

The Way of Heavenly Knight

Received August 2, 2019

Revised August 16, 2019

Accepted August 17, 2019

Key words

Spiritual experience, spiritual journey, spiritual symbolism

The monomyth *The Way of Heavenly Knight* is an original description of a spiritual journey in the form of a romance. Its frame is a poem of kōan-like verses. Each verse is followed by an explanation in the form of a chapter of the story. The main hero, the Wandering Knight, gradually passes through all the stages of his spiritual journey until he gets back to where he came from. The difference is that he comes back transformed, poorer in what he had to leave, but richer in his new spiritual experience.

Introduction

The main aim of the romance *The Way of Heavenly Knight* is to illustrate the complete process of spiritual journey, much like Zen's *Ten Bulls* [1], Hindu *Rāmāyanam* [2], Christian *Interior Castle* [3], or Buddha's *Shorter Discourse on Emptiness* [4].

The storyline of this romance takes place in the Knight Age, but is easily transferable. The basic environment and some features of the narrative (“bring the adventure to an end”) are most reminiscent of the medieval *The Quest of the Holy Grail* [5]. However, the elements of Christian symbolism are not named here in order to open up space for the reader (e.g. to recognize who the Hermit and the White King are). The character of Astera already deviates from the Christian female archetype of an innocent virgin and is close to Judaism: as an object of the knight’s courtly and later also spiritual love, here a female embodiment of mature wisdom takes place. Some typically Zen scenes (e.g. what is “being at home” in the second act) as well as the *kōans* introducing each chapter can also resemble the samurai world. A partial parallel to the second act in which both heroes became stars can also be found in Gjellerup’s novel *The Pilgrim Kamanita* [6], based on the legends in the *Pāli Canon*.

The Way of Heavenly Knight takes some form of a monomyth [7]. The main hero, the wandering knight, gradually passes through all the scenes until he comes back to where he came from. The difference is that he comes back transformed, poorer in what he had to leave and richer in his new spiritual experience.

The original form of this romance was just a poem, consisting of kōan-like verses, which in themselves can serve as a test of how far the reader has progressed on his spiritual path. Like in Zen, an explanation to each verse in the form of one chapter of the story has been added. However, just as in Zen, who cannot understand the opening verse, he will not understand the story either. So does such an explanation make any sense? Is it worth to talk about something that everyone has to experience at his or her own? This romance offers a key: After the knight eventually takes the hermit's advice and becomes a troubadour, he does not attempt to pass on his spiritual experience directly, but only promises:



About the author

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*I'll sing a romance
about a no-one's land where the sunshine disappears,
so that the stars may come out in the night of love,
about beautiful princesses and their hidden chambers,
about brave knights fulfilling them their most secret wishes.*

MONOMYTH	SCENE	SPIRITUAL SYMBOLISM
Accepts the challenge	it is not enough to believe that the sun is behind the clouds	spiritual desire
Starts out on a journey	wants to get to the sun	first decision
Good deed	gives away wealth	cleanses his mind
Meets his teacher	bends in front of the hermit	learns humility
Initiation	accolade – knight of heaven	acknowledges higher power
Receives magic	his horse gets wings	his mind is open
Trials	fights with clouds	obstacles in meditation
Breakthrough	his horse gives up grazing	renounces the world
First victory	finds the sun	inner unification
Reaction	dazzled by himself	finds out his narcissism
The goddess	saves the lost star	you and me are one
Plot	yearns to meet other stars	learns to distinguish
Solves the mystery	we all are both the star and the sun	outer unification
Last doubt	“You’re still not at home here.”	not only to visit but to live
Takes on a special task	“Conquer the kingdom of heaven!”	final decision
Reconciles with his father	acknowledges the white king	learns to respect the law
Temptation	tries to be a savior	even altruism can be egoistic
Defeat	loses the chess game	mystical death
Goal achieved	finds himself naked in a cave	spiritual awakening
Sacrifice	a hermit sacrifices for him	son becomes father
Returns transformed	becomes troubadour	serves the world
Epilogue	returns to his beloved every night	his journey continues

Act One: Bright day



Chapter One

**Those who long to see the sun,
let them not be lost in the clouds –
even if they firmly believe
that the sun is beyond them.**

And it came to pass in ancient times that everlasting darkness struck the whole county. Day after day, the sky was overcast with dark, heavy curtains of clouds. No one believed that the sun could ever show. All lanterns were sold out for years ahead, and after them all candles disappeared from the shelves. Anyone who had at least a small oil lamp was scrupulously sparing every remaining bit of wick.

In a poor cottage below the castle, a cellar-master and two pilgrims are sitting at a table lit by a single candle:

“I hear the sun will come out tomorrow.”

“Fool, how can you believe in unearthly things? Who remembers any sun? Maybe there’s no sun at all.”

“But I believe the sun exists! Once it comes out by itself, we have to believe and wait!”

“And what if you just wait in vain?”

“One day I must behold it, even after my death!”

“Well, well, we’ll all see after we die.”

Everyone around the table drank deeply from their clay cups. Without being noticed before, a knight joined their talk:

“You say, after death? That may be enough for you, but I’d like to see the sun right now! I want to follow the Way of Heavenly Knight. You know... I’ve already seen the red sky at sunrise. I must get there!”

“You’re lying! Be aware, everybody, there’s a heretic among us, can you hear him well?”

“But it’s really true! Whoever becomes a heavenly knight can just rise above the clouds and see the sun. But first he

must believe that the sun has always been there! That what matters are the clouds, not the sun! And only after that he can see the sun for the first time and earn a well-deserved reward for his faith. And finally he goes ahead with the sun over his head.”

“Nonsense! How could a horse be chased somewhere above the clouds?”

“They say that whoever yearns to get there with all his heart will be helped. As he is knighted to the heavenly knight, wings grow to his horse.”

“Who are you anyway?”

“Nobody for you. For no one here! I’m a nameless knight errant.”

“You talk a lot, knight! So do you believe or don’t you? We’ll be happy waiting here at the wine cup. Our faith is enough for us, one day our sun will rise on its own. But what have you shown at all? What good is that faith of yours? You ended up just like us! You have to sit here with us in the dark, but that’s not all, you’re unhappy here.”

The knight stood up angrily and drew his sword, but then he bowed his head and muttered through his teeth:

“So this was the last straw. Why waste time? Early in the morning I’m saddling my horse to fight the clouds. Maybe it’s not in vain. Maybe they’ll get scared and disappear. Or at least retreat. I’ll convince you! I’ll try this adventure.”

But the knight was not that fast to make it. Although he had already sold his castle and his heavy armour, the gold he got for it still weighed him down. His horse shuddered beneath the weight, always stumbling and falling into the mud when it looked up longingly. Still, no wings! Only the deep prints of four horseshoes remained on the road behind them – day after day still on the same ground. What heaven is that!

And so the knight had no choice but to give away his gold. He gave away his first coin with his face still drawn and his heart heavy that he would miss it on his way. But the last

coins he gave away with a joyful smile and sincere wish to serve the travellers. So much he liked the giving in the end!

When he had nothing to give away, a hermit in his scuffed robes with a brown hood, girded with a rough rope, stepped into his path and looked at him sternly:

“Knight, do you have still anything to give me?”

He’d love to give him something, but his moneybag and pockets were already quite empty. Too bad he was hurrying with it!

Embarrassed of not knowing what to do, he knelt before the hermit and pleaded with his head bowed:

“I have nothing to give you, Sir, please forgive my poverty. I am no longer the one I used to be.”

“You’re right, you’re not the one you used to be,” the hermit repeated his words in a solemn voice. And as the knight realized this truth – unknown from where – a sword fell so heavy on his shoulder that he almost collapsed beneath it. But to his wonder, he felt no pain. Startled, he looked up in amazement but saw no more of the hermit. Only his horse happily dug his hooves and waved bravely – yes, really! – his new wings. The knight understood that from now on he was no longer a worldly knight, having just been knighted heavenly.

But even with the new wings, he could not get his horse to fly. On the contrary, this choosy animal was most interested in what it would chew on a sweet herb or a crispy twig. He used to drift along, and he folded his new wings comfortably on his hips, as if he’d always been able to do it: “No hurry to heaven when there’s so much good stuff!”

“So where to go with a horse like that?” the knight pondered. It occurred to him that the closest thing to heaven was the mountains. There he may fight the clouds while still standing firmly on the ground.

So they headed for the mountains. The horse walked peacefully along a narrow path that wound out of the dense woods up to the mountain pastures, as if remembering what good-

ies he would find there. “How can he know it when he’s never been there?” the knight wondered. But he was finally content now. His wandering already led somewhere, and finally it had the right direction: ever higher and higher. As they passed the last of the wind-beaten spruces, the vast green pastures of pink rhododendrons and blue gentians blossoming in the islets among the protruding dark rocks opened before them. They were in the mountains.

The next morning, they finally managed to break through the clouds. The eternal twilight subsided unwillingly, and for the first time the knight saw the sun rise majestically over the pink wall of red clouds. They glowed solemnly by all the tones of blue, cyan, purple and gold. The whole world was suddenly flooded with heavenly brightness.

For the knight, it was a very glorious day. It seemed to him that the celestial glory would never end:

“I’m here, finally I’m here. I really came up here! So beautiful! So magnificent! The whole world is shining, the whole world rejoices! Now I’ll be wandering forever with the sun over my head. I’ll never get lost! The battle has been won.”

Chapter Two

**What did the knight fight on the ground?
As he forgot the sun,
the clouds turned on the spot
in a heavy, blinding fog.**

Though the knight was immensely happy, there was a strange doubt about him that he could not dispel: “How come the clouds gave up without a fight? And where did they vanish, anyway? I didn’t even deserve the victory! And what about my horse, it didn’t fly at all! What kind of heavenly knight am I, what am I dragging my sword and shield around for! And above all – what am I going to tell the guys below the castle? How bravely I conquered the clouds? Should I lie to them? Everybody’s going to laugh at me!”

And as he rides silently on his horse with his head down, immersed in his doubts, he suddenly looks up and is startled: The sun is gone! How come he didn’t notice it before?

It's just like before, there's the eternal gloom again! You can't even see the tip of the spear, just thick fog all around, wet and sticky, cold to the bones.

"How is that possible? My beloved sun has left me! It's the same sad, grey day again, with no warmth and no love. Why? Why?" screams into the fog in all directions.

Amid this cold silence, he can hear the far echo of his own voice: "Why? Why?" But the echo does not end, it does not fade in the distance, but it carries on, answering him in a high-pitched, ringing voice:

"Because you took it for granted that the sun would never be lost to you again, and then you completely forgot about it, and let yourself be surrounded by fog."

"And where did the sun leave me, then?"

"Nowhere, it's only the clouds that went up, my dear knight, the same clouds again, yet your beloved sun is high above your head all the time! As long as you are in a cloud, you don't know about it. The cloud is all around you as it's turned into a fog. You have to get out of it! That you can't see where to go right now? Don't hesitate, one way, just up!"

The knight stopped the horse, wiped cold sweat from his forehead, and worked hard to see where the mountain trail went on.

"Who could it had been, the voice? Oh, yes, I guess now! Clouds, they tend to be low once, then high again. What good does it do me that the sun shines just as kindly over them? Until I get high enough, it is foolish to rely that the clouds do not cover me. We have to get up, keep up!" exclaimed he in a resolute voice, urging his horse into a gallop.

Chapter Three

**As the sun enchanted him,
the distant fog turned
to tempting glowing clouds.**

"What a beautiful, shining day it is!" the knight thought as the clouds receded again. "And not only shines the sun, everything else around shines! There's sun everywhere, there's actually sun in everything! So many bright clouds in the blue sky, resembling fleecy lambs! In fact – what lambs, I already know you well, you're just fog inside! Yet how beautifully you can reflect the rays of the sun... only this one wandered off somehow, I have to rush him... Into the gallop!"

The knight took hold of his spear and felt his horse accelerate gradually beneath him, turning into a gallop. As they approached within sight of the brilliant cloud, the knight was startled:

"Oh, but from near, that's not a lamb, but a grown ram... And how mighty he is! Look, he is standing on his hind legs and grimly sets his curved horns, as if urging me to fight."

The knight stops his horse and stares up at the dark, shaggy ram's head. He screams at the top of his lungs:

"So you won't obey me, you devil's head?"

"Come on, poor earthling, just try!" hears he a sneering reply.

So the knight starts up, holds his spear out in front of him, and grips the shield with a tightly clenched hand, as he expects to feel a violent impact. But what's going on? The spear just stabs into the thin fog, and it penetrates on and on, without any resistance, without any meaning or purpose. A crosswind props into his shield, curls it, and he suddenly loses his correct direction. His head is spinning; he can't see what is left and right, not even up and down. The fog, still the same, dull and incomprehensible, seemed to surround him from all sides, as if there were always only this and nothing else.

The knight understood that he was lost, and that the whole fight had been in vain: "I had lost before I started. Again, there are the same clouds everywhere as before! But how is

that possible?" He dismounts and wipes the sweaty horse. Then, from a height above him, he hears a gentle ringing voice:

"Next time, don't mistake me for lambs, my fiction hero. Do you want them more than me? I'm the one who shines for you on my own! Bright clouds, they just reflect my light."

Chapter Four

**How did he penetrate to the sun?
One fights the clouds with a sword,
the other rises above them with a leap.**

"But clouds need to be put to an end forever, all of them!" shouts the knight. "How treacherous they are, how creeping, how ubiquitous! And close up they are so nastily wet and cold! What good is to be expected of them? My strength is in the sword, and what I cut off, it will never come together again. Clouds! Get out! Here will be only the sun, my beloved sun, the only one radiating."

So he cuts his sword into the clouds, swinging his muscular arms hard, fighting devotedly and persistently. As his forces gradually weaken, it allows him to notice more results. Yes, he managed to break the black and white cloud apart, and for a moment clear sky appeared between them. That's certainly good... But what about this bundle of grey fog? His sword slumps in vain, and only his fingers get stiff. And as he sweats with his effort, his sweat cools down in the thin, cold air, creating thus another cloud around him.

He stops in surprise: "This new cloud, I even make it myself with my own efforts! But I will never see anything through it! And yet my goal was to make the clouds fall so that the sun could be seen... It seems to be a futile struggle."

Disappointed, he puts down his sword and sits heavily on the hard rock. With pain he recalls the sun, where is it now? Perhaps the more he misses it, the more he must crave. He leans back and searches with his sight in the height, trying to penetrate the fog until he hears a quiet, ringing voice again from there:

"My knight, the struggle with clouds is a noble contest indeed. You can become a champion in it, who will be no equal in the tournaments of the heavenly knights. True, there are those who can do it for their whole life... but if you desire to win over the clouds once and for all, you have to be able to do something else."

"But what else can I master? I have a sword, and I cut into the enemy with it. I have a shield, and I protect myself with it. I have a spear, and I penetrate forward with it. And finally, I have a horse, and he carries me faithfully on his back all the time."

"And have you ever allowed your horse to fight alone?"

"How come, horse? They don't understand anything, even those with wings."

"But when it comes to grazing, every horse will understand."

"What?"

"A horse spell."

"No..."

"Yes! You whisper it in his ear: *You'll never be well-fed of clouds.*"

The knight stood helplessly, trying to put it together in his head.

"Just hold on tight!" he managed to hear the last words. From far, there was echoing a cheery ringing laughter until it gradually faded, and the silence was complete.

The knight hesitated for a moment, then bowed his head and sighed in resignation. He hugged the horse around his neck, bent to his ear, and whispered the spell there: "*You'll never be well-fed of clouds.*"

At that moment, the horse neighed, stood up with his hooves in the air and waved its wings so violently that it raised above all the clouds with a single, mighty leap. The knight

could barely keep in his saddle. That's why he was advised to hold on tight... Indeed, that magic spell had really worked!

Black and white clouds remained deep, far below them, and even the scattered shreds of fog could no longer be recognized. And though the vast sea of clouds beneath them emitted a glorious, enchanting glow, the knight finally realized that his horse would never be well-fed with earthly things. And not just the horse, even himself will ever be satisfied with the power over them. *"You'll never be well-fed of clouds,"* – yes, that was the right magic.

The whole world of clouds had now collapsed, and there was nothing but a clear sky above them. They were there, they arrived there. They were finally in heaven! As the clouds lost their dark power, the sun shone all the more – the knight's only beloved sun to which he set out here.

Chapter Five

And who was this sun?

"You are That" whispered the Earth.

"I am That" thundered the heavens.

But where should he go next? And mainly, how to do it? The long awaited sun was here and there was so much of it that it could no longer be more. But it was still not *his* sun, he still didn't know it completely. He would like to embrace it, to feel its warm closeness, to kiss it, but he was not able to do that:

"Love unloved, offered in vain: the lover is here, but the beloved one is still far away..."

What was he supposed to do? After all, he was a knight, and as he had got through the clouds, he remembered the only way: To penetrate!

"Heaven may be beautiful, but heaven is still only little. I'll try to get to the sun itself! Only then it will be possible to bring this adventure to the end."

He leaned back and shouted: "Sun, my sun, you'll see me soon, I'm coming for you!"

He urged his winged horse to fly straight up, repeating to himself with a throat tight:

"May it burn me to dust, lest there remain any splinter from the spear I hold out in front of me. The sun is my goal, that and only that."

It's not easy just sitting on a horse and pointing upright. First he had to overcome vertigo and not deviate from the vertical. It was hard, extremely hard, but after a while he could just ascend. His direction was right, his goal was right, his determination was right. He had all the armour and the best horse for it. Now he firmly believed that he would succeed.

However, the more he extended his spear, the more his faithful horse swung its wings, the higher the sun seemed – still the only one, still kindly shining in a flawlessly clear sky, but still beyond his reach. Exhausted, he remained hanging motionless in immeasurable space. The horse beneath him dug its hoof into the void several more times, and then it hung the tired wings for good. They were neither rising nor sinking any more. There was total silence.

And in that silence it happened. No one knew how, no one knew exactly when, no one said why. It was a strange, indescribable grace through which time started to run again, but this time without the knight's previous effort. All that was known was 'This is you' and it was the same as 'This is me'. So close to each other that there was no need to embrace anyone, just to be quiet.

And when the knight dismounted his horse and bent down to tie his shoelace, he noticed that in his heart was the same sun he had seen in the sky before, and that it had always been there. From here he no longer has to go anywhere, and so it will remain forever.

"I am who I am. I am who I am." He repeated these words quietly, finally knowing who he was, who he loved and who he was loved by, and who he was now in union with.

But he could not know that this was just the first act of his story, and that there were new, even more glorious adventures awaiting him in the kingdom of heaven.

Act Two: Dark Night

↑ Image: Edmund Blair Leighton
God Speed (1900)

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↑ *Image: Edmund Blair Leighton
God Speed (1900)*

Chapter One

**Those who long to see the stars
let them their sun set –
even if they knew well
that the stars are there by day.**

After the knight had managed to know the sun, a long rest awaited him in the kingdom of heaven. He reached out, put his hands behind his head, blissfully stretched his body tired with a long struggle, and then just enjoyed the immense grace he had received. It warmed him somewhere deep inside, and it was the only wealth he was allowed to keep. For a long time, it seemed that he was lacking nothing, and that it would remain forever. He had also forgotten about his horse that might go to graze in heavenly pastures.

And in fact, the knight did not lack anything for a long time. But as celestial time passed inexorably, something began to dwell on him.

“What’s the matter with me?” It was an unfamiliar feeling for him, for as a poor knight, he was more used to distress than surplus. But now it was all the other way around! What was extra, that was a mysterious glow he hadn’t noticed before. It was now pouring in the whole world – far below and far away, up to immense distances.

But where did that strange glow come from? The knight had been searching for its source for a long time, and was surprised to find that it was coming from himself. “Yes,” he understood, “when the sun is in my heart, it must also shine. The joy and glory of me now shine all over the world. All this here is my shining day!”

But when there is something extra in heaven, there must also be something missing. After some time, the knight was amazed, how it is possible, that the glow came only from him and from nothing else.

“Can I be such alone in the world? There must be someone else who also radiates joy and happiness! Down below, the world is shrouded in a thick blanket of clouds, but here in heaven – why can’t I see anyone here? What a heaven is this!”

“Is there anyone else?” He shouted from the top of his lungs into the unfathomable abyss, but in vain. He felt his happiness crumble, as quickly as he had found it.

“Is there anyone else?” He called again, this time more quietly. He recalled that stars also belonged to the sky. “That’s how it has always been! Sure, the stars, at least those, at least tiny islands of someone’s presence, they must be here somewhere, but where? I don’t see any around here!”

And indeed, the stars, these were not to be seen, as if they had been cursed. More and more sadness fell on the knight, and his glow thus faded faster and faster. Yet an unexpected thing happened: As his own light ceased to dazzle him and surrendered to the darkness, this began to open before him in all directions, gradually revealing its deepest secrets: First, second, third, thousand... The stars leapt from the depths of darkness and covered the entire celestial vault with a distant flickering brightness.

The shining day of the knight’s soul was thus utterly forgotten, and now there was ruling the only dark, silent and freezing night in the whole heaven.

Chapter Two

**What did the knight fight in heaven?
As he left the beloved sun,
in the distance it has changed
into the last sunken star.**

The knight’s glow had already faded enough that when he looked back into his heart, he saw only a tiny, nameless star instead of the sun.

“Is that me?” he wondered. And then he realized it fully: “I, too, must be a mere star, in fact! Nothing more, what a sun, for I am but a tiny, nameless star here in this vast heaven, just one of countless others.”

And he was so light and fleeting as if he had spread to the vast space, as if there wasn’t a single place in heaven where he could rise even a little above the other.

But his horse walked around all eager, hoofing and snorting as if sniffing another adventure. The knight was alert, watching his gaze curiously. The horse was staring at one darker place in the sky where stars were missing.

“There must be a terrible loneliness,” the knight realized, “such a desolate, dreary void.”

He rubbed his eyes and looked even deeper into the celestial abyss. “Well, there’s a tiny star in the centre of it, just as if to revive that dark place.” The horse nodded at it, as if already knowing in advance what it was going to happen.

*He sang a romance
about a no-one’s land where the sunshine disappears,
so that the stars may come out in the night of love,
about beautiful princesses and their hidden chambers,
about brave knights fulfilling them their most secret wishes.*

And as this romance flowed from his lips, the silver thread of his spear wrapped itself around his body, drawing him with gentle but irresistible force to the abandoned star. As he approached, a new, festive garment, such as he had never worn before, was gradually woven from the wrapped thread around his body. It was a long, shiny flowing cloak with red decoration that revealed his manly muscular chest.

“What happened to me? I’m here suddenly without all my weapons, which I’ve always relied on so much, with my chest bare, utterly delivered to that mysterious, distant power. This is how everyone can beat me!” However, as a true knight, he was not frightened. Deep in his heart he even looked forward to not missing a new adventure.

Slowly, the knight grew accustomed to wondrous things happening in heaven, noble and mysterious. It started with that very horse: In front of his eyes he covered himself with a dark blue velvet shawl with silver trim. The knight, to his amazement, found that his spear had turned into a long silver thread, stretching somewhere into a dizzying abyss. Now he held not a shield in his hand, but the body of a lute, and his sword turned into its neck. He was surprised and didn’t understand anything, especially what made him start playing the lute, and then begin to sing:

Chapter Three

**As he embraced the abandoned star,
she turned in his arms
in a blazing, beloved sun.**

The unknown star was approaching fast. She was so beautiful and so attractive that the knight could keep his eyes on her. A crown of every colour he had ever known, and even had never seen before, blazed around her head. She seemed to take in turns the gleam of all the gems of the world, moving in an unknown dance. Gradually, however, he realized that the star was declining from his direction. The mysterious thread that had drawn him to her was already burned in her heat, and he had no choice but to approach her by himself. Though he attracted her naturally with his own weight, she seemed afraid of the tremendous speed of his winged horse. But she didn’t run away, she just dodged him, until they started dancing around.

They swirled around, like two stars have been doing since long ago, bowing to each other in full respect and admiration. It was an extremely rare encounter, as it happens once in many, many ages, if memory ever encompasses it, whether human or celestial.

“Come closer to me so I can embrace you.”

“You must let go of the bridle for that, my heavenly knight.”

The knight released his bridle and spread his arms.

“I gave up the sun, and the sun is here again. How is it possible, how can you be my sun?”

“I the same way as you can be my sun! I was so looking forward to you coming one day...”

Then they stepped back away from each other courtly again so that they could get a better look at each other.

“You must be... a celestial fairy? And what do they call you?”

“I have no one to call me, as I have been abandoned here for ages. I just remember in ancient times, when the stars used to be within reach of each other, that my name was Astera. And what’s your name?”

“I am a nameless knight, long abandoned by my relatives. They had served the king faithfully for a long time, until they had had enough and became robbers. I don’t want to know them anymore, and neither the king likes me too much.”

“But the knights of heaven, they serve not the earthly but the heavenly king. Once I heard your name from him.”

“I have a name here? I’ve never been here! I’m just on my way.”

“Yes, so far you are just on your way, but on a heavenly way. And here you are at home. You came here to visit your true home! And here your name is Celestin.”

The knight was just wondering, but he liked the new name Celestin and he felt it belonged to him, just as this beautiful celestial fairy couldn’t be named other than Astera. From now

they knew their names and could get to know each other better.

“When we are separated, we are a star to each other, a mere star in the midst of countless others,” said Celestin.

“But when we are close together, we are the sun to each other, the only sun not equal in the world,” Astera assured him.

So they embraced each other in heavenly love and got to know each other. As soon as they departed, they recognized a loved one with their own name and their own beauty. Conversely, in intimate proximity each of them loved one single being who had been here since ages and will be the same for ever.

Chapter Four

How did he get to the stars?

**One chases them with the wind,
other silently glows with them in the sky.**

Then throughout the heavenly ages knight Celestin rested in the grace of this heaven. His love settled, and he flowed peacefully through time with his beloved star, Astera. Yet he was beginning to feel that there was something extra about him. It was the same as when he first met the sun closely. Despite the enormous power that had attracted him to the beloved star, the idea of what other stars were doing began to haunt him. But he couldn’t see any stars yet, because the sunshine of nearby Astera completely overshadowed them.

“It begins to seem to you, my dear, that I am no longer enough for you?” Astera turned to him.

Hesitantly, Celestin sought the answer. He felt that he was just waking up from a sweet dream, but he allowed himself to dream the rest of it. Though still having been drunk with heavenly love, in the depth of his soul he was curious what would happen next:

“I just realized you weren’t the only abandoned star here. My heart is now crying for the other ones. I’d like to fly after them.”

“Don’t look there, Celestin.”

“I can’t stand it. Look, my horse is impatient again.”

“Fly then, you’ll see for yourself,” Astera smiled mysteriously.

“I am a knight and I serve the lady of my heart faithfully,” Celestin called already from far, “as you say, I will do! To be here, I will be here. To be elsewhere, I will be there.”

His way to the next star was much shorter and easier than last time. Celestin no longer had to dampen his own glow so that he would not dazzle himself. The star grew larger at a dizzying pace, and it became striking that her crown was too much like the crown of Astera.

“She’s amazing, but it’ll be all the same again!”

He stopped the horse in time and made his way to the next star. Again, it was the same likeness, the same rays, maybe a little different colours, but no more adventures. Celestin lost track of how many stars he had visited until one seemed nicer to him, and there he stopped his winged horse:

“Tell me, unknown star, what’s your name, but quickly, I’m in a hurry!”

“You don’t recognize me, Celestin? Astera, after all!”

Celestin looked down and flushed with shame. But Astera was not angry, just waiting for Celestin to recover from his surprise.

“Forgive me, my lady, I’m just on my way. I don’t know how the heavenly knight is supposed to behave here,” he said, straightening up.

Astera sighed and looked straight in his eyes:

“Celestin, as a star I can never be your only lover, we both know that. Yet as the sun, I can be your only lady, if you are still a knight.”

“My only lady? I recognize your voice now! Was it you who led me out of the clouds?”

“Who else, Celestin, was me, but not as a star.”

“But I thought it was the sun at the time.”

“You were right, I was your sun, and you were my star then.”

“That’s so beautiful,” Celestin told her. “I love you so much.”

And then another miracle happened that we are not accustomed to on earth, but that naturally belongs to heaven: Instead being attracted by love, Astera and Celestin began to drift apart, ever faster. Their splendid glow faded until they found themselves at the farthest reaches of the celestial vault as two tiny stars. But despite this distance they were still aware of each other. Gradually, they learned about all other stars in the vast celestial vault, and they were aware of them all. In the end, the only love dwelt among them that united them all, as if there shone a single sun in many stellar forms.

Chapter Five

And who were the stars?

“That’s you” sounded from the Earth,

“That’s us” flashed from heaven.

Heavenly kisses continued to wander among the stars, passing through space, and proceeding to the new place of the heavenly vault:

“We all are stars...”

“We all are the only star, always the same sun...”

“I sun...”

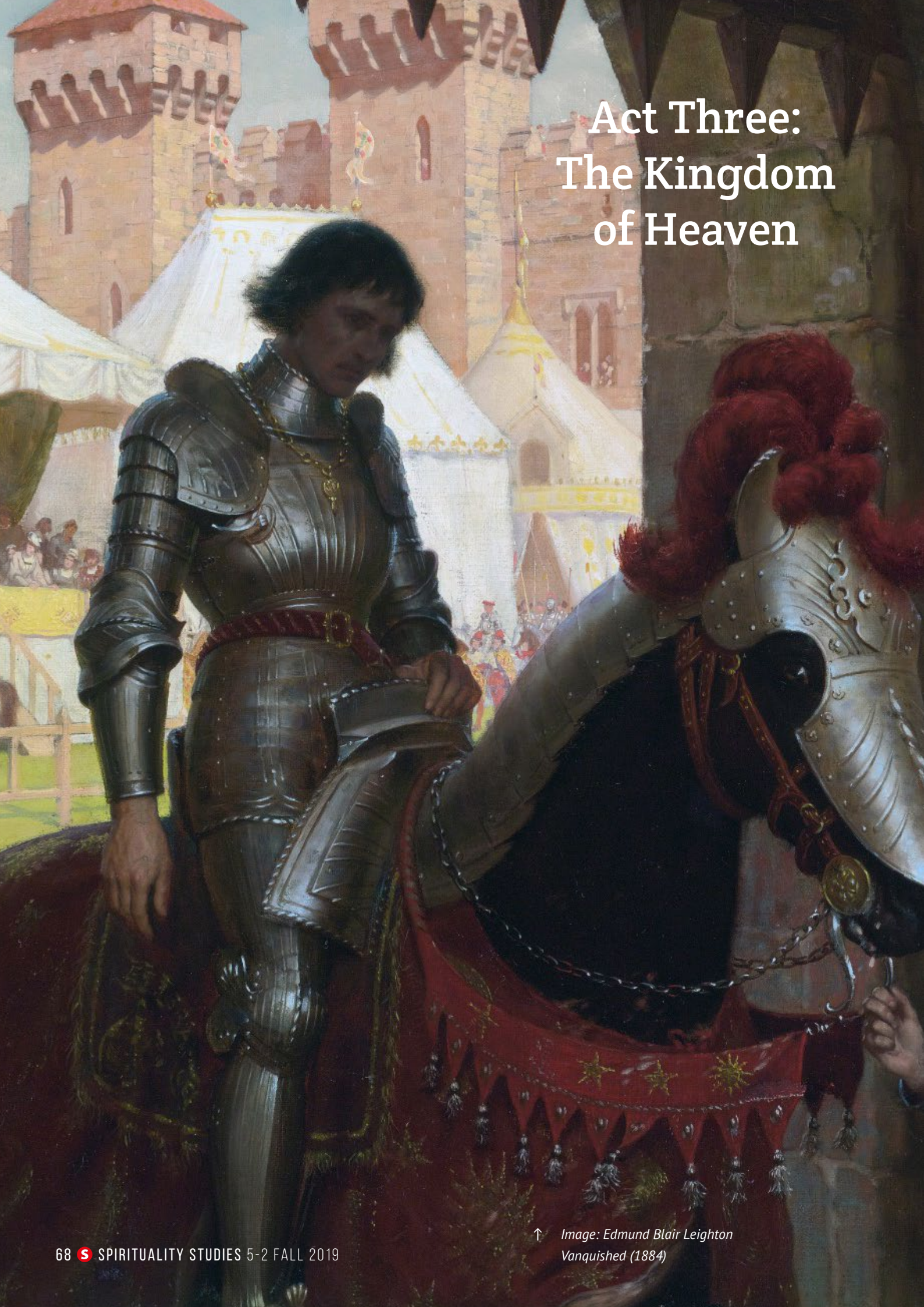
“You star...”

“We stars...”

“We sun.”

The knight’s heavenly night reached thus its fulfilment. But this is far from the end of his adventure, for he is still facing severe trials and great adversities.

Act Three: The Kingdom of Heaven



↑ Image: Edmund Blair Leighton
Vanquished (1884)

Chapter One

**Those who want to get there,
they just dream about it.**

**Those who woke up there,
they are at home there.**

Both Astera and Celestin then rested happily for a long time in celestial love, which was even deeper than before because it had reached wisdom. It was Astera, who woke up first from that sweet dream:

“Celestin, wake up, you’ve been visiting us too long.”

“You said before, I am at home here,” Celestin said.

“All I said was that your real home is here, but you are still not home here. We must not be together like this anymore.”

Celestin paused, reluctantly putting on his helmet. What soldier would want from the conquered land! Nowhere was he as wonderful as here in heaven together with all the stars, and again it should not be the end of his journey.

“But how do I wake up? Is this all around just I’m dreaming about?”

“You guessed it.”

“But it’s all so incredibly genuine!”

“You guessed a second time. This heaven is so real to you that you refuse to wake up. And until you wake up from this dream, you will never know your true home.”

“But you are not only in my dream! How could we love each other so much?”

Astera shook her head and the brightly coloured rays from her crown ran across the celestial vault:

“This dream is real only through the magic power of our love.”

“And what would happen if we gave up that dreaming?”

“Then you would really be home with me! And could you stand it, my dear?”

“For you, my lady, I will do anything. I’m ready.”

“Even leave the heaven of eternal love and continue to wander alone?”

“Yes, my lady,” he said sadly, yet bravely.

“And would you be willing to die for me there?”

“Yes, my lady,” he replied quietly, his throat tight.

“Then you will go and conquer the kingdom of heaven!” exclaimed Astera powerfully, and her crown blazed with such a terrible heat that it burned the whole heaven in a single mighty fire.

Everything fell through, and nowhere was anything left – neither light nor dark, as if the old time had come to an end, and at the same moment a new time has begun.

Chapter Two

**What was the hardest thing for the knight?
As he eagerly coveted the kingdom of heaven,
his hands began to tremble.**

The knight again had his old sword at his waist, and his spear was scuffed and broken at the tip. His shield was also leaky from the countless wounds he had suffered on his way to heaven. His horse was stepping in place, for the knight didn’t even know where to drive him. Gone is all shine and glitter, gone is the flickering beauty of the mysterious game of light, gone is all joy and happiness.

“What do I have left? Only poverty, it is faithful even in need, but nobody wants it,” he told himself. From his happy days, he had only a few memories left. As he recalled them, the tip of his sword began to carve something into the inside of his wooden shield. It hurt him as if the sword had been carving into him deeply, for he recognized the image of the lady of his heart, though simple, yet amazingly faithful. But even in

that image, her face no longer shone as it once did, as if she now humbly shared his exile with him.

He rushed his horse, from nowhere to nowhere, yet at least forward, and urged him into a trot:

“Where are you all? I challenge you to fight!”

But there was only dead silence everywhere, without the slightest murmur.

“Don’t you even see me here, a tiny human being, the smallest of the smallest?”

As he fully realized his infinite misery, he finally looked up. At that moment he was horrified and shivering in terror. There stood a whole celestial army.

He realized that the battle he so recklessly asked for would not be long to wait. Ahead of him, now a gigantic chessboard, perfectly smooth and shiny, stretched diagonally upward to unseen heights, over which echoed the trumpet’s voice, announcing the start of the match. The opponent had white figures. The knight noticed the heavily clad pawns in the foreground, the menacing enemy knight with the long sword behind them, and the impregnable rooks on both sides of the chessboard.

“Here I have nothing to lose,” the knight thought, lifting his black horse to the rear and leaping into the middle of an empty white field. “Check!” he shouted at the white king, who stood at an angle in the black field.

But the white king, leaning on the ancient sword, showed no surprise. On the contrary, he stabbed the sword in front of him with both hands, reached out to the knight, and spoke to him in a gentle voice:

“Welcome, my dear heavenly knight. This game is as old as the whole world, and there is no less to play than life. But you and your horse jumped just in the middle of this game. I appreciate your bravery, but long ago the white has begun first,” he pointed at his army, “and is therefore at an advantage. I will let you back your move, but then get out of here quick!”

“His Majesty, I promised to bring this adventure to the end, no matter how. That’s my only wish. I’ve sacrificed everything for it. I don’t even have anywhere to go back to.”

The white king shrugged. His appearance was familiar to the knight! Yes, he reminded him of a hermit he had met at the beginning of his journey.

“So you still believe, my dear knight, that the kingdom of heaven can be conquered by mere sword?”

The white king fixed his wise, kind eyes on him.

“But the sword falls out of your hand as soon as it shivers with your eagerness. This is not the way of the king. He must peacefully command the entire army! Turn around and look behind you.”

The knight obeyed and looked back. Behind him towered a wall of huge black figures. The brave pawns immediately covered his bold cavalry attack, the knights had already mounted their horses and the entire army was moving forward with a thud. This was his army, waiting for his command. His hope was now in united force!

Chapter Three

**Whenever he was certain
of the kingdom of heaven,
he reached into the void.**

“The command has to be peaceful,” the knight recalled the wise words of the white king, and his fear gradually vanished. He now stood in the back of his army as a black king. He wore a glittering crown of black gems on his head, precious armour of dark steel on his body, and a sword with an ebony hilt in his hand. Next to him stood a black queen he had never seen before. She was incredibly beautiful, her long black hair covered her exposed shoulders, and above her firm hips she had a high, wrought belt of dark, matt metal. But she was doing nothing yet, just gazing intently into the distance at the white king, as if to enchant him with her magic sight.

“She doesn’t even care about me,” the knight complained, “and yet she should be my main strength! A queen, that’s the strongest chessboard figure!”

He remembered the carving on his old wooden shield. Yes, a queen! The lady of his heart... She sent him to death, and it will happen soon. Why is he here to fight for some vain kingdom with a white king who, moreover, is good and yet wisely advises him? He is a thousand times better! Let him keep his kingdom and reign in it fairly further...

Such thoughts ran through his head while the battle continued. The white knights already penetrated his territory, and a huge white rook threatened his right side.

“So will my lady do anything?” The knight wondered. He watched her anxiously, not to miss her only movement. To his surprise, he realized his lady was no longer in her original position. She stopped watching the white king and stared at the back of the nearest black pawn.

“What is she doing? She is supposed to attack and not throw off with the last infantryman. She had liked at least the white king before, but this is too much!”

He stopped and reminded himself to command peacefully. So he pushed out jealousy and looked at the pawn’s back. What if things were all different?

And indeed, it was different. The black pawn in front of them had a small door in his armour, up on his back! The knight strained his eyes even more and gradually became convinced that every single figure, either black or white, had that hidden door there – in secret, not to know about it, and not to be able to reach it.

It occurred to him that his beloved star – apparently now in the role of this black queen – was somehow helping him out here. Only her love had just changed from hot to metallic cold: “Think my dear, hurry, just notice. Use your head!”

“Oh, these ladies... Who’s supposed to know them?” The knight frowned, yet obeyed, forcing himself to think coldly in the middle of the fight with all his strength:

“The back door, of course, he realized immediately. This game has its backdoor. And with the backdoor there is a way out! Black or white, pawn or king, we all have a chance to get out, escape the curse in that chess figure of ours. And whoever doesn’t get out by himself, let him help the other one.” This thought enchanted him now. He rejoiced that he had just found the key to victory:

“Just let the enemy attack, from now he has no chance,” he was cheering ahead, “it’s all just a game of black and white after all... because the truth is only who we are inside, and this one can never lose! It’s a real miracle, now I’m holding the last key to the kingdom of heaven in my hand. It is just enough to turn it right. In fact, I can become the saviour of all beings in the world!”

At that moment, his cold mind had subsided, and the decision was made in one instant. Turning sharply to the black lady at his side, he shouted in fierce passion: “I’ll free you first!” With a single move, he swept the lush raven hair off her back, and ripped her gown with his iron glove. He rushed to the hidden door, opened it, and reached inside hastily. But his face froze in horror: He felt absolutely nothing inside!

Chapter Four

Is human life enough for this goal?

**One sleeps until the horn blows,
the other doesn’t just allow his eyelids to sink.**

The knight stood petrified, watching the battlefield grimly. “This is obviously not where salvation leads. How could it, if this is just Heaven of Nothing? Horror! The disguise will be even more perfect than I expected! Still, there is real blood pouring from the wooden figures, though all empty inside. The wounds in my empty body really hurt me, and I can clearly feel the icy breath of death behind my neck.”

Then he watched how his black knight ended up stabbed, hitting a long spear in a hurry. His two rooks slowly turned into piles of ruins. In the end, even his black queen had to cross the board and surrender herself to the white king: “Don’t go there! Stay with me...” Just in vain.

It was all as the white king had correctly predicted. He had started with the first move and, with his infinite wisdom, had always to win. The knight understood that whatever he did, he would always be faced with an inevitable loss from which there was no escape.

Then it actually came. A white horse rushes to his left, a white bishop is pointing at him from the right, and a white king stands right in front of him: "Chess mat, my dear heavenly knight! You've lost the last chess field you can still stand on. Black King, you didn't surrender in time, so prepare for death!"

An unspeakable horror overwhelmed the knight, penetrating to the furthest depths of his being. This is really the end of all hope! Absolute end! Fully reconciled, he just expected when it would happen. Now, or now again... It doesn't matter anymore. Moments passed...

Suddenly he heard a mighty horn sound over the battlefield, announcing the end of the match. And it was only this single sound, vibrating in the entire kingdom of heaven that finally awakened him:

"After all, it's all different! I just dreamt the whole thing, absolutely everything. It was all only my dream about myself! Who would have thought this was possible? It's just Astera, my beloved star – where is she, what is she doing now – she has known it for ages! She didn't need to wake up anymore! It was only me who did not understand how deep and true this dream about oneself could be."

Those were his first thoughts when he rubbed his eyes. "Astera..." And he was extremely grateful to her for sending him to conquer the kingdom of heaven, though she knew in advance how much it would cost them both.

Chapter Five

And how did he get there?

As he heard from heaven "Where are you?"

he knelt and whispered "I don't know..."

And then he just listened

to the echo vibrating in silence –

"You are here,"

"here,"

"here"...

"The kingdom of heaven," he thought, "how could it be at any place?" He smiled at this idea. "But where did I actually wake up, then?" He felt around and found himself in some strange cave with rugged walls and a high ceiling he could not reach. As his eyes got used to the dark, he noticed a roughly carved bench standing at one wall, with a brown robe and knotted rope lying on it. "The hermit!" realized the knight, "I should thank him, too." What would he do if I asked him, as he did last time, "Do you have anything else to give me?"

The knight looked at the bench with the robe, and then looked at himself. He was quite naked! After all the disguises, there was nothing left on his body. And what beautiful and glorious costumes they were! He laughed frankly at this memory. Then he looked at the robes again and finally began to understand the hermit.

He got up, put on hermit's robes, and girded himself with his rope. "Thank you, dear hermit. You had something to give me because now I'm even poorer than you. But I don't need to be a hermit anymore. It would be just another disguise."

He sat down on the bench and felt good and light again. Will this adventure ever end? Who knows! Where is Astera now? Who knows! Who is he himself and who will he be in a moment? Who knows! And where is he anyway? Who knows...

As he sat in the poor hermit robe, he knelt in respect and merely listened to the vast silence that reigned in the cave. This silence continued to grow until a perfectly clear and distinct response emerged from it:

"You're here, you'll always be here. You will always be where you are and who you are. Like me, I am the one who I am."

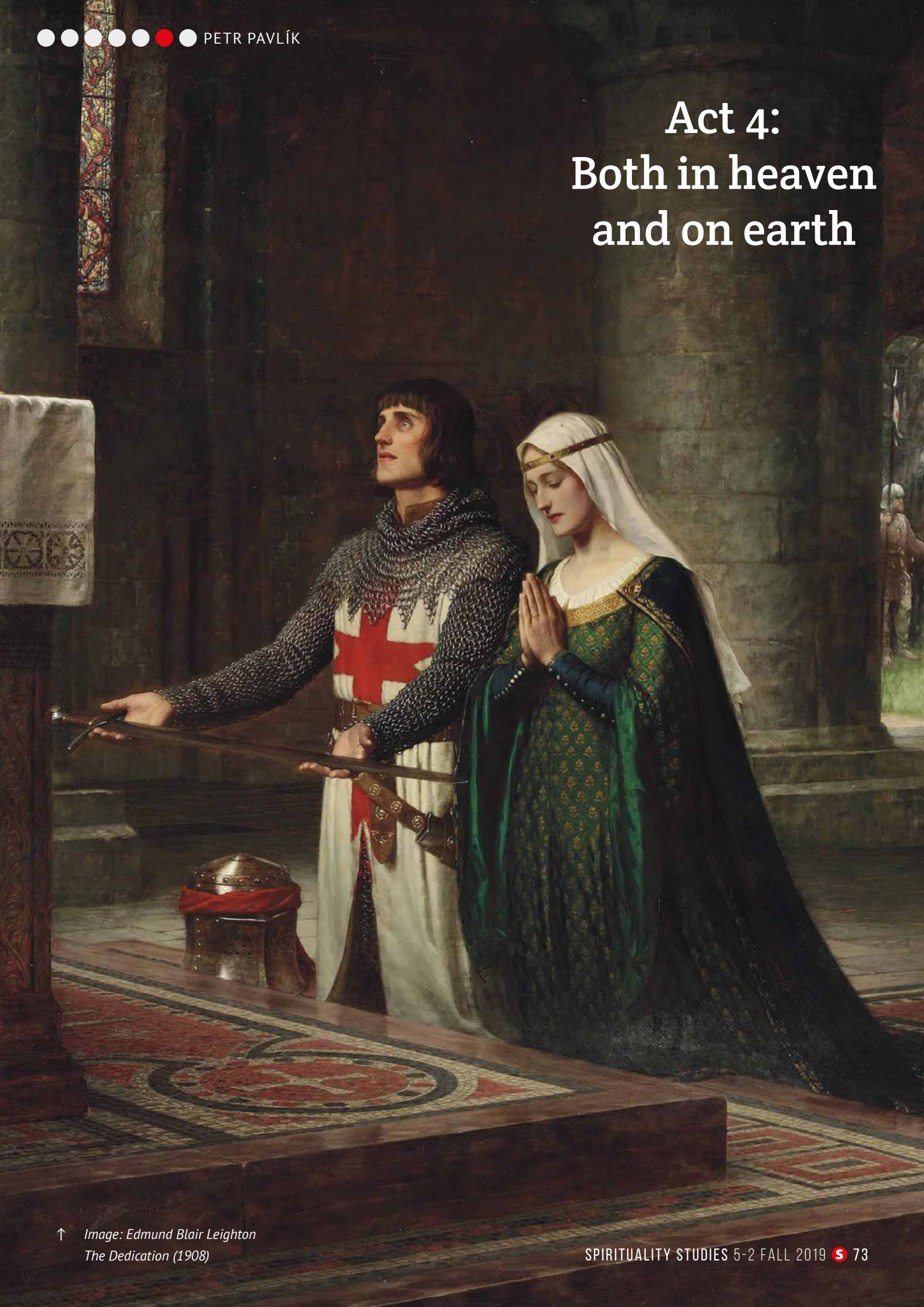
The knight bowed in silent approval.

"You can travel on with the sun over your head, knight!" the cave echoed.

The knight walked out of the cave and stared into the sunshine that spilled across the valley. The sun is here again! He was finally home. His horse stood nearby, nibbling on a fairly ordinary earthly bush, as if nothing had ever happened.

It might seem that at this point the knight's adventures will end, for nothing greater could be achieved, on earth or in heaven. But there is still an earthly life and a world waiting for the knight outside the cave.

**Act 4:
Both in heaven
and on earth**



↑ *Image: Edmund Blair Leighton*
The Dedication (1908)

Chapter One

**What was close before,
that is far away now.**

**What was far away before,
this is close now.**

"Well, you have returned to us, my dear heavenly knight, welcome among us poor ones," appeared the hermit in front of the cave.

"But Father, what are you wearing, this used to be my knightly dress!"

"Nothing, son, this was just scattered over the rocks. They were probably sweeping up there in the morning," laughed the hermit, pointing at the sky with his finger. The knight jumped off his horse, stumbled towards the hermit down the rocky path, hugged him and put his head on his shoulder. He didn't say anything; they just held each other in their arms for a long time.

"So, so... that's how it should be," said the hermit, "we are equal now."

"And what about your horse, my heavenly knight? Here on earth, his wings will only inspire envy."

The Knight nodded sadly, drew his sword, and swung to chop them off. But the horse shook its head dismissively and looked up at him pleadingly. Even the hermit was alarmed:

"Hold on, Knight, the wings are just too much to see!"

So the knight lowered his sword, leaned against it, and shrugged.

"You can leave them for the night," the hermit continued, "just by day we try to hide them. Compared with that former celestial glory, the sackcloth shawl will be poorer, but even a horse has to get used here," he laughed softly.

"In fact, the wings may come in handy," the knight laughed bitterly with him, "after all, it is being sung that on clear nights a spirit soars on them to the heavens!"

He flashed his sword over his head to make it look cheerful and brave, but it rather made him sad:

"It's soaring to the heavens... The heavens! Where else can they be than here, where I am? This is what I already know well; a heavenly dream is a mere disguised earthly dream! And yet I feel there's still some difference between heaven and earth... how could I be homesick here?"

So he tucked his sword with one hand, while he lovingly caressed his old leaky shield with his other hand, in the same way as he used to play the celestial lute up there. He gazed with tenderness at the faded image of the lady of his heart. Now they were closer to each other than in heaven, but differently than he had ever imagined, and he would never be able to explain it to anyone here on earth.

Chapter Two

What did the knight leave with?

**He had the sun in his heart,
and a star in his palm.**

And what did he return with?

**He had a star on his forehead,
and his heart in his palm.**

The knight and the hermit descended along a rocky path that wound down into the valley. Far below them, the river glittered, and on its banks lay villages with thatched roofs and white church towers. The knight guided the horse, and the hermit showed him the way in places covered with bushes.

"Knight, do you know what you're getting into?"

"Yes, Father... perhaps."

"Then don't forget four things. First: When you were leaving, you didn't know the sun yet, though you had it in your heart. You will always remind yourself that here is everybody like you were before. Second: When you wanted to get hold of the stars there, you were ready to give yours first. Never forget how hard it is for others here. Third: Once the sun goes out, a star will shine on your forehead. You'll hide her, otherwise you would betray your mistress.

Finally, fourth: The last thing you have to give away is your heart. Don't worry about it."

By the time they reached the forest, it was evening. The knight took care of the horse and the hermit set a small fire. They sat on rocks, warming their feet, wet from the evening dew, and were well. There was nothing to say, the hermit stared silently into the fire, and the knight was thinking about his four hints.

Suddenly there came harsh male voices from the woods behind them, and the knight's horse began to flinch until it broke free. Several men in leather hats and high boots ran into the clearing. Before the knight and the hermit recovered, they stood tied to trees with a rag stuffed in their mouths.

"That's so you don't think of screaming," laughed one of the scoundrels.

"So we've finally got him, our reward is sure," rejoiced the one in the least ragged dress, pointing to the hermit.

"Looks old, though. He shouldn't be forty yet."

"That's probably due to his adventurous life," chuckled the other.

"But the main thing is this cloak, you see the lining, and the stitched hole from the spear on his collar. It's him."

"So, Knight, once again would you like to betray your robber brothers and send a king after them?"

The real knight was twitching, tied to a neighbour tree, wishing to say that they accuse the hermit dressed in his clothes, and as for himself, he would gladly send the king at them again. But it was futile, the gag in his mouth held tight and to move with the handcuffs was impossible.

"Then you'll never succeed again, dear Knight, as you're finished," shouted the less ragged one, waving his knife in front of the hermit's face and watching his face closely. The hermit looked at him with a mild, compassionate look, as if he had counted on everything in advance.

"Well, you don't care, so we are nothing for you, so that's enough!" shouted finally the scoundrel, slicing through the hermit's throat with a single long swing. Blood spurted out into the distance, and one drop of it hit the knight's shield, now rolling by the hearth. The knight froze. The hermit's motionless face, facing the sky, was lifeless. Now he finally recognized it: For the face belonged to the white king!

"As for this hermit," he pointed at the knight, "we'll at least dust his fur a little." He laughed, kicking him with his high boot with undisclosed pleasure. "Look, there's a spear lying here that will do the job fine."

They untied the knight from the tree and thrashed him with a spear until they could no longer.

"Just run away before we think of adding you more."

"And now let's have a drink, guys! Tomorrow we go to them brothers for our reward," said the one in the better clothes, and lay down comfortably by the fire. The others were happy to join him.

Meanwhile, the knight staggered through the trees until he ended up lying in the moss by a small stream. He dipped his head into the cool water, waiting to recover. Then, gradually, he felt his hands, legs and ribs for anything broken. It wasn't. He thanked for being alive and fell in a deep sleep.

The next morning he made his way to the fireplace. In the tall grass and the surrounding bushes, he silently gathered what he could find from his belongings. He found his sword, which was handy now. He could dig a grave with it in the damp ground, and carry the dirt out in his shield. Meanwhile, he washed his and the hermit's clothes in the stream and dried them in the sun. He was also trying to call his horse; perhaps he may hear his voice. It was in vain, only the flies buzzed and it became hot.

With tears in his eyes, he buried the hermit in his true robes and sat down at his grave. He still couldn't believe what had happened.

"He must have known beforehand that they were after me... Perhaps he heard it from herdsman. A good hermit, so good... and then he arranged to change our clothes. Now everyone believes they've killed me, and the vengeful brothers will never let look for me again. But a hermit, he sacrificed himself for me, a good hermit!" The Knight threw himself on the grave, a cruel cry rattling his body. "Father!" he called desperately, "Father!" But the hermit was no longer here.

Then the horse came back after all. The knight tied his broken bridle, looked back for the last time and started off. As he looked into the inside of his shield, he saw a drop of the hermit's blood beside the engraved image of the lady of his heart. He wiped his forehead and took several deep breaths. He could not bear any more. Now he was sure he had led this adventure to the end.

Chapter Three

**And when he crossed the threshold
of his birth home?**

**Cheers of joy rose from the ground,
silent cries fell down from the sky.
Hallelujah...**

He arrived in the village below his former castle late in the evening. He sat down in a corner, again at the same table, wondering what was new.

"Where have you been all along? You'll be surprised, but an amazing thing happened here. The sun is shining again, and most importantly – we didn't have to lift a finger for it."

"I'm sorry, I was..."

"Fool, couldn't you stay home? You've missed a historic event! There's a rumour that the court astrologers were working on it, and that they've made it. They need to be thanked!"

"But in heaven..."

"In what heaven, here in the castle, there will be a huge festival, and even the king is to arrive. Our King himself! But you obviously don't even know what a king looks like!"

"A king, down here, an earthly one?"

"What are you talking about? Wait for tomorrow, the sun will rise again! There will be lots of entertainment and joy, wine will flow in stream."

The knight stared into the ground for a moment, but then recalled the hermit's advice. He thanked him silently and took courage:

"Yes, my friends, certainly, of course. I'm also happy to come and participate. A wandering troubadour will surely be welcome here."

He straightened up, looked at the guests with a smile, and continued to speak bolder as he found his new role:

"Yes, sure, I'll borrow a lute somewhere. I've got a lot to sing about. It will be about the glorious adventures that await the heavenly knight when he desires to bring them to the end." He jumped right up on the table and began:

*I'll sing a romance
about a no-one's land where the sunshine disappears,
so that the stars may come out in the night of love,
about beautiful princesses and their hidden chambers,
about brave knights fulfilling them their most secret wishes.*

“We’re curious, then,” laughed the jolly guests, until their voices faded in the clatter of pewter tankards and fists banging on tables.

“I’m curious, too,” nodded the knight as he was leaving the hall, “if the sun will come up again in the morning. Does it have to at all?”

He smiled frankly at this thought and remembered the hermit again. Sure, he’d like it to shine again tomorrow. “Yes, Father, so be it if it is your will,” he whispered humbly to himself.

He mounted his horse and rode out into the starry night. He went where he belonged as a heavenly knight, where he was at home. He looked back cautiously that anyone could not see him, took off the sackcloth, exposed the horse’s wings and spurred him on. With his heart pounding, he then listened as the horses’ hooves rattled faster and faster on the stone blocks beneath him. One last touch to the ground, and beyond that there was only silence.

Only the dark outline of a flying horse and rider was overshadowing the vast star vault. It was steadily shrinking, and the number of stars around it gradually grew, until only a single tiny star was eventually covered:

“My beloved...”

And at last the shadow disappeared, and this star shone again in the sky, with a double brightness.

For all this night they were allowed to be together again. From earth they were two as one, and from heaven they were one as two.

Hallelujah...

Notes

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