Hungry dogs | A translation

Debra W. Weatherly

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The Hungry Dogs, A Translation

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A new translation of the book *The Hungry Dogs* was the focus of this study. Retranslating literary works has been found to be invaluable because it not only updates the language to appeal to modern readers but also puts them in touch with another culture. It is important in a translation to follow as closely as possible to the author's ideas and thoughts as opposed to adhering strictly to the literal context.

During the years following Peru's liberation by Simón Bolívar, one of the major problems facing the government has been the integration of the Indian. The Peruvian Indian has been exploited to the fullest and suffered atrocities at the hands of politicians who supposedly have the Indian's best interests at heart. The rise of many intellectuals in the early twentieth century on behalf of the Indian brought world-wide attention to this problem. However, in spite of efforts to integrate the Indian, the problem persists even today.

It was during the 1930's that Ciro Alegria made his debut as a young author defending the Indian cause. While in exile for political stances against the government, he wrote and published several books and articles that exposed the lack of humanitarianism in the Peruvian government's treatment of the Indian. After the publication of his books and others, world-wide intervention began.

Today, Peru is once again torn by internal strife in the form of the Shining Path Movement. The Shining Path bases its teachings on the philosophy of José Mariátegui, and began as a "big brother" for the Indian. Unfortunately, such ideals did not continue and the Indian is being exploited once more. The Indian, caught in the political web between the terrorists and the government's army, is the one who suffers.
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INTRODUCTION

An accurate translation of any language depends, in large part, not only on the correct interpretation of grammatical fragments but also on the ability of the translator to impart the spirit of the original author through the vehicle of translation. The belief that a translation must adhere as closely as literally possible to the original text prohibits the translator from communicating the author's true message. The translator must, therefore, reproduce the denotative meaning of the work and many times, in order to sustain the content of the message, the form must be changed.

The subject of literal accuracy in translation has been debated for a long time. Although considered to be one of the foremost problems in translation, translators over the years have begun to take more liberties with the grammatical structures in order to convey the thoughts and ideas of the author with greater clarity. Problems in translation now focus more frequently on the flow of the translated form of work, the rhythm, and the style instead of incorrect words or syntax.

The translator's primary task, then, lies in
fashioning a cultural reproduction of the author's message. In the case of scientific works this tends to be fairly straightforward and simple. However, where literary works, especially poetry, are concerned, this can be difficult. The same grammatical structure or the same word may have many different meanings.

The process that a translator undergoes to arrive at the finished product can often be long and tedious and other times quick and painless, depending on the grammatical construction and the degree to which the meaning is hidden in the syntax and the complexity of ideas. This process consists of finding literal meaning in the original language and analyzing it to find the grammatical relationships and the meanings of words. Next, the passage is translated to the target language, and, last of all, the passage is restructured to make the message fully comprehensible in the target language.

The primary structural elements from which an author builds an elaborate sentence are referred to as "kernels" by translators. A translator will begin with the kernel of the sentence--what is the basic sentence saying--and forward-transform, segment by segment, to the surface structure. Through this process there is a transfer from the original language to the target language with minimal
errors. The restructuring of the product will maintain the rhythm and tone of the work and retain the author's style.

Translation is important for communication. It helps to remove barriers between peoples, allows them to experience another culture and conveys information that they might not otherwise obtain. It gives insight into the feelings and thoughts of other nations and allows readers to experience foreign culture through different authors' perspectives.

Why do people translate? Sometimes there is a need for a translation in the field of science, for example, to disseminate beneficial knowledge more widely. Sometimes a work may have such literary value as to necessitate its translation.¹ Perhaps it can best be summed up in the words of Denver Lindley:

"This is something I admire so much," says the translator, "something I find so profound, so beautiful, so piercing that I must make you understand and admire it too, even though you, through some inadvertence, have neglected to learn the language in which it is written. Let me show you how it goes."²

²Lindley, p. 162.
Translation is the impulse one feels to share a good story with others. "The Hungry Dogs", by Ciro Alegría is just such a story. In it, the author concentrates on Indian life in the Andean mountains and the subjugation of the Indian by the white man.

One considerable problem in the translation appears in the dialect of the Indians. Alegría reproduces the mountain dialect which is an odd mixture of Quechua and Spanish, thus making it difficult to discern the exact meaning of the conversation.

In this book, Alegría focuses on the daily life of the Indians in the northern, mountainous regions of Peru. From the heights of the craggy peaks, the reader looks down into the hearts of the Paucar peasants, coming to understand their needs and desires.

A backdrop on the situation of the Indian provides the reader with a detailed outline of his condition. From the time of the Spanish conquest, the Peruvian Indian has been exploited to the fullest by his conquerors. After the liberation by Simón Bolívar and the establishment of decrees by José de San Martín, the Indian was given title to the land. This, however, proved to be of little value to the Indian because he failed to understand legal documents, their meaning, or the concept of private
property. Moreover, the vast majority of the Indian population was illiterate.

During the nineteenth century Peruvian legislation relegated the Indian position to low priority and considered the Indian to be an incompetent savage. Part of the problem was that between 1823 and 1900, Peru had nine different constitutions. About the time the Indian became acquainted with one set of laws, the government changed them.

One president stood out during this period because of his sincere attempts to integrate the Indian. This was Ramón Castilla, who recognized that "Indian education and integration were essential to the creation of a unified country and its future economic development." ³

In spite of his efforts to integrate the Indian and largely because of mistreatment, there were several revolts. Because of this, the Indian was required to have a passport to travel internally until 1851 and had to pay to use the public roads until 1856. In 1854, Castilla tried to improve the lot of the Indian by removing the Indian tribute. His decree began with the following words:

Independence, won with so many sacrifices, is an empty name for the majority

³Thomas M. Davies, Jr. Indian Integration in Peru (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974) p.29
of Peruvians who live under the strictest slavery and most complete debasement.

The rise of true indigenismo during the last decade of the nineteenth century had tremendous impact on the twentieth century. The Indians and their problems had been neglected in the universities in the 1970's and 1880's. This came to the attention of several intellectuals who began to crusade for the Indian cause. Among these men was Manuel González Prada. After fighting in the War of the Pacific, González saw the contribution of the Indian to the country. He took up the Indian cause in his writings and the faculty and students in the universities began to study the Indian problem also. González Prada instilled new patriotism in his fight for the Indian and other writers joined in. His influence was felt other than in his literature by future twentieth-century leaders such as José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre.

By the start of the 1900's, Peru was a divided nation, seemingly without leadership, and inundated with problems. Thomas M. Davies, Jr., a long-time student of Peruvian integration writes:

"There was no unity of language, custom, economics, or geography. There was an Indian nation and a white nation, a coastal nation

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4Davies, p.29.
and a sierra nation, a nation of those who lived within modern Western culture and those who lived under feudalism. Old problems had not been solved, but new ones had been created. The unfinished work of the nineteenth century was left to the intellectuals, the teachers, and the politicians of the twentieth century."

Government focus on integration in the early twentieth century concentrated on two areas: Indian integration through the military and by immigration, the mixing of European blood into the country. This was proposed by President Augusto B. Leguia who wholly supported the Indian cause. He began by altering laws that would benefit the Indian in 1909. The problem now was that Congress failed to pass the laws. Those that were passed were not enforced, and Indian exploitation continued.

During his eleven year tenure, Leguia tried to integrate the Indian by incorporating him into rural work for the improvement of the regions where Indians lived. Thousands of kilometers of roads were constructed and improved during Leguia's term which helped to speed integration, but at what cost?

... such material gains were offset by the cost in Indian life and oppression. Badly dressed and poorly fed, Indians were forced to work in distant provinces. With diseases and injuries left untreated, they died by the thousands. What little benefit they derived from the new roads was lost in the destruction

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^Davies, p. 43
of their families and themselves.\textsuperscript{6}

Even though Leguía failed to help the Indians in his eleven year rule, the indigenismo that he introduced did develop in politics, literature, music and art. But Leguía would not be in office to see it to fruition. A military coup overthrew him in 1930. Peru was left in a confused state. His successor was Colonel Luis M. Sánchez Cerro, a very popular figure who promised to cure the Indian problem. Calling the Indian "our brother" he pledged to give the Indian the dignity and homage that he deserved. Unfortunately, Sánchez Cerro was the same as the majority of his predecessors. His words rang fervently as campaign promises but fell empty once he was elected.

With the crash of the Leguía dictatorship, many expatriots who had been exiled made their way home. Among these was Victor Raul Haya de la Torre.

Haya de la Torre was born in the coastal city of Trujillo on February 22, 1895. Although he came from a middle-class family, adverse circumstances required that sacrifices be made to send him to a private school. From a very young age he demonstrated a tremendous interest in

\textsuperscript{6}Davies, p. 85
politics.

After moving to the capital he joined the Peruvian Student Federation (FEP) and, with the passing of years, became its president. Although Haya de la Torre had supported Leguía in the elections of 1919, he led the students in a protest against Leguía's policies on May 23, 1923. He was captured in October and imprisoned. Even from prison he continued his political protests which culminated in a hunger strike. It was at this point that Leguía deported him. On October 9, 1923 he sailed for Panama.

Two months before Haya de la Torre was exiled, José Carlos Mariátegui, another political leader, returned from exile in Europe. He had been exiled to Europe under the guise of a scholarship from Leguía and it was there that he defined acutely his ideas on Marxism which he brought with him on his return to Peru. Mariátegui's views on indigenismo were based on the works of Manuel González Prada. Mariátegui's indigenist philosophy was more widely received because of his own humble roots. He rejected racism and actually denied that there was a racial problem in Peru. His overall solution for the Indian problem was to solve the economic problems of the nation as a whole. Mariátegui looked to the Incan communist social structure
as an example and thought that the return of land to the Indian would be a major step in the right direction. His ideas did not sway the Leguía government much, but they did affect a whole generation of students and intellectuals. Although Mariátegui shared many of the same ideas with Haya de la Torre, came from more humble roots and was closer to the people. He established the newspaper Amauta in which he published many Marxist articles including some that Haya de la Torre sent from abroad.

On his exile, Haya de la Torre spent his first year in Mexico working with the Mexican intellectual philosopher, José Vasconcelos, and absorbing the excitement of the Mexican Revolution. It was at this time that he established APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance), a political party which concentrated on ending foreign domination of the economy, integrating the Indian masses into national life, and democratizing the political structure of the country. Although Haya de la Torre maintained that it was necessary to rescue millions of Indians from their state of ignorance, countless politicians before him had said the same thing. Unfortunately APRA was suppressed by Sánchez Cerro and also by his successor, Oscar Benavides.
Oscar Benavides was unanimously elected to the presidency three days after the assassination of Sanchez Cerro. Although he met personally with Haya de la Torre, like his predecessor he never allowed APRA to mature publicly. The suppression of APRA by these two men sent it underground and, at the same time, this unified the party.

For the first two years of his presidency, Benavides ignored the Indian problem. However, in 1936 a man by the name of Saturnino Vara Cadillo published a book on the mistreatment of the Indians in the construction of the highway from Huanaco to Pucallpa. Indians from the age of 16 to 60 were forced to work on the highway for practically nothing. If they tried to escape they were captured and forced to return. Benavides had formed the Superior Council of Indian Affairs in 1935. Unfortunately, the Council did little towards improving the Indian's lot in life nor did it focus on integration.

Overall, Benavides did not solve the Indian problem but he did make some changes in education and published many laws. Unfortunately, the Indian's condition did not improve and the thirties can only be said to have been turbulent times at best.

In spite of campaign promises and good intentions on
the part of a couple of presidents, nothing major was ever really accomplished for the Indian. Laws were either rejected by Congress or passed and then never enforced. The Indian continued to be exploited and used until 1948 when international intervention began as the Indian's condition and situation was brought to the attention of the world.  

It was during this tumultuous decade that Ciro Alegría made his debut as a literary defender of the Indian. He was born on November 4, 1909 on a farm in Huamqachucu, Peru. During his childhood he studied in different schools and spent his vacations on the large farms or haciendas of friends or family. It was on these haciendas that he gathered much of the information used in his works. He spent the year of 1923 working on his grandfather's hacienda with a handful of peones, or workers, and a cook. Through his friendship with these Indians and cholos (see glossary) he came to know the thoughts and feelings of the Indians. His experiences while working on the haciendas let him see first hand the

mistreatment of the Indian.

He continued in his studies in Trujillo and began writing poems and short stories while still a teenager. When he was just 15 he went with a friend to Lima where he tried to publish several articles and short stories. Failing miserably he returned home and continued his studies.

During his high school years he published a paper with some other students called Tribuna Sasjuanista. He was named the director and thus received his first work experience with a newspaper. Shortly after that he began to work for El Norte, a prominent Trujillo newspaper, as a reporter.

In 1930, Alegria began his university studies in Trujillo and worked part-time at La Industria, another newspaper. Towards the end of the year he and some other students formed a student movement and were expelled from their studies. Shortly afterward he joined the aprista party and spent his time in political work against Sanchez Cerro. For his labors he was imprisoned in December 1931, but released in July of the following year. Taking part in a small revolution against the government, he was pursued by the Civil Guard throughout the northern Andes. Alegria was captured close to the Ecuadoran border and
returned to Lima, where he had already been sentenced to ten years in prison. After passing nearly a year there, Alegria was freed when a jurist discovered a law that considered it illegal to sentence a prisoner while absent.

He immediately began to work for La Tribuna, a newspaper in Lima. Here Alegria wrote for the paper whenever the government permitted its printing. The articles he wrote brought him down once more and in December of 1934 he was exiled to Chile.

In Chile he began work for a newspaper in Buenos Aires. It was here that his first novel, La Serpiente de Oro (The Golden Serpent) was published in 1935. Alegria was also named the director of the Chilean Writers Society, the first time a foreigner had been named to the post.

Towards the end of 1936 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. This was thought to be the result of his time in prison, the constant flight through the mountains, and the persecution he had suffered in his own country. Alegria entered a sanatorium, and it was there that he wrote Los perros hambrientos (The Hungry Dogs). To cap off his literary awards he won the Latinamerican Novel Award for El mundo es ancho y ajeno (Broad and Alien is the World) in 1941.
Alegría spent the next several months working for Reader's Digest. From there he spent time in Washington where he worked as a coordinator in the Federal Agency of United Interamerican Affairs. During the next several years Alegría wrote articles for various magazines and newspapers, gave lectures at many different universities, and traveled world-wide giving speeches and teaching courses at universities.

On May 25, 1957 he married Dora Varona. And that same year he was invited to the Peruvian Book Festival. He arrived in Lima on the fourth of December after spending almost 23 years in other countries. In 1960 he and his family returned to Peru where he continued to write for various newspapers worldwide. He continued writing and giving lectures until his death on February 17, 1967. He died three hours after suffering a brain hemorrhage. And Peru suffered a great loss.

Ciro Alegría was perhaps one of the most vocal novelists of twentieth century Spanish American literature. Of the three novelists who defended the cause of the Indian in Spanish America, Jorge Icaza of Ecuador, Gregorio López y Fuentes of Mexico and Ciro Alegría of Peru, Alegría is recognized as giving the most realistic and satisfying presentation of the problems of Indians.
He is such an understanding interpreter of their problems because of his interactions with them during his early years.

Alegria differs from a number of contemporary Spanish American writers who portray their indigenous characters in such a way that the reader feels repulsed and a certain amount of pity for them. Alegria's characters are human, and by manifesting their nature as Indians, they become real. Unlike the early naturalist novelists, he does not merely stress the ugly side of his characters but concentrates on their good qualities and how they use these qualities to overcome obstacles in their daily lives.

Alegria has few equals in Spanish American literature in describing nature and her effects on men. In his writings, nature is depicted as human and carries on an intimate relationship with man. Nature and man become one and man's life revolves entirely around the whims of nature.

Another delightful ingredient in Alegria's works is language. It is quaint and refreshing. The characters speak the backwoods language of the northern Peruvian area which is Spanish with a strong dose of Quechua, the language of the Incas. Alegria's capacity enhances his ability to depict the Indian as a person, take his reader
into the Indian’s mind, and let him see out of Indian eyes.

Commentators of the Peruvian Indian saw him as a "stupid beast", who was incapable of the normal reactions of a "civilized being." For Alegría, this was unreasonable for he saw the Indian as a person capable of becoming an important member of Peruvian society if only given the chance. This chance eludes the Indian and Alegría stresses this in his works.

In *Wide and Alien is the World*, Ciro Alegría takes up the question of the white man, the Indian, and the land. Here he dove into racial psychology and the book almost becomes a social document of the Indian problem. Alegría offers an ethical message: Solve the problem by giving the Indians titles to the land.

Ciro Alegría believed that a great reason for Peru's social and economic failures resulted in large part from the inability of the whites who controlled the government and the courts to provide a satisfactory solution to the Indian problem. This is highly reflected in Alegría’s works. Whites are portrayed as villains who are out to exploit the Indian in every possible way. They have no thought or care for the Indian's well-being and consider him to be a mere obstacle with little or no human value. Perhaps Alegría's characters are lacking in credibility
because of this, especially to North American readers, but the social reality of these people is one of their qualities.

Given the lifestyle of the *cholo* (Peruvian peasants), the uneven structure of Alegria's works adds to their beauty. Given this scenario, he presents the people and region as they are. He also offers the first presentation of the landscape of Peru which grew from his vast knowledge of the Marañón region and his firsthand experience in the area. He is writing not only about a way of life and the problems facing the Indian, but also about his own experiences and situations that he observed as a child and as a young man.

Like many contemporary novels of Spanish America, Alegria's works are vividly masculine, the language is highly poetic with quaint dialogues and many of the scenes are tender and heart-warming. He uses many folktales to express the superstitions and religion of the Indians and in this way draws the reader into the very being of the Indians.8

A quick sketch of the Peruvian Indian will help the

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reader to enter into the story more fully. The diet of these peasants is among the worst in the world, basic sanitation methods are unknown, and diseases such as typhoid, diphtheria, malaria, and tuberculosis are rampant. Animals and humans co-habit. Altitude and chronic hunger promote the use of coca. (The leaves of the coca plant are chewed by the Indians.) Because it relieves hunger pangs, children are started on it at a very young age. The coca chewer suffers mental and physical damage from using the drug too much. Alcohol use is also prevalent among Indians, especially during the times of the fiestas.

. . . the fiesta is a brief moment in time when the Indian can escape the drudgery and oppression of his daily life. It is one of his few pleasures.9

In spite of the common belief that Indians are lazy, shiftless, good-for-nothing idiots, they are really very hard-working and if this fact did not manifest itself it was probably because the Indian was working most of the time for the hacendados or large land owners. These hacendados manipulated the Indian, making him work long hours and in horrendous conditions with little or no pay. The church likewise took advantage of the Indian and threat-

9Davies, p. 7
tended him with divine retribution if he failed to comply with everything the Church demanded. The Church also opposed education for the Indian.

In spite of many attempts on the part of the government to integrate the Indian, he was still isolated economically, socially, culturally and politically from society by the mid-twentieth century. The nineteenth century leaders of independence, José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar had both fought for Indian integration and just liberty for all men. However, it was to be many years before the struggle for equality and Indian rights made any headway. It was long past the time of our story that the Indian was given land in the agrarian reforms.

In The Hungry Dogs, set in the 1930's, Ciro Alegría drops his readers into the highlands of the Andes mountains. Simon Robles is a family man who entertains his friends with stories, plays the flute and drums, and raises dogs. He also works, like most of his friends and neighbors for the hacendado or large-land holder. In exchange for seed and use of the land, they must work long hours, breaking ground, tilling and sowing the hacendado's fields before going home at the end of the day to tend to their own. Simon's children do not attend school. They work like their parents and their parents before them.
Simon's dogs also work, and it is around these personable, heart-warming canines that Alegría weaves his story. It is a story of pain and suffering and desperation, but also about love, caring and unity. Man wars with Nature and Nature is relentless in her persecution.

Alegría takes us soaring with the delightful youth of Antuca in her treks in the mountainside with the sheep. Her innocence and joy is reflected page after page. The reader follows the dangerous trail of the Celedonio brothers with their faithful dogs and eventually enters the bleakest time of all. Alegría provokes in his readers emotion from one extreme to the other. Charming descriptions of young girls' feelings to chafing thirst and tormented death all bring us to a closer understanding of a different culture and a different life. What these characters feel the reader feels. It is disquieting to find that the readers' own emotions are left bared to the world as Alegría probes within us to unearth our inner-most feelings. Once more, Ciro Alegria depicts the Peruvian Indian in his reality.

A translation of Los perros hambrientos gives us a perspective on a people that cannot be achieved by political/economic studies. It gives us a perspective on
the Indian situation as it existed years ago and helps us to identify with the problems the Peruvian Indian is facing today. Perhaps most important of all, it draws the readers' attention to a problem confronting the Indian now. This problem is the reality of their everyday life. This is the persistence of Indian exploitation. The Indian has been exploited by the hacendados, the civilian politicians and the military. Now, the Shining Path Movement is using him to further terrorist purposes.

This movement has long held captive the attention of politicians, the middle-sector, and the common people of Peru. A thorn in the side of the Peruvian government, the movement began with the division of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) in the early 60's. Fundamentally basing their ideology on the writings of José Mariátegui, the movement started its teachings in the vast masses of poor peasants in the regions of the country that had been abandoned by the centralist bourgeois State. Communism was introduced to the people as an alternate form of government. Ironically, the Shining Path Movement began as the big brother and protector of the peasant but, through the years, it has been the peasant that has suffered the atrocities brought on by the chronic war between the government and the terrorists. The flag of the Shining
Path Movement rose in 1980 and introduced a growing reign of terrorism such as Peru has not experienced for years.

The first military action of the Path began on May 18, 1980 with the sabotage of the general elections and the destruction of several ballot boxes in the small towns around the southern Peruvian town of Ayacucho. Government troops moved in to control the situation, and, in the process, hundreds of men, women and children were caught in the deadly web between the two forces. Anyone suspected of cooperating with the guerrillas was brought in for questioning and detained. Torture and subsequent death became commonplace. The same situation occurred for anyone suspected of cooperating with the military.

Several years have passed, and the battle continues. The Shining Path has infiltrated the areas to the north, specifically the Huanaco region. Tingo María, a small town once referred to as "the cocaine capital of the world," has been invaded by the terrorists. The mountains around Tingo María provide the perfect hiding place for the guerrillas while also allowing them to exploit the drug trade for which the region is noted. Daily skirmishes between the army and the terrorists bring more bloodshed but bring the government no closer to a solution.

Meanwhile, the Peruvian Indian peasants are the ones
who suffer the indignities brought about by violence and terrorism. The idea of a revolution is not a fleeting thought anymore, but has become a concrete possibility.

What can be the solution for the death and destruction brought about by two forces both claiming to be the Indians' ally? Perhaps with the passing of time, the peasants themselves will revolt against the violence imposed on their society by the game played between the government and the guerrillas. The game where the peasants are but chess pieces that are used to wage a war where the meaning of life and its value exist no more.

The **Hungry Dogs** permits the reader to draw closer to the Indians we read about in today's headlines. Through Ciro Alegría the reader can identify with the cholo and his way of life. A defender of the Indian cause, perhaps if he were alive today, Ciro Alegría would again take his pen and express for us his outrage at the abuse of his brothers.
1. Dogs After the Flock

Bow-wow . . . , bow-wow . . . , bow-wo-o-o-w . . .

Ear-splittingly piercing, and sorrowful as a lament, the long, monotonous bark of the dog leading the flock, whipped through the sheep's white fleece. Running at a slow trot and romping along the hard earth, the sheep speckled the grey sensuality of the Andean mountain-range with white.

It was a large flock since it was made up of one-hundred pairs, not counting the lambs. You must know that Antuca, the shepherdess, as well as her parents and brothers and sisters counted sheep in pairs. Their arithmetic added up to five and from there started all over again. So they would have said, "five hundred" or "seven hundred" or "nine hundred"; but in reality, they never needed to talk of such quantities. Counting in pairs simplified the matter. And this had been the Indian bookingkeeping for generations. After all, why get into a muddle? Counting was a hoarder's task, and it's logical that a people who were unfamiliar with money and relied on the simplicity of barter would not beget descendants that
knew much about numbers. But, evidently, this is something different. We were talking about a flock.

Antuca and her family were content with owning so many sheep. And so many sheepdogs. The sad tone of their bark was just that, for they leaped and ran around happily. They guided the herd's progress wherever the shepherdess wished. She came behind, silently, or singing a tune, if she wasn't giving orders, while spinning the tuft of wool fastened to the distaff. The dogs understood her through signals, and perhaps, too, the brief words she used to send them from one side to the other.

"Along the black hill
my little lambs walk
Following the old ones
in my snow-white flock."

Antuca's small, sweet voice died a few feet into the desolate fullness of the hills, where straw is the only gift from the harshness.

The Sun is my father
the moon is my mother
And the little stars
are my little sisters.

The winding hills straightened their bluish-black rocks. Dense clouds floated and slowly rose around them.
The impressive, quiet grandeur of the rocks dwarfed the sheep, the dogs, and even Antuca herself, a twelve-year-old mestiza* who sang to keep herself company. When they came to a propitious straw field, they stopped walking and the dogs stopped barking. Then, an immense, heavy silence oppressed the nubile chest of the shepherdess. She yelled:

"Cloud, cloud, clou-u-ud . . ."

Because, that's what the mountain people yell. That's because they know and are intimate with everything that belongs to nature.

"Wind, wind, wi-i-ind . . ."

And sometimes the strong, harsh wind came. It bellowed against the cliffs, whistled between the straw, whirled the clouds, tousled the dogs' straight fur and stretched Antuca's black shawl and red skirt to the horizon. If there was a dog by her side, and there always seemed to be one, she would say to it in a joking tone:

"You see? The wind came. He pays attention . . ."

And she laughed with the laughter of a clear water stream. Understanding her, the dog moved his tufted tail and also laughed, with lively eyes that shone behind the pointed, shining muzzle.

*See glossary
"Dog, pretty, little dog . . ."

From time to time she looked at the flock, and if a ewe had gotten too far away, she pointed her finger and ordered:

"Look, Zambo, fetch her back."

Then the dog ran toward the stray, and barking around her, made her return to the herd. The sheep already knew of his persistence if they didn't obey. It was necessary. If a ewe lagged behind the flock, it ran the risk of getting lost or being trapped by a puma or a fox who always lie in wait from the shadow of their lair.

After having fulfilled his duty, Zambo returned, with the soft, agile trot of the Indian dogs, to lay down next to the shepherdess. They took shelter together, mutually sharing the warmth of their bodies.

And thus they spent the day, seeing the changing Andean crests, the bleating flock, the now blue sky, now cloudy and threatening. Antuca spun while chattering, yelling or singing for awhile. Sometimes she had spells of silence, as if she were one with the vast profound silence of the mountain-range, made of stone and immeasurable solitary distances. Zambo accompanied her attentively. He raised his ears at her slightest gesture and was quick to obey, though he was permitted to lay his
head on the soft cloth of her skirt and sleep lightly.

Sometimes Pancho, a peasant shepherd, appeared, his skinny figure an outline against the rough shape of a hill. Then Antuca called him, and after being sure that his flock was a long way from hers so they wouldn't intermingle, he went eagerly and happily toward her. A yellow dog accompanied him and exchanged hostile growls with Zambo. They ended up quieting down with the grumbling orders of their owners. And these two kept company from the beginning. They talked and laughed. Pancho took the harmonica that he carried on a red string around his neck and threw the happy and sad notes of the wainos* and the tormented notes of the yaravíes† to the wind. One called "Manchaipuito" broke Antuca's heart and made the dogs howl. She smiled maliciously and took strength from where there wasn't any to scold Zambo:

"Be quiet, idiot . . . Are you acting like something you saw?"

And once Pancho said:

"This yaraví was about a lover who was a parish priest . . ."

"Tell it." begged Antuca.

So Pancho unfolded the tale:

"They say there was this priest who loved this girl a
lot, but the girl didn't love him because he was a priest. And see, suddenly one day the girl dies. So since the priest loved her so much he went and dug her up and took her to his house. So there he had the body, and from one of the shin bones he made a quena*. And he played this yaravi, day and night next to the girl's dead body . . . And then, because of his love and also this sad music, he went crazy . . . and the folks from those parts that heard the yaravi day and night, went to see why he played so sadly. They found him next to the dead, rotten body of the girl, crying and playing his quena. They talked to him, but he didn't answer. He just kept playing. He's crazy, you see. And he died playing . . . Maybe that's why the dogs howl . . . the priest's soul comes when it hears his music, and then the dogs howl, because they say that dogs howl when they see souls."

Antuca said:

"It's so sad . . . don't play it."

But deep inside she wanted to hear it. She felt as if the heartbreaking cry of the Manchaipuito ran through her whole body, giving joyful pain and cruel, sweet suffering. The music's trembling pitch penetrated her like a sword to wound her roughly, but shaking her insides with a recondite tremor.
Pancho performed it and continually made the reeds of his instrument wail with the tremulous notes of the legendary yaravi. Then he said,

"What'd love be like, if one cries this way . . . ."

For a moment, Antuca enveloped him with an emotional look of a ripening girl, but then she was afraid and applied herself to the distaff and the howling Zambo. Her young hands—agile brown spiders—made the spindle rotate skillfully and produced thread similar to a silky, white snowflake. Pancho took pleasure in watching her and played other tunes.

That's what the idylls are like in the mountains. Her companion was more or less her own age. Ripening flesh would triumph in the end. Without a doubt they would join together and have children who in time would find other shepherds while watching the sheep in the heights.

But Pancho didn't always go, and then Antuca spent the day in solitude which was broken when she talked to the clouds and the winds, which in turn lessened Zambo's tranquility. When afternoon came, they started back. In the winter, they started back earlier because the sky's rusty opacity soon became a brutal storm. Antuca stood calling the dogs that appeared from the straw to run and bark, gathering the flock and slowly pushing them to the
There were four dogs that helped Antuca: Zambo, Wanka, Gueso and Pellejo. They were excellent sheep dogs, famous in the region where they had many offspring whose ability sustained the genius of their breed. The owner, the peasant Simon Robles, enjoyed as much fame as the dogs. This was due in part to them and in part because he could play the flute and the drum very well, among other things.

Normally, in the bustle of the herding, Zambo walked next to Antuca, bringing in the strays; Wanka went out front, guiding the flock, and Gueso and Pellejo ran along the flanks of the herd, being sure that none of the sheep strayed. They knew their job. They had never disabled an animal and imposed their authority by barking at their ears. It sometimes happens that other more common dogs get furious if they find a stubborn ewe and end up killing her. Zambo and the others were patient and enforced obedience with a nip or by pulling softly on the wool. These measures were used only as a last resort because their presence next to a ewe indicated that she should go toward the other side and a bark in her ears meant she should turn around. They were happy doing this in between leaps and bounds.
Not even a storm could get them. Sometimes, even when it was still early, the dark sky began to spit. If Pancho was there, he offered Antuca his poncho. It was a beautiful, colorful poncho. She refused it with a discreet, "I'm okay like this." and they began the return trip. The rain drops kept falling and were bigger, then fell in lashing streams. The thunder rumbled and the lightning drove violent, elusive swords of fire into the peaks. The dogs crowded the flock together, forming a dense mark that they could watch over more easily and led them at a faster pace. They had to wade through the streams and brooks before the storm increased their flow and made them impassable. They never turned back. They moved on quickly and silently. The terror of each flash and crash was painted in the sheep's eyes. The dogs walked tranquilly, dripping water from their soaked fur. Breaking the grey net of the rain with a light impulse, Antuca came behind. The distaff became a pilgrim's staff to keep her from sliding on the wet, slippery clay. The brim of her straw hat pointed downward so the raindrops could trickle off.

But they almost always returned home in calm weather, in the late afternoon hours, enveloped in the happy multicolours of twilight. They enclosed the sheep in the
fold and Antuca went into her house. Her chores ended there. The house was like few others. It's true it had a straw roof, but only one of the rooms had a cane and plaster wall; the other was made with adobe. In the corridor in front of the stove, Juana, her mother, passed the supper to father Simon Robles and to Timoteo and Vicenta, her brother and sister. The shepherdess took her place in the circle of fellow diners to share the sweetness of the wheat, the corn, and the roots. The dogs came closer, too, and received their rations in a round tray. Likewise, Shapra, the watchdog was there. They didn't fight. They knew that Timoteo wielded the club with an expert hand.

Night fell between violet and blue mists that thickened to black. Juana put out the stove, being careful to save a few coals to rekindle the fire the next day, and then everyone surrendered to sleep. Except the dogs. There in the sheepfold they pierced the quiet, heavy, night darkness with their persistent bark. Like they say, they slept with just one eye closed. Because the foxes and cougars take advantage of the shadow's help to assault the sheepfolds and take their prey. So you have to bark at the slightest noise. You always have to bark. That's why when the clarity is such that the
dangerous beasts' give up their raids, the dogs bark too. They bark at the moon, so fat and dawning, beloved of poets and romantic ladies, who plays the part of a cougar or hungry fox for the dogs.

"Bow-wow . . . , bow-bow . . . bow-wo-o-ow"

The Andean night vibrated with the voices of Zambo and his family, which, together with the other neighboring dogs, formed a howling choir.
Zambo and Wanka came from far away. To tell you precisely, Simon Robles brought them. They were still very young and had their eyes closed. If they would have had them open, they would have seen less. They traveled in the bottom of a hollow that their guide had made by folding the front skirt of his poncho, with the help of his forearm and hand. Perhaps they felt a continuous and irregular movement, without knowing what was going on. The horse's trot on the long, uneven road produced it. The dogs came from Gansul, from the famous kennel of don Roberto Poma.

"Juana, I brought dogs." Simon Robles yelled as he arrived at the house. She ran to get them and then took them to the pen.

In the middle of their infant shadows, they there nursed some small, tough teats for many days. Aided by the blindness, man denies the sheepdog the maternal teat and gives them a ewe. That way the dog grows and
identifies with the sheep. So that's how our friends finally opened their eyes and found themselves with a mean tit, many feet and a universe of round, white forms. An acrid odor surrounded them. And behold, they lived in that world and the meager teats gushed forth the stream that appeased their hunger. They understood that the sheep belonged to their lives. The little bitch began the experience of walking. And she tripped on the feet and slipped in the manure. A bleat gave her a headache. She tried to imitate it but only managed to bark. Still, her small voice startled a lamb and separated a ewe. Then she felt the difference. But anyway, the udder was good, and she could continue suckling. Life comes first, and the sheep gave her life. Soon her brother understood too.

Meanwhile, the eye-opening was enthusiastically celebrated by Antuca and Vicenta, who was the shepherdess at that time. They carried the dogs to the house.

"What'll we call them?"

Simon Robles said:

"Call the bitch Wanka."

And Timoteo thought:

"The little male that's darker, call him Zambo.*"

So that's how they were baptized. The male dogs name was easy to understand because he was darker than Wanka.
But what about her name? Still, noone asked Simon the reason for that name. Perhaps he himself didn't know. Wanka was a hardened tribe from Incan times. Maybe the word sprang from his chest like a star springs from the shadows. "Wanka", he said with the accent he could have used to say: "Behold a brave destiny". And you needn't think it strange, since it was dealing with a dog. The animal fraternally shares the mountain men's lives in a brotherly fashion.

The thing is that Wanka and Zambo grew up affectionately with the sheep and the Robles family. Their eyes, of course, soon saw more clearly and further away. The masters had sallow skin. Simon and Juana walked somewhat bent. Timoteo's poncho was swollen with a wide, rotund thorax. Vicenta, straight and agile, was the one who taught them the pastoral duties. But they got close to Antuca. Little, vigorous Antuca. She was waiting for them when they returned from the heights and she went with them to the hut that the watchdogs occupied in a corner of the pen. They pretended to fight. She gesticulated, growling and they playfully snapped at her. It was a fierce and bloodless battle that the sheep watched with a startled air.

They also became familiar with the region. Their
master's house was laid back on the slope of a hill, surrounded by plantings. Further on, in the middle of hills and slopes, other houses poked out also surrounded by fields that were green or yellow according to the season. Rising behind was the rocky, straw-coloured crest where the cattle grazed. And, downwards, not very far away, in the soft refuge of a hollow, a big tumble-down house with red tiles rested between many tall trees. Sometimes they followed Vicenta down there. There they saw white people, big walls and enormous dogs with short hair, gruff barks, and huge jaws. Vicenta had to hold them to her chest so that those monsters which approached them growling, wouldn't devour them. In all, they saw a lot. The whole area was furrowed with brooks covered with bushes and dark green trees that descended from the heights to lose themselves over far away hills to who knows where. In front, far away, rose some immense blue mountains. Wanka and Zambo never thought of going there. The paths were long, the rocks tall, and they couldn't abandon the sheep. The bark of the enormous dogs from the big house ricocheted from the rocks that went up the hillside, a little bit above their home. Our friends put all their fury into their own bark but they never sounded as thick and terrifying. The hills only sent back sharp
accents.

In spite of everything, life was good. They were growing. Their muscles became strong with the walks and races behind the prospering flock. Soon they would be big. The long bodies, covered with thick gray fur rose three spans from the ground. Their tails were full. The straight ears were always alert and rose at the slightest change. The pointed muzzle could pick up a ten-day-old trail. The shining white fangs could break a beam.

Breed? Let's not talk about it. It was as mixed as a Peruvian himself. Those energetic dogs that were boarders of the Andean mountains were only related in their small stature, abundant fur, and sharp voice. They are generally grey, like black, biscuit-coloured or spotted. Their features could link them to the fox, but without a doubt they had crossed with the old fox. This species of dog which is said to be extinct, surely yelps even in today's dog, which is a cross-breed like his owner, man. Hispanic and native ancestors were mixed in Wanka and Zambo, just like in Simon Robles and all the mixed people round about.

And soon, life called from within. Wanka gave birth to half a dozen offspring. Custom absolved her of her maternal duties with all of them. Four were snatched away
from her to be placed close to the new-born lambs. The others, of course, were overwhelmed with milk. They all had silky hair and looked like balls of wool. They grew up in turn, and in due time could run, bark, and guide the sheep. But since the demand for sheep dogs was high and, also on the other hand, since Simon couldn’t feed a whole pack, he sold them or exchanged them for more sheep.

With one or two exceptions, that's what happened to all the litters. Those that nursed Wanka didn't have the same fondness for sheep as the others did, but Simon would ask the buyer, "Do you want it for sheep or for the house?" And the aforesaid could answer, "It's to watch the house." or "To herd mares and cows." Manuel Rios answered this way. Simon gave him, as he did in cases like this, one of the dogs that wasn't a sheepdog by nature and could dedicate itself to other duties. Some time later, Manuel affirmed that Guendiente knew how to herd cows. With his nose he tracked down cattle that had wandered off. One time, while crossing the Maranon River, the lead cow began to turn back. This is fatal because on gaining solid ground, they refuse to get in the water again and have to be taken across on a raft. Manuel, together with other ranchers, saw the return of the cows from one bank. He ordered his dog,
"Get in Guendiente, take them to the other side."

The dog jumped in the water, but nobody thought he'd understood. What was surprising was that he got to the lead cow and took her by the snout. The water was rising and the current was strong, but the dog exerted extreme tension on the cow's nose and turned the beast to the other side. Manuel encouraged Guendiente with shouts. In the center of the river rose enormous rapids, but the cow, imitated submissively by the rest, had to swim to the opposite shore. The dog let her go only when her hooves had touched land. The lead cow got out and with her, the troops. Manuel was close to crying. When he told of the feat, no one believed him. So he named the other ranchers that had also seen it and ended saying,

"What do you expect of Guendiente? Huh!"

Like that, there were many. But they weren't always fortunate: Life in the hills is hard. Maybe one should tell the painful stories. One sad case was that of Mauser*. His owner, the landowner, Gilberto Moran, was filling a ditch in the road with rocks. This guy, to appear courageous, used to light his cigarette in the fire on the end of the fuse on the stick of dynamite. When everyone ran, he stayed bent over in front of the smoking hole. That's what happened this time. Except
that when Don Gilberto himself took off, Mauser, who had never seen anything like this before, insisted on prying into what was going on in the hole. The farmhands and his master, sheltered behind some rocks, called him in vain. Mauser kept watching the smoke that sprang from the rock. Everything happened so quickly, because death, in those wild lands, is almost always a question of seconds. The rock along with Mauser exploded in a thousand pieces. The echo prolonged the thunder. The flying rock left its track in a hole. On the sunny earth, a few drops of blood lasted but a few hours.

Tinto's luck was also deplorable. He watched Simon's house. One day, mounted on his brown mule and followed by Raffles, don Cipriano Ramirez, Paucar landowner, passed by. He lived in the big house afore mentioned. Raffles was a yellow dog of impressive size. The reckless Tinto dared to growl at him. Raffles threw him to the ground with one thrust. The fallen one realized his mistake and gave up, lifting his paws up. But Raffles knew nothing of forgiveness. With one bite, he broke Raffles' neck.

In time, Tinto was replaced in his chores by Shapra. This one got his name because of his twisted, tangled fur, because shapra means gnarled. (In the backwoods language, some Quechua words survive grafted in a crestfallen
Spanish that only now is beginning to enjoy new currency.) Shapra barked more frequently and louder around the place, but when Raffles came, the owners tried to refrain his impulses.

Chutín was the one who avenged Tinto. The son of the landowner, the child Obdulio, took a fancy to one of Simon Robles' dogs. At last he got a pup, who they called Chuto, which means droll. His small size and absence of honour contrasted with the arrogance and abundant heraldic scale of the dogs from the farmhouse. Seeking sonority and an affectionate shortening, the name changed to Chutín. Because, as it happened, he rose from the place of a passing fancy to that of affection. Everyone loved him, fulfilling once again the sentence "the last shall be first." And there was a reason for this. Chutín surpassed and left the other dogs far behind in all the tasks. The shrewd dogs bit terribly; they became furious on seeing blood and killed or mangled the herd without cause. With his persistent bark, prudent nips, untiring agility and good humour, Chutín did it all, which included herding a good number of cows. What's more he learned how to hunt partridges. With Obdulio, a child of ten, he went on great hunts around the area. It's a job that requires skill. Suddenly, from right beside the hunters, the
partridges came flying next to the ground and crying piteously. Stories say they have three flights: a long one, the second one shorter and the last one even shorter, and then they can only run. But in reality, they frequently fly more. The dog should run after his supposed prey as soon as it begins to fly to see where it comes down and chase it, causing it to fly again and in this way tiring it to facilitate its capture. Not just any dog can do it. They have to be very fast. Chutín did it. At first he thought the prize was for him, but afterward he learned the birds were to be given over. He watched them disappear in the haversack and then, in time, he received a good portion of feet from Marga, the cook.

Then too, Chutín didn't avoid the sudden attacks of nature's strength. When it rained or a strong wind blew, the delicate dogs began to tremble with cold and curled up in a corner. Chutín romped in the rain and barked happily. He loved the storm's momentum and the wind's voice.

Even Don Cipriano loved him and saved the bones from his plate for him. When the other dogs got jealous and tried to shake him up, the land owner used the whip that was hanging next to the office and was used to tan dogs and farmhands. The latter feared it more than the former,
but, at any rate, Chutín enjoyed a respectful consideration. That's how he was able to beat and surpass all the nobility, avenging Tinto, because amongst the exiled was Raffles, of course, the ferocious criminal.

The time came when Simon Robles' herd increased and he needed more herders. And the time came when Antuca should take charge of the flock. She had grown up enough, however not enough to go without any more help from Vicenta. So Simon Robles said:

"We'll separate two more dogs for ourselves from the next litter."

They were Gueso and Pellejo. (Bone and Skin) Simon himself gave them names because besides playing the flute and the drums, he loved to give names and tell stories. He appointed the most curious nicknames to the animals and people in the neighborhood. He called a Chinese woman addicted to the gallant mercenaries, "Shepherdess Without a Flock," and to a peasant with a rough voice and a feeble look, "Fasting Thunder"; a skinny horse was "Cut-wind", and a sterile chicken was "Lay-air". Because he gave himself the pleasure of naming them, he posed as a moralist and a tough guy. He frequently saddled up Cut-wind and wouldn't let his wife kill the chicken. On baptizing the dogs, he said at tea time:
"We'll call them thus, because there's this little story: There was this little old lady that had these two dogs, see. Well, one day, the old lady left her house with the two dogs and then this thief comes and gets under the bed. The lady came back at nighttime and lay down. The thief was real quiet, waiting for her to fall asleep and choke her stealthily without the dogs hearing it, and then find the keys to the box of money. Then, when the old lady bent over to reach for the potty, she saw the thief's feet. And since all old ladies are wise and such, so was this one. So she began to wail as if she couldn't help herself: "I'm so old; woe, I'm so old and skinny; I'm just Gueso and Pellejo" (Bone and Skin). And then she repeated it louder each time as though astonished: "Gueso and Pellejo, Gueso and Pellejo!" So then the dogs heard and came running. She signaled to them and they attacked the thief and left him in pieces. So therefore, these will also be called Gueso and Pellejo."

The story was praised and, of course, the names were accepted. But the quick-witted Antuca had to point out:

"But, how did the old lady guess what was going to happen and name them like that?"

So Simon Robles replied:

"She just named them and afterward by chance they came
in handy. That's how everthin' is." And Timoteo, evidently risking the grave respect due his father argued:

"What I say is that the old lady was really great because she didn't shut her door. If so, the dogs wouldn't have been able to get in when she called. And if the dogs were in and didn't see the thief, they were pretty dumb dogs then . . . ."

The story's enchantment had been broken. Even around the stove, where simplicity is as natural as chewing wheat, logic butts in to complicate things and disillusion man. But Simon Robles anwered like any storyteller would have in his element:

"A story is a story."

This was the same as saying that you have to accept stories with all their downfalls that help them make sense, because even life itself has a sense of make-believe at times. Juana was the one who broke the silence that was produced from the root of that sentence:

"Everything's tangled and you can't see, like the end of the yarn in the skein, but it's there . . . it's just that sometimes the skein is so big."

There was no more question about the story.

Three of Gueso and Pellejo's brothers escaped Simon Robles' clever farm hand. One of them was Manu. Of the
other two, nothing more was known: people who lived far away took them. It was Manu's lot to belong to Mateo, the husband of one of Simon's daughters, named Martina. It's worth telling about this life and passion separately. As we learn about Simon, frequently with his help, we'll tell a lot more important stories. In case you're in doubt, because the truth is on some occasions so paradoxical or so sad, that man seeks reasons to insert uncertainty.

Speaking generically and saving precise distances in each situation, this reminds me of a certain parish priest from the province of Pataz. He was a humble, simple priest from the string of those pious Indians whom Bishop Risco of Chachapoyas, after having taught them dog-Latin, tonsured and threw out to the world to uncover the injustice of heresy. In this case, the world was the mountainous regions of northern Peru.

Our good priest once preached the famous Sermon of Three Hours in the church of the Signas district. He put much emotion and great poignancy in the telling of the sufferings and death of Our Lord. The result was that all of the mountain parishioners, especially the pious old ladies began to groan and cry like babies. Because of the effect of his words and because he didn't know how to relieve all this pain, the confused priest at last said:
"Don't cry little brothers. Since it's been such a long time ago, who knows, maybe it's just a story."
Mateo Tampu, a dark Indian of robust muscles and a trotting walk, arrived one day at his father-in-law's house. He still had dirt from his fields on his hands and feet.

"Father, I want a pup."

Simon Robles was sitting in the door of his hut. For a moment he clicked his tongue, indulging in the sweetness of his coke leaves and then he answered what was expected:

"Well, get him."

Mateo went to the fold and picked up a pup from those that slept on a pile of straw waiting for the return of their adoptive mothers. We've already said that among them were Gueso and Pellejo. They were still too small to follow the flock.

Then Juana asked:

"And Martina?"

"She's pregnant."

The pup began to squirm around and cry. So Mateo imprisoned him in one side of his saddle-bags, covering the warm, palpitating little body, but leaving the head
"Well, I'm going then," he said when he finished his task. At the same time, he threw his prisoner over his shoulder. The pup looked down with timid, surprised eyes.

"Sit a spell," invited Simon.

"Sit and eat a bit," added Juana.

"No, those weeds are gaining on me," said Mateo.

He was the one gaining on the weeds. He was famous for being a hard worker. The crops in his clean fields prospered.

"See ya," he finished.

He took to the trail at a fast trot.

The prisoner was really surprised at the greatness of the world, and he looked around trying to understand. He had only seen sheep besides Antuca, Zambo, and his little brothers—and we know they were denied Wanka. His horizon was the black wall of the fold, made of sticks imprisoned between long rods which were in turn held by strong stakes. Now he had before him the rough vastness and multicolor of the fields. The distance was tinted with purple and blue, and it seemed that it pushed on to lose itself in abysmal ravines. The little one would have liked to cry because that march toward the unknown frightened him, but his perplexity was greater than the
unsuspecting revelations, and he kept quiet in the middle of withdrawn attention. The sound of a river which came down from the heights hit his ears with its thunder then showed him the tumultuous blue and white of its clear waters. The man entered it resolutely and waded across it with the current around his waist. Once on the other bank, the pup felt that the man was strong and trusted him. His anxiety lessened and he even laid it on his watch-tower, that is to say, Mateo's shoulder. He closed his eyes, and half asleep, listened to the crunch of the pebbles in the path. Suddenly a loud rustle made him lift his head. An enormous black bird flew through the air.

"Guapi*, condor, guapi . . ." Mateo hollered.

The pup would have liked to bark since he already knew how, and he liked to add his small voice to those of the other dogs when the man yelled. But now he felt squashed with his stomach and neck pressed tightly in an uncomfortable position and he had to continue in silence.

At last they arrived at what the "watch-tower" considered a final landmark. They didn't find any abysmal ravines there. The earth continued unwinding itself for immeasurable distances towards new distant horizons. The world was wide and long.

At a certain point his conductor stopped and put him
on the ground, then sat down next to him. From the other side of the saddlebags he took out a bundle. He untied a tablecloth, lifted up a mate* and in another appeared a pile of pleasant-smelling potatoes, yellowed with hot peppers. He spat out the wad of coca and began eating quickly. He shared the lunch with his companion, wiping the hot peppers from the potatoes on the tablecloth and stuffing them in the small, wet snout.

"You tired? Eat pup. We're about to get there. Eat up now."

He started to joke around:

"Today its potatoes, but you'll get your good meat, the rich chicha*. . . you're gonna feast . . . You'll see pup."

The one referred to didn't understand and that was best. Otherwise, maybe he would have believed it, later suffering deception. Because what he always ate—when he ate—during the rest of his life, was ground corn or also "shinte", a typical dish that is a watered down mixture of wheat, green peas and broad beans, where potatoes play the part of lonely islands. It's also true that he could always gnaw on a bone when fate was propitious. But he was frugal, like those of his race and their very owners, contenting themselves with what there was.
They arrived at the hut with the shadows of the night. The dog listened to voices and bleating. Then he felt them release him, and they left him at last next to something soft with a familiar odor. He was in the middle of a flock once again. Worn out, he snuggled his small body next to the amicable softness of the fleece and slept.

Damian, a small boy, who went to the sheepfold every day, was his best friend.

"He seems like your brother," Martina said one day.

"Manu, manu," repeated Damian in his baby language.

So they gave him that name.

It could be said that they grew up together. And together also, they went one day to herd the sheep, relieving Martina of that chore. But the truth is, they didn't go very far from the house.

Time passed. The flock, which at the beginning was a small herd, was growing. Damian grew vigorously. Manu looked strong and beautiful. Martina's womb brought forth another son. Mateo traced fertile furrows. Everything on the earth prospered.

One afternoon, the lapis lazuli sky came down to Martina's eyes in two bluish clots. That's what one could think, but the truth is that Martina had been crying alot. She cried up to the moment when whe heard herself
cry, and then she said:

"Now I won't cry anymore . . ."

And she kept sitting in the door of the hut, spinning slowly and painfully, while she felt the soft breathing of the son that slept on her back and the cat-like purring sound of the spindle.

Suddenly she thought she saw Mateo Tampu's face in the ball of wool, but paying closer attention she could only distinguish the innumerable small threads forming a white mountain. She rubbed her eyes again.

They had taken Mateo, so skillful in guiding the spotted oxen and making the earth tender. He had broken new ground in so many fields. The house was always surrounded by them with their successful harvests, plentiful, lively colours of new baize as if they were remnants of a riding skirt: the purple quinoa*, the green corn, the yellow wheat, the dark beans. The potato fields clustered together above, in the colder heights.

Everything would be fine if he were here. Virgen of Carmen! Who knew if he would ever return!

At last Damian came in herding the sheep. Manu was leaping about, barking, but not like every day. He sensed something and was also sad.

Damian had a purple mouth from wild berries. She
called him and stood looking him in the eyes.

"My comfort!"

She squeezed the seven-year-old waist slowly, where a pert Indian waist was already developing and then she put the new poncho that she had woven for his debut at the fiesta on him.

"Pretty mama!" he said, faced with the shriek of color.

But she didn't notice her son's jubilation. She gave it to him because they wouldn't go to the fiesta. Mateo wasn't here, and the house, the fields and the cattle need more attention. Besides, at the fiesta someone would ask her to dance and then people would talk . . ., and who knows, he might come back. He'll come back. Some have come back and others no, but Mateo will be one of those that return. Yes . . .

Martina feels her heart expand with hope. She dreams, perhaps looking at a horizon that fades away. But the very growing shadows bring her out of her withdrawal and she goes to the stove.

The crackling fire palpitates in the midst of the night and other far-away lights start to burn. The conversation of lights begins through the dense punco* darkness, spread out tightly over the twisted skirts of the mountains.
Martina and Damian eat, listening to the bleating of the sheep, and they give Manu the leftovers, which is a lot now because Mateo's split pumpkin was left empty. The china feels the man's absence even more in those little details: in the mate without food; in the hoe that she herself brought in, thrown against the door; in the lavish white sombrero hanging on the wall that no one will wear now; in the plow that rests under the eaves, whose team will be abandoned; in the bed that will sadly be too big for her alone . . .

She thinks she needs to explain to her son what happened, but she doesn't know how to do it and remains silent. The silence is tense because Damian looks at her with eyes full of questions. Suddenly both of them burst into tears. It's a hoarse weeping and broken, morose and silent, but that binds them together, that joins them.

"Your Pa . . ., They took you Pa!" she erupts at last.

She couldn't say another thing and remains still, denied any movement. He barely understands and becomes quiet also. They turn off the stove and go into the hut, climbing between the shadow onto the creaking bed. The little one cried a little. The sheep bleat. Later on an overwhelming silence fell over the hills, full of an anguished quietness and a frightening dumbness. But human
silence is deeper. That small silence of a mother and a son that can be valued at something equal to four hundred years.

Manu, who has tracked his master down the trail, howls at last. He sends his complaint rolling down the path that zigzags toward the river, the valleys and beyond. . . To where? . . . Who knows?

What happened is that they took Mateo as an enlisted man for military service. Neither Damian nor Manu understood that. Martina herself doesn't understand exactly what it's about.

That day, the gendarmes took him by surprise while he was lovingly earthing up the lush corn field. Bent over the furrows, hoe in hand, he didn't see them until they were very close. Otherwise he would have hidden, because they never show up in the countryside for any good reason: they take the men prisoner, or require horses, cows, sheep, or even chickens. Well, Mateo couldn't do anything else but put the hoe to one side and greet them with his sombrero in hand.

"Hail Holy Mary, Good-afternoon . . ."

The gendarmes spurred their sorry nags that advanced, trampling the corn field. They carried enormous rifles and were dressed in blue uniforms with green trim.
Without more ado, and practically screaming, they asked him:

"Where's your *libreta*?"

Mateo didn't respond. The gendarme with braid trim snarled:

"Your *libreta* and military conscription. You're acting like a lame dog."

Mateo didn't understand very well, but he remembered that they took away another Indian from the hillside in front years ago for the same thing. They had left him because he was too young, but now they were evidently dealing with him personally. He guess that he should say:

"Well, it should be there in the hut."

And he began to walk, followed by the *cachacos*, who took pleasure in spurring their horses and prancing them over the young plants. Mateo looked scornfully at the destruction and spat his anger in thick, green, coca spit. He thought he would get to the hill and start running to hide himself in the forest by the creek, but he felt them ready the rifles, rattling the bolts, behind his back, so he had to keep on to the hut and go in.

He came out accompanied by Martina. He was grim and silent. She, with her hands clasped and raised, crying and imploring:
"There's no **libreta, taititos**, from where would we get one? Don't take him taititos. What'll become of us? Taitas, for the wounds of Our Lord, leave him."

One of the gendarmes got off his horse and hit her, throwing her to the ground, where Martina stayed like a ball of wool, groaning and wailing. He immediately tied Mateo by the wrists behind his back. It was a horsehair rope and Mateo struggled, feeling the flesh rub off. The one with the stripes drew his horse near and slapped him twice across the face.

"That's the way, corporal," the other one laughed while he mounted, "So he learns to fulfill his duties, this animal half-breed."

And then together:

"Walk . . ."

"Walk now . . ."

Martina got up and went to put his poncho on him, because, as is natural, he'd been hoeing in his shirt-sleeves. Mateo began to walk with a tired step, but had to speed it up as he was threatened by the gendarmes, that cracked the reins over his ears. They devoured the path. Downward, and downward. One hill and another. Martina went up on a little rise to watch him disappear around the last bend. He went in front with his purple
poncho and his big, reed sombrero, followed by the trotting horses, which held the captors with rifles that now, having no purpose, were slung across the curved backs. The rope went from the wrists to the saddle-horn, hanging in a painful, humiliating curve.

The scene remained in Martina's eyes. From then on she always saw Mateo going, tied up and unable to return, with his purple poncho, followed by the blue-uniformed gendarmes. She saw them turn at the bend and disappear. Purple-blue . . ., purple-blue . . ., until nothing remained. Until they were lost in uncertainty like the very night.

That's how the house was left without help. There was no husband, father, master or laborer. Martina did her chores in the midst of a painful silence; Manu, infected by the sadness of his masters and sorrowful himself, howled at the distant places, and the earth filled up with weeds.

The time of harvest arrived and Mateo didn't return.

"It's taking a spell." said Simon, who went with his woman to help in the harvests; "When the chachacos take them, it takes a spell . . . I'm old or maybe they'd of taken me too."
And Juana consoled her daughter.

"He'll be back, he'll be back . . . ."

But Martina felt in her heart that Mateo was far away.

For the wheat threshing other farmers from thereabouts went, following the custom of the minga*. Afterwards, the four harvested everything else, with furious strength. They laboriously shucked the corn, beat the broad beans, and deloused the quinoa.

These chores had been happy ones during other times but now they held no delight, especially to Martina. They spoke little, only what was necessary. Simon tried to tell stories, but didn't insist when he felt himself without an audience. Martina only half listened to him, Juana was a bit deaf, Damian didn't understand a lot of things. Only Manu looked at him with attentive eyes.

The taitas whispered together at night and this made Martina think it concerned something irreparable. She got worked up:

"Taitas, what's goin' on? Tell me, taititos. . . ."

Then the old ones pretended to be asleep. A fierce wind got in through the cracks in the hut bringing all the desolation of the jalca*. It lifted the covers and wailed for a long time. Martina hugged her youngest son who seemed even poorer and unprotected because of his
ignorance of the disgrace.

After a few days, the parents left.

Simon said to her:

"When the time comes, I'll send over Timoteo to sow.

Martina watched them walk slowly over the dancing road, on the hillside, until they reached the last slope. They stopped there and turning around towards her, waved their sombreros, then began sinking beyond the horizon.

She would have liked to run, and catch up with them and go with them, but around her was her house and her cattle, and everything that Mateo would like to find when he returned. She stayed, firmly stepping on the earth as though rooted to it. She felt that Damian had caught her around the waist... Her children! And the house, and the cattle, and the earth. She had to stay. And wait for him.

That afternoon it got dark in an even sadder way. The shadow soon erased the silhouettes of the distant hills on which Martina hung her hope: on them were the broken trails that Mateo would come down on his return.

The night swallowed and gained for itself all life. Even with her children, Martina felt an oppressing loneliness.
All of these occurrences explain the rise of Manu.

In the house where there's no man, the dog keeps watch. And Manu took on a special importance because of this. He himself realized, although not precisely, that he didn't play the same part as he had before. He wasn't just the watchman at night that smelled out the shadows. During the day he was running around nearby accompanying Damian and the sheep. Martina sheltered her forlornness in him. She called him when she saw people in the distance: the hut was next to the main road, and white men traveled on it. She was still a good-looking woman. Her face shone with a youthful freshness that the pain still hadn't stained. The curves of her breasts and hips were badly hidden under a loose blouse and the thick baize. If the wind lifted her skirt, the soft, ochre legs, as if made from smooth, brown clay, could be seen.

Manu, feeling himself to be the watchman of the house and its dwellers, became proud. He growled and showed his sharp fangs on the slightest occasion and always had his gaze and ears alert. Sitting straight on a hill or a rock, he was an untiring look-out for the area. But, nevertheless, he too missed Mateo, and, from time to time, the nights heard his plaintive howling.
4. Puma of the Shadows

The night was black. The dogs barked in the sheep-fold, but not like they usually did, with a tired, monotonous accent; their voices now held a hint of alarm, of bitterness, of contained violence. It's the same bark of the dogs when they smell the acrid stench of pumas and foxes in the wind.

"Geez! I swear they feel a cougar." Timoteo pointed out.

In the neighboring sheepfolds the alarm spread also. The night was populated with barking and calling. The masters, with their shouting, encouraged their dogs and terrorized the supposed prowling, wild beasts:

"Sic 'em . . ., sic 'em, sic 'em, . . ." 
"Puma, puma, puma-a-a-a . . ." 
"Fox, fox, fo-o-ox . . ."

And it was truly a favorable night for the destructive ones' raid. Not even a star shone. Night without heaven or space, denying gazes and footsteps, blackened with shadows. In past times and on a night like this, the puma assaulted the Robles' sheepfold. Trueno* attacked and
followed on the chase. They ended up tangling in a fierce battle, because the dog returned after a long time, panting and full of wounds. Juana applied lemon with salt and white rum to the wounds in vain. He bled until the early morning. Then he died. But the afternoon of that very day, the buzzards glided repeatedly over a hill and descended behind it. Simon went to check and verified that Trueno too had his fangs firm: the puma was dead.

That’s when he decided to go to Don Roberto Poma after two pups. Zambo, Wanka, and their offspring, though they carried out their shepherding chores like reliable dogs, didn’t have any bloody episodes to date, even though four throats for one sheepfold is a lot for any wild beast to dare to come near. It’s true that, without a doubt, they chased off foxes and pumas, but these, being prepared, ran a good distance and could hide themselves opportunely in the thick woods of the creeks. Perhaps it would be rude not to mention Shapra at that moment. Being the watchman of the house, he trapped and killed a possum. The very sullen possum was used to winding its long, naked tail around its victim’s neck and dragging them off at full speed. That’s what the deceased did with one of the chickens that was sleeping in the lean-to of bars next to the hut. But, her companions raised the very devil in a
great uproar and she herself weighed so much and squawked as much as her neck permitted, that the possum couldn't get very far, and Shapra was soon following the scent. For better or worse, on trying to jump an irrigation ditch, his prize reduced his forward momentum and the kidnapper fell with his victim into the water. Shapra caught up with them there. The battle wasn't very epic. With two bites Shapra broke its neck. Furthermore, the other dogs arrived, demanding their part in the fight and soon they shredded the unfortunate hunter.

Now the dogs barked angrily, anxious for action. Perhaps their very desire to fight made them sense pumas and foxes where there were only leaves stirred by the wind. Suddenly, they leaped the wall of the sheepfold and bolted, running across the fields. At the hut, their barking could be heard from far away.

Let's get out to the flock," said Simon Robles. "The fox is very wise. If there's one out there I swear that when he senses that the dogs are on the other side, he'll come . . ."

Sure enough, the fox is shrewd. In this case, he would carry off a lamb. Since he doesn't have a lot of strength, he only kills sheep when he finds them lost in the fields. Otherwise, he just abducts lambs and
chickens, because they weigh less and permit him to run quickly.

Simon Robles and his family went into the sheepfold and sat down on the dogs' straw. At night a flock projects an original and impressive presence. Erased by the darkness, only their eyes can be seen. Yellow and immobile, they shine in the midst of the shadows. You could say that hundreds of strange, quiet lights burned. Or, better still, that the left-over coals from a rare, yellow fire are there. Since the whiteness of the fleece is swallowed by the darkness, the eyes lose their animal characteristics and shine like fantastic gems in the night. The Robles were used to seeing that, and without commenting on it, began to yell so their presence in the sheepfold would be noticed.

"Fox, fox, fo-o-ox ..."

The dogs' barking was heard from here and there, each time further away. This happens when they don't have a sure scent or aren't able to determine anything exactly. Simon noticed it and then said:

"The night lies, and scares the animal and also the *cristiano*. The shadows give birth to pumas and foxes where there are none, it gives birth to fears."

The darkness just barely allowed the others to see
Simon's silhouette. But the aroma of the *coca* that he chewed and the snapping sound on his knuckle of the *checo* that held the lime with which he sweetened the ball of *coca*, clearly indicated his presence and even his attitudes. Timoteo, didn't use the bittersweet leaf because of his youth.

"That's how it is, that's how it is." he continued, and then was quiet. Probably because at that moment he put the lime covered wire in his mouth so the *coca* leaves stuffed in one of his cheeks would macerate. The wire is hooked on to the lid of the *checo*. As it passes over the humid *coca*, it gets wet and goes back to the *checo* like that. Then, as it's shaken against a knuckle it gets covered with the lime it holds, ready once again to take a load up to the wad in the mouth. When *cholos* and Indians take a break from their work, they sit in a row, and slowly chew *coca* leaves. The little thump of the *checo*, soft and repeated, forms a sort of music. They say that during the day *coca* gives you more strength to work. At night-time, it makes you want to talk more, at least it had that affect on Simon. On the other hand, it causes others to be silent and concentrate. It's that Simon's very fibre was talkative. Of course, that doesn't mean he was a chattering. On the contrary; he was capable of
deep, meditative silence. But when speech sprang forth from his chest, his voice flowed with the spontaneity of water and each word had a suitable place and the right stress.

Without a doubt, at that time he was going to tell one of his stories. You never knew when you could reckon them real or imaginary. He made all of them sound true and drew conclusions for each event. And now, for example, his listeners wouldn't know if the Holy Book told it like that or if Simon added events from his own harvest of stories.

Taking advantage of this meeting, let's look at Simon's whole body—it explains a lot and we shouldn't just take it lightly—even though at the moment it's hiding in the shadows. He was a sallow cholo, whose Indian face was polished by the Hispanic blood that was mixed in his ancestry. Therefore, his cheekbones and mouth weren't as prominent and his nose was long and unbroken. He was old and his moustache and goatee beget silver-grey. The baggy, wrinkled eyelids didn't hide the shifting, brilliant naughtiness of his brown eyes. Our friend's dress was regional: a straw sombrero, long poncho, shirt, dark pants held up by a colourful belt, and buttons. His back was slightly curved but noone would say
he was worn-out. His body was full of noticeable muscles that exuded energy and his hands were the huge ones of a man who works the wide earth and holds a tight rein.

Simon Robles was famous for everything we've already said about him: his flute, his drums, his dogs and his stories. He also had children. Outside of those we already know, he had another girl and two boys. The girl was married like Martina; the others were in areas of farming. Of course, Juana had responded to her vital calling. Old age hadn't taken her wide, round hips, full breasts or strong womb from her. Like a chip off the old block—and in this case, there were two strong, old blocks—the children went through the world energetic and brown, hand in hand with life.

But let's get back to that night and that time. Once again, Simon knocked the checo against his knuckle and spoke:

"Now this here's the story of the shadow or better still, of a puma and other things and shadows. Listen up now . . ."

"It's that our father Adam was in Paradise, carrying on like everyone knows, the given life. They had every fruit there. They had mangoes, chirimoyas*, oranges, avocados and guayabas* and all the fruit you see in the
world. There was everything and all the animals too, and they all got along good together and with our father. But every Cristiano's nature is to be discontent. And see, he didn't have to do nothing but reach out his hand and take what he wanted. And then our father Adam griped to the Lord. It's not certain he asked for a woman first. First he asked for the night to be taken away.

'Lord' he says, 'take the shadow; don't make night: let it only be day.'

And the Lord says, 'What for?'

Our father said, 'Because I'm afraid.'

Then the Lord answered him: 'Night were made to sleep.'

And our father Adam said, 'If I'm still, it seems to me that an animal will attack me, taking advantage of the dark.'

'Ah!' says the Lord, 'That shows me you have bad thoughts. None of those animals was made to attack another.'

'That's the way it is Lord, but I'm scared of the shadow: just make day, that every little thing shine in the light.' our father begged.

Then the Lord answered, 'What's done is done.' Because our Lord doesn't undo what he's done. And then he
says to our father, 'Look', pointing to one side. And our father saw there the biggest puma yet, bigger than all of them, that came screaming with an ugly voice like it would eat our father. It opened its huge mouth and walked. And our father was afraid seeing how it came toward him. Then it got there and didn't do anything. It went over the top of him without hurting him and disappeared into the air. It was a puma of the shadows, see. And the Lord says,

'You see, it was pure shadow. That's what the night is like. Don't be afraid. Fear makes things out of the shadow'.

He left without paying any more attention to our father. But since our father didn't pay attention either, though he should, he kept getting scared at night. And his evil habit passed to the animals too. That's why you see devils, goblins, and sorrowful souls, and also pumas and foxes and all sorts of uglies during the night. And more times than not, they're only shadows, like the puma the Lord showed our father. But the story doesn't end there. It's that since our father didn't pay attention, he was always afraid, like I told you. He asked the Lord for company. But so the Lord would give him some, he said,

"Lord, you gave everyone company but me'. 
And since everyone had but him, the Lord had to give him someone. That's how the woman lost, because she came with fear and the night . . . "

The dogs returned, worn out from their comings and goings.

And Simon Robles finished:

"Seems like this time it was a puma of shadow too."

This said, they went to bed.
One night Vicenta said to her sister:

"Antuca, tomorrow I'm going with you because I want to get some ratanya."

Ratanya is a small plant of the heights, whose twisted root, when mashed and boiled with baize, tints it purple. It's used a lot and that's why in the regions where it exists, that colour abounds in ponchos and skirts.

Simon added:

"Bring some pacra too. I'm going to give the cattle some salt now."

Pacra is a small plant from the heights too, but it grows in the highest part, up where even straw can't live. I springs up in the scant earth that exists in the cracks of the rocks, spreading and taking root on the rocks with wide, fleshy leaves. The hill people use them to give to the animals, ground together with salt. They're famous for fattening them and making them procreate.

That's how the morning saw the two sisters following the flock.
They went contentedly. Everything invited jubilee. Here and there, the fields were full of nascent seedlings. The recently risen sun shone and his light sparkled in the early-morning dew, shivering on grass that sprang up impetuously from the damp earth.

The dogs barked and leaped joyously. Wanka, the bearing mother of many generations, ran around Vicenta, her old mistress, running off suddenly and rambling without cause, to turn and jump. That’s what you called exerting yourself just for fun. The others, affected by Wanka’s happy exaltation, ran around just as much. And poor Gueso, indifferent to the misfortune that would occur, entertained himself in going around in circles and more circles, by dint of barking at the sheep that separated themselves from the troop. Antuca had to intervene:

"Gueso, have ya gone crazy?"

With which the scolded one recovered half his composure.

On arriving at the place where the hills divide to open to the puno mesa, the sisters turned to look down. The view gave off the exact colourful lushness of the sown fields. The grey huts smoked in the midst of the multi-coloured farms. A leafy wood of eucaliptus trees
surrounded the house-hacienda of Paucar. The creeks cut
the countryside with their greenish-black woodland lines,
descending to the ravine full of valleys formed by the
Yana River. Colourfully dressed men and women came and
went on the yellow paths. Someone saddled their horse in
the door of a house. Other white flocks made their way
slowly on up to the heights.

They continued on their way commenting that the crops
promised a lot and that the year would be good. On
passing some hills of red dirt they heard some brief,
insistent whistles.

"Haven't the dogs hunted even one groundhog?" asked
Vicenta.

"No, they make them dumb. They're on one side and the
groundhogs go on the other side and whistle. The dogs
stay there barking next to the hole and that's it."

"That's the way it always was." finished Vicenta.

And the singing Antuca appropriately struck up the
well-known waino.

"If I was a groundhog,
   I'd go around your nest.
And on going round . . . Pssst,
   I'd whistle you my best."

She imitated the groundhogs whistle comically and
because of it and also because they just wanted to, both of them burst into singing peals of laughter.

The skirts of the mesa got wider. They slowed down the march and the dogs, barking for the sheer joy if it, scattered the sheep through the straw fields. Overhead, the sky was blue and white. To the front, the black peaks stood straight like threatening fists.

"Well, I'm going for the ratanya and the pacra. I'll be back in a spell . . ."

Antuca stayed with the flock, watching her sister lose herself between the rocks while going up one of the last crests.

Grey clouds began to pile up in the sky and the wind blew, whirling the straw fields. At Antuca's voice, the dogs began to reunite the flock. Vicenta would return any time now. Just a bit ago she saw her coming down carrying a great bundle. What's more she was the only one to be seen that day although she had scrutinized the heights. Pancho didn't come. Without a doubt he'd taken his flock somewhere else.

But lo, suddenly, breaking the uniform yellow of the strawfields with their black silhouettes, two riders appeared from afar. They drew near at a gallop. Soon
they were close. Their ponchos were streaming in the wind and they had their straw sombreros thrown on. They carried rifles on their saddlehorns. The one that rode in front unwound the rope that he had strung to his body, crossing his chest.

The one with the rope rode up next to the flock and threw it skillfully over poor Gueso, who was the first one they found. Gueso didn’t have time to jump to one side to avoid the tightening of the lasso around his body. When he realized what was happening, he was already caught by the neck. The rider had made a small lasso and as soon as it encircled the neck, he gave it a quick jerk. The flexible, well-greased, leather rope closed, running easily through the shiny iron ring. Antuca went to see what was happening. On the other hand, when Vicenta saw the two men on her way down, she hid behind two big rocks. She was very close and could clearly see what happened. Vanka and the other dogs went up and began barking at the intruders. A straight-haired, yellow dog came up behind them. He began to bark and it looked like an all out fight would ensue. Meanwhile, poor Gueso panted, straining the rope uselessly. The smiling man held it with a firm hand.

"Get out of here, Guenamigo*" yelled the other rider
at the yellow dog. He went, with his tail between his legs to sit some distance off.

Antuca arrived just then:

"Let go of my dog!" she cried.

The rider tranquilly replied:

"What do you think I threw the rope for fun?"

"Let him go if he isn't yours." argued Antuca, whose shiny eyes contrasted with her pale face.

Meanwhile, Vicenta didn't miss a detail, with her eyes just barely showing. Yes! That was Julian Celedon and the other, his brother Blas. Some years ago, in the fiesta in Saucopampa, she danced a lot with Julian. He was the same today: a tall cholo, sallow, with a sharp nose and large, brown eyes. His sparse moustache fell in disorder over his wide lips. He hadn't gotten older. Now he held himself serenely erect on his black horse. He had a hardness and energy in his gaze. Vicenta remembered that that time at the dance, she wanted Julian and the only reason she didn't give in to him was because her ma had her eye on them. The cholo enjoyed a bad reputation. And she felt that that old, buried feeling was reborn. She almost lamented hiding herself. She would have liked them to discover her and that Julian possess her, after a brief struggle, in the middle of the rough, wild straw.
But they didn't see her and Vicenta couldn't decide if she should go out.

"Let him go, for God's sake, let him go!" implored Antuca.

At her cries, the dogs growled at the riders and held their aggressive attitudes. The fur on Wanka's neck stood straight up. One word from Antuca and they would have thrown themselves on the riders. Julian, who looked on with an indulgent, compassionate air, took note of such a possibility and said to his brother.

"Shoot one of those dogs."

Blas prepared his rifle, but Antuca hurried to shut them up and send them away.

"Do you know who I am?" asked Julian.

"No, I don't know." said Antuca with a sorrowful voice.

"Julian Celedon." he said with gravity and pride.

Antuca stood frozen. Of course she had heard of the Celedonios. They were famous bandits. The cholo enjoyed the effect produced by his words for a moment, and then asked:

"Are these dogs from Simon Robles' litters?"

"Yeah."

"Ah, that's what I wanted . . . ."

He looked ahead as if to continue the march. But he
remembered something.

"What's his name?"

Antuca hesitated. Did they really mean to take him? Poor Gueso was there, with his tongue out, pulling on the rope.

"Tell me his name you dumb kid... and be thankful that I don't do nothing to you because you're too little yet."

Antuca trembled.

"His name is Gueso."

"Gueso!" repeated Julian to the dog, "Gueso! That's a funny name."

He spurred his horse. Gueso refused to move so Julian dragged him for a good stretch.

"Whip him." he ordered Blas.

Blas, who up to that moment had followed with his rifle fixed on the other dogs, brought his horse up and whipped Gueso with the reins. The dog went to one side and laid down again. They called Guenamigo who went up to Gueso with a friendly aire but Gueso growled, fixing on him a troubled, enraged look that gleamed suddenly. Then Julian prescribed more whip so the prisoner would stand up and when he wouldn't, he continued to drag him. Like that, dragging and whipping, they continued until Antuca
saw them disappear behind a hill. She'd been paralyzed by fear up until that moment and now began to cry in screams. The dogs howled, watching the place where they disappeared.

Vicenta came down and seeing the pain of her sister and the dogs, felt the former emotions leave her . . . So many times she had held Gueso in her skirt when he was young! Poor thing! Then she tried to console Antuca:

"Don't cry, don't cry now . . . We'll get a pup for you from the next litter . . ."

Antuca kept crying and wailing.

"Don't cry Antuquita*, don't cry. We'll get another pup and call him Clavel* like you want . . ."

But she too, was sad and fat tears ran down her cheeks.
Gueso heard his companions' howls and thought he also perceived Antuca's weeping. Yes, she wailed and cried. His beating, captive heart swelled with nostalgia and rebellion. He now refused to walk with greater determination. Being dragged hurt his ribs and covered him with mud, but he still refused to move his legs. At last he managed to stop himself in some rocks. Julian hurled a curse and muttered:

"I'll pull your head off of you with just one jerk!"

He stopped his horse and turned to his brother who followed at a short distance.

"What do you think? This Gueso has a bad temper."

To which Blas responded:

"Maybe he'll go if you're good to him."

Julian got off his horse and approached Gueso, who looked at him with rancor and hate. Guenamigo positioned himself at a prudent distance. The man squatted down next to Gueso whose difficult breathing needed attention. The rope tightened around his neck and made a circular groove in his fur. When the man extended his hand towards the
leather, Gueso showed his fangs, so he changed methods and
stepped on his fur to immobilize him. Then he loosened
the lasso and began to pat his head and back
affectionately.

"Gueso, lil' Gueso, now you're gonna walk. Don't
abuse yourself this way, you're gonna be alright."

Gueso continued laying between the rocks but he let
out a wail.

"You see?" Blass said. "Leave him now. You'll see
how he walks."

Julian mounted and then gave a weak pull on the rope.

"Gueso, lil' Gueso, c'mon man."

"Man?" joked Blas. "You're even turning the dog into
a cristiano!"

Both of them laughed.

"But look, he doesn't walk." Julian said, pulling
with more determination. "Get down and whip him until he
walks . . ."

Gueso was desolate. He couldn't hear the howling or
weeping anymore. Discounting the voices of his
kidnappers, the silence of loneliness had fallen over the
puna*. But he didn't think of walking. Let them pull him
until he was asphyxiated or freed, because they were sure
to become bored with him and free him. That's what he
thought. As you can see, he didn't know man, since he was used to the docile sheep, the soft hands of Vicenta and Antuca and the few blows which Timoteo used from time to time to enforce good behavior at the feeding trough at dinnertime. Now he would know man, a hard and stubborn animal from whom it was impossible to hope for anything without previous obedience.

Sure enough, Blas got down and untied a whip used to herd cattle that hung from a tie behind the seat of the saddle.

"Get up and walk!" he said, closing in on Gueso and shaking the whip.

The dog still lay between the rocks. Stuck in there, he was sure they wouldn't get him out by fair means or foul. He just wanted them to take off the rope. Furthermore, the sight of the whip didn't especially impress him. That's because he didn't know about it. The whipping with the reins that he had suffered thus far hadn't given him any idea of the burning pain of the lash.

"Well, then, give it to him." said Julian.

Blas raised the whip, which had a wooden handle, and let it fall on Gueso. It hummed and exploded, but with a dull noise because of the abundant fur. The leather snake wrapped around his body in a hot, fiery furrow, piercing
him at the same time with a vibration that went all the way to his brain like a thousand thorns. The lash repeated itself time and again, so much that Julian was pulled by the rope. Gueso shook a bit, and Blas went to help him by taking him out from between the rocks. They let him rest for a bit and then the one that held the whip began to beat him again. Gueso tried to resist once more: he didn't stand up.

"Give it to him. Give him more." Julian ordered. Blas asked:

"Do I mark him?"

"Mark him. . . ."

The whip rose once more, like a circle, then glided over Gueso's panting body, and suddenly recoiling and folding its end, it exploded on one of his buttocks. After a small crack, the flesh opened, like a red flower. Gueso let fly a piercing howl.

"On the other one too?" asked Blas.

"No, I don't want him to get worms. Just give it to him right there."

And the whip rose and fell on the trembling body, humming and cracking rhythmically. Gueso felt his flesh burning. He stood up to run, but could only turn sideways because the rope held him. In his confusion he hadn't
remembered it. He didn't try to delay anymore. Julian pulled and the other one ordered him, shaking the dark, flexible snake:

"Walk!"

And Gueso, worn out, abandoned to a painful and bloody surrender, with short breaths, a burning body and his head in flames, began to walk. A thread of warm blood slid down his leg.

He discovered that the man was stubborn and implacable.

They walked until well into the night. Then, from a hill, a throbbing light stood out in the distance. Julian stopped his horse and pierced the shadows with a long whistle. A similar whistle sounded shortly.

"There it is." he said, beginning to walk again.

A man covered with a black poncho came out to meet them, accompanied by a dog that barked without much conviction. Then they unsaddled in the doorway of the hut surrounded by shadow. There was also a woman there who set about stoking the fire and a wee one that slept in a bundle of blankets. Gueso was tied to a beam that supported the straw roof and the men left with the horses to return a while later and sit at the far end of the corridor. In the dim light of the reddish glow of the fire they began to talk about a cattle sale and then
counted some jingling coins.

The woman served *cushal* of beans, wheat and dried corn in large *mates*. The bodies, numb from the mountain cold swallowed with delight the steaming hot soup. Julian separated a portion of food in his mate and took it to the prisoner who also received a few rough words and hard but affectionate pats. Gueso ate, prodded by hunger, his chest still filled with hate. Deep inside himself he had decided to hate. Better said, hate filled his chest, bruised and hot, like the blood of his wound.

The woman shut off the stove and the men, after talking for a bit while they chewed coca, lay down to sleep. Guenamigo and the other dog curled up at the feet of their masters. Gueso, by himself next to the fire, laid his head between his feet, prisoner of a great anguish as he remembered the flock and his former existence. Wanka and the rest of his companions would be sleeping now on the warm straw, between the white skeins of wool, or maybe barking at wild beasts. At their side they would hear the herd chewing their cud and, the next day would turn to dawn as always, placid and bright.

But, for him, there would perhaps be none of that. The man was hard and the rope solid. But, maybe not. Maybe chewing it tenaciously, gnawing, mangling it. And,
slowly, he stretched his snout toward it. Of course he could bite it. His teeth sunk in effectively. It even had a pleasant flavor of hide and grease. A fiber gave way at last, and full of hope he continued gnawing, gnawing, with his body beaten by the wind and his eyes full of shadows. But he was sure that, in spite of the darkness, he wouldn't get lost. That he would know how to get to where he belonged, to his sheepfold, to his flock. He gnawed silently. One of the men turned over on his bed. And if he awoke and discovered him? But the man didn't move again and Gueso kept gnawing stubbornly. Another strand gave way. Only one of the three that twisted together to form the rope was left. Gueso felt it so thin in his mouth when suddenly, one of the men shouted:

"Hey, that dog's chewing the rope."

The other men woke up and Gueso didn't move, but one of them got up and tried the rope.

"Really, he's about to break it . . . ."

They hurled curses, and the owner of the house said:

"I'll get a horsehair rope."

He looked among the things piled in a corner and in a short while Gueso was tied to the fireplace by a thick horsehair rope, but not before Julian had treated him to two good lashes with the very rope the prisoner had chewed.
Gueso felt lost. The horsehair rope hurt the mouth and didn’t give way to his bites. No, he couldn’t go now. Maybe never. Besides being stubborn and implacable, the man was wise. The flock was definitely far away. A tearing anguish crossed his life, and he felt like articulating his pain in the long mournful note of his howl. But he was worn out, too worn out even to complain. And he gave himself up to sleep, the restless sleep of a captive, full of pain and disgrace.

They left as soon as it was light.

"Good-bye Martin."

"G'bye Miz Pascuala" they said.

Where would they go? Gueso had never gone that way before. Since the previous afternoon he had gone on unknown paths for a long time, but now the sensation of strangeness sharpened, maybe because his body wasn’t burning from the blows. It still hurt him, but his poor head was now able to recognize judiciously what was happening along the way. As always, whistling fields of straw, huge rocks and sharp peaks made up the sight offered to his eyes. But as much as this side of the mountain looked like the other he was in the habit of pastoring, the newcomer still felt hostile toward unfamiliar places and grappled with the sadness that flows
from anywhere that isn't your favourite spot. Worse yet, the rope, although different because of last night's situation, was, like yesterday's, tied to the horse and held at the other end by Julian's hand.

At noon, the men dismounted to eat lunch. They sat down on the ground and took a large piece of roasted meat wrapped in a cloth from the saddle bags. A shiny knife converted it into strips and some went to Gueso and Guenamigo. Guenamigo, as usual, was barely noticeable, walking silently in Blas' tracks.

And then, the persistant, regular, untiring trot continued. Sometimes they passed between the tail-ends of cows or mares and flocks of sheep, but generally they only was desolate strawfields. Gueso soon felt himself tire. He felt that the weariness was something that seemed to rise up from the earth, from the slippery path, a dark channel dug from the comings and goings in the rough tangle of the strawfield. He panted more rapidly and his drooling tongue lolled. But the path suddenly went up a ravine and began to zigzag between thick leafy bushes. The vegetation thickened more and more as they went up. In front were tall, red rocks. Then came the powerful sound of a river, and , when the first nightitme mists fell, they were next to the river itself. It was hot and
Gueso felt tormented by his abundant fur. The horses swam across the river and the men and dogs crossed in a raft that was tied to the bank under some trees. On the other side, after walking a stretch, they found a hut. Gueso was tied to one of the posts. It seemed as though he was destined to live in the tortuous captivity of the rope. And then, in spite of his fatigue, he howled long and painfully.

"Why are you yelling?" Julian asked him.

He took a big piece of jerky out of the hut and threw it at him.

They had arrived at Cañar.

Cañar had no condor nests. But, it did have puma dens. It was a deep valley full of dense woodlands—in parts vivid and green, even luxurious, in parts dead and grey, even disintegrated--, at the bottom of a ravine of craggy rocks.

To one side ran the Marañón. A faraway hill dissolved its icebox to create a brook that ran down to the valley, leaping over inaccessible rocks, to irrigate a small garden and then lose itself in the river. Next to the garden rose a feeble hut of leaves and cane.

At times these two men could be seen in that hut or in
that garden. In the hut, they sat and relaxed, chewing coca while in the garden the men cultivated or harvested what the different plants produced: yuccas, bananas, cocaine, hot peppers. But nobody ever saw them. Not even a soul ever passed by Cañar.

The Marañón, agitated and voracious, defended Cañar, or better said, the Celedonios. In spite of everything, one could have crossed the river, but why go? One would see a very small valley, lost in a bend in the river, hidden and concealed between rocks. These abrupt, upright rocks didn't provide a way out on the other side, though the brook extended itself toward the heights forming a gully full of thickets. Then, cutting it in half, the rough, uneven rocks loomed up. Whoever arrived at Cañar fell into a rocky hole with the only way out being the danger offered by the bellowing river. So it wasn't a propitious place for the activity of a peaceful cristiano with farming aspirations, when wide, easily accessible valleys spread up and down the Marañón. But Julian and Blas Celedon knew why they were back there. Later, with the passing of the days, the people knew why too, and last of all, the authorities knew.

A cruel fame buzzed around that dark canyon that bloody tracks led to. The popular fable pluralized the
last name and the Celedonios' voice resounded in the region like the discharge of Winchesters.

Gueso wasn't freed for that day or many others.

"D'ya think he'll go back?" asked Julian.

"He just might: dogs just go back. And this one, though he's never swum would probably swim four rivers at once. . . they're very troublesome."

So Julian checked the firmness of the knot in the rope. Moreover, he took Gueso to the river and without removing the rope, had him bathe along with Guenamigo. The captive felt very relieved from the stifling heat that, like we said, his thick fur gave him and made his foreignness apparent.

Being a mountain dog until now, he hadn't known about the perpetual heat of the valleys.

Tied to the post and seeing, as one would say, the flies flying, it didn't take long to notice that some big, blue ones whirled around his wound. Julian noticed it too.

"You see?" he said to his brother. "The flies are here and if you not careful he'll get worms."

So he poured a burning, black liquid into the open flesh.

Gueso felt that that stubborn, implacable, cautious
man also knew how to be a friend. He spent many moments with him, patting his back. He took Gueso’s food to him in a large trough so he could share it with Guenamigo, who really was a good friend. Guenamigo ate solemnly to one side and, in spite of his freedom, he didn’t growl or show any kind of hostility towards Gueso. Julian said:

"Let them be brothers. When two are united in a battle it’s better than four."

And, he also, without a doubt, sought a brother because how long would Blas last? For how many more journeys? How many more days even? Who knows. The laws of the rustler are written in the knife and the rifle, and both of them destroy lives.

Julian kept looking at Gueso, fixedly, profoundly.

"Gueso, lil' Gueso . . . ."

The pain of the lashes passed. Gueso got fat on the abundant rations of jerky and yucca. Guenamigo became friends with him and walked with him exchanging sniffs. His eyes became familiar with the greenish-grey growth and the red stain of the rock. In his ears, the rushing of the river and the rustling of the leaves were familiar. Once accustomed to the sounds they wooed him to sleep. And the man, the bad man of yesterday, showed his warm heart in his hands, in his eyes and words.
One afternoon, Gueso understood. He moved his tail. And licked the man's hands, groaning, fidgeting and excited. Julian hurried to free him and Gueso ran and jumped around his former enemy from one side to the other giving short barks. What happiness for them both!

"Look, BLas, look . . ." shouted Julian.

Gueso jumped over his owner—he was now his owner--, and Julian greeted him with pats while swearing affectionately; certain kinds of men hurt and cherish with the same words. Only the accent changes.

When man and dog tired of celebrating, Gueso and Guenamigo ran off to explore the small valley. The new one could only see a little. The garden, the two horses in a small pasture, cactus, woods crossing from one side to the other, rocks and the river passing through the meager earth. But Gueso drank the clear water of the brook. We could then say he was a citizen of Canar, because when a stranger drinks the water, it takes root in him and makes him want to stay. You see, in all the northern parts of Peru—and that's where our story occurs—there's water with magic virtues. In Cajabamba, for example, it's the water of Tacshana, a brook. In Huamanchuco, the waters of Los Pajaritos, a spring. So the legend says that if a stranger drinks their waters he
never returns to his own country. The water gives him a new dwelling place.

Since then, Gueso didn't herd sheep. He had to learn about cows. Some were surly, others gentle, but all of them refused to budge on the road and frequently turned against whomever barked. Besides, they didn't understand the language to which Gueso was accustomed. When he barked around their ears they got mad. But Guenamigo was an efficient teacher and Gueso discovered the snouts and hocks. The apprentice received a lot of kicks and horns, but he rapidly perfected the difficult art of biting the hocks and holding the snout while avoiding the impressive answering assault. But, generally, with just barking at a certain distance he got the animal going, something which, as we noted, didn't happen when he was too close. Then, the exasperated cow would stop, size up the dog, and then charge him for a while. Julian or Blas would intervene at that moment dishing out lashes and bawling out Gueso for slowing up the march. But Gueso finished learning perfectly everything he needed to know, and they moved on rapidly. They were always in a hurry.
And the move was hard. They left Canar at night. Generally they arrived at their destination at dawn, but many times after a two-day trek. On separating the cattle they operated in the early morning or at night, in the light of the moon, to avoid the vigilance of guards and spies that the hacendados had scattered in suitable places.

Cutting cattle out of a herd is a bothersome chore. Those that form the front of the move run back again and again to join those left behind. Sometimes, of course, it was possible to take all of them, but usually it consisted of separating ten or twelve. A large herd proved to be inescapably slow and the Celedonios needed speed above all else. That's why, on gathering the herd, they moved day and night to get to places where others would take them. Down lost trails, between shadows, under great rain storms and wind, they had to herd, always herd.

At first Gueso suffered, but then he grew accustomed to that life. His heart beat happily while he walked behind the restless herd, pummeled by the rain, caressed by the starlight, stabbed by the wind, bandaged by the shadows . . . . It was also placid to stretch out next to Julian, feel his warmth and his sure strength and keep watch with cocked ears. His master had few friends.
Besides Martin, in whose house they had spent the night when he was kidnapped, Gueso knew Santos Baca, Venancio Campos and three or four more, scattered in the mountain tops. Some of them were riflemen on the haciendas, that turned a blind eye, gave opportune tips, and when it was necessary, brought out the guns hidden in the bedcovers and joined the Celedonios. He also knew Elisa, the pretty half-breed from the town of Sarun, who lived in a red and white house surrounded by blue leaves and located at the beginning of the main street. Sometimes Julian went there at night. They spoke in soft whispers and there in the shadows, Julian took his ration of tenderness. Gueso watched the road with the horse's reins between his teeth. He nodded off, tired from waiting because the rider only returned at daybreak.

One time, Gueso saw his flock in the distance. There was Antuca, the dogs, the sheep, everything that represented his life in another time, and for many hours he was immensely nostalgic. He stood, undecided, watching the slow movement of the flock. Should he go towards them? Should he follow Julian? Julian stood at some distance watching the dog. Then he called:

"Gueso, Gueso . . ."

The aforementioned turned his head towards his master.
There were the hard and tender eyes. And the multiple, risky life made of boldness, speediness, night, danger, and death.

"Gueso, Gueso . . ."

And slowly, giving himself over to the provocative inducement of violence, he made his way towards Julian. In so doing, he decided his destiny.

And so, Gueso was a good comrade and a faithful guard. He didn't just service his master in moving the herd. Many times Gueso saved his life.

One time, with the cattle cornered against the rocks, they waited in the heights for two men who should have arrived to take them. It was a dark night, but not enough for the shadows to hide the white stains of sheep, the silhouettes of the rocks or the bothersome outline of the Andes. The wind whistled and a penetrating cold filtered throught the ponchos. Julian and Blas, distanced from each other to prevent the herd from disbanding, could barely see each other. Seated in the strawfield, with winchesters in their hands, they only stood when some cow tried to get away. At their side the dogs gazed into the distance, and the horses, with their reins loose, grazed on the hard straw.

Suddenly, Gueso became alarmed. Growling, growling,
his ears stood up. But nothing could be seen. Indeed, Julian was restless too. His instinctive man's heart that lived in risk, next to death, had a presentiment of danger. Besides, he remembered. He was remembering his life.

This earth gave forth little, it's true, and the patron demanded much work. And that moment, pure, red, full of fury and brillance of knife. Behold, the patron said, "Cholo, thief", and discharged the gun, and he, Julian, took out the knife then and nailed him. It sunk in softly, to the handle and the patron fell, gushing blood. He would swear by the Virgin that he still wasn't a thief. Sometimes he fought with a knife and by his hand somebody else's blood ran, but he wasn't a thief. Afterwards, with the constant pursuit, he had to pick up whatever was necessary to live. One day Bias came to Martin's house where he was. "You know what? I escaped from the soldiers. They came to the house looking for you and they caught me. 'Hey cholo dog,' they said, 'Where is he?' I said what could I say if I didn't know. They started to beat me saying, 'Tell us beast.' And more beatings. Night came and because they were drunk and deeply asleep, because they'd drunk all the chicha my ma had made for the party, I could flee. And I'd been
looking for you until Venancio told me where you were and I came. I'll stay with you. If I go back, they'll take me prisoner. They said I steal cattle too."

That's how Bias got together with Julian. After awhile, they decided to go to Canar. What was good was Elisa. Always in the life of a poor man there's a scrap of blessing called a woman. Julian thought about Elisa and felt his very longing form a lump in his throat. Not being able to see her all the time!

Soon Gueso ran off, barking. Guenamigo was right behind him. Everything happened just in time because an instant more and they would have fallen. The presumed captors, discovered, opened fire. A shot flashed. The Celedonios leaped on their horses while the night rumbled and flashed at their backs. A bullet wounded a cow, that mourned with a tremulous, hoarse cry. The rest of the cattle, full of panic, scattered in a gallop in all directions. The Celedonios slipped through the broken terrain to nonplus the persecution and at the same time responded with a few shots. The dogs were with them again. They let the reins loose and dug in their spurs. The hoofs rang for many hours in the shadow's drum. A radiant dawn opened in front of the run and then they stopped. There was no-one around them.
"It was the Culebron* . . . ."

"I swear to you, it was him . . . ."

"Dammit! Someday . . . ."

Guenamigo had his back burned from a grazing bullet.

And we should say here that the fight between the Celedonios and the Culebron, a second-lieutenant of gendarmes had begun a long time ago and continued.

On another occasion he had gone to Canar itself. He arrived one night. Gueso and Guenamigo's barking woke up the Celedonios who slipped down to the brook. The second-lieutenant waited for the light of day to position himself better, but seeing the thick brush, knew he didn't dare enter. He and those that were with him would have been easy game for the hidden cholos. To finish humbling them, two men fired from the rocks on the other side of the river. One of them was Venancio Campos, who lived in the heights and in a situation where he could hear, by the prolongation of the echo, the shots fired in Canar. The Celedonios, who had already made a pact with him, fired a few shots as they fled. The Culebron had to go back the way he came, protected by some night shadows. Don't believe that Venancio and his friend were deceived. They let them go because they were only interested in saving their friends. But Julian took revenge from the flight at
the brook soon afterwards. He entered the capital of the province in the daytime, bright and sunny, and drinking a cup of pisco* in don Mamerto's store, situated in front of the police station, where the gendarmerie also worked. Julian left the store, leaving Don Mamerto stunned and speechless, mounted tranquilly, shot four bullets at the gendarmerie and then left. When the Culebron and his men came out exploding their rifles. Julian was already far away and in any case he was a difficult target. The shooting did nothing but increase the raid. The town didn't like the second-lieutenant and, scorning the extenuation of suprise and lack of horses ready for a persecution, the town found it an opportune moment to laugh at him and qualify him as an utter imbecile. For just that reason, Culebron swore at the Celedonios and never lost an opportunity to pursue them. He made agreements with the ranch owners, and filled the roads and paths with spies. But it didn't bring many results. Nighttime, fear, death and ready, ringing money are good accomplices.

And there's no need to say that on the excursion to the capital of the province, Gueso was with Julian. He ran behind him feeling the explosions of the shots and the whistle of the bullets. He no longer feared them, even
though the first time he suffered a great scare with the detonations. It was when Julian found himself unexpectedly with an employee of the Llata hacienda, that Gueso became famous for his bravery. Both men, on recognizing each other, threw themselves to the ground. They opened fire, and Gueso fled frightened through the reports. In a short time, it was silent and he heard Julian's voice calling him. Depressed, with his tail between his legs, he came closer. His owner guided him in front of the other man. He was rigid, bloody, stiff. Julian's forearm was bleeding, where he had ripped his shirt on falling and with the remnant he bound it. Then he took the rifle that the defeated man still clutched, mounted and at a short trot, with his arm bent across his chest, he continued on his way. Gueso still felt the reports and in his eyes the dead man's blood hurt him like a wound. But soon he got used to it. He heard innumerable shots and say many men fall down to never rise again. Julian Celedon was a good shot. But the debts of the dead became terrible enemies.

Ultimately, someone discovered the visits to Elisa. And it was, like always, a night in which man, horse and dog arrived at the house surrounded by the thick leaves. She didn't meet him at the foot of the gate, but said,
"My Ma isn't here. She went to a wake. Come on in."

They sunk down in the warmth of the barbecue full of cloths and sheepskins. They made love. Soon the woman's voice sounded between the shadows:

"Didn't you feel it?"

"No."

"I have a son."

The rough hands felt the soft, warm, bulging womb. Yes: it was bulky, you could say that it palpitated. And those rough hands that clutched the deadly Winchester and the damaging harness whip, became tender, soft, full of a quiet blessedness, on the fruitful innermost parts. The night couldn’t see the beautiful, noble face of that man. He hadn't robbed or killed anyone. No evil hung over his life. He had the tranquil peace of a child. At his side was the lovely, pregnant girl and the rifle had disappeared... But, soon, he recovered his vigilance. The rifle was taken with claws like pliers; it was hugged instead of the woman, and loved. It was because Gueso barked furiously outside. They beat on the door and pushed it. Julian managed to escape through a small window in the kitchen and he sunk into the night, but not before a bullet zinged over his head. He wasn’t alone long when
Gueso caught up with him. The man, carrying the rifle in his hands, walked up a ravine until reaching the heights. At his side, panting, walked the dog. They had lost the horse, but they were free and that was enough.

At daybreak, Julian stopped next to a road. He was with his dog and his rifle, all that he had in life. He was that they were denying him Elisa and his son. Oh, he also had his coca that took away his sadness. He took the long sack out of his pant's pocket and began to chew.

"Gueso, Guesito, if it wasn't for you, they'd of surrounded the house and got me . . . ."

The hours ran by and at last a rider appeared in the distance. Man and animal hid themselves behind some rocks. The rider advanced completely unaware. When he was closer, they heard him whistle. His horse was a blue Moor, of a graceful breed.

"Hey friend, get down," shouted Julian, jumping in the middle of the road and pointing the rifle.

The horse stopped abruptly. His owner was pale and undecided, more from perplexity than resistance.

"Didn't ya hear? I said get down." Julian insisted.

The man got down trembling. Julian mounted and said to the dispossessed, throwing the saddlebags that were on the back:
"Take your saddlebags; I don't want them things. The poncho I'll go ahead and take. Don't ya see they've left me without mine?"

He left at a gallop.

And, with that ease, he got himself a new horse. Common law says that he who leaves something to one side is owner and slave to the world at the same time.

The Celedonics understood from that incident that they were being closely watched and they resolved to always go together.

"When two are united in battle it's better than four." But, in reality, on following the progression, they were eight because they started out being four with the dogs. So, struggling against disgrace, rifles under their arms, eyes and ears always alert, Julian and Gueso, Blas and Guenamigo would last how many more journeys or days even.
7. The advice of King Solomon

The predictions voiced by the Robles girls, on the memorable day when Gueso was kidnapped, never came to pass. The year was bad. In the arcane language of the farmer, a bad year means a year without good harvests. One must tighten the belt then, and from there comes the saying, when someone gets mad: "A bad year makes your stomach stick out".

During the time of our story, the rains soon fell short and the cornfields on most of the farms didn't reach their potential. It wouldn't be air that was lacking in the collection sacks or mere straw in the yellow roundness of the unthreshed corn. The peasants looked to the sky, full of blue harshness. They thought about the seed for next year and the waiting period for the harvest. Because of that, rations were reduced.

Nor was the promise that Vicenta made to Antuca about the dog named Clavel fulfilled. Simon said:

"There's nothin' to give them to eat, and other cristianos won't want them either so . . ."

The very night that Wanka gave birth to the pups, he
took them and threw them into the deepest hole in the nearby brook. The mother was howling for a long time in front of the impassable deepness of the dark waters.

Well, that's how life darkened because of the drought. Of course, the loss of Gueso caused the dogs and men to suffer, but the passing of light and darknesses called time, soon brought other sadness. Speaking frankly, to be a man or a dog is a great thing; but only when there's food. What could the Robles and all the peasants do on half-rations? Well, they blaspheme, tighten the colourful belts, and go around the withered farms like idiots. Nothing happened. Accustomed to the assurance of rain, they didn't think of putting the sown lands close to water for irrigation. But, besides that, brooks that ran deeply suffered a greatly reduced flow.

"And Martina's fields?" Simon asked Timoteo one day.

"They were lost too." he replied. "They were lost and what's worse, my sister-in-law who was in a fight with her husband came. There she is and she doesn't want to go back to her own house.

In spite of everything, the chat dwindled. They were eating and very soon the wheat in their mates was finished. Many days had passed since they'd finished the chickens. From behind the far-away hills the sun sank and
a fiery sky gave ember colors to the fields where the plantings languished. In spite of the fact that the news warranted comment and further clarification, Juana, as well as her daughters, remained silent.

"Chew, Timoteo, don't sit there like a shapeless chicken," Simon told him, presenting him with a wad of coca.

Both of them took big balls of it. The shadow had already arrived, but the colors of the afternoon survived in the coals of the stove. Simon turned the thread of the conversation, be it to give in to his fondness for narrating or to break that sad silence. It bothered him nevertheless, since he was used to having full wombs and full plates in his house.

"So she had a fight with her man, no? Idiot, idiot that he is," he said.

He waited for someone to ask him why the man he referred to was an idiot and then continued:

"In times past, there was a cristiano who had a woman that was a widow. And this woman really bothered the poor man. For any little thing, she brought up her dead husband and began to cry: "Uuyuyuy, uuyuyuy, You are so bad and my little dead man was so good, uuyuyuy, uuyuyuy". The poor man killed himself trying to please her and the dead
man was always better. And that's not all that happened. Then she cried, she wanted to go: "I'm going, now I'm going." The cristiano became cloying begging her, until at last she stayed. And that's how it always was. The poor man couldn't live anymore. Until one day it occurred to him to go ask advice from King Solomon.

This King Solomon was wise, but really wise. He could see into the future and know what one needed. When the cristiano arrived at where the king was, he told him part by part what had been happening. The king told him: 'You're too dumb.' The cristiano asked him, 'Why, your Majesty?' (Because when you're with the king you must call him Majesty.) And the king gave him this explanation and this advice: 'Because you don't know what any farmer knows. Go to such and such a road and sit there to wait where the road splits in two. A cristiano will come on his donkey. Listen to what he says and do that.' Said and done, the man went to that place and was sitting on a rock, when he saw that someone came riding on his donkey. And when the rider got to the fork in the road, the rider wanted to go on one road and the donkey on the other. He had to get down and pull the donkey to the side where he wanted to go, but when he mounted, the donkey turned around and went down the other road. Then the cristiano
dismounted and cut a stick . . ."


"Shut-up, lambida*." the narrator answered; "Don't poke your nose into men's things."

And he continued:

"He mounted with the stick in his hand and when the donkey wanted to go down the wrong path, Whap! he hit him between the ears and then gave him two more, whap, whap . . . The donkey started walking down the right way and the rider then said: 'Use a stick with a donkey and a woman'. The cristiano who was listening and seeing all this understood and he too, cut a stick and went to his house. The woman began with her little song. 'Uyuyuy, uyuyuy, where did you go to? You always leave me alone. My little dead man wasn't like that. He was so good (and he was like this and he was like that), he had good things, uyuyuy, uyuyuy'. When she tired of that tone she started on the other. 'I'm going, now I'm going'. Then the cristiano sprung on her: 'What are you going to go with?' And whap, whap, whap. . . and encouraged as he was he said for himself, 'Go if you want to.' And whap, whap, whap . . . with the stick. Then the woman begged: 'I won't, I won't, just don't hit me'. But the cristiano
still gave her her due. Whap, whap, whap; and he left her thrown to one side. Never again. The woman never went back to crying without a reason and never said that the little dead man was better or that she wanted to go . . . It is well said that King Solomon was very wise . . .

The girls laughed, Timoteo approved and Juana only frowned because that was her role. Good humor had returned. To prolong the gladness and give it reality, Simon ordered,

"Timoteo, tomorrow you will kill a sheep . . ."
And the dogs on half-rations? Truthfully, they couldn't tell or listen to stories. If they had sheep to herd, they sure didn't have sheep to eat. When their meager supper was finished, in which there were a few bones from time to time, they howled prolongedly and threw themselves to the field in useless treks.

But for some of them, the wiser ones, they weren't so useless. The big house of Paucar, situated in a hollow, had some green alfalfa fields around it and a large corn field between other plantings. A dam held back the water from the brook to irrigate the alfalfa. At that time it was used to save the other plantings and, naturally, the cornfield.

Scorning the parched cleanliness of the skies, the hacienda's seedlings rose up exultantly from the water that bathed their roots and manifested a liveliness that in the midst of everyone else's general problems, seemed almost provocative. Above all, the cornfield, tall, firm, and noisy like a forest, opened its yellow crests and its jolly green leaves to the sun. On the stalks, two by two,
swelled the feminine, pregnant ears of corn.

Behind them went the dogs. And on a certain night when Wanka and Shapra ambled outside the sheep-fold, they saw Manolia and Rayo pass by, with a fixed look of knowing where they were going. They knew them well. Above all, Shapra. He, Zambo and Pellejo, tyrants of the region, ceased their hostilities when Manolia—who belonged, like Rayo, to a neighboring peasant—emitted an odor that made them emotional and caused their blood to boil. Then, they paced off, and Manolia was docile. On the contrary, the tyrants bit and chased any dog that crossed their path, with an exception made for Raffles and all the perfidious population of the big house. Now, Shapra saw them go by attentively quiet too, because those weren't times to be fighting. However, Wanka, who was wiser from being old and not from being a dog, noticed that Manolia and Rayo had the aspect of being well-fed as well as the fixed look. Both things were a little suspicious. It was necessary to follow them. And following their tracks they arrived in like manner at the cornfield. Shapra followed tightly next to Manolia, but not because his intentions were gallant. They entered the cornfield secretly. The leaves rustled against their heads. Manolia stopped suddenly and, from a patch, knocked over a stalk. With
claws and teeth she scratched the husk and then bit it voraciously. Shapra decided to do the same thing and her maneuver was fully successful. The same happened to Wanka who was further over and got her lesson from Rayo. The recently matured pulp of the corn was tender, sweet, and milky. They gorged themselves.

The satisfied fullness of their companions couldn't pass unnoticed by Zambo and Pellejo, and the next day, they too formed part of the troop. Discreetly, they waited to follow Manolia and Rayo, since the exploit was evidently theirs. Wanka and the dogs with her still hadn't abandoned their fear as apprentices. Besides, the night before, while they gnawed on the ears of corn, the bark of the criminals from the big house sounded loud and close by.

The field was well guarded by a dense fence of thick, fleshy leaves and brambles. They got in through a needle's eye. A needle's eye is two parallel boards, planted in the earth. They hold up cross-bars of wood in the holes that they both have at approximately the same height. Man and large animals go through by moving the cross-bars. The dogs, of course, pass tranquilly underneath the bottom bar. They only have to stoop down a little.
But, that night, Wanka's nose disturbed her when she sensed a fresh odor of man on the environs around the poles. It was the smell of don Romulo Mendez, a worker from the hacienda. She knew him well. The other dogs noticed it also. Manolia, who up to that moment had walked proudly at the head of the troop, stopped in front of the poles. Moreover, it didn't look like it did other days. Beyond the bottom pole, hidden in the grass, there was a rope. To one side, next to one of the braces, rose a great pole a little bit bent toward the rope. It supported an enormous rock tied with a cord. The eyes of the dogs, accustomed to the night, saw it all very well. Behold a strange and suspicious creation of man. And that recent smell of don Romulo Mendez! Wanka remembered him as a tall, thin guy with a black moustache.

They stood undecided for a moment. Then, Rayo dared. He bent under the pole and on coming out the other side he moved the rope. The pole collapsed violently and smashed with all its weight and the weight of the rock against Rayo. He let out a sharp alarm and his companions fled in panic. But then there was a great silence and slowly, walking with all the softness that their fear demanded, they returned. There was the unhappy Rayo, smashed and immobile. He was the object of that human invention.
Should they go in? Indecision overtook them again. Time ran by as they waited alertly. They studied the night, refining the eye and the ear, and they noticed nothing. Naturally, the fallen pole couldn't get up by itself. And that was all. Meanwhile, there inside, the vigorous cornfield rose up full of sweet, juicy ears.

Shapra, the most daring, went in and slipped into the plantings. Encouraged, the others joined him. Now, the worst thing about a cornfield is that if you move you can't hear someone else's movement. The rustle of the leaves is so rough and loud that it doesn't let you hear the same noises, though more distant. So, they weren't aware of the man's presence until he was very close. A shot sounded and a flame was seen. Shapra's voice wounded the night. There was no time to lose. To the door! Close to it, another man took aim with a flaming, exploding barrel. Was that Manolia that screamed now? The men kept shooting and the dogs kept running. They only stopped on arriving at the sheep-fold and on stepping on their beds of straw. Then they began to bark, at the same time, fearfully and angrily. Alarmed, the great dogs at the big house let their rough voices be heard too.

At last, peace extended over the fields and beneath the shadows, but in the Robles sheep-fold they waited
restlessly for dawn. Daylight didn't bring Shapra home. Instead, it showed him down below, black and hairy, stretched out next to the cornfield's fence. Next to him was poor Manolia, showing for the last time her chocolate and white colors, and Rayo, enfolded in his yellow fur. The vultures got closer.

The survivors didn't go back to the cornfield anymore. Life continued dry and parched.

The absence of friends and persistent stomach anguish made the dogs' howling even sadder.
9. The papayas

One morning, the provincial deputy prefect, Don Fernan Frias y Cortes etc., etc., was in a lousy mood. The previous afternoon a letter from his godparents had arrived full of ill-winds. He spent the whole night disturbed by that gust of bad news, and the morning still found him with sleepless eyes and dishevelled hair.

He went to his office early. He didn't respond to the greeting of the Indians that he met along the way and they presented him with their genuflections and submissive "taita". He muttered drily: "Bah!", and continued on his way without seeing them. Had he not been so busy he would have kicked them.

He would have done so because Don Fernan belonged to that class of useless brats, spawned in Lima the capital city, in between good, upright people. Those that govern send them to the provinces to free themselves of a stupidity that never tires of demanding convenience. Naturally their destiny can be no other than that of the easy bureaucracy of the sub-prefecture and the collection of taxes. Once there, they try to "accumulate money" by
any means to be able to return to Lima, to squander it on suits and brothels, and then go out again to find a job. From this, as it turns out, the country folk believe that everyone from Lima is a whippersnapper of honey-sweet eloquence and polished gestures that hide their long claws and that they live for reasons other than jobs. It's for the perennial plan to bounce back to the capital.

Now we can easily understand the reason for Don Fernan's bad humor: it so happened that some of his adversaries were making effective negotiations with great force, and the envied position of deputy prefect was at risk. Therefore, he needed to do something notorious to demonstrate the benefits of his services to the government.

What to do? He had already sent all the subversive half-breeds that were at hand to Lima. Many of these, before being inundated in rules, had committed the grave error of writing the opposing candidate's name on walls. Many acts of adhesion were also sent out—signed by the whole town, that jail would await anyone who didn't obey—the "regimental saviour of the republic that you, kind Mr. President, sets over us", etc., etc.

We should warn you, by the way, that there's no reason to try to put two and two together and look for whomever could have been the object of that praise, between the two
or three presidents with talent that Peru has had. To the short list of geniuses that humanity offers, one would have to add the long list of Peruvian presidents. All of them have been classified like this, by absolutism or compulsion. The people are always ready to insult them the day after they fall from popularity. Some let them talk, smiling cunningly and sardonically, but encouraging adulation and the compromises it creates, like Leguía, whom others believed and played ridiculous or dramatic parts in his government.

But, what could be done? That's what Don Fernan thought. Meanwhile, a clear morning on the hillsides caused the lukewarm sun to shine in the irregular stone alleys on whose sides houses with yellow walls and red roofs agglomerated. In the plaza, the church lifted up the petulance of its towers, where the cracked bells pealed, and the deputy prefect's building proudly displayed its two floors, its white roof and a balcony running around.

What could be done? The deputy prefect was already in his office—which seemed to have double authority since it was on the second floor--, sitting in front of a table crammed with papers. Through the window, of rusted iron bars, he was looking at the plaza covered with grass and
the yellow brook that crossed it. In front, Don Mamerto had already opened his store and his fat belly shone as he stood in the doorway. This, while he amused himself watching some pale, flabby pigs grunt and root here and there. The black silhouettes of two devoutly religious people with mantles on crossed the plaza to be swallowed by the toothless mouth of the temple and then everything went back to normal. Only the obese Mamerto and the tedious pigs. "Misery of small towns!" grumbled the deputy subprefect. And, to pass the bad moment, he polished off two cups of good, coastal firewater. But it wasn't something to lose his position over. On Sundays, the Indians and the cholos filled the town and demands abounded. Between demand after demand, and fine after fine, in addition to the small salary, Don Fernan already had a large amount of soles* that he wanted to add to before returning to Lima. On the contrary, it wasn't worth sacrificing himself! Besides, at forty years old, when one hasn't been able to do things right, as is said, one must insure the future.

What to do? The crafty spirit of don Fernan panted with the question, like a caged animal, when behold, the long, thin figure of second-lieutenant Chumpi, the one nicknamed Culebron, drew himself around the corner and
headed toward the deputy prefect. Then, the lightning
flash of a happy idea loomed in Don Fernan's eyes. His
lips grew in a smile below the thinly cut, black moustache.

"Orders, sir?" the second-lieutenant said after his
usual greeting. He filled the office door from top to
top bottom.

To the surprise of the second-lieutenant, the deputy
prefect's answer wasn't the usual, "There's nothing new .
.. Come in and drink a cup."

"My lieutenant," said Don Fernan, "I think it's no
longer a question of just sitting and watching the flies
fly. .."

"Sir!"

"Yes." The deputy prefect's voice had a solemn tone.
"Let's stop the banditry, friend . . . Come in here. I
need to talk to you."

The second-lieutenant entered with great resonance of
his spurred boots.

The deputy prefect stood up:

"Simply put, my lieutenant, go to Canar and bring me
the Celedonios, alive or dead. Do you hear me? Alive or
dead . . ."

Chumpi hardened his angular, brown face even more. A
brief moment passed, his straight moustache trembled,
while he said with a rough voice:

"I'll bring them, sir . . ."

The deputy prefect then came down from his dignified and authoritative height. He stood next to Chumpi and slapped him on his firm back. Taking advantage of the cordiality, Chumpi suggested:

"But we'll have to ask for reinforcements from the Prefecture. About four more gendarmes . . ."

Don Fernan was surprised.

"No, my friend. What! As if the Prefecture needs to pursue the rebels. The whole Government is worried about this. . . But they won't send anything. . . Here, between us, we know who's involved in this mess . . . Friends of mine. And if they triumph, we'll make them sign an act of adhesion . . . Lieutenant, I won't leave that easily. . . For a while, you'll have me here as your friend to serve you. . ."

And he added:

"But, my friend Chumpi, about the Celedonios, you are the man for the situation . . . I'll inform people in such a way that it'll go well for your promotion.

The moment became a little bit difficult. Chumpi didn't trust these offerings of promotion and didn't even give thanks. On the contrary, he screwed up his face and
nose in a scornful manner. Don Fernan soon felt unarmed. Would Chumpi go, like the other times, and fail? The white face of the deputy prefect, to which the heights had added color, paled a little. Even so, he continued looking fixedly into Chumpi's half-breed grey eyes. He was tall and robust and had crossed his arms. One of the huge hands that squeezed a bicep had a thick iron ring—an effective amulet to ward off evil—and could have squashed him with just one swat. But Chumpi's eyes quit looking into his own and rested on the papers on the table. Don Fernan smiled. More confident, he returned to his Liman astuteness honed in reviewing all forms of flattery.

"My lieutenant, I see you're somewhat suspicious. . . . But be assured that the capture or death of the Celedonios won't be left without mention. . . . The newspapers will talk . . . A battle in the fields . . . eh? . . . I give you my word. . . . And more than all that is honor. And duty . . . ."

Chumpi thought for a moment. Incapable of contradicting, or even weighing all those words, he simply said:

"They pay me to catch them bandits. . . . I'll bring 'em."

Don Fernan had the feeling that the sun had come out
after one of those mountain storms that bothered him so much. Returning his eyes towards the bottle and guiding Chumpi by his back to draw him to the table, he politely offered:

"Well, let's have a little drink to compose the body. .. It's a bit cold, eh?"

Not just one, but several drinks were slipped between the chests and backs of the deputy prefect and the second-lieutenant. The latter thought it an opportune moment to joke and make a point:

"Yes, lieutenant, they're running around out there saying, 'The Culebron does nothing ... The Celedonios run right under their noses ... That Culebron will die a second-lieutenant because nature has given him nothing else ... And Culebron here and Culebron there ... The whole town thinks it ... The whole town! Well, I think that that Culebron is going to sweep up the Celedonios with just one swipe, and if need be, with those who talk so much too ..."

They guffawed together, fraternally.

"You'll see, Don Fernan, that I'll bring all those so-called talkers here one of these days and I won't be lettin' 'em go until they pay a fine.

"That's what they deserve, lieutenant, but first of
all, the Celedonios, eh? Alive or dead..."

"Ya, ya; alive or dead. I'm goin' to prepare a force and in two or three days I'll leave to find 'em. Right up to Canar itself if I have to, but this time they won't escape.

They kept drinking. One bottle was not enough and they sent out for more. Second-lieutenant Chumpi went down the stairs holding on to the bannister. He swayed, stopping every second or third step to laugh clamorously.

"They say the Culebron just walks around, do they? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! . . ."

The second-lieutenant's laugh had a fierce, bitter tone. He rolled down the stairs and went ricocheting through the irregular alley... "Ha, ha, ha... Ha, ha, hahaha..." On the pavement, the sun shone clean and happily. But the laughter shadowed everything. He was already well known in the town. On hearing him, an old lady came to the door of her house, peeped out and then slammed it violently. Full of sun from the alley, the laughter prolonged its trembling along the bent riverbend and far away. "Ha, ha, ha..."

On the morning of the third day, the capital of the province watched a group of riders head out, led by the
second-lieutenant Chumpi. He rode a high-spirited, prancing sorrel. The local hacendados had loaned their facilities and all of the horses were good. On them—blue uniforms with green fringe—bent gendarmes with crab faces. On their foreheads were straight black locks under ancient kepis with bent up visors. The brilliant barrels of their rifles, cross-wise across their backs, pointed to the new-born sun.

"Culebron is going get blistered on that fine sorrel."

"Ya, the hacendados got together to collaborate against the Celedonios."

"Bah! You couldn't catch them even if you had a hook."

Those were the comments of the townspeople as they watched the group pass with their noisy, shod horses in an unobstructed trot.

"Ya know what?" muttered the shoemaker between his rotten teeth. "Last night Culebron was in the pharmacy buyin' things."

"Wolf's bane for bruises."

"Valerian for his nerves, man . . . ."

And they broke into laughter.

Only Culebron knew what he bought. He slipped in to talk to the pharmacist in the back-room for a reason. Then he was given a package that he quickly hid under his
threadbare, green cape. Now, scornful and haughty, secure in his bearing as a rider, he eased up on the reins so that the sorrel arched his neck and at the same time touched him lightly with his spurs. In front, his pony caracoled and foamed, filling the street with his presence. Behind, the gendarmes, not accustomed to this class of animals, either pulled the reins so tightly that the horses stopped completely, or sunk their spurs in so deeply that they jumped brusquely. The townspeople laughed.

"Ride well, guanacos . . ." scolded Chumpi, from one moment to the other, turning his head towards his subordinates.

But he consoled himself with his own skill.

His sorrel—a typical Peruvian horse of Arabic descendance—advanced flaying about gallantly, now going forward, now going sideways. He responded docilely to the reins, the spur, and a squeeze of the calf.

On leaving the town they let loose on the reins and the horses began a regular trot. The puna road soon showed them it's zigzags. From time to time to one side of the road or the other, some dog would bark at the horsemen from the doorway of a sheepfold or a hut.

"Bite, bite." yelled Chumpi.
And, giving an example, he dug in the spurs and the sorrel swallowed up the road. The guards, trying not to bring up the rear, shook the reins and if one of them raised his whip, the spirited horse would run, tumultuously and suspiciously, off the road.

They didn't even see their surroundings. Before, when they had gone looking for recruits for military service the work was entertaining and easy. On nags they had acquired from the indians, step by step, they went eyeing the Indian girls of about twenty years. They went along enjoying the view of the countryside and the rural chores. Sometimes, they stopped next to the houses where a red flag waved, an announcement of chicha*, to slip inside for awhile. But, now they didn't. Now they had to follow Chumpi at a trot. Up, up. The road, like a ribbon, tangled with rocks, held itself behind the trees and went up and up, until it took a gorge that led to the top.

When they were on the crests of the mountaintops, Chumpi called his men together. The cord of horsemen formed a circle around him. Between the panting of the sweaty horses the mute attention of hard faces, he spoke:

"To the first guy you see, say 'Stop!', and if he doesn't, shoot him, got it? Take the safety off of your
rifles and keep your eyes everywhere, because they walk around these parts. . . ."

The rifles came down off the backs and, after a rapid crackle of bolts and latches, they positioned them at the head of the saddles.

The eyes of the gendarmes and the second-lieutenant's binoculars searched the immense puna. Only sharp rocks and yellow straw covered the almost vertical slopes where boney cows puttered about slowly.

They advanced in silence. They didn't hear anything except the threat of the puna birds, some rare lowing, multiplied by the echo, and the knock of the hooves on the black path that unfolded as it girded its loins. The bends behind which it lost itself posed a threat of ambush. But they went around them time and again without meeting a single human being. Chumpi always went in the lead, thinking and re-thinking the battle plans. He had already failed so many times, but this time, . . . this time. He smiled soberly while the strong wind unfurled his cape. Behind him the gendarmes put on their multicolored Indian ponchos. They were sad. Those Celedonios were good marksmen and any one of them could be left rotting behind and not even in a good coffin. What were they to do? Second-lieutenant Chumpi kept on
going!

The mountains just showed them their silent vastness crossed with peaks. In the afternoon they arrived at the place where the road started to curve down to the Maranon. They needed to cross the river to get to Canar. Those Celedonios would never fall!

Chumpi ordered his people:

"Let's see, get some cattle together for me... Later, later" he insisted when he saw some of the guards seemed undecided.

When the dawn fulgurated in the sky, there was a head of some twenty cows the gendarmes brought through the dips and passes.

"Need to round them up, so they go down to the river..."

The guards went after them, following the orders of the second-lieutenant. But just to the point where they would be seen by the Celedonios because it was going to be a clear night. On their return, the moon rose plating the clouds with silver.

"Okay, lieutenant..."

"The cows just went down the slope?

"Yes, lieutenant; we threw rocks at them and they went running..."
"Good, good." approved Chumpi, rubbing his hands together.

At the foot of a rock they huddled up to wait for the hours to pass. The horses went from one side to the other, to where there ropes reached that held them to the rocky peaks or to well bunched sheaves of straw.

"Well" said Chumpi; "we need to cross the river holding on to the skins of the animals . . . Careful you don't let loose."

Then he took several bottles of firewater, one after the other, out of his saddlebags. The moon slowly advanced bathing the hillsides with its serene light.

But that silver, silky light wasn't able to deaden the tension of the moment. A few more hours and perhaps death would come for many of them. The black peaks seemed to be a procession of shrouded ghosts that would soon stop to play a funeral psalm that the wind would carry to and fro.

"What do the dogs bark at, man?"

"You're right. Seems they're barking a lot."

That's how Julian and Blas Celedon talked while the dogs basked, showing their teeth clean up to their foreheads. They were in Canar, in the corridor of their hut, sitting in front of the stove next to which they devoured jerky and baked yuccas. The cholo, Crisanto
Julca had arrived with the news about a bunch of cows that could be herded from the Sunchu hacienda to the ferry of a distant town of sold for whatever price the cattle businessmen from the coast want. Then too, they could take them to Chonat, the little town whose inhabitants live on the lucrative industry of making jerky out of stolen cattle that they are able to acquire very cheaply. So, with their cattle theft sliced they travel to cities on the coast, where they sell them earning two hundred for a hundred.

"These cattle are left-overs." assured Crisanto.

And they said:

"We'll go, of course . . . ."

"We'll go get them, no use wasting them. . . ."

But in this moment they didn't speak of the journey, on which they had pledged to start the following day. All afternoon they had cleaned and oiled the winchesters. It was to be expected. They chewed coca and smoked cigars that they themselves made from the scarce tobacco plants that they planted in the small garden in front of the hut, and listened to the cholo Crisanto while he untangled his memories of a pleasant story. He interrupted himself to say:

"They bark at the cows. When I came I saw a lot on
this side... I swear to you they've come down.

The night was clear, and it wouldn't occur to anyone
to attack by surprise in such conditions, much less the
condemned Culebron, who was a mixture of fox and snake.
Even though the dogs kept barking, Crisanto continued
their story:

"Yes, it's so boring to walk alone, but when I began
to steal cattle that didn't belong to anyone, I didn't
know that... One time I wandered up around the puna at
Yaucarbamba, where there is a point that they call 'the
bitches', because there the cattle are wild and chase
Christians as if they were really dogs... Well: I'm going
to beat them at the game and one of them paws and paws the
earth and then throws herself at me. And behold she horns
me in my little butt and knocks me over... Just as well
that the bothersome thing went after the horse and I had
time to climb up a tall rock. And what do you know but
that that damn beef came to stand in front of the rock and
I couldn't get down. She was there for two days and
didn't move. The rest of the cattle ate to one side, as
if sure that I wouldn't be leaving. I was already hungry
and the cow planted herself there. The same with my
horse, only further away, dragging the reins and eating."

The dogs left, running towards the beach. They barked
and barked. It was a question of taking a look around and seeing what was out there.

"You go, Crisanto . . . Something's happening . . ."

"It'd be my pleasure, men . . ."

Crisanto got up and lost himself between the trees. He came next to the river and nailed his eyes on the bank in front of him. He studied rock by rock, tree by tree. It was easy to distinguish. A few cows had come down to the beach and some others were up at the top coming down too. Two or three, standing on the bank, drank slowly. When Crisanto returned, a bull bellowed filling the canyon with his powerful voice.

"Didn't I tell you?" he pointed out as he arrived; "It's just the cows. There they are at the river and some others are coming down."

The cholos chewed coca and urged the storyteller to continue.

"Well, I tell you that cow wasn't thinking of going anywhere, and me, I was hungry. . . But, hunger develops ideas in a cristiano. Behold, I let my poncho fall to the level side of the rock and the cow comes to horn it. And I shove my knife in her very throat. She stayed there, thrown to one side and trembling, and I left, quietly, to look for my horse. I mounted, and took off in a streak."
On the return I found some tame cattle, but I didn't want to steal them. I had a tremendous hunger and all I wanted to do was to get somewhere where someone would give me a little piece of jerky."

After each one had related some incident of their existence, given at random, they went into the hut and lay down. The next day they would go to the hills and herd in that whole lost bunch that Crisanto had told them about. The night was hot, so they didn't even bother to cover themselves. Further on, but within hand's reach, the Winchesters shone in the light of the moon, that filtered through the reeds of the roof. The Maranon wooed them with its deep murmur. . .

The cholos slept.

A violent, angry bark woke Julian Celedon. The dogs ran towards the beach and then returned as though fleeing from someone, to then start the attack and come back again. Dealing the others a blow in the chest, he woke them.

"Get up, men. Something's happening."

The Celedonios clutched their weapons. Crisanto took out a big, mildewed revolver. Dawn came. Roses could be seen in the path in front. No-one came down. They should already be on the bank of the Canar by now. The dogs came
back to circle around their owners, and then went down the path barking.

"Let's go up the creek." Blas Celedon advised, remembering the time they had escaped that way and the gendarmes didn't dare follow them into the brush.

So they went that way, weapons in hand, crawling under the foliage. But soon, on that side the dry knock of a rifle sounded and a bullet zinged mournfully next to them. And another, and another... It was the guards. Over there came three, separating them until they cut off all possibility of access to the creek. The uniforms shone blue in the middle of a grey wild cane field.

"Shoot them, men."

The Winchesters let their voices be heard. The rifles answered and they kept on coming. There weren't just three, even though no shots were heard from the other side. The cholos took shelter behind some bushes and looked up. The soldiers disappeared for a moment. There they were, behind some rocks, lying on the ground. The nickel-plated bullets of the rifles exploded in the reeds, taking pieces of them along. Far away, in the rocks, an army shot. The echo made the small skirmish into a battle.

"Let's slip into the brush. We'll come out below and throw ourselves in the river and cross," grunted Crisanto,
who hadn't shot yet, knowing the short range of the revolver.

And the cholos were getting ready to run towards that side, when a loud discharge let them know that the gendarmes were over there too. Culebron, sheltered by the inefficiency of the winchesters further than four hundred meters, let his body stand out conspicuously in the open space on the hill.

"Dammit!" roared Julian Celebron, shooting at him.

And then Blas swore also, letting out his iron fury, through the hot barrel.

A shot rained on them that howled between a stalk of broken reeds. Rifle in hand, Culebron looked inquisitively at the cholos, who seemed ready to put up a good fight. Just let them get closer!

"Celedonios, throw down your weapons and come out!" shouted Chumpi.

The cholos roared like cornered beasts:

"Come in here, dogs, come in . . . ."

Bullets came in from all directions. Culebron himself took the bait and emptied his rifle quickly. He slipped in another cartridge, just like the gendarmes. They could see them clearly in the light of the sun that had already come out. The brush didn't allow the blue uniforms of the
soldiers to blend in.

"Go in." yelled Culebron to his people. "Aim well!"

The guards advanced, running to take cover behind the trees. One of them fell. The cholos took positions in the rivulet that ran behind the hut. The dogs, scared, stuck next to their masters, rubbing against their shoulders. Death rang. Guenamigo was shot, and fell from one end to the other, bleeding from the mouth. Blas absorbed the warm breath of that bubbling blood, feeling that his chest burned.

"Man, are there bullets?"

"Only about fifty."

"Then, let's head to the cave."

The cave was really high up, at the foot of the peaks. They needed to go up a small path that twisted up a side that wasn't well covered. But there, at least for the moment, they would be safe. On up, above it, inaccessible rocks hung and down below, the solitary path guaranteed their salvation, even though it would only be temporal, with the help of the Winchesters. The cholos looked at each other, and suddenly, with a signal, they ran shooting for the cave. Culebron yelled at his people:

"Go in, and shoot, boys . . ."

The gendarmes ran behind, only stopping to fire their
weapons. The fugitives had already arrived at the path and started up the hill. But Crisanto fell. The Celedonios kept running between a concert of bullets that rang and cracked, exploding in the rocks and raising clouds of dust in the dirt. Entering the black cavity of the rock they let themselves fall down. Gueso was already there and he barked from a corner.

"Let them come up."

"Ya, let them."

The Winchesterers pointed at the opening. In the high part of the cave, the soldier's bullets exploded against the rocks, scattering chips and whistling splinters. On the flat land down below, the guards had stopped about one-hundred steps from Crisanto with their rifles loaded.

"Throw down your weapon!"

Culebron roared when poor Crisanto threw the revolver to one side. Two gendarmes closed in, protected by the rifles of the others. One grabbed the revolver. They went toward the fallen man.

"Kill him." The voice of the second-lieutenant sounded behind them.

Crisanto twisted like a worm and then screamed, begging for mercy, but two shots sounded and he was still. Blas Celedon shot, but didn't hit his target and a
discharge made him back up. The brothers swore, by Christ and the holy souls, that they wouldn't die like that. Meanwhile, Chumpi took measures below. He placed three gendarmes between the rocks of the slopes and with three of the others he took care of the dead.

"As soon as they appear, shoot them" he said as he left.

They buried the guard at the foot of the tree. Crisanto was taken to the river and dumped. No need to bother to dig a grave for a cholo like that! The body sunk on falling, but afterwards it floated and the current carried it bumping it against the rocks on the banks. From time to time, it stopped against them for a few moments, to be pulled along again. It would run aground on some wide beach and the vultures would pile up on it, ripping open the stomach and taking out the eyes to start with. Finally, only white bones would remain, strewn from one side to the other.

The second-lieutenant explained to his people:

This cholo doesn't deserve anything else... You know? One time, down by the Chonat district, he roped an ox and took it as if nothing. It belonged to a little old lady that went behind him begging him: 'Don't take my ox, the only one I have. I'm poor. My children are dead'.
The old crab didn't sympathize with her and answered: 'Go back to your house old lady. I know what I'm telling you'. But the lady just kept following behind him, begging and begging. All of a sudden, that scum Crisanto took out his revolver and, bam!, he knocked her over, dead with a bullet in her chest."

On the way back, they ran into Guenamigo's body.

"Throw it into the water," the second-lieutenant said to one of his men; "it'll end up smelling bad."

The siege started, stubborn and fierce. The guards took turns, watching the hill, and the only path that had freed the Celedonios from a quick capture was also the one, with the passing of the days, that was their undoing. The gendarmes whose turn it was to be off hung out in the garden eating up all the bananas and yucca. They harvested the cocaine, too, and only ate a few papayas, because the second-lieutenant ordered:

"Leave me the papayas; I know why I want them."

Four papaya trees rose in front of the hut erecting the grace of their svelte stalks. Next to the leaves, the fruit was beginning to ripen. In a few days, many were already yellow.

"Take down the ripe ones" Chumpi ordered.

And the gendarmes, who were beginning to run out of
the supplies they had and those that were in the hut, that they'd also eaten, threw themselves on the fresh, juicy papayas. The only ones left were those that couldn't be eaten. But if the guards were being deprived, the Celedonios suffered strictly speaking. Without eating or drinking, the cholos languished day by day. But their grip on the winchesters tightened with the remaining strength in their hands. At nighttime, they took turns, watching the entrance to the cave, because Gueso barked if he heard the slightest noise and they couldn't know if it was because someone moved down on the flatland or if someone was climbing the hill. What had happened to Venancio Campos? Without a doubt, he was a long ways away, outside his house. Meanwhile, the days and nights stretched out without measure, untill they almost lost the notion of time. The talegos of coca were already empty. But how tremendous and bloody and deep brotherhood merged in those moments of their existence! The two men and the dog formed a united entity with bloody ties. Death's voice embraced them in just one anguish and just one worry. That of defending themselves to survive.

Julian remembered Elisa with the dying strength and happiness of his own flesh. He was just hungry—with different kinds of hunger--, and she was a distant fruit.
Far away forever, achieving at last her good fortune. She would give birth to orphan flesh, in pain to add to that of the world. The china was so good! There was rigorous softness of stillwater in her hips and womb. Tenderness filled to the brim like the milk in her full breasts. The kindness of cereal in her entire life. Oh, the days!

And the days went by, between hunger and vigilance, until they completed eight. Chumpi didn't try to amuse his men with his tales of the robberies and murders of the Celedonios anymore. They also got tired of looking in the hut and in the fields, under rocks and suspicious trees, for the money that was supposed to be hidden somewhere. One of the guards dared to protest:

"But we're hungry! The cholos have no doubt died in the cave and, in any case, they'll be about to die. They haven't even drunk any water. We just need to go up there. . . ."

It was nighttime. There wasn't a moon. Angrily, Chumpi said to him:

"Okay. Go up and shoot them even though they're already dead. You hear me?"

The gendarme thought about it for a while and ended up picking up his rifle. When he passed by those that were standing guard, there where the path went to the accesible
rocks for shots, the guards asked him if he wanted to commit suicide. He wasn't intimidated and kept going up creeping like a serpent. The dog barked weakly. After a while a shot sounded and something soft and heavy rolled down the hill. On searching in the shadows, they at last found a mass of bloody flesh.

Chumpi roared and assured them all that the siege would continue until the Celdonios died of hunger.

"And for that", he said to one of his men, "you're going tomorrow to bring provisions, a lot to eat, you hear?"

There are moments when life is filled with a terrible happiness. It was during daybreak on the ninth day, when the sun shone on the rocks on the other side of the river. Bias, lying on his rifle in waiting, saw two men hiding between those rocks.

"You see?" said Julian.

And he looked but couldn't say anything. He looked out a little and, so as not lose his shot, fired on the hut. The men on the rocks understood, because they watched them move and take aim. They fired. It was Venancio Campos and his man!

"Venancio." Blas said. And his brother could also say:

"Venancio."
Life!

Then they decided that if Venancio and his man came down, they could fight. There were only six against four and a lot of unequal arms, but they could do it. And bullets? They would economize. They would have to come up close at night. They fired four shots to incite their friends, but they retained a discreet attitude. The barrel of one of their guns stuck out from behind a rock. It seemed that Venancio judged the battle to be unequal and resolved not to attack except as a last resort.

Meanwhile, the gendarmes hadn't fired back. Chumpi understood that the situation was taking on a different aspect and he wanted to appear as cunning as the new attackers. In any case, now he couldn't send for provisions. In order to be able to pass, and this was highly improbable, two or more of them would have to go. Then the resistance that those remaining could offer would not guarantee success. And, it wasn't a question of being defeated again! But, on the other hand, there was the hunger. The matter was unsoluble in that sense. On last terms there was nothing left for him to do except put into practice the plan that had matured for a situation like this one, but one whose effectiveness was not entirely sure.

They waited until night to meet at the foot of a tree.
"We have to resist." said Chumpi, trying to convince the men to make one last effort.

"Hungry? As if we're going to resist hunger!"

"Well, we can't get by; on the other side are men." insisted Chumpi.

"My second-lieutenant, if they see that we're going, they won't do anything. Remember the last time. They won't uselessly risk two against six."

That was true, for one reason and another. Peruvian cholos that practice banditry, except in rare cases, don't confront the public forces unless they believe it's necessary. Venancio Campos was one of these.

So the departure was put off for the next day. Even though, Chumpi would see the convenience of this at the last minute and would make it happen with his tatty authority. Soon, on the shoulders of two gendarmes he reached the papayas. While he handled them, he smiled remembering the words of the pharmacist:

"With this little syringe and this liquid. . . You inject them. . ."

The next day, a dense smoke rose to the sky getting the Celedonio's attention. Pale and panting, they were cornered at the back of the cave, when they saw the air turn black. Was it their weakness? No, smoke. Smoke!
Why? Blas Celedon crawled up to where he could see the valley.

"They're burning the hut and they're leaving. Their animals have already crossed. They're taking our horses too. . . ."

Julian looked out too. As it burned, the roof made of banana leaves smoked blackly. But they were going. They had taken the raft and were half way across the river.

"There are six. They're missing one, and I swear he's probably hiding over here."

"What about the one you shot last night?"

"Oh ya. But there's no body."

"They probably already buried him. With the one from the first day, two against two."

On the other side, the gendarmes saddled up and went up the crest. As if carelessly, they left the raft rocking next to the bank, tied to a rock with the rope.

"Why didn't they let it loose?" sighed Blas, feeling that his strength was fading.

But it was true that they were going. They went up the hill slowly, stopping from time to time. Venancio couldn't be seen. On seeing the retreat, he had gone up to the heights with the intention of coming down afterward.

The cholos watched obstinately until, transformed into
a small moving stain, the blue horsemen lost themselves up high, where the road wove into the puna. It was then that they began to climb down from their den, crawling, sliding, holding on to cracks and crevices. On the bottom, they could walk with weak steps. Next to the brook, they lay down to drink next to Gueso, stomach on the ground. They sunk their hands in the cold water and wet their foreheads. They drank, with their faces under water, drowning and gargling noisily.

"They left, man . . . ."

And they kept drinking until their bellies were swollen. Then, more serenly they noticed the hut turned into ashes and they swore venganze. They looked up to the sky from where The Holy Virgen and Saint Julian and Saint Blas, their patron saints, saw everything and wouldn't let those dirty dogs of Culebron off without a punishment. But not quite so high up, right there in the leaves of the papaya trees, the fruit was showing.

"Papayas, man . . . ." mused Blas.

"Papayas, man."

They got up, but then they noticed, probably because they could walk better, that they were pretty green. After running fruitlessly around the garden where there wasn't even cocaine, they came back. Not one yucca nor
even a banana had been left by those damned men.

"Well, it's getting a little ripe."

Julian fell on his back and took aim. The shot was fired and the broken stalk let the fruit fall down. Half and half, the hook like hands split it in two. The pulp was bitter but it could be eaten.

"It's not that bad."

"Ya. Should we get another?"

Another shot and another papaya. The rest really were green. The afternoon came and they stretched out under the trees. Afterwards, at nighttime they would go sleep down by the brook, just in case, and the next day they would look for berries down there. They would live. Some time they would find Culebron and his disagreeable gendarmes to settle accounts. That stupid Venancio who didn't want to start the fighting.

Soon, Gueso began to howl and they thought he was hungry. They blamed themselves for not giving him a piece of papaya. They ate some berries too. Soon Blas felt that a strange trembling shook his body.

"My belly and my head hurt."

"You're weak, man. . ."

But Julian Celedon, who had never known about vibrations in the pulse, saw that his hands were shaking
strangely. And his legs. And then his whole body.

"Poison! . . . Poison, man. . . ."

Gueso continued howling. Bias didn't even answer. Julian felt as if something tore apart his insides and he roared his anger like a puma. He had no idea of time. He just knew that he was going to die. Face downwards, his hands on his temples, he blasphemed with his mouth full of foam. How long was he stretched out there with his silent, trembling drama? Gueso barked. Someone was coming. Was it Culebron? Yes, he himself came with his men, rifle in hand. And his hands, the quick hands of Julian Celedon, couldn't hold his rifle. His eyes, those clear eyes, darkened, losing the line of vision. He moved Bias, taking him by the arms:

"They're coming, man, they're coming."

Blas was rigid and cold. Julian turned in one last effort. He wanted to fire, but everything was turning to night. He was that a shadow crossed rapidly towards the gendarmes. A shot sounded. Then another shadow came towards him getting bigger and bigger. Something hard touched his forehead. And he had the impression, brief, but clear, that an endless silence opened up before him.

The shot broke open his skull. In his agony, Julian
didn't realize that the shadow that went towards the gendarmes was Gueso. The faithful dog leaped on Chumpi, who met him with a bullet. There he was, half-dead, but stubbornly surviving extinction. The second-lieutenant stood there looking at his beautiful work. He said proudly:

"And then they'll say that the second-lieutenant Chumpi doesn't have a head... Hahaha... ha... ha... This is what you call hunting pumas... Ha... ha."

At last he ordered:

"Take these cholos to town. We'll take pictures of them. Pick them up."

When they carried the bodies by, he saw that Gueso moved. With a bullet he broke open the dog's head. The light in the eyes that still looked sadly at the bent body of Julian, that the guards carried by the arms and legs, finally went out.

"Dog of shit." said Chumpi, remembering the attacks that his bark warned his master of.

And this is the epitaph that the courageous life of the faithful Gueso was rewarded with: Bandit's Dog.
10. The new planting

For the peasants, the planting, the cultivation, and the harvest renew each year the satisfaction of living. These are the reasons for their existence. And in the manner of rude and simple men, the footprints of their steps always line up in innumerable furrows. What else? That's all. Life continues to be good if it is fertile.

Afternoon comes when the last field on the hacienda has been planted. Don Cipriano Ramirez himself has scattered the wheat over the fragrant earth. He has done it evenly with the skilled sure hand that belongs to a veteran of such skills. Those have been happy days in which, after having lost almost all the harvests of last year, it has rained again; they have plowed and sown again. Patrones* and peones have mixed together in jubilant embrace with the earth.

When the sun sinks down, the work in the haciendo's* fields is completed. Fifty native workhands unyoke their fifty pairs of oxen. The oxen low quietly as they walk toward the pastures. The weak sound of the church bell in the faraway district of Saucopampa is heard. But the men
have already prayed over the earth, between the alfalfa, in the noble task of the seed-time.

Don Cipriano and the overseer from Paucar, Don Romulo Mendez, are the last ones to leave the plowed earth.

Don Cipriano is tall, white and a little obese. His face is full and bloated. He wears a suit of yellow denim and heavy boots. Pulled down to his eyebrows is a wide-brimmed palm hat. Don Romulo, sallow and thin, has a poncho twisted at the shoulder and covers his head with a battered reed hat. His bowed shinbones deform the dark pants. Both of them walk looking at the earth, where they sink in up to their ankles, as if they were counting the innumerable furrows. Don Cipriano walks with his hands stuck in the pockets of his vest. From time to time he smiles. Next to him, but a little bit back, to show respect, comes Don Romulo, twisting his moustache. He smiles too.

The earth is beautiful, and even more so if it's plowed. Soft and tender, well-disposed, it is fertile and exhales with a fecund sexuality.

The peones wait for the patron, on his orders, lined up on the side of the field. The growing night already drowns the polychromy of the ponchos. With hat in hand, the straight heads turn watchfully towards Don Cipriano.
To one side his voice sounds strongly, with an authoritative and reproachful accent:

"Sow, sow, I don't want any colonist's fields left without seed. You saw that last year was bad. It dried up too quickly. If this year is the same, only God knows what will become of his children. And use what's left over carefully. Don't trust too much. I wanted you to remember this. He that needs something, let him ask. Now you may go...."

The irregular line broke up forming a stain around don Cipriano. Oxen here and seed there. He listens attentively and then gives orders:

"Good, good.... Get ahold of that ox Jovero.... Take that big, bullock preferably.... Get that ox Barroso.... and Limon too. You've got to make them work. I've seen them. They're always full of bad habits. Tomorrow Don Romulo will give seed to those that don't have it. It'll be barley and wheat since nothing else is left. Do you hear me Don Romulo?"

Don Romulo, who is there pawing at his straight, black moustache, interrupts to say"

"Tomorrow, yes, sir...."

That moustache is for rebellion. Don Romulo has been twisting it for thirty years without being able to give it
an erect and gallant point. But, of course, now his preoccupation isn't in shaping it but it's that it has become a simple habit.

The peones leave at last. The hacendado and the overseer walked towards the house at a slow and peaceful pace. They converse with flavored words of the earth, wheat, and rain showers.

The diningroom table had the food ready on it. They sat down at it, like every day, in the company of Dona Carmen, the old mother-in-law of Don Cipriano; dona Julia, his wife, who had a wee one in her arms, and the child Obdulio.

The hacendado and his overseer carried the message of the sowing and excited the rest with their conversation. Even better, the murmur of rain sounded on the roof and patio. And from the fields, fresh and acrid, filling all the rooms, came the promising fragrance of the plowed earth, wet and full of seed.
The old Indian Mashe and fifty more---men, women and
children---were begging Don Cipriano in the hallway of the
big house.

"Take us in, patron, take us in."

And Don Cipriano:

"What are you going to do here? Don't you see
everything is being lost?" His voice reflected
annoyance. And it was because he had been worried for
many days. At first it rained buckets. For a whole week
the water drummed on the earth. Don Cipriano was happy
repeating the old farming proverb: "A great drought
brings great rains." In his fields and those of the
sharecroppers the fresh green of the plantings appeared.
The young plants rose from the earth with the happyt
impulse and easy lightness of setness. But suddenly the
water became scarce. Every morning the clouds always rose
from the Yana River and the brooks. They rose towards the
heavens by the skirts of the mountains, slowly covering
and discovering. They became dense, very tall and
distant, and then they disappeared. Sometimes they let
loose a heavy shower or a few drops that didn't even penetrate the earth.

"Will it rain?" Don Cipriano asked Don Romulo every day. And he answered:

"Sir, it has always rained . . . ."

Of course it's clear he said it for consolation. If it had rained little the previous year, it seemed as though this year it would rain even less.

And in the middle of that tribulation, fifty Indians went to ask for accommodations! They panted and groaned under their hat brims and torn ponchos full of dust. They stood before Don Cipriano like a flock of cornered animals. But their human quality convulsed in the imploring hands and shone in the eyes full of supplications.

"Take us in, patron."

They came from the extinct community of Huaira. After a few years of judicial procedures, Don Juvencio Rosas, hacendado from Sunchu, had tried his inalienable right to possess the lands of an ayllu whose stubborn existence prolonged since Incan times, by means of colonies and the Republic, suffering all the onslaughts. And this Don Rosas appeared one fine day at Huaira, accompanied by the public forces and his own minions, to take possession of
the land. The Indians, in a last and desperate fight, tried to resist. Some fell. The forceful voice of the rifles let them soon understand the small value of machetes and slingshots. The old, Indian Mashe, accompanied by the fifty that cried now in front of Don Cipriano, fled. He had been a supporter of the obstinant and final resistance and he thought, rightfully so, that they would take him prisoner. He wasn't wrong because that's what happened to a lot of those that remained and who were besides judged for subversion in the capital of the province. The rest of those that kept on in Huaira, submitted to Don Juvencio, became sharecroppers.

Mashe was called Marcelino in cristiano and he had his dark, beardless face full of wrinkles.

"What will we do with ourselves, patron?" he said with a sad accent. He was learning to beg, because he had before enjoyed communal goods and so his voice was lifted like a man's voice who owns land.

Don Cipriano looked at the group of Indians thinking about the drought, but also that he needed arms for the chores and that here there were many vigorous arms.

"Well," he ended up saying at last, "Stay and choose your rentals where you want, and of course, where other sharecroppers aren't already established. But I don't
guarantee anything. Do you see the sky? If it doesn't rain, well you know what will happen. . ."

At that time the sky was cloudless. The Indians knew only too well what was being said, especially Mashe, whose age had seen much, as is natural. The wind crossed with strong strokes of its wings and cawing like a bad bird. The puna lifted its black, tall peaks in an attitude of ambush toward the north, south, east and west. The message of life didn't take shape on any side. Not even one dark, dense cloud. The few that quickly crossed the sky were as thin and frayed as the rags of the proscribed Indians.

"Patron, we son't bother you; but just give us a place, a little place to stay."

"Well, for now ask for lodging in the sharecroppers' homes. They'll give it to you. I'm sure they'll give it to you."

The Indians remained immobile. Mashe dared to beg:

"Patron, and we would like food. Maybe barley, and seed, too."

The hacendado wrinkled his eyebrows with this new problem. But it was evident that these men had needs. And being as they were his sharecroppers it was his duty to protect them. He belonged to that class of feudal
lords that lives in the Peruvian mountains and has for his servants, according to his own words, "in one hand honey and in the other gall", that is to say, food and a whip. This was the moment of honey.

"Well" he said, "let Don Romulo give you a measure of grain and a measure of wheat per head. There's no more than that. Plant something. It could be that it will rain a little and catch the last plantings. Now go."

The Indians left at a slow walk, after having received the measure of grain that was supposed to mitigate their misery.

Don Cipriano stood thinking of the Indians' tragedy and the other closer, larger tragedy that beat everyone the same. And if it were to rain? Then he remembered the proverb: "Sow first and you get your money".

"Bah" he laughed, "ten more dry days and there won't be a single plant that'll hold up."

Simon was sitting on the rocky railing of his hut, chewing his coca. The wind played with his goatee and his long moustache and his grey hair that Juana joked was "so straight and wiry that you'd want to count them". His dark, wrinkled face was as sad as the dry earth. Mashe passed by looking for a place to stay and on seeing him,
approached:

"Good afternoon, sir. Could you give us a place to stay?"

Mashe was accompanied by his old woman and two young girls. Simon looked at all of them thinking about the drought and the scarcity of food. But then he said:

"Of course, come in."

The old bearded one gave lodging to the old dark one. He probably wouldn't have done so with a white man. It's that the dark brown color made them brothers with the feeling of race and the earth from which they sprang. The strange earth that, in spite of everything, loved them and was their end and destiny.

During lunch, Timoteo kept looking and looking at one of the girls called Jacinta. Then Mashe told the story of Huaira and on finishing said: "That's how we came to be begging for a small place to live, just a small place in the big earth."

And Simon said:

"The same with me. I'd come from a long ways off when I got here. And this isn't mine either. What we plant isn't ours. One looks for his own small place in the world and there is none, or they've already lent it out. And it's just a small, small place in the world."
The three men chewed coca to their liking.

Simon added:

"They're wise, right? But the same thing happens to them that happens to the white fox."

And, with his natural ability of a narrator, he fell quiet to inspire an expectant silence. Mashe and his family, who liked stories, were all ears. Those that already knew it got ready to listen to it with pleasure, because Simon always added some new detail each time.

"There was a time when there was much hunger among the foxes. And one of them got to the place where he couldn't stand it anymore. He was hungry and, of course, all the sheepfolds were built with high walls and there were lots of dogs. Then the fox said: 'One shouldn't be an idiot in these circumstances. One must be astute.' So he went to a mill, and taking advantage of the fact that the miller was off to one side, he rolled around in the flour until he was white. That night he went up to the sheepfold. 'Baa, baa', he bleated like a sheep. The shepherdess came out and seeing the white bundle in the dark, she said: 'A little sheep was left outside', and she opened the door and let the fox in. The dogs barked and the fox said: 'I will wait until they sleep, the same as the sheep. Then I will look for the fattest lamb, and, chomp, with one bite
I'll kill it and then I'll eat it. As soon as it's daylight and when they open the door, I'll run and no one will be able to catch me'. And that's what he did, but he couldn't get out. He hadn't counted on a heavy rain. So it rained, and the flour began to run off of him. A ewe that was at his side saw the white on the floor and thought: 'What manner of sheep is it that loses its color?' On looking closer she discovered that the fading one was a fox and she began to bleat. The rest saw him too and began to bleat. The dogs came and in four bites they turned him into jerky. So I always say that the crafty always get caught. So let's put it in our situation. The drought is worrisome to us but also for Don Cipriano and Don Juvencio, and young and old alike. But they just have a drought of heaven. We, the poor, have droughts of justice, droughts of heart . . .”

Mashe approved briefly:

"It's true, it's true."

And he wanted to tell the story of the frog that boasted about the great lake he lived in but then it dried up; but Mashe was afraid he wouldn't tell it well and he was quiet. Then he inquired laboriously:

"I'm thinking of settling down over there because when I came I noticed some alder trees. What do you think?"
"Well, even though right now it's good and bad, but if it rains, it'll be okay."

They went to sleep. The strangers accommodated their tiredness in the diningroom, between their already few blankets and those that Juana gave them.

Sleep didn't come easily to anyone. Late at night, the howling of the dogs at the wind could still be heard.
The saints are high in the heavens! All of the saints are there doing their miracles. Now they're up in heaven and bitter. Each saint has his own specialty. And everywhere there is an image to ask the saints for what is needed. Saint Isidro brings grain to the wheat. But no-one speaks to him of rain. For that, at least in the lands of our story, the Virgin of Carmen is the expert. To prevent accidents in those very rains, there is Saint Barbara. When there's thunder, one prays in this manner:

Saint Barbara, lady of ours,
free us from the lightning's powers.

Saint Christopher is the protector of wayfarers, and Saint Nicholas, the protector of sailors. The devoted servants of this saint are the raft cholos of the Maranon River. Saint Rita of Casia is the advocate of the impossible, but she shares responsibilities with Saint Judas Thaddeus. Saint Cayetano keeps money and bread in the homes. And so on. We have left Saint Anthony for the last. He is the most miraculous, hearty, democratic, and patient of the saints. He is an expert in discovering
losses and robberies. He looks for employment, arranges weddings, heals the sick, erases poverty, takes care of infidelities, etc. Besides this, he's content with very little. A small candle and a few prayers. And what's more, if he doesn't give what is asked for, the person he denied can take compulsive measures against him to obligate him to do something. There are those that beat him. Others stand him on his head. Others urinate on him. Also, if he has a new suit, they'll take it off of him. He receives this kind of treatment until the miracle comes to pass. If he doesn't, he's likely to be beheaded. That's what happened to the one that Simon Roble's grandfather carried in his saddlebags. He was a muleteer. The herd of mules that he drove—nothing less than thirty mules—got lost in the immense mountains of Callacuyan. He looked for them for three days. On the fourth, he desperately took Saint Anthony out of the saddlebags. He put the saint on the ground and with a machete cut off his head. But one should become an atheist before his time! On going up to the next hill he saw a man riding bareback behind some mules. They were moving quickly. They came up next to him and they were his mules. There they all were, not one more or less, but the man wasn't with them. So, Simon's grandfather
understood. He put the saint back on his feet and stuck his head on as best he could, though it hung to one side.

Then, Simon’s grandfather kneeled before the saint, crying and asking for forgiveness. From that day on he was more devout. Of course, he had the head welded back on. This devotion as well as the image was inherited by Simon. He had the saint in an old shelf in the hut. And that very saint with the broken neck was the most miraculous. No other was worth as much

But the troubles of those times weren’t the concern of Saint Anthony. One had to go prostrate oneself before the pluvial Virgin of Carmen, whose effigy was venerated in the small church in Saucopampa.

So, Simon Robles went, accompanied by his family—with the exception of the shepherdess—, as did all the other peasants in the region. Every year, the Virgin, who was the patron saint of the region, had a fair and a procession, but it was also tradition to take her out when it didn’t rain. Then she would bring the rains. She’d always done so! Simon, who was old, only remembered a famine that occurred when he was little and herded sheep.

At nighttime was the prayer, and the yellow burning of the candles on the altar. There was the cry of the praying people: "Most Holy Virgin, help us", and the
tight black in the reduced space of the church that smelled like candle wax and wool, and the imploring eyes turned on the image. They slept with sleep full of farming daydreams there in the church, in the houses of the village and in the open fields.

The next day as soon as the sun was up, they had the procession. The sun shone in a sky filled with rare clouds. And more Indians and cholos arrived—a fiesta of color in the suits and tribulation in the encouragement—trotting on the paths that twisted on the heights, lowlands, and hills to stop in the backwaters of the plaza. Ding-dong, the bell sounded, calling the faithful. At last the Virgin came out, white and red cheeked, dressed in clear purple bordered with sequins, in a little cart which the people fought to carry. Straight and stiff, the large eyes of the Virgen were fixed as always on some faraway place, sad faraway places painted grey by the fields of agonizing plantings. Indians and cholos squeezed themselves around the cart and stretched in a large mass behind her. Combed or stiff hair. Brown faces that were serious and with devout gestures. Black shawls and purple ponchos and Cuban cigars with colorful bands. Skirts that were red, yellow and green and black and grey pants. In one hand the candle and smoking flame
that paled in the splendid sun, in the other a white or yellow hat. Overcoming the murmur of the prayers, the cry of "Most Holy Virgen, help us" sounded. The procession left behind one street and went down a rural road. They arrived at a hill where the cross that was famous in those parts spread its great arms on an old, rock pedestal. There they stopped and kneeled to pray: "Most Holy Virgin, help us!" "Let it rain, let it rain." They returned slowly, very slowly. A group of dogs brought up the rear and with them was Pellejo. The dogs watched the spectacle with reluctance. The slow walk was tiring, and on the other hand, hunger puts you in a bad mood anyway. Over there, in the middle of the crowd was Timoteo next to Jacinta. If it were other times! He would have sunk the plow into the hilt and then said to the girl:

"We have plenty to eat. Come with me."

He would have taken her for his wife. But now it wasn't possible. Worse yet, he hardly ever saw her. Old Mashe had taken his family to a place on the level land. He built a small hut there, and plowed the dry earth, just in case. If it would just rain now! "Most Holy Virgin, help us!" Timoteo wanted to plant. "Most Holy Virgin, help us!"

The procession returned very late.
Simon Robles returned to his house hopeful, but also, deep inside, somewhat sad. Other times, the Virgin only stirred up happiness. There was little to ask of her and in her fiesta all sorts of gifts of chicha, food, women, and dances were offered to her. Simon liked to play the flute and accordion and make people dance and dance himself when another "maestro" took the instruments. On the subject of the procession on the great day of the fiesta, he also liked to recount the events that happened in the fair in the town of Pallar. It was that the inhabitants of that town were accustomed to annually carry the Virgin that they worshipped, in pilgrimage, to the top of the steep hill that was nearby. The image was very big and heavy, and so was the cart. Consequently, these circumstances united with those of the rough, straight road so that the bearers of the cart suffered, groaned and sweated all the way up to the top. And all that courageous and painful bother was a homage to the Virgin, therefore, behind the cart went the singers and everyone else singing:

This and so much more

Deserves Our Lady.

This and so much more

Deserves Our Saviour.
Closing in on the twisted rocks, the road became so broken up that many of the followers couldn't even see the Virgen. Of course, this didn't prevent them from taking the burden of suffering from those that carried her by continuing to sing the song. All of a sudden, one of the bearers slipped. The others staggered and, on banging the cart against some rocks, the rope that held the image broke. The Virgin then rolled back down the hill, bouncing and breaking to pieces on the rocks, as the singers continued their tune:

"This and much more

Deserves Our Lady.

This and much more

Deserves Our Saviour".

By the time the bearers went to tell them to be quiet, the poor effigy was in pieces.

But now Simon didn't even try to bring up that story. As we have already said, he walked with a sad spirit. He didn't carry the happiness of a jolly word in his mouth nor the sweet, party taste of chicha. Prayer was unleavened, as if it only knew to taste the blood of sufferings. In spite of everything, he had trust and the outlook of the heavy shower played it. The Virgin was so miraculous!
His wife and his children went behind him in silence. Pellejo walked along looking at the ground. A dry, dusty wind choked them at times. Faraway, very faraway, on the mountains to the south, a wide, dense cloud was coming.

"Most Holy Virgin, help us!"
Voices and faces of drought

"It doesn't rain." the peasants said ten days after the procession. The plantings had already died, but they still wanted rain. They could plant again. There was still time for the seed to germinate and even more so if man's hope dampened it.

And one night it was marvelous. Their ears heard the anxiously awaited voice of rain. It fell long and lavishly, scattering a pleasant odor to the earth. When morning came, it continued pelting the earth sweetly. The men again yoked the oxen, took up the plough handle, opened furrows and scattered seed. The heart, above all, is an earth that is always damp and faithful.

The young plants came up again, as if they were joyful at springing forth to the world that awaited them. The rain didn't stop for many days. Everything prospered. Miraculous Virgen of Carmen!

But pain, hunger, and death are supreme lashes. The sky cleared up again, and the earth was left without juice and life began to suffer.

The days ran by in the midst of a useless wait. One
afternoon, Simon Robles went to the sheepfold and contemplated the flock. The previous year they ate and sold a lot of cattle hoping that the next year there would be no need. And behold, that only about fifty pair of sheep were left and the rain had gone.

Would they have to eat all of them. Would they be left without even wool for the baize? He felt sorry for the poor sheep there to the side. They were sweet and simple, ignoring their luck. Then he walked over to the dogs' hut and stayed with them for a while. They were skinny from no food; nevertheless they greeted him by wagging their tails affectionately. Wanka gave birth two more times and the pups always went to the water. Poor Wanka! But after all, it was best.

Another day, Simon saddled up Cortaviento—the lack of pasture made the name even better suited for him—and rode up to the pastures. He looked in vain for his lost cow all day and didn't find her. It was evident that hard times had arrived. He returned to the hut like a shadow.

But there was still room for hope. The sky amused itself by playing with the hearts of men and the yearning strength of the earth. It rained a few more days. The dying plantings came to life again, retrieving health and trying to stand up straight. But they couldn't persist in
their purpose. Thirst came again and they gave up at last. Simon put a large pitcher and two large pots out on the ground. He put them in a corner and slowly, as though he were fulfilling a rite, he filled them with wheat, peas, and corn. He carefully covered the openings with pans of identical size and, after looking at the almost empty granaries, he went down and told Juana:

"I've put away the seed.

Everything was expressed in that. Juana felt within herself a desperation that would have had her sprinkle the earth with her tears if it were possible. But she continued doing her chores serenely next to the stove, her full mouth contracted in a firm grimace and she just replied:

"Okay."

And the relentless, oppressing, long days of drought came. Men and animales weren't the only ones that deplored it. All nature uttered the fatal words of thirst and death.

A whispering wind crossed the mountains carrying clouds, lifting dirt and murmuring long responses between the withered leaves of the trees. "It doesn't rain", cried an agonizing thread of water from the deepness of a river-bed. "It doesn't rain", repeated the alder trees,
twisting their arms and letting their leaves fall on the banks. "It doesn't rain", chorused the grass, losing its green and become yellow so it was confused with the earth. Even the big house on the hacienda raised its voice. "It doesn't rain", admitted the tall, severe eucalyptus trees that surrounded it. Their leaves sounded with a metallic ring.

A burnishing sun shone in the beautiful, blue sky. It lived under a crystal covering that would have been happy if it wouldn't have had the vision of the earth. The sun began to paint a desolate symphony of grey with dying grass and skeletons of trees in gorges and hillsides, slopes and flatlands.

And the wind, always raising whirlwinds of dust and stealing the clouds to drive them over the last mountaintops, to who knows where. The sun always glittering from dawn to dusk. And from dawn to dusk the exquisite sky that laughed at the desolation.

The nights seemed interminable. They were never so black, never so deep. The wind lowed, scattering the odor of dust, disintegration, dead bodies. If the moon came out, to shine on the death and the withered or leafless trees, it pretended to preside over a reunion of spectres.
The drought imposed a cold during the nights and the fields were soon brown mantles. In the porous furrows, there wasn't even one peep of tender green in the recently sprouted plants.

Men and animals, in the midst of the grey sadness of the fields, wandered around tired and humiliated. They seemed drier than the trees, more miserable than the twisted grass, smaller than the blackened pebbles. Only their eyes, faced with the sharp denial of the splendid sky, showed a pain in which beat a dramatic greatness. Agony trembled in them. They were the eyes of life that didn't want to die.
Time went on aggravating the evil with its indifferent regularity. Water was just a small thread in the bottom of the brooks. Don Cipriano quit damming it up to water his plants. The women had to go, with their jars, to look between the large rocks and pebbles in the river-beds for drinking water. They heard that down below, on the banks of the Yana, where oranges and cocaine prospered, men died drinking water arguing by shooting and fist fights over the little water that the river brought.

One day Don Romulo suggested:

"Sir, who knows but what the Government . . ."

"The Government?" growled Don Cipriano indignantly, "you don't know how the Government is. They see things differently from Lima. I've been there. One time there was a famine in Ancash, and it didn't matter a rap to the Government. The deputy prefect, if he's not a beast, should have already informed the Government. But I bet you the Government doesn't do a thing."

After such a brusque answer, Don Romulo didn't bring up the subject again and of course, he continued twisting
his moustache.

Meanwhile, Simon sent his son down to check on Martina and when he returned they had the following discussion:

"She doesn't want to come here. They're eating the sheep. She doesn't have any wheat. She says that any time now Mateo will return."

Simon limited himself in saying:

"She should come! Dumb girl. You'll take her a measure of wheat.

The cattle broke the fences and went unpunished. Why object? And they ran around the fields with their worried, useless lowing. Before if they would have broken in they would have filled their bellies. Now, after a tedious run, they were convinced that it wasn't as bad outside the fields.

The cows lowed as they dreamed of distant, promising points. They began to walk, but without a doubt, soon realized that the greenery they thought they saw was always a little further beyond the next crests.

Don Cipriano had a great herd of goats. They scaled the rocks and peaks to pass their restlessness in the fields behind their flustered eyes. Their mischief and pleasure in the heights sometimes found them a mouthful of the rare dry grass that persisted in some crack in the
rocks. But ordinarily, their height only showed them in a clearer form the extension of the drought's lash.

Hunger bit the stomach with voracious and implacable jaws. The peasants visited the big house on the hacienda time and again. Following Don Cipriano's advice, they had stored everything possible, but it wasn't enough. Of course, the situation of the fugitives of Huaira was even sadder than that of the sharecroppers. It's true that if the Indian is insatiable in a banquet, he contents himself with just a few mouthfuls in time of need. Nevertheless, his already reduced rations were finished. The others began to look at them with distrust in their eyes. The open hand of the first days was closed now. And his treks through the fields provoked a hostile suspicion.

If there were many importunates, Don Cipriano stubbornly refused to help them:

"There is nothing here. I don't even have enough for me."

But he would let someone stay and, secretly, would fill one side of his saddlebags with barley. Then to make the Indian believe that he was receiving special attention, Don Cipriano would say:

"Don't tell anyone. I'm just doing this for you."

Don Cipriano was great at that.
But the demand grew, in spite of everything, and the hacendado had to start earnestly denying them. He lived surrounded by begging and tears and he who had always had a courageous heart, became cowardly. This caused him to be even less reasonable than before.

Moreover, the hunger had returned to more static cholos and Indians. Sitting in the doorways of their huts they chewed coca—if they had it—exchanging monosyllabic mournful woes. They always know how to plant and harvest. The rhythm of their lives is regulated thoroughly with the earth. That’s why, now, they were dying next to the earth.

But, if hunger is sad for man, it is even more so for an animal. The cattle had resolved the problem with cactus and fleshy leaves. These were prickly and bitter, but the intimate call of life didn’t permit choosiness. The goats browsed in the brushwood, and sheep and horses took advantage of the sharp, dried weeds. The dogs, however, felt lost. In the majority of the houses, their rations were cut off. They had to go out to the fields and then the first packs appeared, wandering without rest behind their unfulfilled desire.

Wanka and her pack kept serving their masters. It could be said that they all shared poverty together. And
men and dogs became thinner and thinner. Simon Robles forgot his stories. He also left the flute and the accordion in their places. One on the shelf, next to Saint Anthony, and the other hung to one side, like a perennial full moon in the darkness of a corner. The fiesta of Saucopampa came, and, aside from being poorly attended it was just a prayer session. What were you going to eat or drink, if there wasn't any food and chicha is made from corn and not rocks. What were you going to play if the only tune was the fierce wind. What were you going to sing or dance if there wasn't any heart left. The Virgin had forgotten about her children, just like Saint Lorenzo, the patron saint of Paucar. His chapel, situated to one side of the big house, was always open and the peasants rushed to ask him for help just like they did Don Cipriano. One day Juana went there to pray and she came home very frightened. It turned out that the image had in front of it, as was traditional, a handful of ears of corn. The peasants offered this every year, because for them the ears of corn are the most beautiful flowers that bloom on the earth. But now the select sheaf wasn't there.

"Godless." grunted Juana.

"If he let them take it, it was because he wanted them
to." argued Simon, calming his wife.

Vicenta forgot the cloth she was weaving, and Timoteo wished he could forget Jacinta. Antuca kept herding the sheep, accompanied by the dogs. Wanka, Zambo and Pellejo kept following behind the flock with tired steps and reluctant barks.

One day Antuca remembered to sing:

The Sun is my father,
the Moon is my mother,
And the little stars,
are my little sisters.

But her voice didn't sound like it had before. Her song even scared her. And with the pantheist sentiment of her Indian ancestors, she understood that the dark, powerful forces of nature had come against animal and man.

"Cloud, cloud, clo-o-oud."
"Wind, wind, wi-i-ind."

No, it wasn't like it was before. The clouds rose to become smaller and march across the immense skies on the wings of the wind. The fog before was dense and heavy and it enveloped her so tightly, that at times, on spinning the white wool and turning the spindle, Antuca believed she was spinning fog. Now the fog just barely rose from the Yana River to disappear. And the wind that brought
the clouds before and announced the rain, took them away
as it mouthed blasphemes over the barren land.

Animals and cristianos alike had been abandoned.

Worse yet, Pancho didn't come to play the wainos and
the Manchipuito on his harmonica. Each time he appeared
with fewer sheep, and, without a doubt he and his family
would end up eating all of them.

It was so good to be with Pancho! But the truth was,
she had nothing to give him. She had dreamed of being
big, with wide hips and round breasts, like Vicenta in
times of wheat, and of loving him vigorously and having
children. But the hunger had made her smaller. Beneath
her blouse and the hem of her skirt, shrank a fleshless
framework. Her large eyes shone sadly in the middle of a
pale face with concave cheeks. She saw herself in the
dogs. Wanka, Zambo and Pellejo, so thin, with their sharp
muzzles and sunken flanks had shining eyes. The sheep
with scanty wool, melancholy gaze and weak step, were in a
sad situation too.

One afternoon Antuca felt more than ever nature's
denial, her own pain and solitude and that of the animals.
She summed up all of the penuries:

"Keep vigil over hunger, little animals. . . ."
15. An expulsion and other penalties

Animals love those that feed them. Without a doubt, it's the same with that superior animal, man, even though he accepts rations in the form of less visible compensations. That's where the old love of masters comes from. Surely this feeling of love is nothing more than the physical remembrance, the primary adhesion to earth, water, air and all things that allow life. After all, man is a vital contingent and this way the search for food is completely permissible. But captive animal became a coward, the roughness of the road gnawed at his claws, and the paw turned hollow. (In a light flick of the wrist many chapters of the story are compressed.)

But tragic times are reborn prodigiously. And in the times of our story the paws reappeared. Borders between man and beast were drawn, and between men and men, and beasts and beasts. In Simon Robles house there still persisted for much time the solidarity between those that give food, because, of course, giving food is taking care of someone. Dogs and people still bound themselves together in the disgrace. But the rations were short, and
little by little, the faithful feeling relaxed. Governments and patrones know this phenomenon well—masters of greater calibre—and Simon was aware of it. He had suffered before and seen the suffering caused by lack of food; but the sand wasn't going to turn into flour.

So time went on.

Antuca was herding in the heights, if you could call it herding when she took the cattle to amble in the midst of dry straw that had been gnawed off to the roots.

Sitting down, she spun a frugal ball. At her side was Zambo, curled up in his thinness and sleeping. Suddenly he opened his eyes, raised his ears, sniffed and softly, with cautious steps, he slipped by his owner. When she noticed his absence she called him. Her voice didn't reach docile ears. Alarmed she stood up and noticed that the other dogs were gone too.

"Wanka-a-a . . ., Zambo-o-o . . ., Pellejo-o-o . . ." 

Was she left alone with the cattle? She climbed upon a rock and saw them in the hollow of a dip that had served as an accomplice. She ran and didn't want to believe what had happened. They had killed a sheep and were eating it. She yelled at the dogs, shook her fist and raised the distaff but all in vain. Her gestures and voice were
answered with deaf growls and they kept swallowing voraciously. She was no longer the owner that fed them. She was the one that took it away. Wanka herself, barked furiously.

Frightened, Antuca herded the cattle alone and returned to the house crying.

The dogs didn't leave their prize until very late.

Wanka was the one that started the festivities. She was lying in the hollow to protect herself from the wind—her weakness let her feel the cold—when a large ewe happened to pass by. What sort of fever came over her to throw her on the carelessness and innocence of her victim? She forgot the old, maternal teats. With one blow on the chest she knocked over the ewe and the latter didn't even have time to bleat because a ferocious bite broke her neck. Wanka proceeded as if she was accustomed to doing so and wasn't surprised at her skill or success. As she perceived the taste and heat of the blood, she voraciously bit and the first chunk of warm meat was destroyed with her strong jaws. She felt as if her fangs and tongue and entire body were attending an ancestral banquet, wrapped as she was in the hot vapor of the blood that gushed out, purpling the ground. Then Pellejo appeared and last of all Zambo. When Antuca began
hollering and threatening them, it was nothing more than a small bother. It was terribly exciting to stick the snout in the blood and tighten the jaws to break bones, subduing the elasticity of the tendons, softening the lean meat, and swallowing, swallowing until the belly felt heavy and a new heat ran through the body and a new energy sang in it. Time meant nothing now. Three dogs, from the time of the cavemen, ate there. They were in front of the front of the prize taken from the open fields in nomadic eagerness. Until they were full. Then came serenity and the realization that the flock wasn't there. The mountainside was very desolate without them and the shadowy peaks had a very solemn, awesome sadness. Wanka silently followed the trail home and the others followed her. In spite of their full bellies and their strength, the walk back wasn't happy without a flock to herd. One after the other, at a quick and somewhat heavy trot, they descended to the outskirts of the house. They stopped undecided. Should they go in? It was mealtime. They were afraid. At the same time they wanted to go in, take their place in front of the feeding troughs and afterward, like every other day, go to sleep in the sheepfold, on the straw. But it wasn't like other days. They had been raised to protect. Their whole lives had been like that
and suddenly, almost without realizing it, they had killed. Without a doubt man would take a different attitude now.

Night still hadn't come, but a thin, half moon already rose on the cotton whiteness of a cloud.

After a long time, they approached the house, with a soft, fearful tread, heads down, and tall between their legs. Simon was sitting in the hallway. They came with red muzzles and full, hanging, stuffed bellies. Simon took a thick rod that he had by his side and fell on them. They cried and fled from the blows and he swore and chased them. His whole family appeared armed with pieces of wood and helped him. The dogs stopped and tried to return humbly but the men and women attacked again and chased them far away. So there wouldn't be any doubts left, they threw rocks and Timoteo's good marksmanship hit Wanka's ribs. When night fell, the dogs got together again and tried to return again. To return and gain once more man or the house or at least the sheepfold. Not because in that moment they thought of continuing to eat the sheep. But man watched. Simon remembered that in the past famine, when the dogs began to devour the cattle, you needed to either kill them or throw them out. If you didn't, they would keep killing everytime they felt
hungry. It was necessary to work quickly and energetically. That's why he was still standing there, watching, with the rod in his hand, on one end of the porch.

Wanka and those with her contemplated her for a moment and, understanding at last, changed directions. Before them were the wide fields.

The Indian Mashe had built their hut, as we have said, in the land that they chose next to a bunch of alder trees. These twisted trees—the fig trees of the Andes—furnish wood, but there was nothing to cook. In a small hut with a straw roof and stick walls, a fire lit up four waiting table companions.

That time the Indian Mashe came home sadder and more tired than usual. Existence itself weighed heavy on him like a load of stones on his back.

"There's nothing. And the Patron doesn't want to give anything. There is nothing . . ."

He slowly sat in the door of the hut and to hide the trembling of his hands, he hugged his knees. And from his silence, the voice of tragedy rose—pain of earth and time--, which was his whole life.

Jacinta felt bad and went out to look for something.
Don't think she was going to sell herself. The Indian women that give themselves in the fields don't do it for money. They lay down on the wide earth and, looking up at the blue sky or the stars, they receive man nobly and a pure, harsh voluptuousness lights up their lives. Jacinta went to see what she could get begging at some door. Sometimes they had given here barley. Maybe now, again.

On the road she ran into a drop of blood. She sniffed the air and something told her it wasn't a man's blood. With the animal instinct that has a presentiment of prey, she started looking in the fields. One drop and another. Yes, it was that way. She ran. There--red and white--were the leftovers of a ewe. The wool, tatters and bones all mixed together. After hesitating for a moment, she gathered them into her shawl then threw it over her shoulder.

Old Mashe's eyes shone. When Jacinta told her tale in detail, he said:

"I swear the dogs killed it. I would bet my old neck even though it's not worth anything."

They put the pieces on the fire. They pulled off the scraps of meat and gnawed at the bones. Old Mashe took two rocks and broke them open to suck the marrow. When night came and the shadows squeezed the hut, they were
still slowly chewing and sucking eagerly.

The next day, Wanka and her pack remembered their prey. Of course, they only found the blood that the sun and the earth were already consuming.

They needed to look for something to eat. But, where?

That's how they were abandoned to the interminable anguish of the roads of famine.
16. Waiting, always waiting

Time went by slowly, time of pain and poverty, without returning Mateo Tampu. The truth is, however, that now it felt like the time for him to return. Maybe. Martina didn’t really know how long it would take, but she thought he was about to come home. Any day now they would see him climb the last hill with the same vigorous trot that he’d had before. Surely, the faraway hills felt his step on their backs even now. He would be traveling long, sitting down for a moment to eat and then stubbornly starting to trek again. He would come down the path with the sunrise.

And waiting, always waiting, Martina silently resisted the famine’s lash. She could still live. There was no question of leaving now that he was coming back. She, the children, the dog and the earth had missed him badly. But he would soon be here and, like the water the rain brings, he would drown their lives with contentment.

The smallest of the children grew laboriously. The woman loved him with the profound tenderness that the unfortunate children inspire in their mothers. Of the two, he was the one that suffered the harshness of time
and men. He barely spoke and didn't walk much. But his little voice could say "taita" and there were no lack of tears. Seeing his misery, Martina thought that Mateo should return now. They all loved him and waited for him. He had to return.

And, let's think that just maybe, Mateo Tampu, down on the coast, suffering the despotism of corporals and sargent, lost in the anonymity of the marching troops or behind the bars of jail, would console himself by feeling that faraway, hoped for affection. Or maybe he died of malaria. Maybe he deserted and fearing persecution didn't return to his normal haunts but stayed there to forget and be forgotten. The plains have more roads than the Andes and it's easy to get lost because there are no rough crests to encourage one's legs to persist in the trek or sharply defined landmarks on the horizon to give one a definite sense of direction.

Martina knew nothing of this. Mateo was still a footprint in her flesh and life. With the loyalty that beings with a simple intimacy have, she patiently waited for him. At first her vigorous body, full of voluptuous currents desiring a riverbed, suffered from his absence. The famine brought hunger and thinness, and the erotic shine went out in the slow blood and lean muscles.
Strength hid in the far, vital corners to save itself and resist.

But soon there was only one ewe left in the sheepfold and a measure of wheat on the terrace.

One morning Martina said to Damian:

"I'm going to Sarun where Mateo's relatives are. I'm going to ask for food. I'd go to my Pa but they won't have any. Eat the wheat. If I still don't come back and you run out, call over Candelaria and kill the ewe. She'll take you but it's better that you stay here in case Mateo comes. You remember? Yes . . . And if I still don't come back and you don't have anything to eat, go to my Pa, your grampa Simon. The river doesn't have much water and you'll be able to cross."

They were both silent and Martina added, as if challenging adversity.

"Yes, I'll come back. . . and so will your Pa."

She left carrying her smallest son on her back. Her sister-in-law, who had gone some time ago, had told her that Mateo's parents had an abundance of food.

Damian and Manu stood watching Martina disappear in the distance for a long time. At last Damian began to toast the wheat in a pan and then both of them began to eat it loudly. The nearby, rocky spring gave them water.
when forced by dipping hands deep down and licking with the tongue. Then the hillsides gave them solitude.

The boy and the dog were company for each other in an arid, hostile world. The ewe from the flock, with overcome eyes and body sprawled on the earth belonged to that world. Or at least it seemed so to Damian.

Night came and they climbed up on the meat dryer. Manu tried to lay down at the boy's feet but Damian wanted him right next to his body. While the dog was awake, the yellow light of his eyes was a consolation in the dense darkness of the night. And the night talked with a thousand mysterious voices. When Martina was in the hut, Damian went to sleep quickly and couldn't hear the night. But now the sinister message of the strange life that lives in the shadows came to his overawed vigil. The wind lowed, bringing whispers and confused, distant rumors. Someone passed crying on the road. Afflicted beings groaned their sufferings, and one of them came near, dragging his steps. He hit the hut causing the cane and mud to grind. The ewe bleated and Manu woke up and ran out to bark. He was out there for a long time. Was it a thief? Or a fox? Or a spirit condemned to punish? At last the dog returned and the strange life outside continued. It was a concert of wailings and moanings that
didn't end. A night patrol of afflicted beings that took refuge in the shadows to deplore their terrible sufferings. And each time they came closer, closer, without a doubt to kill or embody Damian to their painful punishment taking advantage of the fact that he was a small, abandoned boy. At times he called:

"Manu . . ., Manu!"

The dog opened his eyes, watched for a moment and went back to sleep. At last, the dawn powdered an uncertain whiteness and the imaginary population left with its complaints. Life took on a new meaning and, in the arms of a consoling confidence, Damian slept. He woke when the sun was already high up and shone in the skipping shine of the heaven and the brown earth.

Without a mother he was so fragile and the world so hard. He just now perceived the meaning of the separation and wanted to cry but contained himself. Nevertheless, an obstinate tear sprung forth and he wiped it with the hem of his poncho. Just as well there weren't any tracks from the howling night-patrol. He would have to prepare wheat again. This time he would boil it. Well, no, he would toast it because it was faster. Once it was prepared, they ate it. Then they went to the sheepfold. The skinny ewe walked around reluctantly. They stopped at the edge
of the brook, a place from where they could see the house. The ewe chewed on wild cane and the few fleshy leaves of the bushes whose roots could bring up water from the dry riverbed. A few green shoots were growing and Damian pulled them up to give them to the ewe. The ewe ate them faint-hearted as though she were afraid of the calamity. Manu stretched his weariness on the earth, but kept his head lifted and vigilant. The little boy—remember that to date he's only nine—slowly began to make a pile of wood. There was no rush, and the chore was easy because of the abundance of dry wood. When he was finished, it was already past noon. The tired ewe had laid down on the ground so he sat next to Manu. They spent the afternoon looking at the withered scenery. On the pealed skirts of the hills some dark huts rose. The closest one belonged to dona Candelaria. She was old, bent and skinny, whose dark face had more wrinkles than the dry earth. She spent her time coughing so loudly that you could hear her from a long ways away. Besides coughing, she was always bawling out a little, black dog that warmed her feet. Damian and Manu watched her walk around her hut, mumbling who know's what complaints and then she sat down in the doorway. The dog and its owner formed one black mass in which her white hair stood out.
There she stayed, when she wasn't coughing or scolding, talking in a complaining tone to a non-existant audience. She gesticulated and tried by any means to get them to understand her clearly. It appeared as though her listeners didn't understand everything clearly because she would then renew the battle, raising her voice and shaking her cane. At last she began to fight. She moved her arms under the dark, floating shawl. Suddenly she stood up straight and brandished the club. Since the enemy fled, she shook the thick stick and then let it fall to the ground twice.

"Like this and this . . . Just one good swing." she threatened.

It was already late and Damian and Manu, herding the ewe, went back to the hut. The boy carried the pile of wood, and also a vessel of water that he had spent the whole day filling by leaving it at the foot of a rock from which water ran slowly, drop by drop. The fire burned and the flat, earthen bowl offered them once more the flavourful brown of the toasted wheat. Sleep came more easily that night, and, maybe yes, maybe no, they barely cried at all.

That's how one day after the other passed. Dona Candelaria was always arguing or fighting with someone.
The wheat decreased and neither Martina nor Mateo appeared from anywhere. One night, Manu suddenly jumped up barking furiously. The sound of a dull thud of a stick was heard. He screamed and then was quiet. Then the ewe bleated and some footsteps were heard leaving rapidly. Full of fear, Damian went out to see what was happening. He couldn't see anything except shadows. From far away he heard a word. Then he looked for Manu and found him stretched out. But his body was warm and he was breathing. Damian was at his side, snuggled in the immense night, waiting for life to come back to him. He couldn't do anything except caress him softly and whisper repeatedly, "Manu, Manu". At last he stood up as the day broke.

But there wasn't a ewe to watch anymore. The light just let them see the rations they usually had and wouldn't have for much longer. To have something to do they ran around the nearby places. Dona Candelaria was not to be seen. Was she still inside her house? Did she leave? Damian remembered the fights she had with invisible beings that pestered her daily and he was afraid to go see what had happened. Maybe she was on the bed, motionless, from being strangled while she slept. And the dog? Without a doubt he wouldn't leave her side but stay
there watching her. Anyway, it seemed to Damian that it wasn’t a good idea to go to the house so he didn’t go. For our part, we prefer to ignore what happened to the poor old lady. Without a doubt she died of hunger. But the mountains mystic caused the mystery of pain, the desolate immensity and the secrets of the drought. On refusing to clear up the disappearance of Dona Candalaria, Damian did nothing more than resist the black swallow of fatality with his little boy strength.

The next day the wheat ran out. There was just water. Water from the gourd that was gathered drop by drop. Mommy! Daddy! The long roads were always empty. One day, we don’t know which one, Damian went to the hill:

"Miz Candalaria." he called several times.

"A-aaa, A-aaa", the echo answered him weakly. All the fields were silent and the faraway huts seemed to be without people or with dead people inside of them. Mommy! Daddy! But there was just solitude. And Manu, the poor Manu, that had such a solid and sad air. Hunger hurt the belly and caused him to see blue. At first it produced an atrocious anguish, a perennial, overwhelming restlessness. Then it became lax and relaxed the muscles. They stayed next to the barbacue drinking water from time to time from the gourd.
How many days? How many nights? Time disappeared like light and darkness in front of weak, half-closed eyes. As far as vital perception is concerned, he only felt the howling of the wind. An obstinate wind trembled and howled over the hut and made Damian feel as though someone was there that he had ignored in the silence.

But one day he opened his eyes with what little strength he had left and he saw the light. He saw the road passing in front of the hut. And he remembered Martina once more. "Kill the ewe and if I still don't come back and you have nothing to eat, go to my father's house". It was true that he couldn't kill the ewe now, but several days had gone by with no food so he could go. He left the hut, followed by the dog. The road was long and rough. He had been on it three years ago, when they went one time to Saint Anthony's novena that Simon celebrated, but he couldn't remember it very well. Nevertheless, he got on the road and let his instincts guide him. The instinct of natives is sure, above all to unravel the paths in the uneven roughness of the Andes. His legs shook and his sandals collided with an irregular noise. The wind came and enfolded him and swirled his poncho around as it filled it with dust. Manu walked
behind him or at his side, wan and tired. They sat down to rest for a moment then continued the trek. But the weakness became more intense and doubled him over. The road was long and rough. There was a rock next to a bare tree. Habit made him sit under the tree even though the naked branches offered no shade.

The Huaira mountain was so high, so high. And the Rumi was even higher. And even more so the Manan. It rose above the black and blue conglomerate of mountains that ran towards the north. They squeezed together and fell over each other like a herd of cattle that a man with a live whip drove. Damian's eyes failed him, a sudden cold came over his body and he fell to the earth. He felt the distant rumor of bells. His companion looked at him restlessly.

"Mommy, Mommy . . ., I want some hominy, Mommy." the little one said.

Then he was quiet, eyes closed and the emaciated, brown face so pale. With the sure perception of dogs, Manu felt that death had arrived. He howled for a long time and stayed next to the body, accompanying it, the same way he had been accompanied on many a night.

Afterwards, a vulture flew over them and sat down a ways off. Manu barked at the same time that the bird
tried its first pecks. It had curved beak and claws, a red crest and black feathers. It belonged to the kind with bare necks and white throats where the black feathers begin to grow. It looked intently at the dead body with cold, hard eyes, and then stumbled towards him with a few unbalanced steps. Full of anguish, Manu found some last strength in his weakness and threw himself on the bald neck. He wasn't able to bite it and received a terrible peck on his flank. But the vulture didn't come any closer. So a slow, stubborn battle began. The dog barked at the enemy and the enemy advanced opening its great, fan-like wings. The blood from the flank dripped and painted the ground. Sometimes, the vulture stopped for a moment with an aire of indecision. Then it decided to advance once more and the watchdog stopped it with barks and bites when possible. Sometimes the vulture was able to get behind the dog to the body, but Manu wouldn't let it stay there and made it leave. Once it tried to ignore the dog and eat but Manu leaped on it and hurt its neck. The white throat turned purple. The peck on the flank had taught the dog the advantages of fighting from afar. He attacked and left, barking and growling furiously, with violent eyes. The vulture opened its beak and stretched out its neck furiously too. But, then, faced with the
barks, it returned to its natural attitude and retained its dignity. The dignity that is due a being that dominates the air when faced with a mere being that can only trot on the earth. But, after all, it was insolent because it realized that Manu's opposition was insignificant and after measuring the possibilities of attack, it advanced once more. The resistance rose again and so went the battle. Suddenly, Manu noticed that another vulture was coming. It hit the earth and came towards them with its unbalanced walk. He barked louder then. The new arrival looked at him with contempt and scorn. A shot sounded and the first enemy fell. The new arrival took flight with a vigorous impetus. Manu noticed that a man came down the road, pulling a brown mule. It was Don Romulo Mendez. When he arrived, the vulture still beat its wings against the earth. They are famous for resisting death unless the bullet splits their heart. After contemplating the painful scene, Don Romulo bound up the body and put it face down over the saddle. Manu sniffed him and wagged his tail, and, realizing he was a friend let him take the body. The man, pulling the mule, took went the same direction that they had been going, with his rifle slung across his shoulders. The dog went at his side. Don Romulo left, but not without one last look
at the vulture on the ground. In other times he would have taken it as a trophy, but now wasn’t the time for vultures.

Damian’s green-faced body arrived at his grandfather’s house with its arms and legs waving in time with the mule’s steps.

After he finished explaining how he’d found the body, Don Romulo said:

"I wanted to take him to Martina’s house, but since he died alone and on the road, it’s because she’s not there. Anyway, you can bury him too."

Then he added:

"And I tell you, if it weren’t for the dog, the vultures would have eaten him."

Simon took the body down, lovingly and silently and after looking at his wife and children, he said to Timoteo:

"We’ll bury him right now. What kind of a wake can we have for him?"

The cemetery was a square piece of land surrounded by a stone fence. It was close to the big house on the hacienda. It had a small house for the priest or someone left in charge so they could charge for burials more easily and also make sure that no-one buried anyone
without paying. The rustic crosses without names fell to
the earth, worm-eaten with time. During other times, the
tracks to the tombs would be covered with grass, but now
the new graves stood out because the gate had been left
open and the animals had eaten all the grass. A bony ass
was even now wandering amongst the crosses.

After paying the man in charge—the priest only went
to Paucar for the festival of Saint Lorenzo—eighty soles*
wrung from their misery, father and son entered the burial
grounds carrying their feeble, painful burden. Manu
followed behind.

They found some pale Indians there who could barely
dig. They were burying the body of the famous huaino
singer, Manuel Shinac.

Instead of sitting on the corridor as was usual, the
day after burying his grandson Simon went to find out what
had happened to Martina.

His horse, Cortaviento, could barely move his body, so
Simon had to slowly walk the long road. On one side and
the other, far away, vultures flew. Without a doubt
horses and asses were dying. Cows, owners and thieves
were never able to die on their own.

The house was empty. And there was nothing in it. It
was evident that everything had been stolen. Not even a poncho or a tool. Only the plow was left to one side, with the air of something that belongs to another time and place. There were also some pots and pans and broken gourds scattered round. And Martina? Without a doubt Dona Candelaria ought to know, seeing as they were neighbors. Simon climbed the hill and called repeatedly much as Damian had done before.

"Miz Candalariaaaa..., miz Candalaria..."

Only the sonorous, late gust of the echo went by time and again, until it disappeared.

"She's gone, too." he thought at last, as he noticed the silence and quietness that surrounded the hut.
We haven't forgotten about Mashe. At least we left him eating well. Sadly enough, we don't go back to find him like that now. The old Indian wanders over the desolate fields looking for something.

One day he returned to his house with a fat, steel-coloured snake. His daughters looked at it in surprise. His wife didn't. She had lived for many years and seen hard times.

Mashe explained:

"It's edible. You cut it from about four fingers behind the head and another four fingers from the tail. You eat the rest."

So he cut open the snake in that manner and then baked it. Each one received a piece. After hesitating a bit, the girls ate their part too.

But they weren't always able to find anything. Not even snakes. And, one day, the old, Indian Mashe didn't get up. Better said, he couldn't get up. He stayed there wrapped in his blankets looking out of the open door of the hut—they had no way of closing it—at the dry, dusty,
By the hostiles fields.

We haven't forgotten Manu either. When Damian stayed under the earth, the dog wailed for awhile, but in his simplicity he understood that it was the end and he ran to catch up with those that had buried the feeble, overcome body.

That's how he got to Simon's house.

"Oh," said Simon, after looking at the thick, grey fur, "It's the one that Mateo took."

"Ya, that's him,' affirmed Juana.

They observed him for a moment and then each one tended to his own business. And if we were precise that was nothing at all. Only Antuca and Timoteo herded the flock, which was now twenty pairs of sheep. They had added Timoteo to this chore and both shepherdss went out armed with thick sticks to prevent attacks from the dogs. As we have said, the dogs went wandering around everywhere looking for something to eat.

Manu followed the sheep time and again, he slept in the sheepfold and waited for his rations with an alert spirit. But nothing was given to him. Not even the affection to which he was accostumed with Damian. If they killed a ewe, they roasted and boiled the bones, so when the bones finally did come the warm, polished anxiety of
his jaws, they were useless.

There, faraway, in the fields and on the roads, the wandering dogs howled. The pain of them was his own and after all, nothing tied him to man. One night when the deep anguish of the village hurt him worse than ever, he jumped the flimsy wall of the sheepfold and went to join his companions.

A twitching, brown hand reached out and pulled back and reached out, trembling, toward the sheaf of wheat. Behind it, a hoarse voice mumbled: "Forgive me, forgive me". And the anguished eyes saw the sweet face of Saint Lorenzo, sweet and serene like the wheat itself. "Forgive me, forgive me". The eyes turned suddenly. No, noone had come in and noone was in the silent darkness of the chapel. But there was Saint Lorenzo with his sweet, serene face. The close-fisted hand hesitated. "Forgive me, forgive me". But at last it fell, like a claw on the golden sheaf. There were no more eyes that saw the sweet, serene face of Saint Lorenzo, but only escape through the door. The man fled, with the sheaf of wheat under his poncho, fearful and exhilarated as if he carried a treasure.

He stopped, by himself, behind some rocks. When he
was sure that noone could see him, he sat down, pulled off the heads and chewed the wheat, slowly, so slowly.

That's what the Indian Mashe was remembering in that hour. In the midst of the late shadows he clearly saw the thick, yellow sheaf and the sweet, serene face of Saint Lorenzo. Then he called:

"Cloti, Cloti."

His old woman came, and, sitting next to him, bent her rough, wrinkled face over him.

"I've never done bad things. But it was I that stole the wheat from Saint Lorenzo. Because it could bring punishment, I didn't bring any to you."

And as if he had waited just to say that, Mashe died giving a sigh of relief like someone who lays down to rest.

The three women cried over the dead man.

What would they pay the burial with? In the middle of the gray, leafless plain they dug a hole with the hoe and the bar that belonged to Mashe. They were useless now, just like all the other farm tools, so why not use them for burials?

And Mashe rested well there on the plain and not in the cemetery. The cemetery was just a cemetary because it had a stone wall and because of this the Church assured salvation of souls. Mashe rested well there, in the wide
earth for which he had fought so much. It was open and free for hope and death. And at last he had them.

Jacinta was sitting by the side of the road close to Simon's house.

It was because after burying Mashe, the women had looked at each other and said: "What are three, poor, abandoned women going to do together? Who will feed us?" The road was in front of them so they went down it.

While walking, Jacinta remembered Timoteo. He seemed good and strong. He had always stared at her a lot. But precisely because he had looked at her so much she didn't want and couldn't go to his house. She thought she should wait by the side of the road. He would come out and see her. Then, maybe he would invite her in. If not, she would keep going, even though she didn't know where. That way everything would be above board and right.

So that's what she did. While waiting, she deplored her poverty that hadn't even left her a small bit of wool to spin on the distaff. At least then her hands would have something to do, her eyes would be on the thread and her attitude would be less ostensible. To avoid looking at his house, she turned her face towards the hills. From time to time, though, she couldn't resist a glance at the
balcony. A long time passed and at last Simon came out. Then he went back in. Then Timoteo appeared. His father had said to him:

"There's a poor woman sitting out there. She probably has nowhere to go."

Timoteo's heart leaped in his chest and listening to it he went to see who it was. And there was Jacinta. He went up to her and said:

"What are you doing here?"

She kept looking at him:

"My Pa is dead."

Then she lowered her eyes. What a difficult moment! If she just would have had a spindle and a bit of thread to twist. She began to nibble on the border of her poncho. Timoteo remembered that they lacked so many things in their house. But maybe his Pa . . . At last he decided and said the right words:

"Let's go to the house."

Simon was on the porch. Thin and pale, his poncho seemed to be hanging on a stick. The two young people stopped in front of him with just one restless question. Would he deny them? Would he say, "Stay for the night, but you leave tomorrow"? Simon calmed the hardness of his dark eyes and said to Jacinta:
"Come on in."
18. The hungry dogs

The grey packs of hungry dogs went here and there. They seemed like remnants of earth in movement. Where in the hell had the partridges flown to? There was absolutely nothing around. They lacked the strength to herd the sheep, and they were chased away from the huts so they wouldn't bother anyone. Sometimes they stood on the hills, dubious and undecided, not knowing where they should go. Their half-opened mouths drooled, while inside their hot heads who knows what Pantagruelian scenes repeated themselves.

One afternoon, while the horizon, dented with hills, stained itself with fire, Antuca ran into Manu. He was laying on the rocks in the dry creekbed. Thin and perhaps mortally wounded. His hanging tongue was pale. Was he dying? He was dying alone. He had lived as a good dog and would wait for death in solitude. He looked at her without bitterness in his brilliant eyes. "Didn't I always try to serve?", he seemed to say to her. And she, who was small and had grown up with the dogs, understood him perfectly. She forgot about the jar and the water. When night fell and she heard the sharp voice of Juana
calling her, she still had her hands affectionately twined in the rough fur on Manu's neck. He was strangely warm and quivering.

The whirling immensity of the mountain night was articulated in rough howls. Traversing the winding bends in a fruitless inspection, they growled, fought and at last quieted down to console themselves by howling sharply. Others kept looking.

They invaded the porch at the big house. They sniffed and scratched the dogs so much that Raffles and his pack growled madly. They were furious at because they were locked in a separate room. They were enclosed there because they, too, had been in night fights. They killed many wandering dogs but had also been wounded in an unequal scuffle. Raffles got mad and complained by barking his threats. Then the hungry dogs barked even louder, encouraged by their numbers and impunity.

From his bed, huddled under the heavy blankets, the child Obdulio listened to the challenges. Don Cipriano swore in the next room and the new-born baby cried inconsolably. Then Dona Julia lit the lamp and didn't turn it out until the sun came through the cracks.

The morning sun found the hungry dogs in the hills.
They were warming up between panting and growling. Wanka had given birth and was trying to feed her four pups, resignedly letting them nurse. The pups, thin and moving in larva-like contortions, seemed to be sucking her very blood.

When day broke, they began to wander about. The former, agile, native dogs, with mountain blood in their veins, almost couldn't walk now. They resembled an odd skeleton of bones with a covering of twisted fur.

But they continued to resist hunger. With their flanks stuck to the bone and their chests turned into cages, they persisted in living as if fed by the wind. The wind itself tried to either carry them away or bury them in dust clouds. But they came out of these storms, semiasphyxiated, growling and howling. The strongest ones ran away from the dust, with what little strength they had left, and then returned later. They banded together as if to defend themselves from something strange, like an enveloping, wide force that they could resist better if they were together.

When nighttime came, the same sad chorus shook the mountains. The howling began to cut the silence like swords. Then it confused itself by forming a vast, interminable complaint. The wind pretended to carry it
away, but the complaint was born and rose again and again from a thousand desolate jaws.

One night when there was a full moon, Zambo went to lie down at the foot of some leafless trees. He was terribly tired and lax.

Soon he saw a woman come out and head for the field. She carried a bundle in her hand. It was the maid from the big house. A man emerged from the distance and met up with the woman. Both of them lay down on the ground. The woman gave her warm womb and her long muscles to the clarity of the moon and the man. Then, she opened the bundle. Zambo was close by and saw them clearly. The man ate wheat and then potatoes. If he'd just get the peelings! The dog got up and went humbly towards them, waiting for the peelings. The woman screamed and pointed at the dog and the man turned his head.

"What the devil?" said the man, and he threw some rocks at the dog. Zambo ran to take refuge behind some tree.

But he patiently waited there. They had to leave the peelings, didn't they? At last they left, each to his own side. The dog then left his hiding place and went over to the spot. He sniffed determined and eager. It smelled like woman, potatoes and wheat, but there wasn't even the
The smallest scrap left. The man had eaten the potatoes skin and all.

Even sadder was the episode that happened to Pellejo. One day he remembered Dona Chabela. She had a house on the road to the mountaintops. One time when she was coming back from the village she ran into Antuca who was herding the sheep with the dogs.

They know how to her?" dona Chabela asked. She was a very curious, talkative woman and was always looking for something to gab about.

"Of course." responded Antuca. She signaled to Pellejo and said "Get that ewe."

Pellejo went barking and leaping and he brought the ewe back to the center of the flock. Then he returned to Antuca.

"Ohh" said Dona Chabela, "this is a good dog and pretty besides."

She took a morsel, of those she bought in the village, out of her bag and gave it to Pellejo. Now, Pellejo remembered the morsel and its giver and appeared one afternoon at her house. She was sitting next to the fire toasting corn.

"What do you want, ugly dog?" she said the moment she saw him. Pellejo went slowly forward.
"Get out of here, dog!" she grumbled.

But Pellejo insisted on going closer wagging his friendly tail. When he was still a distance away, Dona Chabela took a live coal and quickly hit him in the ribs. His burnt flesh hurt, and Pellejo took off running with alarmed yelps. Dona Chabela's husband came out on hearing the noise and threw rocks at the dog with his slingshot.

For many hours poor Pellejo's wound burned.

The sun had finished wringing all the juice from the earth. What was before swampy area or pools of water now became the uniform greyish-yellow of the fields. They were just darker or whiter stains. They looked like scars or wounds.

In the rivers that had once had much water, the jars now filled ever so slowly. The left over water was rapidly absorbed by the avid lips of the animals.

Nature suffered a deep, wide and tall suffering that began in the roots, extended through the whole earth and didn't even end in the highest peaks where the latest snows melted.

Even the oldest eucalyptus trees that surrounded the big house of Paucar were exhausted. Don Cipriano had said to his son many times:

"Okay, let's embrace it."
He extended his long, hard arms around the rough bark and his son did the same. Their fingers could barely touch. The eucalyptus was very thick.

"Our forefathers planted these." don Cipriano said proudly.

Who knew what profound wisdom their roots and branches told to the clouds, but, nevertheless, they were hurt now too. The aged trunk would perhaps fall, dried and worm-eaten. The leaves became redder and redder. Only a fresh, green zinc lasted in the treetops.

The other young, weak eucalyptus trees, threw their leaves down and became quiet in the midst of a rude trepidation. Before, they had sung around the oldest tree, full of youthful joy, a thousand prayrful, nighttime songs with their luxuriant leaves. The leaves gathered and slowly scattered on the ground making a grey bed that was occupied by cows and oxen with sweet, sad eyes.

And like that, in the trembling of the dying leaves, the last remnant of green was swallowed by the dry earth and the burning sun.

Because of the drought everyone now had to herd their cows, horses and donkeys. The oxen—because of their plowing abilities—were watched more than asnything else.
Everyone who had an animal tied it up at the house during the night and took it out around the brushwood and wild grass during the day. Whether the animals ate or not, because everything was scarce, the men brought them home at night. Outside of those that died of hunger and were devoured by vultures, the cows were lost first and then, when those were watched, the horses and donkeys. It was said that the settlers killed them secretly, in the brooks, and ate them.

For how long would the punishment last? The peasants voices were raised from far and near exclaiming about the evil. If something was harvested somewhere, it wasn’t sold. It was also heard that in distant towns, that were heard of now for the first time, you could buy whatever you wanted. But when everyone heard the prices they stayed right where they were. Unfortunately, the belly knows nothing of prices, much less death. Many of the settlers and some of the older sharecroppers from Paucar took their hunger and complaints to the big house.

Impending fatality weighed heavily on man with a weight comparable only to that of heaven and earth.

Viands were also scarce on the hacendado’s table. There was little left in the graneries and less if
frightened eyes saw it. That night, on the snow-white plates there were a few mushy potatoes and a piece of tough, black met from some skinny animal.

Presiding over the table, Don Cipriano ate quietly. Then he dropped his forehead into his hands and put his head down on his poncho. During all this time he had spoken little and was in a very bad mood. Without a doubt, he felt useless and defeated. Dona Julia, sitting across from him, was nursing the baby. Between Dona Carmen, Don Romulo and the child Obdulio exchanged words. The good, prayerful grandmother of nearly one hundred years of life on the mountains, began to speak of other famines and how the rain always came at last. They had seen drought for two years, but never for three. So, the next winter would bring lots of rain.

And she kept speaking:

"That year . . . what hunger! I was a child. From far away people came to beg. But you couldn't give anyone anything. The woman who owned the hacienda was Mrs. Rosa. One afternoon a woman came leading a donkey. She was pretty old: 'Mama' she said to Mrs. Rosa, 'I've walked so far and haven't found anything. My youngest son died because I had no milk in my breasts. The rest will die too. Their bellies are swollen and one day I found
one of them eating dirt. There is a God in heaven. For His love, give me something.' Mrs. Rosa felt so sorry for her and she measured and took four bundles of barley to the donkey. As it was, the donkey was so skinny he couldn't have carried more. The poor woman went then, leading her donkey and she stopped in the middle of the meadow. There she knelt down, clasped her hands together and gave thanks to God, screaming and crying. There were also theives that year. And there was much blood. One time . . . "

Violent barking interrupted her story. A band of dogs came up on the porch growling and snapping their teeth. Chutin, who wasn't closed in since he usually didn't fight, forgot his usual manner for a moment and standing next to his master, began to fight. Senora Carmen crossed herself and the baby began to cry. One of the hungry dogs bit Chutin on his flank, but at last they left, howling, with many broken ribs. Don Cipriano decided that that was enough. After eating, he went around the whole farm with Pedron, one of the hired hands, and flashlights. They left little pieces of meat everywhere.

Later, when all the lights were out, the dogs came back and with their fine sense of smell they followed the men's trail, picking up the pieces of meat.
A crude, implacable, voracious sun rose the next day. The earth opened up in dry cracks and the sun entered them and toasted the earth more. Along the pathways, in the beds of the rivers—looking for a small drop of water for their poisoned thirst--, at the feet of the withered eucaliptus trees, panted the hungry dogs. Some had already died and lay gazing with fixed pupils.

Carnivorous birds whispered by in a slow, black flight. They rested in turn on the feeble bodies and they took the eyes out first. They always do that. Maybe because they prefer the eyes. Maybe because life persists in them and on taking them out they want to extinguish that last, bothersome sign. Then the hooked beaks ripped open the bellies and the feast began. Over the wide skirt of the mountains, funereal, vibrant circles began to form in the sky. Even the buzzards, that are scarce, showed their red tail feathers. They ate voraciously, stopping only to scratch their heads, fluffing the feathers and emit hoarse cackles. When a condor arrived, buzzards and vultures left to a respectable distance and the biggest bird in the world ate until it tired. At last it left in heavy flight and then the others dared to come back to the prey. A nauseous odor filled the fields as though the
whole earth was rotting. On a flat-land was Zambo, inert and with no stomach. One of his kin that still miserably lived, but slowly dying, came up to him, panting and with trembling growls. It was Pellejo, who evidently hadn't participated in the gift from Don Cipriano. Maybe he didn't recognize Zambo because he had no eyes or stomach. Maybe it didn't matter. Maybe that was it. He hesitated at first, but then began to bite and swallow the bloody, dark innards that were, without a doubt, bitter. Then he went a few steps away. The buzzards, that had fled from this strange being, now threw themselves on the dead dog, beginning again the red-black feast of rotten flesh.

In a short while, Pellejo was writhing and groaning weakly. The agonizing desperation was reflected in the yellow eyes through which a turbulent storm flashed. Then they faded. Pellejo died with a long howl, while he stretched his legs as though trying to run.

He wasn't the only one who had such a destiny. Others had also eaten their brothers and therefore don Cipriano's work was doubled. But not in vain did others have alert eyes and good instincts. Some of them abstained cautiously and thus saved themselves. That is if you could call saving yourself putting off death for a longer period or taking one traitorous bite of your brother. And
don Cipriano kept scattering pieces of fresh meat.

One of the colonists came one day to say to him:

"Don't kill all the dogs, taita. Who will watch the cattle. Right now they can't do much more than howl, but at least this still scares the wild animals.

Don Cipriano said:

"It's better that they die, stupid. Why should they die slowly? It's better that they die quickly and at once."

It had been said. At nighttime, foxes and cougars began to wander impudently around the sheepfolds. Before they had fled from the howling of the dogs, but, on feeling the promising silence that smelled like rotting flesh, they began their excursions. Every night there were more attacks.

The peasants tried to imitate the dogs:

"Bow-wow, bow-wow, . . . bow-woooow."

But the wild animals knew better, and soon the sheep would be bleating as they were carried off towards the brooks. They weighed so little that their abduction was that much easier. The next day, the men counted their cattle by pairs and then swore desperately, at the top of their lungs. They had to start sleeping in the sheepfolds next to the sheep.
Because the wild beasts were full and also because of the new watchfulness of the owners, they quit coming on their excursions. The nights had the silence of death. You could only hear the furious rush of the wind in the rusty leaves of the eucalyptus trees. From time to time a howl. Long and sharp, quivering. Some dog with mountain ancestors said good-bye to his race.

Indians and cholos surrounded the big house like a band of condors one afternoon. Simon Robles was there too. What faces he saw! What face did they see! Was that Santos Rosas? And the other guy, was it Claudio Perez? And that one over there, Guille Agreda? And those, all of them, the same ones he had seen at the plow, the hoe or the spike-toothed harrow, chatting during rest time around the tarp of wheat or with the bag of coca in one hand and a sweet ball of it in the mouth, was it them? Many of them had listened to his stories. Many of them danced to the sound of his flute and accordion. There was the happiness of new ground on their faces, the light of the jolly sun and elasticity and joyful rhythms in the strong, brown bodies. But they were so different now. That long, painful time had scratched their mouths, eaten their cheeks, sunk their eyes and disheveled their hair. Their backs were bent as though they couldn't support the weight.
of their ponchos.

After making them wait a long time, Don Cipriano came out, accompanied by Don Romulo, to see what they wanted. Both of them carried revolvers in their belts. An outcry rose:

"Patron, we've come so you'll help us..."

"Listen to us, patron."

"We're all dying, patron."

"Patron..., patron..., patron..."

Don Cipriano tried to impose order by taking an authoritative stand and saying:

"Speak one at a time."

"Patron, patron," spoke up a small-boned Indian, detaching himself from the crowd. "Give me something, patron, I don't have anything. My wife is dying."

"Food, please, Patron." groaned another.

Don Cipriano intervened, yelling:

"One at a time!"

And then he added,

"I warned you settlers. What are you complaining about now. Go back to Huaira! And those of you that are from here, kill your cows, your horses, your donkeys, your sheep. I have nothing."

One of the settlers replied,
"We already went to Huaira, patron. Don Juvencio told us, 'What about you? Be thankful I don't kill you like dogs. Get out of here'. Anyway, those that are there are dying, too. What are we to do then? Help us, patron. We'll work for you when it's time. Don't lose the arms that do your work, patron."

His voice was crying, so painful. When he finished, don Cipriano was silent and the whole bunch of ponchos and raised heads that surrounded him was immobile. Then a cholo protested:

"There are also people from here that have nothing. Nothing, patron. What are they supposed to kill? Give us a little wheat at least."

Don Cipriano thought about the amount of aid needed and insisted:

"I don't have barley. If I give something to one, all of you are going to want some and there's not enough. There is nothing for anyone."

A chorus of complaining voices followed those statements.

"Patron, have mercy."

"Help us."

One of the Indians folded his hands and knelt before don Cipriano.
"Patron, at least tell the man in charge of the graveyard not to charge us to bury our dead. We don't even have anywhere to bury them. If we bury them in the fields, the souls will wander".

"Well, what am I supposed to do?" replied don Cipriano indignantly. Those are things of the Church. I can't get into that.

"But, patron . . ."

"Go away now. I have nothing and can do nothing."

finished don Cipriano.

"Go away." repeated don Romulo.

Simon Robles voice sounded rough and firm:

"Patron, how is it that you have nothing? Your mules and fine horses are eating barley. Isn't a cristiano worth more than an animal? And there too, are your fat cows. It is good that they're in the pasture where they can't be stolen . . . But now one of them should be killed so you can feed your people. We are worse off than dogs. Yes, we're like hungry dogs. Thanks be to God, I still have a little. But others are so poor. Like the new settlers from Huaira. They've been cast out to the fields to look for something to eat, weeping and begging. They never find anything and they can't steal. We have women and children. Think about your own and do it for your
wife and children. If you have a heart in your chest, patron, help us. And if you can think like a just man, think, patron. With our work, with our very lives we cleared the land for your fields. We planted them and harvested all that you and your animals eat. Give something of that to us, at least to the most needy. Don't leave us thrown out as though we were mere, hungry dogs, patron."

Simon Robles was quiet, and the peones felt that he had spoken with the mouth, the heart, and the exhausted bellies of all of them. They looked to the hacendado waiting for his answer. They thought it would be favorable because everything was so clear. But he threw a quick glance over them and then leveled it at Simon:

"With your lives and work, huh? And isn't the land mine? Do you think I give you land for your pretty faces? I knew you were talking like this Simon Robles. Just wait, that's all. You'd all better watch out. Let's go, don Romulo."

The patron and the overseer turned their backs and went into the study. Those that had begged were left perplexed at such an unexpected outcome. They looked at one another without knowing what to do. Soon a loud voice sounded:
"Let's go on up. There's the door."

And others, deciding immediately, responded:

"Let's go."

The mob broke up running down the porch of the house towards the door that let to the storeroom. A few shots sounded and someone was wounded. But the shots had come from the study. Since it was in direct line with the porch they couldn't aim very well from there. Some cholos pulled out the shining blades of their machetes and waited on either side of the door to prohibit Don Romulo and Don Cipriano from leaving. But from one extreme, from a barrel that came out stopping the wind, a loud shot erupted. Ambrosio Tucto, who was in front with his machete in hand, ready to split the head of anyone who wouldn't open the door, fell face downwards. Blood gushed from the legs of others and two more were on the ground too. The shots continued, and the peasants realized that there were many that were firing. They couldn't defend themselves. So they stopped. They tried to retreat, but on encountering the shots from the study they threw themselves off the porch and ran through the fields. Those that watched the door to Don Cipriano and his overseer fled also when bullets whistled by their heads and hit the adobe walls behind them.
The men that were in the storeroom came out and then Don Cipriano and Don Romulo. Some of them kept firing at the fugitives.

"Stop, hold your fire." shouted don Cipriano. And as he walked up next to them he pointed out:

"Like Napoleon said: 'Let a fleeing enemy cross the bridge'..."

It was Don Cipriano’s custom, since he didn't know anything better, to attribute all sayings that pertained to war that he had learned in his life to Napoleon.

Amongst the obstinate riflemen was the boy Obdulio, who clutched the rifle from the livingroom that was used to shoot partridges in his trembling hands. The others were employees that don Cipriano had from the valleys where the Yana River flowed. Since everything there had dried up and besides, in Paucar bad feelings of sublevation ran together with the dust of the drought, he had brought them over in case there was a revolt. If he had made his workers wait to see him it was precisely because he had been issuing orders. Now he seemed slightly pale, just like his son. Don Romulo had one hand on his rifle and the other on his moustache. The other employees wrinkled their brown faces trying to appear impassive. But everyone regretted the three dead
men—dusty ponchos, bare feet, matted hair--, stretched out on the porch. The Indian Tucto kissed the earth. Another twisted his mouth with a painful and angry expression. The third one had his arms outstretched and seemed to be a cross. Great bloodstains marked the ground.

Don Cipriano called the servants and said:

"Take the dead and put them in that room. They'll have to be buried tonight. And clean up the blood with rags and water. Now, my friends," he finished, directing himself to his armed people, "let's go have a drink. These things disturb the nerves a bit."

The families of the dead men waited for them for many days. And when someone overcame the hunger long enough to take the news to them, there was no-one left to give it to.

Weeks, months.

The shining skies seemed to be a steel-coloured frame. From the brown dryness of the earth, the skulls of animals pointed out the black of its empty water-holes.

And the men that didn't cry for rain in the shadows of their huts were found, without a doubt, scratching the bowels of the earth for water.
There is a moment in which all of life listens and discovers in the wind, in the color of a cloud, in the eye of an animal and of man, in the branch of a tree, in the flight of a bird, the emotional secret of the rain. Even the ecstatic rock seems to acquire a special gesture, a complementary hue.

And there is a moment of happiness for which all of life waits: the moment in which all the signs take shape in the evidence of a full heaven.

That's how it was at that time. November came. One day the wind didn't take the clouds away. From the mountaintops to the south they came, getting bigger until they filled the skies, black and dense. A slow, level breeze blew. Men and animals sniffed the quiet horizon and the dark, quiet firmament. The trees extended their afflicted arms up high and the birds flew chirping between the naked branches. The crags got bigger until they poked the heavens. And the ochre hollow of the earth waited alertly and eagerly.

And then there was the old and always radiant miracle.
The first drops lifted dust. Then the brown earth turned dark and spread a fragrant odor.

A jubilant chorus of lowing, braying and bleating rose. Cows and ponies frolicked. The peasants expanded their nostrils absorbing the potent remnants of the rough fragrance. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, the whole sky collapsed throbbing. It was a storm. A long, happy storm. Earth and sky united through the rain to sing the song of life.

Privations? There were still a lot, but the shrubs and the bushes would give berries, the ground would flower in white mushrooms and all life would again be blooming green and flesh full of gifts.

The water fell lovingly on men and animals, on eucalyptus trees and the reddish-black rocks, on the fragrant fields, the white bones, and the tombs of the dead.

Even though it fell on sadness, the celestial, musical streams announced jubilee.

Oh, hope!

Simon went up to the storeroom, took off the lids that covered the mouth of the jars and the pots. He sunk his delighted, warm hands into the freshness of the grain time and again. Wheat, corn, peas! It was so sweet to touch
them. It was sweet to look at them from the light that came in from the skylight. It was even sweeter to say their names, that gave his mouth the nutritious juice of life. Let the weeds grow up a little and the cattle feed. Then the spongy, fertile earth would be open to keep the seed hidden from hunger.

For days the rain kept falling like a blessing.

Animals and men regained their previous forms and voices. From the tops of the mountains to the valleys the brooks ran down singing. The trees sprouted again and the brown weeds drowned the stark white of the bones and the memories of crosses without names in their greeness.

One afternoon Simon Robles looked from his chair on the porch, where he was sunning himself while the water splashed, fertilizing the fields. A shadow made him look to one side.

Wanka!

She was standing to one side of the porch, looking at Simon and waiting for his voice. Skin and bones, with her matted hair dripping water, red eyes and her half-opened mouth panting, she waited. Her appearance was so painful that Simon felt as though his own suffering was there in his poor abandoned animal. He was touched thinking that he understood what the change of times meant. It was an
end to the expulsion and the return of bygone days. And he was moved even more when he saw there were only two pairs of sheep in the sheepfold and that Wanka had come back to take her place as their guard.

"Wanka, little Wanka, come here!" he said.

The dog came up to rub herself affectionately against Simon. He patted her bony flanks and cried.

"Wanka, little Wanka, you know what it's like when the poor man and the animal have no land or water. You know, that's why you've come back. Wanka...little Wanka... You've come back like the good rain.

And for Wanka, the tears and the voice and the pats from Simon were also good, like the rain.
GLOSSARY

ANTUQUITA-  Little Antuca
AYLLU-  Indian farming community.
CACHACO- Policeman or soldier.
CHECO- Small gourd used to store lime.
CHICHA- Indian liquor.
CHINA- Indian woman
CHIRIMOYAS- A tropical fruit.
CHOLO/A- Peruvian peasant.
CRISTIANO- A civilized person.
CLAVEL- Carnation.
COCA- Cocaine
CULEBRON- Nickname meaning 'large snake'.
CUSHAK- Stew.
DON- Title for men used to infer respect.
DONA- Title for women used to infer respect.
GUANACO- Idiot, useless.
GUAPI- Curse used against birds of prey.
GUAYABAS- Small, sweet fruit.
GUENAMIGO- Literally "good friend".
GUENDIENTE- Literally "good tooth".
HACENDADO- Large land holder.
HACIENDA- Large farm.
JALCA- Mountain.
LAMBIDA- Nosey, busy-body.
LIBRETA- Identification papers.
MATE- Half of a gourd, flattened.
MAUSER- Rifle.
MESTIZO/A- Half-breed.
PATRON- Boss, master, landlord.
PISCO- First-quality anisette made in Pisco, Peru.
PUNO/A- Mountains.
QUENA- Flute.
QUINOA- Species of goosefoot.
SOLES- Currency used during this time.
TAITA- Father.
TAITITOS- Little fathers.
TINTO- Black or dark.
TRUBNO- Thunder.
WAINOS- Indian dances.
YARAVI- Sad song.
ZAMBO- Black.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


