into bed, the storm seemed to slowly recede like a devastating army, leaving behind it a mixture of real and imagined noises. Thus the familiar sounds of the Roar, the ~~owl that roared~~ in the belfry, and the grandfather clock mingled with the hoarse whispers of streams, distant barks and plaintive bleats . . . a turbulent ~~blend~~ of echoes that troubled her sleep.

She woke with a single idea: to find out what had happened and set her mind at rest. And if she arrived in time, to talk with Matias, tell him of the mountain's warning, and try to frighten him into abandoning his evil ways. Mila knew he slept at the Spirit's place, and there she hoped to find him.

* She decided to feed the animals first. Outside the door, she tripped over a big branch from the cypress. The cisterns were full of ~~green~~ ^{greenish} water ~~in~~ ^{were floating} in which twigs and snails floated. The steps down to the terraces were covered with debris, the tilled earth had been ~~swept~~ ^{washed} away and ~~showed no signs of cultivation~~, and the ^{earth under the} almond trees were ~~surrounded~~ ^{was} by tiny ~~unopened~~ buds. . . . The storm had ravaged everything like a second St. Pontius' Festival.

* "More hard luck!" thought the woman, ^{and} wishing to see no more, took her basket and shawl and set off for Murons.

The sky was calm and clear, but the earth still bore the ^{signs} ~~marks~~ of that furious onslaught. At every step Mila found new puddles, gullies, heaps of mud and rocks, uprooted kermes oaks, hitherto unknown springs. And further down, toward the tilled fields, olive groves strewn with branches, as though someone had shaken them from every single tree . . . Badblood Creek was swifter and more perilous than ever and, overflowing its narrow bed beneath Punch Bridge, it left a coat of black slime upon the banks on either side.

When Mila caught sight of St. Pontius' Farmhouse, her chest suddenly tightened and she recalled her quarrel with its inhabitants. She felt as innocent as a newborn babe, yet they considered her a loose woman. And now, mulling over what had occurred, Mila sensed that the grandmother, a decrepit mummy who sat all day before the fire, hated ~~her~~ not her supposed wickedness but her youth and her beauty, while Arnau, whom she had inadvertently ~~conquered and~~ subjugated, could not forget that she had spurned him for another. . .

"What a petty, mean-spirited bunch!"

Mila bitterly decided to cross the foot bridge without stopping, but as she approached it, she heard someone calling her from the garden. Surprised, she turned around. Marieta ran toward her, waving a kerchief and shouting: "Wait for me! I'll come with you!"

Mila halted, feeling ^{even} ~~still~~ more astonished. When they were together, Marieta tied the kerchief around her head and exclaimed, without even ~~bothering~~ to say good morning: "Who would have imagined! We were sure he was at the hermitage!"

The woman seemed very excited. Mila, who understood nothing, continued to stare at her.

"But when the dog showed up, barking and ~~snarling~~ scratching at the door, we knew something was wrong. He was covered with mud, and as soon as we opened it he ran toward the bridge, ~~turning his head~~ ^{looking back} and barking. And since we just stood there, he ran back and forth like he wanted us to follow him. 'If Owl's come to fetch us, something must be wrong,' my husband said, so he and Arnau took the shotgun and followed the dog . . . Then they went for the police, and now they've all gone back to get him."

"To get who?" ~~Mila~~ squeaked Mila, finally recovering her voice.

Marieta looked at her in amazement: "Oh my God! The shepherd, of course!" and seeing Mila's eyes grew wider, she asked: ~~him~~ "Didn't you know?"

Mila barely managed to shake her head.

"Yes, he fell! The shepherd! . . . He fell from the Flagstones!"

The blood drained from Mila's lips, her legs ~~buckled~~ ^{grew weak} beneath her, and she leaned back against the hedge beside the path. The memory of that skelton on ~~the~~ ^{the} Highpeak drifted across her mind like a thick fog.

Marieta murmured: "I thought you knew! Everyone knows about it . . .," but at the sight of Mila's drooping head, she gave her a sharp slap.

"I'm sorry," said Marieta. "I was ~~scared~~ ^{afraid} you were going to faint . . ."

"I had no idea!" Mila replied with a shudder.

Then they set off for the Flagstones, and as they walked Marieta ~~gradually~~ explained what had occurred.

"He must have been making for Lookout Mountain . . . and when the ~~storm broke he wa~~

storm broke he wanted to keep his sheep dry, so instead ~~of~~ of going around the long way, he decided to cut across . . . but the Flagstones were wet and you know how steep they are . . . The poor guy took a fall, head first . . . and broke every bone in his body . . ."

Mila managed to ask: "And . . . is he in bad shape?"

"Bad shape? He's dead, honey, dead! The man's deader than a doornail!"

Mila ~~anxiously~~ gripped Marieta's arm.

"Dead?"

"He was already stiff by the time my husband found him. That's why they went for the police . . . May he rest in peace, poor shepherd! The dog was acting so crazy they finally had to shoot him. He wouldn't let anyone near the body. And they rounded up the sheep, which were scattered all over . . ."

Mila then recalled those distant howls and bleats she had heard in her sleep. And she told Marieta about the ~~rattling~~ bones.

"It was a warning, it was a warning!" the woman assured her.

Mila stared at the ground, thinking: "Just a few days ago he was telling me about the skeleton, but who would have thought he'd be the next to go! That was no fairytale. It all came true . . .
(It's all come true) *
 It all came true."

And ~~she~~ she had worried about Matias! Well, she could stop worrying now . . . but why had she thought only of him, as though no one else existed? . . . How strange! . . . And the woman, who still was not herself, began to feel guilty ~~about forgetting the shepherd.~~
the shepherd
 She should have prayed for ~~him~~ too. Perhaps she could have saved him!

Before reaching the path that led to the Flagstones, they heard voices and saw a group of people walking toward them. It was the delegation that had gone to fetch the corpse: the judge, the mayor, two doctors and the rector, all from Murons, along with assorted curious onlookers. Behind them, a policeman and Marieta's husband bore a stretcher covered with Gaietà's dark gray cape.

Upon reaching a flat spot, the men ^{laid g.} ~~lay down~~ the stretcher ^{down} and * stopped to rest. The two women approached them.

"Good morning," said Marieta.

"Good morning," everyone replied.

Mila, whose legs were still unsteady, was unable to utter a word.

The body beneath the cape resembled a mountain range, ^g with an occasional peak here and there. The soaked cape looked even darker ^r and was covered with mud.

People milled about, speaking in whispers as though they were in church.

Mila heard a question: "What town was he from?"

^g "I don't know . . . from the mountains . . . The certificate ^{te} should say . . ."

^{she} ~~Mila~~ raised her eyes and saw Arnau staring at her, his lips curled in a savage smirk. It pained her to see him rejoice in the shepherd's death, but almost immediately she felt something warm in her hand and saw Baldiret ^J beside her, his face red and his eyes ~~was~~ swollen. He clutched her arm, gazed at her, and then gazed at the stretcher.

"You . . . he's . . ." and he let out an anguished wail.

A stern glance from his father cut his explosion short.

~~Upon~~ ^{hearing} that Gaietà was dead, the boy had run to the Flagstones, where they had found him sobbing inconsolably. Only his father's threats had ~~calmed~~ ^{silenced} him at last, and lest he be sent to his room, he tried to control ~~his grief~~ ^{himself}.

Mila stroked his head and kissed him.

Marieta slowly asked her husband: "Aren't you going to let the kid see him?"

"Go ahead, show him," ordered the judge, who had overheard their conversation.

Everyone approached the stretcher.

Marieta's husband lifted the cape, exposing the old man's face.

Mila felt the tears run down her cheeks.

Like the cape, like his clothes, his face was caked with mud. He was almost unrecognizable. His cheeks were green and sunken, his brow was dull white, like lard, and his eyes, though open, were ~~misty and unfocused~~ ^{glazed}, reminding Mila of ~~that~~ ^{the} hare they had skinned beneath the Organ. There was a purplish bump above his left eye -- from his fall, no doubt -- and patches of blood still clung to his hair. ~~Could that motionless figure everyone contemplated really be the shepherd?~~ ^{Could that motionless figure} . . . she wondered with the same incredulity she had felt upon ^{looking at / discovering} beholding the sea. At a signal from the judge, the men covered the ~~corpse~~ ^a and picked up the stretcher, while the onlookers all set off ^a agin for Murons.

"Where are they taking him?" Mila asked.

"To the hospital," someone replied and then stared at her in surprise.

Arnau, who walked ahead of her, turned and spat on the ground.

Mila felt her ~~strength~~ strength ebbing. When they reached Punch Bridge, she said goodbye to Marieta.

"Where are you going?"

"Home . . . I ~~don't~~ ^{sick} feel well . . ." and after crossing the bridge, she turned onto the path.

Hearing that she was unwell, Baldiret stopped as if to follow her. He looked at Mila, then at the stretcher, and finally ran to overtake the crowd.

XVI: Suspicions

With each passing day, Mila became more aware of the shepherd's absence. Her initial reactions had been ~~surprise and shock~~ ^{one of} shock. The manner in which ~~she~~ ^{way} she had found out, her walk with Marieta, that disfigured corpse on the stretcher, motionless, speechless, and sightless -- it had all been like a tragedy in which ~~everyone~~ ^{the townspeople} played roles that left little room for individualized feelings. Her own emotions had been touched, but not very deeply. Even on the morrow, when she attended ~~his~~ ^{Garieta's} funeral and joined the crowd that ~~accompanied~~ ^{bearing} his body to its resting place, she was distressed by her own sense of disconnectedness. Her ~~spirit was untroubled,~~ ^{with untroubled} ~~her dry eyes~~ ^{she} gazed at everything around her: the women's contorted faces, Marieta's nose, ~~whose tip was red~~ ^{from crying} and the cold weather, Matias' yellow, sleepy visage among the men who walked before her. He had donned that bizarre felt hat and his best black jacket, which, far from being tight, now looked several sizes too big. Her attention flitted from one thing to another, and she heard the woman on her right say to a friend beside her: "I went to see him in the hospital . . . His neck was ~~broken~~ broken and his whole face was crushed!" The other replied: "And his shirt and sash were torn, as if he'd tried to grab onto something." Then the first one added: "Poor guy! How can you grab onto a flat rock?" And the other responded: "The doctor said the fall must have killed him instantly . . ."

The women kept talking, while Mila tried to locate the source of her indifference . . . Was she really unmoved by the shepherd's ^{downside} death? Had she never loved that man ^{who} who had treated her so kindly?

"No, no," a voice within her replied. "It's just that all this has nothing to do with Gaietà . . ." And she imagined him ~~awaiting her~~ at the door to the hermitage, ready to ask as soon as he saw her:

"Well, how was the funeral?" A week later, she still felt the same way and was even less convinced that ~~the shepherd~~ ^{he was truly dead.} had died.

She expected him to appear at any moment, asking for something or other.

One day she broke ~~a~~ ^{that unbolted raised the her front} the chain attached to a bolt on the gate and thought absentmindedly: "I'll ask the shepherd to fix it." Not long thereafter, as she cleaned the wardrobe, she found one of his kerchiefs with ~~Matias~~ Matias' underclothes, and mumbled: "Next Sunday I'll take it down to him . . ." The fact that he was no longer in this world still had not ^{yet} dawned on her. ^{But} all the same, she missed his reassuring smile, his sweet laughter, his luminous stories. She felt a vague longing, like the onset of ^{an illness} a disease that would weigh more and more heavily upon her grieving spirit.

* Her sadness was ^{intensified, deepened} augmented by the fact that Baldiret no longer visited, as though he too had abruptly passed away. Matias showed up when he wanted something ^{from her}, but being with Matias was the same as being alone. Sitting at one end of the bench with ~~his elbows on the table~~ and his chin ~~cradled~~ in his hands, he kept his thoughts to himself and seemed half-asleep. Mila, who was tired of her own endless soliloquies, tried to rouse him from his torpor with questions about the world, even if it was the world of that foul tavern where he spent the winter or the sinister passion that ^{slowly} ~~steadily~~ consumed him. But Matias didn't feel like talking and offered monosyllabic answers . . . it was as though he had forgotten how to speak and could not even recall the lies and tall tales he had always ~~been~~ favored . . . It was ~~her~~ torture for the woman! Restless and bored, she longed to see people, to hear their voices . . . and one day she resolved to

visit St. Pontius. She had not been there since the shepherd's funeral, but the cause of their quarrel had ~~vanished~~ ^{After all, he} ~~with his death.~~ ^{was as dead for them as for her . . .} so perhaps now they would treat her a little better. Before setting out, she went to fetch something from the terrace and noticed a black figure among the pines near the Roar.

"Oh dear!" she ~~thought~~ ^I thought. "It's some woman ~~all~~ ^I by herself!" But then she looked more closely: "No, it's a priest . . . My God, it's the rector!"

So much for her visit! She hurried back inside and ^{after spreading a} ~~spread~~ a white cloth on the table, ^{brought out} ~~where she placed~~ a salami, chocolates, and a plate of cookies. Then she ^{smoothed? unknitted? smoothed} ~~let down~~ her skirts and waited. An hour passed, and ~~then~~ ^I another, but there was no sign of the rector. Mila kept going out on the terrace. "Why's he taking so long? It's not that far from the Roar!" She even walked ^I ~~halfway~~ ^{the hill down to meet him} down the slope. In vain: the rector had vanished without a trace. The woman felt snubbed. To walk to the Roar and not stop at the hermitage! What a wasted afternoon!

The next morning she visited St. Pontius. The men were out working, Baldiret was at school, and the grandmother was sick in bed. Mila was delighted to find Marieta alone.

She was mending clothes in the sunlight ^{that streamed through her} ~~from the~~ kitchen window with ^{wave} ~~her~~ feet ^{rested} on a stool, ^{lay} ~~her~~ sewing basket beside her, and her glasses held in place by a band around her kerchiefed ~~her~~ ^I head. Marieta's eyesight had deteriorated and she could ~~not~~ ^{not} sew without her glasses. At Mila's "Hi there!" she raised her eyes and looked out over the rusty frames.

"Don't move, Marieta!" the hermitess cried, and taking another stool, she sat down and asked about ~~everyone~~ ^{in the family} everyone.

LOOKS ODD! *

→

Marieta slowly replied, and Mila learned that Arnau's betrothed had bought an ^{expensive} fancy hope chest, and that Baldiret was ^{now} an altar boy and, since he ate lunch at the rectory, ~~they didn't see him from dawn to dusk~~ ^{he was away} morning till night, that the grandmother had stones and the doctor said they might have to ^{probe} sound her, that they were worried because ^{the second-oldest} their second-born son ^{had been drafted} was going into the army, that Red, their French mare, had given birth to a dead foal . . . But despite ~~all~~ ^{of} all this ~~information~~ ^{as} information, Mila felt the same reserve ~~she had noticed~~ ^{sensed} before, and ~~something told her~~ ^{she sensed} that Marieta was not pleased by her visit. Yet she remained seated, as though she were awaiting something, and indeed, that "something" ^{was not long in coming} finally appeared.

In the course of their conversation, Marieta mentioned the shepherd and Mila, forgetting everything that had occurred, said how much she had missed him in the weeks since his death. Marieta's face suddenly hardened into an expression she had never seen before.

"Come on now! You've got nothing to complain about!"

"What do you mean?" Mila asked in surprise.

"He ^{took care of} cared about you two!"

"No more than you, Marieta . . ."

"But his favorite ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{was} Baldiret . . ."

Marieta looked up and exclaimed: "Well, he ^{chose} has a funny way ^{to} of showing it!" But she quickly ^{calmed} controlled herself and added: "I mean . . . may he rest in peace! Who knows ~~about~~ whose fault it was?"

Taken aback by these mysterious words, Mila softly replied: "I don't know what you're talking about, Marieta."

"Come on! Don't play dumb! . . ." And she laughed with the same hardness Mila had seen in her face: "If that was his will, there's nothing I can say . . . he must have known what he was doing . . ."

Everyone has his obligations . . . What bothers me is that ~~everyone~~^{people} thinks ~~we~~^g . . . Including the rector, who keeps saying how Gaietà told him this and Gaietà told him that . . . Well, so what? He told us ~~stories~~^{lots of stuff} too, but the fact is we haven't seen a penny." ~~since he did~~

Mila finally began to understand: Marieta was talking about money.

"God Almighty!" she exclaimed. "Do you think he left us something?"

"I know he didn't make a will, but as far as leaving or . . . or . . . whatever you want to call it . . . the government wants its share of that money!"

"Listen: he didn't leave or give us ~~a thing~~^{anything}! You say he had money, but we didn't even know that!"

Mila spoke with such ~~earnest~~^g conviction that Marieta lowered her eyes. But her voice insisted: "Well, I don't know . . . but they didn't find ~~anything~~^{it} on him, and he certainly couldn't have taken it with him!"

Mila indignantly retorted: "So you figure we must have it!"

Marieta retreated a little: "Now I didn't say that . . . but people have to pay their ~~debts~~^{bills} . . . and if he owed anything to anyone . . ."

Then Mila suddenly grasped the woman's train of thought. The shepherd had "paid his ~~debts~~^{tatto}" -- in other words, her ~~services~~^{favours}.

"My God," she ~~moaned~~^{gotta} moaned, and covering her face, she began to sob.

Marieta hastily put her sewing down on the stool.

"Hey, what's the matter? I mean, what did I say?" small-minded bunch!

Mila thought: "What a jealous, nasty crew! They were afraid he'd leave us something! . . . How can they be so ~~stingy~~^{potty} and ~~mean~~^{vicious}?"

And controlling her tears, she proudly replied: "Marieta, I didn't know what you were like . . . but not even God can forgive what

you're just you ~~had~~ said." And rising to her feet, she wiped her eyes and continued:

"Just get this through your skull, and may I be struck dead if I'm lying! I never slept with the shepherd! You hear me, Marieta? Never!

As far as his money's concerned, ~~he~~ ^{God} knows what he did with it, but our ~~own~~ ^I consciences are ~~as~~ ^I as clear as the saints' ^{up} in Heaven!"

And she silently walked ~~toward~~ ^{approached} the door, but ~~Marieta~~ ^I Marieta motioned her to stop.

"Don't go out looking like that! Calm down first . . . What'll people think if they see you? . . . And besides, where there's smoke there's fire . . ."

Mila looked at her ~~again~~ ^I again.

This time the woman met her gaze: "You owed everyone money . . . you told me so yourself . . . Well, if he didn't leave you anything, how come you paid your ~~debts~~ ^{bills} so quickly?"

Mila was more astonished than if a cannon had fired outside the house. *

"What? You think we . . .?" And recovering, she added: "I wish we did!" with a bitter smile.

"Don't tell ^I me you're going to deny that too! The storekeepers told me!"

Mila opened her mouth to reply, but Marieta cut her off: "Since they didn't find ~~anything~~ ^I anything on the shepherd, ~~everyone~~ ^{people} reckoned

all you'd have it ^{or} and made a beeline for your husband, who paid his ~~debts~~ ^{them} right away. So now what do you expect ~~everybody~~ ^{people} to think? . . .

If it wasn't Gaietà, then who gave you all that money?"

Mila felt a wave of pain spread through her body. Why did the ~~pitiless~~ ^{so relentlessly} Fates pursue her thus? Why did everything turn out wrong?

She stared at Marieta, her lips ~~trembled~~ ^{trembling} as she tried to speak . . . and suddenly she stuffed her tear-soaked handkerchief between her teeth and bit down ~~as hard as she could.~~ ^{with all her might}

"Good bye," she stammered and fled homeward, leaving Marieta staring after her at the door.

She ran all the way back to the hermitage.

Why had Matias paid all their bills at once? Why couldn't he be a little shrewder? And ~~even more~~ ^{furthermore}: why had the shepherd died? Why had he, who loved her so, left her sorrow instead of riches? He had promised that sooner or later the truth would ~~out~~ ^{be} out, but that wasn't what had happened! . . . She nervously ~~bit~~ ^{gnawed} her hands and ~~pulled~~ ^{tugged} at her hair.

Like a wounded beast who crawls off to die, she resolved never again to descend the mountain. Everyone else would be just as spiteful as Marieta! ~~Gossip~~ ^{Gossip} was like a weed: once it spread, you ~~couldn't~~ ^{couldn't} uproot it . . . The people in Murons would all point at her and stare! . . . She wasn't strong enough to bear it. If they had to insult her, let it not be to her face! Let Matias go and fetch things, while she stayed ~~locked in that house,~~ ^{at home} dead to the world.

Such was ~~her~~ ^{was thwarted by Baldiret's arrival} intention, but two days later ~~Baldiret~~ ^{Baldiret} appeared. He came not of his own volition but to say the rector wished to see her. ~~The~~ ^{Mila} woman anxiously asked ~~Baldiret~~ ^{the boy the boy} if he knew what it was about, and ~~upon~~ ^{upon} upon hearing that he did not, she hurriedly took her lunch off the fire and followed him.

The rector was seated in the armchair beside his desk. He ~~asked~~ ^{invited}

Mila to come in and shut the door behind her.

"Sit down, hermitess . . . I sent for you because . . . because I hoped we could speak together . . . I nearly . . . I nearly visited you a few days ~~ago~~ ago, but frankly, I couldn't bring myself to enter your house . . . Some things are difficult . . . difficult to say . . . but then yesterday Baldiret's mother spoke to me again . . ."

Mila paled and stiffened at the mention of Marieta ^{who had} ~~she~~ ^{now} ~~she~~ sat on the edge of her ~~no~~ ^{prisoner} seat like a convict about to be sentenced. What had happened since their conversation? What had ~~she~~ ^{heard} told the rector? She never found out, but she was put through a grueling interrogation full of leading questions and cruel revelations. Amid ~~that~~ ^{hidden} ~~traps and innuendos~~ that net of traps and innuendos, one thing stood out clearly: the shepherd had "money, lots of money" in a belt beneath his sash. He had told the rector of his plan to leave half to the Church "in memory of the Mother and Son" and half to Baldiret. The rector had taken charge of the dead man's body, but no one had seen either the belt or the money. Matias had recently paid all his ^{creditors} ~~debts~~, and if anyone knew where the money was, he was obliged to speak out or lose his soul, ^{since} ~~for~~ to remain silent would be "to rob the Church and an innocent child," whereas "those who repent will be forgiven, for Our Lord God is merciful . . ."

Mila sweated through this long speech, which was further ~~lengthened~~ ^{lengthened} by the rector's habitual repetitions, for despite his insistence that he was merely asking, ^{since} ~~since~~ Gaietà had stayed so long at their house, it was obvious that he shared Marieta's suspicions. Mila denied everything, forgetting her respect for the rector and fiercely defending herself against his insinuations. A thousand times

no! They knew nothing about the shepherd, had never seen his money, and she didn't mind repeating it for all the world to hear!

But maybe not everyone else could say the same! . . . Maybe those who talked the loudest had something to hide . . . In any case, Gaietà ~~wasn't~~ ^{had stopped} living there ^{a while before he died back} anymore . . . Her eyes flashed as she repeated, with maniacal tenacity, that she was a respectable woman, Almighty God was her witness . . . Till at last the rector, who had listened attentively and kept his eyes fixed upon Mila, holding up his hand in an effort to calm her, said he "considered her a good woman and never went just by what ^{other} people said." But when, somewhat mollified by this declaration, she confessed as another proof of their innocence that Matias could have won the money gambling, the rector dropped his hand and looked at her ^{suspiciously} ~~mistrustfully~~.

"So I'd heard, so I'd heard, and that's why . . . because ~~after~~ ^I ~~all~~ ^I what ~~else~~ can you expect? A gambler's capable of anything. It's true they've stopped for a while because we gave them no choice . . . they were leading others into sin . . . But they'll start again, mark my words, it's too late to save them . . . and when they do, keep an eye out . . . anyone can slip and fall . . . and if you notice . . . since I know you're a good woman . . . have no fear . . . because a priest, a father confessor . . ."

Mila left the rectory feeling even more depressed ^I than after her conversation with Marieta. ~~God~~ ^I because of Matias people thought they were thieves, nor was there any way to refute such accusations! The rector had even asked her to spy on her own husband.

Unfortunately, Matias visited her that evening. He ^{was sleeping} ~~slept~~ at home more than before, and she ^I ~~now~~ understood why. He sat silently by the

fire and, seeing the troubled look^l on his face, she thought: "That's why he's been acting stranger and stranger! He's wasting away now that he can't gamble anymore."

She felt like telling him everything, throwing the truth in his face, but why bother? What ~~possibly~~ good could it possibly ^{come if it} do? And besides, as soon as her words sank in, he would start trying to think up lies and excuses.

The woman had long ago learned to keep her thoughts to herself, but this one tipped the scales.

She had gradually relinquished all her feelings for Matias: first consideration, then affection, then patience and now resignation. What remained was a bitter scorn that within a day turned to fury. His ~~footsteps~~ ^{offensive} footsteps, his face, his voice, and even his breathing were so hateful that she could barely control herself. During the day, when he was out or she was busy around the house, it ~~was not~~ ^{wasn't} so bad, but at night in their bed her torment seemed unbearable. The slightest contact made her start and ~~she~~ ^I instinctively pulled ^I away, covering her ears so as not to hear his snoring.

He no longer enjoyed the untroubled sleep of a peaceful brute but turned from side to side, scratching, kicking and whimpering like a beaten child, and at each movement she thought: "He's going to wake up!" Revolted, she pulled away till she nearly fell off the bed and then lay still, scarcely daring to breathe lest she rouse him . . . till at the first cracks of daylight around the shutters, she leapt up, took her clothes, and dressed in the kitchen.

Her decline was as precipitous as it had been before, and her green eyes swelled till they seemed to devour her face, as they had in Gaietà's story about the Lord of Llisquents.

XVII: That Night

Matias told Mila there was going to be a festival in Murons, and the first evening she went to ~~watch~~ ^{see} the ~~people~~ ^{James} dancing. The old square buzzed like a beehive, while well-dressed ladies bedecked the balconies, ~~olympically watching~~ ^{observing going down at} the sardanas below them.

Deafened by the uproar, Mila took refuge in an arcade whose square columns, ~~constantly watered~~ ^{frequently} by ~~animals~~ ^{dogs} and children, gave off a ~~smell~~ ^{stank} like an open sewer.

On the outside, two or three rows of backs blocked her view, while on the inside a constant stream of merrymakers trod on her skirts and shoved her. Trapped between that human wall before her and the river at her back, her nose ~~full of the~~ ^{assaulted by} ~~stench~~ ^{piercing} of urine, the woman felt bored and uncomfortable. Was this supposed to be fun? If she couldn't see anything, she might as well go where the air was fresher and there was less commotion. And making her way through the crowd, she decided to buy a few things and return home.

At the top of France Street she met the musicians, who were on their way to have a drink during intermission. It was the same band that had performed at St. Pontius' Festival, and the ~~cornetist~~ ^{grinned} ~~smiled~~ and shouted: ~~"Well hello there, gorgeous!"~~ ^{Hi, well hi there,} His head was shaped like a jug, and he ~~gave her a roguish wink~~ ^{gave her a roguish wink,}. Mila couldn't help laughing as she remembered how he had flirted with her at the festival till ~~at last~~ ^I someone ~~had~~ ^I told him she was ~~a~~ ^I married woman. That ~~unexpected~~ ^I encounter dispelled her bad humor, and still thinking about the cornetist's funny face, she completed her purchases and set out for home.

Matias, who had been watching, caught up with her as she left

does this really mean 'head' or 'nose'?

i.e. did he have a face like a Toby jug?

the town.

"You leaving already?"

"Yeah. You want to come?"

Matias scratched his head.

"Now? . . . It's still early . . . When they stop dancing . . . or after supper . . . there's going to be a torchlight procession . . ."

Mila caught on immediately.

"So of course you want to stay . . ." she ^{said} sarcastically ^{responded} replied.

"Yeah . . . for a while at least . . ."

"Well then go ahead ~~and stay~~," she ~~said~~ ^{responded} ~~replied~~ ^{replied} this time without rancor. And she set off again for the hermitage.

"See you later!" Matias shouted after her, adding when he thought she was out of earshot: "I'll be home late, so don't wait up for me . . . I'll knock on the gate."

~~What a stroke of luck!~~ What luck! An evening all to herself! And she cheerfully made her way up the mountain, still thinking of that cornetist.

Only nice guys ^a had ^{could have a} faces that made everyone happy ^{including including herself} like her. ~~for example~~ ^{I included} You couldn't look at him ~~without~~ without laughing, and if she knew him a hundred years she'd still smile whenever she saw him. Why had he thought she was single? She didn't act like a ^{such a kid} girl, nor did she feel pretty that day. But he didn't care; he was the fun-loving type. What a stroke of luck, having a ^{that kind of nature} temperament like that . . .

And absorbed in such idle musings, she ~~reaching~~ ^I reached the hermitage as the sun went down. She entered the dark sheep shed and groped for eggs in the nests. There were ~~one~~ ^I two ^I . . . ^I three . . . six, seven . . . With her hands full ^I, she ^{entered the little bedrooms} climbed the stairs and ~~went~~

I ~~to~~ put them in a basket ~~in the little bedroom~~. She counted them. One more and she'd have three dozen to sell. Not bad for ~~a week's~~ ~~laying!~~ *was his work!*

She covered the basket and took off her fancy clothes. Then she closed the balcony doors in the sitting room and went to light the fire and an oil lamp. Supper was ready and only had to be reheated. She went down again to lock the gate outside the courtyard. A cricket was chirruping loudly, and without knowing why, she felt ~~an~~ ~~un~~ sudden urge ~~to have~~ snails for supper. ~~"Tomorrow I can cook some,"~~ she thought *d'll get* hungrily ~~and, after bolting~~ the gate, she turned toward the hermitage *as she bolted* ~~and screamed as she jumped back~~. She thought ~~she had~~ seen something *but when* ~~she suddenly screamed and started~~ *she'd*

~~moving~~ move in the sheepfold. She looked more closely. Bah! . . . It was nothing! She was still afraid of the dark, *just* like the ~~shepherd~~ *shepherd* said . . . *All the same, as* she climbed the steps, ~~but when she was halfway up~~ she *stepped* ~~uneasily~~ turned around. God! This time she let out a blood-curdling shriek and dashed for the kitchen door. Whatever had been lurking in the shadows was now *right* ~~running~~ behind her. . . . She hadn't the presence of mind to shut the door as she entered. A man stood on the ~~threshold~~ *stepped* ~~threshold~~. Terrified, she ~~leaned~~ *and* ~~back~~ *steadily* ~~steadying~~ herself against the table.

"Don't be afraid," he stammered *hoarsely*, ~~his~~ *the* ~~white~~ *white* eyes *of his* ~~eyes~~ *glinted* in the lamplight.

If they'd punched a hole in Mila, not one drop of blood would have trickled out. But seeing the man move ~~toward~~ *toward* her, she shouted:

"What do you want?"

He halted.

"Don't be afraid . . . Hoo, hoo, hoo! . . ." And sticking his

hand in his pants, he ^{began} ~~begin~~ to search for something.

"I said what do you want!" she repeated, feeling even more frightened.

He swallowed nervously and hesitated.

"Hoo hoo hoo! . . . I wanted to ask if you'd . . ."

His last hoarse syllable died in his throat.

* Mila ^{was shuddering} ~~trembled~~ like a leaf, but with a great effort she managed to reply: "Get out . . . get out this very minute!"

But he didn't move; he seemed nailed to the spot. He only ^{stretched out} ~~extended~~ his apelike paw, in whose palm a gold coin glittered.

"What d'you say? . . . Huh?" And he threw the coin at her feet, where it rang noisily upon the floor.

The woman backed away till she reached the wall. His eyes ^{glowed} ~~glinted~~ like the day ^{she} ~~he~~ ^{caught him watching her and she snapped,} ~~surprised her beneath the almond tree.~~

"You want two? . . . Take 'em . . ." he muttered, and another coin struck the floor and rolled under the table.

"No, no!" she screamed. "Get out of my house!"

But instead of leaving, he took another step forward. He breathed heavily through his nose and ^{trembled} ~~was shivering~~ as though a tarantula had bitten him.

"You want more, huh? Go on: take 'em all!" and handfuls of coins rained down at ^{the woman's} ~~Mila's~~ feet.

* She stood rigid and silent, as though ^{petrified} ~~bewitched~~ by that shower of gold. But suddenly ^{Mila's} ~~her~~ ^{terror} ~~terror~~ roused her and, feeling wings sprout on her heels, she fled toward the bedroom as fast as she could.

She heard him roar with fury and then howl as he pursued her.

With the Spirit close behind and betrayed by her ^f ~~own~~ own footsteps, she

swiftly vanished down the stairs that led to the chapel, cut across it and even reached the little door behind the altar, but as she ~~opened it~~ ^{turned the knob} something tripped her, and she fell upon the flagstones . . .

She saw stars, but before everything went black, she felt the ~~man's~~ ^J beast's paws and ~~his~~ ^J hot ~~hand~~ ^J breath upon her flesh.

After sitting ~~for~~ [#] for a long time on the floor, the ~~woman~~ ^{Mila} rose to her feet. Everything still seemed ~~fuzzy~~ ^{hazy}, and lights danced before her eyes. She made her way through the sacristy, crossed the storeroom behind it, and pushed open the door that led to the sheep shed. The courtyard was outlined in pale moonlight, ~~but~~ ^{and} beyond it the gate yawned ~~men~~ ^{the} menacingly. Outside, ~~that~~ ^{was} cricket still ~~chirruped tirelessly~~ ^{chirruping} ~~and insistently~~ ^J. Mila climbed the steps. On the landing, the kitchen door also stood open: ~~a~~ ^{the} golden rectangle of light from the oil lamp inside ~~that made it look like a seal upon the~~ ^J whitewashed wall ~~and~~ ^{reminded} reminding Mila of those coins that had fallen at her feet.

*
reference
'it' not
clear

She entered the kitchen: nothing glittered upon the floor. The murderer had gathered his treasure ^{before departing.} The only sign of his visit was a wet footprint near the door . . . Noticing that her hands were sticky, Mila looked down. They were covered with blood, as was her ^{woolen} shawl. She lit a ~~man~~ candle stub she kept beside the sink and ~~entered~~ ^{went into} the sitting room. There were one . . . two . . . three wet footprints on the tiles. She raised her candle and looked at the clock: nearly ^J nine ^{taunting} fifteen. Its ~~mocking~~ ^J tick-tock was steady and persistent as the cricket's chirrups.

She entered her bedroom and approached the mirror. Everything looked red, like clouds ~~colored~~ ^{tinted} by a brilliant sunset. She ~~shut her~~ ^{blinked}

~~eyes~~ ^g and looked again: her face, like her hands and shawl, was covered with blood, and there was a gash that ran from her cheekbone to her chin. Now she understood why ~~that~~ ^{the} fall had been so painful. Her head must have struck ~~the~~ ^{an} iron bolt on that old altarpiece in the sacristy . . . She washed the cut with alcohol, which ~~stung~~ ^{brought} ~~so~~ ^{tears to her eyes.} fiercely that she cried. Afraid of fainting, she stopped and looked in the mirror. Though the cut was not deep, she would bear the scar all her life. ^g She put on ~~a new kerchief~~ ^{another shawl} and washed her hands. Something seemed to draw her out of the hermitage. She snuffed out the candle and crossed the sitting room. The night was mild and so bright that she could see the sundial's round face on the kitchen wall, where it ~~glowed~~ ^{glinned} like that flirtatious cornetist in Murons. The front gate beckoned her and she went outside. The firmament seemed ~~to swirl~~ ^{swirled above} around her, sprinkled with ~~stars so brilliant that everything throbbed in~~ ^{in whose brilliance made brilliant glow} with an ineffable phosphorescence. ~~everything seemed to glow~~ ^{glow}

Mila calmly sat down upon a rock on the hillside. She, who had been so anxious, had suddenly lost her fear. What else could possibly happen? . . . With her legs together and one elbow resting on a knee, she held her kerchief against the wound on her face.

~~Big Rocky rose~~ ^g in the distance like a dark and starless patch of sky, and further down, ~~the~~ ^g vague forms swam in a grayish penumbra, from which a deep ~~silence~~ ^{hush} full of inaudible harmonies rose like smoke from a censer. Mila happily wrapped herself in that awesome ~~silence~~ ^{stillness}. She knew that any sound would cause her an almost physical pain, and she thanked the ~~cricket~~ ^{stubborn}, who had now fallen silent. Maybe she had squashed it as she passed through the gate . . . And she thought: who knows if it's a sin to kill a cricket? Crickets are alive, and even

a cricket's life is ~~unreal~~ real. To kill it before its time is the worst thing it can suffer, because like all living beings, a cricket has but one life . . . Only one; that's not much! . . . And if we idly destroy it? If it's crushed like that cricket? Was there no possible atonement? Was there no way to make up for it? Perhaps it was a sin to kill a cricket, a greater sin than many she had thought dreadful . . .

Sin was something that had always ~~troubled~~ puzzled Mila, and now, as she reconsidered it, her thoughts seemed to rise into the celestial vault. And she, at the center of a huge thought that embraced the world, quickly grasped what she had failed to understand, and saw the dark side of everything with such clarity that she crossed herself in thanks for her restored vision. For example: how could she not have ~~realized~~ noticed that the Spirit was after her? How could ~~have~~ she have ~~misunderstood~~ misunderstood the way he looked at her the day they had met, when she was ~~polishing~~ busily polishing that candleholder in the chapel? She recalled the way he had stared, as though dazzled by her presence; now she saw the lust in those ~~heavy~~ sunken eyes. And furthermore, every time she had run across him, his actions had ~~pronounced~~ uttered? embodied? the same ugly prophesy. *

Gaietà had said: "You've got nothing to worry about as long as I'm alive . . ." But why hadn't she seen that the Spirit, ~~making the same~~ who like her had ~~misinterpreted~~ misconstrued mistake she had about the shepherd's feelings, would ~~get rid of him~~ first fall ~~upon~~ ~~attack~~ she and the spirit and then ~~attack~~ ~~her~~ . . . Because both of them had been entirely mistaken. Gaietà had never loved her as a man loves a woman. It was not his age, his amulet, or his virtue that ~~had come~~ stood between them. No: it had been a memory, a shadow, a respect for his beloved wife, the servant girl at St. Pontius.

Now, in the new clarity that suffused all her thoughts, she saw them walking together, one dead and the other living. Now she felt the unbreakable bond that held their souls together.

A long screech from the belfry owl interrupted her meditations, seeming to rend the air as that ^{iron} bolt had torn her face. Perhaps the air would bear a ^{mark like the ^{one}} scar, just ~~as~~ as she would on her ~~skin~~ cheek. She felt that ~~everything left a sign, so imagine how many there must be!~~ ^{the world must be full of such signs...}

She sat up without taking her hand from her face. The flesh on her knee bore a red mark from her elbow. She placed her other hand ^{beneath} ~~below~~ it and sat as still as a ^{one paralyzed} paralytic.

The night enfolded her ^{Mila} in its innumerable veils, but she remained unaware, her attention focused on her hurt knee and ^{knotted stomach} ~~burning entrails~~.

The moon had risen, bathing everything in its aqueous blue-green light: the cisterns ^{like} like colossal emeralds, those two cypresses, taller than ever, embracing like two old giants about to bid each other farewell, Big Rocky, dark blue against the sky's uncertain glow, ^{halo} ~~that~~ ^{which} seemed to ring the mountain like a mysterious aureole about its buried legends, the kitchen's cold white wall, and . . . pine groves, ^{hillsides} ~~slopes~~, cliffs, and distances all dissolving in that silent, shoreless sea.

A big night bird swooped noisily overhead, and almost simultaneously a shooting star inscribed its arc upon the firmament, falling to earth not far from the Girl. Mila thought: "The shepherd would have made up a story about that bird and ~~the~~ that star . . . What a wise man he was! . . . as if Dawnflower had given him ^{it was ~~himself~~} what she'd promised that ^{the wisdom she had} old man . . . Yes: ^{Gaietà} he always knew what was going to happen . . .

And she remembered all the times he had warned her, with furrowed

brow: "Watch out for him, hermitess . . . he's the nastiest character in these mountains . . ." And later: "We sure messed that up, hermitess! That bird of ill omen is circling round your home . . ." And later still: "I have to look sharp, 'cause if he caught me he'd make me pay for it . . ." Mila had always laughed at his fears; only now did she realized ⁷ how justified they were, now that it was too late for her ^{or} ~~of~~ Gaietà . . . Because the Spirit had killed him; she was as sure as if she'd seen it: those pieces of gold ringing at her feet had been the murderer's confession . . . And she remembered snatches of conversation at Gaietà's funeral: "His neck was broken and his whole face was crushed . . . His shirt and sash were torn as if he'd tried to grab onto something . . . covered with blood . . . his belt was gone." His belt was gone! Now ⁷ Gaietà hadn't fallen; she knew how ^{steady} careful he always was . . . He hadn't fallen; someone had pushed him from behind . . . From behind: he himself had seen it coming. "He's always been as ~~terrified~~ terrified of me as Satan is of crosses, and he's never even dared to look me in the eye . . ." The Spirit had ~~crept~~ ⁷ crept up behind Gaietà once before and shot at him on Goblin ~~Chest~~. Like a beast who kills by stealth, he had pushed him down ^{the} ~~that~~ ^{Flagstones,} ~~slope.~~ "How can you grab onto a flat rock?" That's why the shepherd's face had been caked with mud . . . "The fall must have killed him ~~instantly~~ ⁷ instantly," the doctor had said . . . and once he was dead, it was easy to take his belt . . . Poor shepherd! How could people be ^{so} ~~so~~ blind? Everyone ~~had~~ ⁷ said: "He took a fall," and they left it at that . . . ~~him~~ while the Spirit went free and was ^{king} ~~lord~~ of the mountain . . . till he met another shepherd and another hermitess.

The woman ~~shuddered~~, feeling her ^{the fire in her entrails} ~~entrails~~ ~~burn~~ more furiously ⁷ ~~7~~

* than ^{on} her face when she had rubbed it with alcohol. And suddenly, to her horror, another memory returned: her silent prayer at the Roar as she drank its magic waters, and that dream of the saint laughing so hard his fat lady's belly shook . . . St. Pontius had always hated her! She closed her eyes and drew her legs more tightly together.

* Near the cisterns, ^{the} that cricket had begun to chirrup again, ~~bravely~~ ^{damntlessly} repeating his single ~~unpleasant~~ note, as sour and ~~penetrating~~ ^{piercing} as a bugle. ^{don't cut!}

She turned around, vainly trying to ~~peer into~~ ^{peer into} the blue shadows. She hadn't ~~squashed~~ ^{crushed} it . . . thank God! Was it really alive? . . .

But her thoughts returned to the shepherd. Those who had been dead for centuries ~~survived~~ ^{seethed} in his tales. The world ~~swarmed~~ with spectral presences that wandered between Heaven and earth, bereft of the flesh and blood that had once made them visible but even so, still secretly mingling with the living . . .

And as she remembered, she imagined a ~~blue~~ ^{blue} will-o-the-wisp flickering ³ across the hillside below her. She saw that old man among the mocking fairies, condemned to pine ~~eternally~~ ^{eternally} for a love that could ~~not~~ ^{never} be. And then she heard, still further down, the muffled sound of dead voices, the groans of severed heads knocking against Punch Bridge, turning over and over ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the ~~bubbly~~ ^{bubbly} stream . . . * All ~~Gaietà's~~ ^{Gaietà's} ~~stories~~ ^{tales} were about ~~other lives~~ ^{had} and the strange persistence of what ^{had} once existed. But they were merely stories invented to amuse and beguile . . . And Mila's skeptical mind refused to credit what her senses could not perceive . . . till she ran ~~up~~ ^{up} against his ~~final story~~ ^{last one's} the skeleton on Highpeak.

Was that just another tale? . . . No it wasn't! . . . During the storm, she had heard those bones rattling above her, and every time she ~~thought about it~~ ^{remembered} she heard them again . . . No, that was no story . . . Well then? . . . Perplexed, Mila gazed down at the ~~shadows~~ ^{shadows} unreal sea below her, as if hoping to dull the brightness of her newly awakened thoughts, which had already begun to fade little by little.

Meanwhile ^{she} the moon cast its silver ^{rays} over everything, like ~~the~~ the webs spiders subtly spin to adorn lonely silences that no man should trouble with his ~~unpleasant~~ ^{wretched} chimeras. ^{fantasies / fantasies}

Maria Jover

[Faint, mirrored bleed-through text from the reverse side of the page, including words like 'professor', 'department', and 'university']

XVIII: The Descent

The imperperbable hours ~~slowly~~ flowed over Mila, who sat motionless ~~upon~~ upon her rock on the hillside.

Though the night had ~~turned~~ ^{grown} chilly, she never thought of entering the hermitage. On the contrary, whenever her gaze fell upon it, she quickly shuddered and ~~looked~~ ^{glanced} away.

What was she doing there? She was waiting for Matias, who had promised to return that night. "I'll be home late," he had said, and ^{Mila knew} she ~~understood~~ why: he was gambling. There was a festival in Murons, and people always gambled at festivals, so there was no danger of his ~~leaving~~ ^{leaving} ~~coming~~ until the game was over, but once it was ^{done} he would return. She ^{*} was certain of this fact, and therefore she decided to stay where she was.

She waited ~~while~~ ^{as} the night inched indifferently toward morning . . . till at ^{last} ~~last~~ the sun rose ~~and~~ she heard his footsteps echo below her and ~~then~~ caught sight of his shadowy figure, barely visible in the ~~pale light~~ ^{pale dawn}.

He climbed hurriedly, with lowered head, ~~worrying about something~~ ^{mulling over} ~~As~~ ^{As} -- perhaps some excuse to explain his long night in the village. She ~~watched him~~ ^{gazed} till he looked up at the hermitage, ~~whereupon she called~~ ^{and then she} out to him in a casual voice. He stopped, surprised, and gazed all ~~about~~ ^{around}. Upon ^{libid} seeing her, he approached uneasily. His weary face was as green as the ~~Spain~~ Spirit's.

"What? Up so early?"

"I didn't go to bed."

And then, without tears, screams, or gestures, she told him every-

brief

* thing that had occurred. Her recital was as concise as an inscription on a tombstone, and her ~~big~~ ^{canyon} green eyes were as calm as a deep, mysterious gorge.

When she had finished, Matias' face revealed the greatest shock he had ever suffered: a cruel, mute expression of fear and consternation.

Seeing him remain silent, she pointed to the hermitage: "Well, after all that, you can bet I'm not going back, but I didn't want to leave without telling you first."

His corpse-like face scowled as he took in these words.

"What?" he mumbled ~~glumly~~ ^T glumly. "You want to go away? Where to?"

She angrily replied: "I don't care . . . Anywhere . . . As far away as I can get!"

Like the Spirit a few hours earlier, Matias began to ~~shake~~ ^{trouble}. For a ~~moment~~ ^{second}, it seemed that he would plead or argue, but, unable to summon the will, he quietly submitted, lowering his head and muttering: "Well, let's go then."

But at that moment, the ^{canyon} gorge suddenly ~~ceased to be~~ ^{lost its} so calm and something furious, demoniacal glowed in the woman's eyes: "Not with you . . . never again. . . Don't try to follow me . . . or I'll kill you."

She stared into his eyes, trying to impress her threat upon his ~~very~~ ^J soul.

* Then she silently rose and, without ~~looking back~~ ^{turning}, bearing nothing more than the clothes ~~on her back~~ ^{she was wearing}, stiffly and solemnly made her way down the slope.

harsh
bitter

Her destiny had crystallized in that bitter mountain solitude.

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