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The Sucas

I

The hollowness of the last thump on the eroded soil foretold the end of the excavation was near, and the following underground resonance provided them with the confirmation they needed. Professor Matthias looked at his assistant with surprise, and then snatched the spade from his hands to begin digging frantically. The excavation had lasted for hours, without rest, with the sun burning on their backs like charcoals, producing a mix of sweat, and dirt drenching their countenances. When they wiped the sweat off, it formed new puzzles of gray lines accentuating their wrinkles. Professor Matthias was digging as fast as he could disregarding the pain produced by the blisters on his hands, throwing the sand towards the sun shining over his shoulder, as if a life depended on his effort. Finally, the surface gave them in return the entrance they had eagerly searched for so long. Both men immediately went down on their knees to strip the vault with their bare hands - they looked like dogs digging up a bone - until a small hole gave off a pungent odor faintly similar to the smell of matches. Immediately, they screamed for joy with big eyes of disbelief. And they hugged, and they jumped together, and they danced until their excitement gave way to the fatigue. Then, they sat close to the hole, and waited for the smell to dissipate. When they considered it safe, they

entered a narrow cave, crowded together, and uncomfortably stooped. Their elbows touched their thighs, and they bowed their heads with their chins rubbing their chests, in an attempt to avoid the graze of the pointy rocky formations.

II

The Sucasas were the most advanced civilization of their time in South America. Due to patience, hard work, and the leadership of their brilliant thinkers, they managed to capture the vast knowledge acquired during centuries, in their exceptional technological discoveries; a large part of which still remain up to the present day as an enigmatic collection of clues.

Professor Matthias's meticulous studies proved one of their greatest discoveries was the elaboration of a complex and very singular written language. As opposed to the Incas, the Sucasas organized an alphabet, which combined various writing systems. Using ideograms, and pictograms – although it was found they also used a simpler system of phonograms, similar to the Etruscan alphabet, and to many of our current western signs, which was most probably destined to groups in the lowest posts of the Sucasas social scale - the signs could be read in more than one direction: from right to left, from left to right, or even diagonally, with no modification of the meaning. Furthermore, it is believed these signs possessed exceptional qualities, unlike any other language. For their most impressive characteristic was their capacity to convey the emotions of the narrator based on the election of signs. Not by means of interpretation of the chosen sign. But because the combination of these bore the capacity to communicate the emotion the author was attempting to imprint in his story. Due to this capacity, the sense of a

phrase could be transformed from a jolly story to a painful one, depending on the permutation of signs, despite using the same signs every time.

It is for this reason any attempt to translate the Sucsas' writings into one of our contemporary languages, could only aspire to be incomplete, since in our vocabulary, the choice of words determines a meaning, and this attempts to convey an impression which may or may not be understood by the reader. While the Sucsas' signs were already receptacle and transmitter of an innumerable range of emotions.

Many of these characters have been deciphered, and an imperfect attempt of translation has been developed. Nonetheless, the identification, and classification of all the possible alloys used in the Sucsas' language is without a doubt, a task requiring many lifetimes to be complete.

Several years before, the professor learned from the locals the legend of a buried monolith, sculpted by the Sucsas' priests, and hidden by their commission to protect it from imminent destruction. According to the legend, the rock contained all the symbolic barbers of the Sucsas' language, and had been buried hundreds of years before in the bowels of the long forgotten, Ccantac Mountain.

The professor and his assistant began their search almost immediately. Guided initially, by the improvised instructions of inexperienced guides, and later following their own judgment; digging almost everywhere in the mountain with little luck until now.

III

They advanced into the cavern with the echo of their steps confirming it was much deeper than they had predicted. It took them a few moments to adjust their vision to the darkness. The place was dry, and a veil of dusty mist made it difficult to walk without groping the walls. Their pupils were dilated, and the professor's hands were still trembling with excitement, when a blend of sensations coming from the walls invaded him.

“Did you feel that with your fingers?”

“Yes, it feels like carvings on the rocks!” replied his assistant with awe.

“It's more than just carvings, it seems like a tale”, said the Professor unable to curb the eagerness vibrating in his voice. His fingers began caressing the carved signs on the wall, which produced in him, from one line to the next, a gamut of dramatic emotions, from expectancy to happiness, restlessness to fear, and finally disappointment. It was the story of the last Sucsas king.

Although he was not able to translate every detail on the wall, professor Matthias understood the images told the prophecy, and the anticipation of the Sucsas for the arrival of a king who would lead them during a long reign of prosperity. But the prophecy was never fulfilled. The king was born, and evolved from a playful lad into a man of character. But when he reached adulthood he suffered a surprising conversion, giving in to a treacherous force, which changed the man, and eventually the Sucsas' destiny. The story of the king in this period was a long succession of contradictory, and selfish actions, which did not correspond to the conduct of the long awaited leader. He gathered wealth, acted extravagantly, and began reasonless wars with complete disregard to the well being of his people. But the story was incomplete. Professor Matthias' rollercoaster of emotions ceased when he reached the last

corner of the wall. The final chapter in the life of the infamous king was missing. Both men searched around them, but the silent passage, told them nothing else.

They slowly advanced even further into the cave, testing each of their steps against the irregularities of the ground. The ceiling became progressively taller allowing them, after a few feet, to stand straight, and walk almost naturally. Until they found on an altar of uncertain age, erected to the dome, a splendid carved monolith. On it, engraved to eternity, were the signs keeping the hidden intimacies of the Sucasas.

On a wall behind it, an inscription in deep furrows told the king's final chapter. It was a painful story. It detailed the perverse influence of the king's main political advisor, and the fatal consequences on the lives of his people. The glorious technological, and cultural advances of the Sucasas had been insufficient before the power, and authoritarianism of the changed leader. The wall recounted persecutions, tortures, and executions extending for decades, until finally, after a long reign in agony, the ill-fated king found his end at the hands of his entourage. A senseless civil war led the Sucasas to slavery, and famine, and eventually to their extinction, leaving behind only a superficial trail of their phenomenal talent. The story left Professor Matthias with a deep sense of sadness. It wasn't hard for him to decipher the tale. Whoever was responsible to sculpt the story of the Sucasas on the rock, made sure to use signs conveying that one emotion, which made the interpretation easier.

The two men began to examine the massive monolith next to the wall. They walked around it admiring their amazing discovery. Gaping at the carvings like deep wounds inflicted on the stone, which tripled their size. Palpating the signs extending from its top to its very bottom. The same signs keeping the hidden formulas created

by the Sucas, the extraordinary translations of even the most intricate of sensations feeding the souls of men. The Sucas' ultimate contribution, their attempt to unravel the mystery that grants humanity to humans.

They walked slowly, unfolding the signs and the sensations conveyed by them; perplexed by their findings, when they noticed the air was beginning to rarify. The first signs became evident on their newly found vertigo.

“It’s time to go back”, announced the assistant, breathing heavily.

“I know,” replied the Professor, with a smile of satisfaction despite his gasps. Like a runner who after a strenuous effort, just won a race. “But wait.” He added all of a sudden, as they were beginning to walk back. “There is another line here.”

Right at the bottom of the wall behind the monolith, was a line he had not read. It was written with characters utterly different than any other they had seen so far. They looked like sketches out of order, each one conveying contradicting emotions in a chaotic pattern. As if, they had been carved with desperation by someone trying to leave a message in his last fraction of life.

The Professor felt his duty to read it. He couldn’t understand it, but it seemed to him that solitary line carried a message intended specifically for him. Next to his assistant he grazed the signs on the monolith; moving swiftly from one to the other, revitalized by his curiosity. Until one by one, each graphic, each sign keeping the secret of that last phrase opened up in the darkness like a flower to the benevolent power of the sun. And his eyes opened widely, his jaw fluttered of panic and the hair on his arms rose, before the message he could never reveal. For his scream answering his assistant’s question, “What is it?” remained hidden behind the deafening roar created

by the curtain of a solid deluge that left almost nothing to take refuge, and confirmed there are secrets in this life better left unrevealed.