

# DREAMS

By Raimundo Rodulfo

## Part I THE LABYRINTH



It was in the labyrinth that Crilo saw Marla for the first time. A sudden instant that surprised both of them when they were desperately striving to find a passage free from crossroads, from cheating doors leading them endlessly through erratic paths. In this world where every path seemed to take them back to the same starting point, the scenery before them was uncertain and dark, both figuratively and literally speaking. The shadows projected by the trees and tall ramparts of that intricate network of pathways made a *collage* of multicolor forms and backgrounds, interwoven with the ivy that swallowed all the vertical surfaces of the place.

The first visual contact was followed by moments of shock, engaged in examining each other, noticing fear in each other eyes. Crilo had been in that place many times, always running for his life, facing the solitude and claustrophobic dread of those who love freedom but who are ensnared behind insurmountable walls. He had never noticed more living presence than his own; not even a bird flew on that silvery, unreal sky. At first, he asked himself about the existence of another unfortunate being in the same situation, running hither and thither like a guinea pig. He later repeated the experience so many times he couldn't remember, resigned himself to keep on wandering through straight, monotonous alleys, imbued in frenzied thoughts, constantly repeating himself that nothing happening was real. An argument that seemed not convincing enough, judging by his uncontrollable emotions and actions.

But for Marla the experience was new; and hence more traumatic. She felt there were still worse things waiting to happen and that it was, perhaps, the last episode in his memories. She, like Crilo, didn't understand why she was in that place, neither was she aware of when everything had started. It was like waking up amnesic in an unknown situation, having no idea of how to face it, just reacting viscerally upon the intuition of danger.

— ¿Are you also lost?

Crilo just got a fleeting glimpse as his sole response from that fragile, shivering woman with pale complexion and curly hair. A further attempt to get closer resulted in her immediate retreat to the end of the alley, which ended like a dead street, with a perpendicular escape hardly perceptible at a distance, where she had emerged from a while ago. No matter how hard he tried to reach and convince her of letting him get closer, he was not able to wipe out the perception of danger she had about him. It would have been reasonable for any onlooker who had witnessed the neglected appearance of that maddened man. As he reached the junction, he noticed a dummy wall, which seemed solid enough as to consider moving it, blocked the way. That was the same insurmountable threshold he had found previously, blocking one of the alleys, through which the image of Marla had vanished seconds before. Repeating his recent experience, which he was unaware of in his unconsciousness, he decided to find out a way through, challenging whatever was obvious to his eyes.

Some time later, after many unsuccessful attempts, he fell on his knees thoroughly defeated, devoid of strength to keep fighting on. He was sweating and tired, unable to control his weeping. He had had a hope this time, embodied in that vulnerable and tormented being who was, like him, looking for a way out to the unknown. At previous times, which he couldn't remember, he had randomly wandered around those same paths, thinking himself to be alone in a world, which he couldn't but regard in his thoughts as unreal.

He suddenly woke up in his bed, his face wet by sweat and tears. It was another of those incoherent dreams in which he used to see himself ensnared in those puzzling, traumatic situations he could only escape from by waking up to the real world. For Marla, it was just the beginning.

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