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BEYOND
THE WINDY PLACE

LIFE IN THE GUATEMALAN HIGHLANDS

by MAUD OAKES

FARRAR, STRAUS AND YOUNG · NEW YORK

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For Jerome Hill, my cousin, my friend

BINDERY DEC 22 1959

I wish to acknowledge my gratitude and indebtedness to Miss Nancy Wilson Ross, Miss Mai-mai Sze, and Mrs. Lillian Bos Ross for reading the manuscript, and to Mr. Jerome Hill for his valuable suggestions and criticism. Mr. Gerstle Mack assisted me immeasurably by his careful reading of the page proofs. In Guatemala I was extended many courtesies and much-needed aid by Don Antonio Goubaud Carrera of the Indian Institute of Guatemala, and by my good friends Julio and Mary Matheu. I also wish to thank Mr. John D. Barrett and the Bollingen Foundation for permission to use in this book certain excerpts from my ethnological study, *The Two Crosses of Todos Santos*.

Maud Oakes

PART I

Señoras, it is impossible to make the trip to Todos Santos and back in one day. I have lived in Guatemala all my life but I have never been up there. I know that only one or two strangers a year visit the place and they never accomplish the journey in one day. It is a long and difficult trail. Look up there at the pass. It is called La Ventosa, 'The Windy Place.' It is eleven thousand two hundred feet high and beyond lies Todos Santos in a high valley."

The owner of the hotel in Huehuetenango made a wide gesture with his arms as he looked at Mary and me. Then he added: "Formidable are these mountains, the Cordillera de los Andes."

I turned to Mary and said: "What do you think?"

"I admit it sounds risky," said Mary, who knew the country far better than I did. "But Maud, just how important is all this to you?"

"From everything I have heard of Todos Santos," I answered, "I feel sure that it is the place I am looking for."

I had arrived in Guatemala four months earlier on a grant from a Foundation in the United States. My mission was to find an isolated Indian village where the Indians still carried on the religious practices of their ancestors. Here I would live and record their ancient customs, and their way of life.

As I travelled about by bus or horse to various out-of-the-way pueblos, I found that most of them were coming in touch with our world by the ever spreading roads and government communications, and that the pure form of their religion was being slowly changed by the Catholic Church and official schools. The Ladinos, people of Spanish and mixed blood, were moving into the pueblos in increasing numbers, opening up liquor shops and exploiting the poor Indians in every way.

I had heard three things about Todos Santos that appealed to me: first that no roads led to the pueblo, second that there was no resident Catholic priest who might have colored their religious ceremonies, and third that the Indians, known as Mames, still lived by the ancient Mayan calendar.

Mary and I started off next morning at five on our way to Todos Santos, riding through the dark, empty streets of Huehuetenango in an ancient taxi and carrying with us a thermos of tea, bottles of water, and food. The sky was clear and the stars seemed to say "no rain today." After we passed through the small village of Chiantla, about three miles from Huehuetenango, we started to climb into the black mountains that hung over us. When dawn came we could see way beyond the darkened valley three volcanoes which stood out against the clouds and the sky: the sharp peak of Santa María near Quezaltenango, and the double peak of Tajumulco near the Mexican border.

The old Ford panted and wheezed as it wound back and forth up the steep, narrow road and became so hot we stopped to cool the motor and admire the view. The sun came up and we saw the beauty of the valley as it cast off its cloak of darkness and came into being. At nearly four thousand feet we turned off onto a plateau, crossed a treeless plain toward a few huts which seemed to cling to the edge of the grass. This was Paquix, the village where we were to change from taxi to horses.

Mary tried to impress on the taxi driver the importance of his being back at Paquix at four o'clock that afternoon to fetch us. But he was as doubtful of the possibility of our getting back from Todos Santos by that hour as we were of the chances of the Ford making the climb a second time that same day. We waited in the car, sheltering ourselves from the cold wind, until the horses arrived, and when they did the worst of our fears were realized. The animals looked half dead already.

Just the same we mounted them and rode off into a Daliesque landscape of stunted pines, twisted cripples of the tree world, and strangely shaped grey-black rocks. Mary and I were both thankful when we left this land of foreboding and entered a slowly rising terrain covered with scrub pines, cedars, and a variety of flowers. As this was in August, the rainy season, now and then we found ourselves riding through meadows rich with green grass.

Near the top of the pass the cold wind became so violent we were forced to dismount. We wrapped scarves around our necks and heads, and walked to stimulate our circulation, although breathing was made difficult by the high altitude and the freezing blasts. I thought to myself: "No wonder this pass is called 'The Windy Place.'" But then as we descended on the way to Todos Santos the wind lessened. The trail wound through very tall, straight pines, firs, and hemlocks. Mountain walls rose on either side and we could see glimpses of the distant valley way below. Streams flowed on all sides and flowers grew everywhere. On the slopes we could see Indians working their potato patches. The view of the fertile valley slowly opened up while the mountains on each side rose high and higher. It was as if there were two valleys: the earth valley opening out beneath and the sky valley closing in above.

I saw an old shepherd coming up the trail driving his sheep before him. Without thinking, I snapped his photograph. He cried out as if in agony, saying in Spanish: "What have you done to me?" I felt as if I had stuck a knife into him. We could tell that he was a Todos Santos Indian by his red-striped pants. "Uncle Sam's Boys," the tourists called them. As we neared the village we met more and more of these tall, bearded, arrogant men. They were all polite and curious, asking where we were going and where we had come from.

"These Indians," I said to Mary, "are unlike the other down-

trodden Indians I have seen in Guatemala. They seem to be more like the Navahos."

"Were the Navahos friendly when you worked with them?" asked Mary.

"I was with them three years and it took six months for them to start being friendly and a year before they really accepted me. These Todos Santos Indians will probably be even more difficult. I've been told they are a bellicose tribe."

On the lower slopes the corn which we had noticed growing thinly up above became increasingly taller, thicker, and more beautiful. There seemed to be more and more of it covering every available piece of earth. Sometime near ten o'clock we came upon two houses and thought we had reached our destination. Alas! our guide told us that it was only an outlying hamlet of Todos Santos; we still had quite a distance to go. At last, however, we came to the valley. The houses became more numerous. In front of some of them women sat weaving; they politely returned our greetings. Stone walls and sometimes fences lined the trails, and still the bright-green corn grew everywhere. From the top of a sudden rise we saw the village spread out below. It was built on a slope that climbed up from the river into the hills. The houses were white-washed and had high, thatched, Chinese-looking roofs, colored with the wonderful shades that straw acquires with age. Everywhere apple and peach trees sprawled over the walls and fences.

As I rode into the pueblo of Todos Santos I felt that already I knew it. It was as though this place remembered me. I had never seen it before but I felt this was my place. Here I would live and do my work. My search was ended.

The trail Mary and I were riding passed through the heart of the pueblo, a village of several thousand people. It was not only the main street, but the ancient Mayan route from the highlands

to the lowlands. On this we found a sixteenth-century church, flanked on one side by the thatched-roofed market and on the other by the school. Opposite was the plaza with its two fountains, one for humans, the other for animals, as well as the town hall and two houses occupied by the few Ladino officials.

Our first move was to call on the *Intendente*, the Mayor of the town, a pleasant man with a Spanish face, neatly dressed in European clothes. He greeted us formally and suggested that we visit with him the Mayan ruins of Cumanchúm which lay above the town.

It was a steep climb and we felt it, not only because of the fatigue of our journey, the heat of the morning sun, and our growing hunger, but also because of the altitude, which must have been over eight thousand feet. From the ruins was an awe-inspiring view of the towering mountains opposite; up the valley toward the pass from which we had come and where we would soon be returning, and down the valley toward the lowlands and Mexico. Below us lay fields of beautiful waving corn, and the village.

"What an ideal location for temples of worship!" I said to Mary. One pyramid was still almost intact, and seemed to be on a smaller scale than, but of the same period as, the Zaculeu ruins outside Huehuetenango. The other was crumbling away and overgrown with tall grass. Next to this pyramid were two crosses, one of old wood and the other of stone and whitewashed adobe. The Mayor told us that the Indians practiced their ancient customs in front of these crosses.

"The Indians have a sacred coffer which they call the *Caja Real*," he went on to tell us. "The head of their religious body, the Chief Prayermaker, guards it in his house. This box is very sacred to the Indians, and on New Year's Day, when the prayermakers come into office, they carry it in a procession encircling the mountains that surround the pueblo. One of my *mayores* when he was drunk

one time told me that when the procession visited the different places of worship it took a day and night. They passed at night when it was quite dark into a huge cave in the mountains, and within were large stone idols. Only the Chief Prayermaker and the head priest know the secret of the whereabouts of this cave." Mary and I exchanged glances. "Señoras, I have lived in this pueblo nine months with my wife and three children. I find these Indians good people as long as I don't meddle in their affairs. They are dependable and honest and I have had no trouble with them; but there have been *intendentes* who interfered with the Indians' religious matters, and even broke open their sacred box. Then there was trouble. They had to send for soldiers from Huehuetenango for protection."

As we walked down the winding trail to the village Mary said to me: "He's a nice man, for a Ladino."

The children we saw as we walked along ran behind the houses to hide from us, although their mothers remained weaving on their porches, watching us curiously, their beautiful faces full of dignity and character.

When we returned to the town hall, or *Juzgado*, as it is called, the *Intendente* made some of the Indians pose for their photographs. They did not wish to, until I promised to send them their pictures. They all had strong faces, shadowed by straw hats. In their red-and-white striped Uncle Sam pants and black coats they looked like pirates. I could see that some of them were terrified of the camera, especially the Chief of Police, a man with long, drooping mustachios.

I told the *Intendente* about the old shepherd who had cried out when I photographed him that morning. He explained to me that the Indians believe that when you take a picture of a man you take of his strength, and the photograph might even be used to cast

a spell against him. From then on I never took an Indian's picture without asking his permission.

Across the way was a shop, or *tienda*, that sold material and buttons, cotton for weaving, needles and thread, kerosene, candles and incense, cigarettes, tobacco, matches, and a meagre assortment of sweets. Here I stopped and bought five candles.

"What are you going to do with those?" asked Mary.

"I am going to burn them in the church to the gods of the mountains and pray that I may be allowed to live and work here. There is no doubt in my mind that this is the place."

The church I entered was crudely built but gave off a wonderful feeling of peace and quiet. As my eyes became used to the dark I observed on the ceiling the most beautifully carved beams and quaint angels, and on the altars primitively carved saints. I lit my candle and said a prayer with hopes in my heart that it would be possible for me to live in this pueblo. Then I joined Mary, who was waiting in the doorway, looking out on two crosses which stood opposite—two crosses like the ones we had seen at the ruins; one, obviously of very ancient wood and very tall, the other, short and squat made of whitewashed adobe. There was much charcoal and candle drippings about so we knew that here in front of these crosses the Indians practiced their ancient customs.

We decided to eat our lunch in the midday sun on the steps of the church. We had just started to examine what Señor Maldonado, the innkeeper at Huehuetenango, had given us to eat, when we found that we had an audience. All the little girls from the school were gathered before us looking at us with large, dark, curious eyes. When I stood up they screamed with terror and ran to a safe distance. Mary laughed at them and explained in Spanish that we were not dangerous. Their teacher, a polite Ladino woman, came and greeted us, asking where we had come from and why we were here, and then led the children away.

Señor Maldonado had done well by us, probably because Mary was the wife of Julio Matheu, manager of the famous Mayan Inn in Chichicastenango. We unpacked enough hard rolls for an army, plenty of fruit, eggs, a roast chicken, and our thermos of hot tea. Never had food tasted so good! As I was licking my fingers after doing away with my half of the chicken, I had a feeling someone was looking at me. I raised my eyes and saw an old man standing near me with an incense burner in his hand. He greeted me and looked deeply into my eyes with a searching, impersonal glance. I had never seen such a beautiful face. It was the face of a sage, full of wisdom, peace, and strength. His hair was white, he was beardless and his eyes were full of power. We gave him bread, which he accepted hesitantly, asking where our country was. We motioned to the north and said, "Far, far away." We told him how much we liked the pueblo. He smiled and passed into the church, wishing us a good journey.

I asked Mary if she had felt the power of his look, and she said: "Yes, it went right through me." We decided he must be a medicine-priest, or *chimán*, and probably one of the head ones.

Our guide had told us that the return trip to Paquix would take four hours, so we were ready to leave at one o'clock and went to say good-bye to the *Intendente*. He was sitting in front of his house with his wife. Mary explained to him my work for the Foundation and that I had been all over Guatemala searching for the most interesting Indians, and that of all I had seen I liked the Indians of Todos Santos best. Would it be possible for me to rent or buy a house?

"I know of no houses at the moment," he said, "maybe later. Why don't you and the Señorita return for the Todos Santos *fiesta* on All Saints' Day, the first of November, and by that time maybe I will have something for you."

“That would be fine,” said Mary. We said good-by and thanked him for his kindness.

We told the guide to follow us with the horses as we wished to walk through the pueblo and on the way we stopped at the second *tienda* and bought some cigarettes. The owner, a Ladino, waited on us. Back of him I saw a pretty Indian girl. I asked if she would sell me her blouse. She laughed shyly and said no, it was the only one she owned. Little did I suspect then how well I should get to know her later.

Our return trip to Paquix was one of rain, wind, and fatigue. When we saw the waiting taxi we greeted the driver as if he were a long-lost friend.

CHAPTER TWO

Two months later, on the last day of October, Mary and I were within a few miles of Todos Santos, riding along on the horses the *Intendente* had sent, when we were joined by the Catholic priest of Chiantla, an American. He rode with the ease of a cowboy, and I immediately liked his young, open, earnest face. He was one of three Maryknoll Fathers who had been sent from New York State to Guatemala to convert the Indians to Catholicism and to better their living conditions. He explained to us that he was on one of his infrequent visits, two or three times a year at the most, to Todos Santos, which was one of his villages, and that this day, October 31, was the first of a three-day festival. The morrow, All Saints' Day, because it happened to be the name of the village, was a very special day on which they held their peculiar and savage rooster race, and the third and last day was the "Feast of the Dead" or All Souls' Day. He was to be the guest of the Indians for all three days. The priest rode ahead, and as he entered the pueblo he was met by the Indian officials and a marimba. A marimba is an odd-looking xylophone with gourds hanging underneath and it can be played by as many as six men. This was a four-man marimba. Skyrockets were set off in the priest's honor, while Mary and I, with the guide leading the pack mule, brought up the rear, feeling rather silly.

An oily-looking Ladino greeted us, saying that it was in his house the Mayor had arranged for us to stay. We dismounted and he showed us the house—a shop on the corner of the main street, in which we were to have one dirty, barely furnished room. Here we ate lunch huddled in our coats because it was so cold. Then we went to call on the Mayor to see if he had done anything about my house. The streets and market place were jammed

with Indians and they stared and laughed at us. The children ran from us and clung to their mothers' skirts in great fear. Two angelic little boys came up to us saying: "You kill people, don't you?" Probably when the children are naughty their parents tell them: "The *gringos* will get you if you don't watch out!"

We stared at them also, for I had never seen such Indians, and all dressed in their best. They were from many other pueblos, and from the lowlands as well as the highlands, but the choicest of all were the *Todosanteros*. Over their red-and-white striped pants they wear strange black woolen garments held up by wide waistbands. From this, in black, fall tails, the undersides of which come up between the legs and fasten onto the waistbands, resembling breechclouts. Their blouses are also of red and white cotton. Over this they wear coats which are of two varieties: the most common, a black woolen garment that hangs to above the knee or to the waist; this rather resembles a smock, the bottom edge has a woolen fringe in back. The second is of tweed; grey and blue finely woven stripes, made into the form of a suit coat. Their heads are bound with red bandanas and on top of these sit shallow-brimmed straw hats, usually cocked at an angle. Some hats had rooster feathers in them.

The Mayor's wife took us to where her husband was white-washing gravestones in the cemetery in preparation for the Feast of the Dead. Mary asked him if he had found a house for me, and he told us that there were only two houses in the village that had chimneys, one that was not available, and the house of Señor López, who owned the store. I could tell that he was going to make little effort to find anything for me, so I showed him a letter from the Indian Institute of Guatemala saying that he was to do everything in his power to help me. His expression changed immediately, and he told me he would go and see the woman

who owned the house that was not for rent. Maybe she would sell me the house and I could resell it when I left.

On the way back from the cemetery we saw a crowd in front of the church watching a curious and colorful dance called the "Deer Dance." It is one of several traditional dances whose subject matter dates from the Spanish Conquest. Some of the men represented Conquistadores, in costumes rented from the faraway town of Totoncapán, elaborately designed of velvet and silk, covered with glittering mirrors, braid, tinsel, and fringe. The ornate hats were topped with ostrich plumes of all colors. Their stockings were a bright pink, to resemble the European skin, and the hair around their carved pink wooden masks was a mass of shining golden corkscrew curls. Other dancers represented animals, also wearing imaginative masks, the most interesting of which was the deer. Most of them were drunk with the local brandy called *aguardiente*, which is made from fermented sugar cane. This they consumed to keep going, as they dance all day and most of the night for twenty days.

When it got dark in our little room the cold became penetrating. We put candles in bottles, took a drink of whiskey, and washed down our supper with hot tea.

We were in bed at six-forty-five, having undressed in the dark so that the men in the shop could not peek through the crack in the door.

Next day was Todos Santos Day. Mary went to Mass before the race, but I stayed in front of the church to watch what went on. The street was packed with Indians awaiting the race. Every available space was taken. Little boys perched precariously on the thatched roofs. I noticed that the horsemen, the competitors, were not at Mass, but looking over their horses and preparing themselves for the competition. They were very elegant and proud. Their costumes had a few extra touches—red silk ribbons hanging

from their wrists and elbows and from their hats, which they wore well back on their heads.

The course was up our street to the plaza. Two ropes were hung from poles on each side of the street, and on the ropes live roosters hung by their feet. The object of the contest was for the rider as he galloped by to reach up and with his hand jerk off the head of a rooster. The team that acquired the most heads won the race. The rider won the body of the bird and ate his winnings with his family that night.

The race started. The horsemen galloped up and down the course with shouts and yells, pulling off the roosters' heads when they could. Mary and I were disgusted at the sight of the poor fluttering birds without heads, and at the drunken riders splattered with blood, and yet there was an excitement and beauty in the spectacle which transcended all this. Most of the men were so drunk that all they grabbed was a handful of feathers. If they swayed and lost their balance the crowd yelled or laughed in anticipation. There were, of course, the usual hecklers, mostly old men.

In the afternoon we went again to see the Mayor, and he told us that the woman would not sell her house but that she would rent it. He was so vague and so "*mañana*" that in exasperation Mary suggested our going to her immediately.

The Mayor led the way through the tightly packed market place to where she worked. She was a rather sweet woman called Natalia, a Ladino without much personality. She suggested that Mary and I go with her to see the house. We found it up and away from the main part of town, on a steep trail. It was an adobe house with a shingled roof and had a small garden which looked down on the village. We were shocked by the dirt within and without, but I could see that the situation was ideal and that it had possibilities, so I gave Mary the go-ahead signal. She told the

woman of the improvements I would make, such as putting in a wooden floor, glass windows, etc., and asked if we could meet a good carpenter and talk to him. Mary handled Natalia so well that she finally agreed to rent the house. When she asked me how long I would want it, I was quite surprised to hear myself say for two years. It was agreed that we would meet at the office of the Mayor at nine the next morning.

Long before that hour Mary and I were up and went to Mass, as it was All Souls' Day, or the Feast of the Dead. We watched a family of Indians making their offerings. On the floor they laid marigolds, called "flowers of the dead," and other blossoms, ears of corn, squash, and cut pieces of orange. Around these they set their candles and into the squash blossoms they poured coffee. They even sprinkled *aguardiente* on them. All of this was for the members of their family who had died: travellers in the next world.

After Mass we went to the Mayor's and waited two and a half hours till all the papers were made out and signed. Our boredom was relieved when ten Indians walked in. They had silver-headed staffs in their hands and I wondered if these were insignia of office. They told the Mayor that one of the riders in the race had fallen off his horse the day before and he had not moved all night and they were sure he was dead. The Mayor told them he would send someone to look at him, and to us he said that this was a common occurrence.

When I had become the proud tenant of the house we went again to look it over and to meet the two carpenters Natalia had recommended. I noticed this time that on three sides I had Indian neighbors, in fact two of their houses were almost touching mine and this appealed to me. I must admit I had a sinking feeling, though, when I saw the filthy condition of my house inside, but

it seemed to me that with a good cleaning, bug bombs, the extermination of rats and mice, I could make it livable.

The carpenters arrived and introduced themselves. It turned out that the one called Alonzo was the brother of Natalia. I liked him immediately and felt I could trust him. His boss was called Adrián and was an Indian dressed as a Ladino. This means he wore American-looking clothes. By my paying a little extra he agreed to put a wooden floor in the house immediately and remove the old outhouse and build a new one on another site, make a table and two chairs. All of this was to be ready in two weeks as I was very anxious to move in and get started.

When it came to the size of the outhouse they did not approve of my ordering one with only one hole. Adrián said to me: "Señorita, the few outhouses in the pueblo are all owned by Ladinos with the exception of myself. Not one has less than two holes and almost all have four holes." I said that might be the Ladino custom but I preferred it as I had ordered it. He shrugged his shoulders as if to say: "These foreigners have peculiar ideas."

As we started home the rain suddenly commenced, and it came down in torrents. From our window for two hours or more we watched the poor drunken Indians stagger by. We decided that All Souls' Day was Mothers' Day to the Indians, for many more women were drunk than we had seen on other days. The frightening thing was to see a drunken woman stagger and fall with her baby on her back. Some Indians fell in the mud and lay there drenched till they were carried home. It was all done with a certain dignity that was comic as well as pitiful. Two men started fighting in our doorway over a pretty girl. We had to hold the flimsy door closed till the police came and locked them up.

That last night we got almost no sleep at all, and the next morning we were on our way at seven. It took five and a half hours to Paquix this time as our guide did not know how to pack a mule;

the load fell off many times. A friendly young Mam Indian working in a field helped us once to balance the load. He was so willing and skillful that I gave him a present of a man's hat which I had bought at the *fiesta* and rather fancied for myself.

As our horses ambled along, Mary and I discussed what could be done to make the house more livable, such as glass in the windows and a fireplace. She tried for a while to dissuade me, probably because she felt I might be ill or lonesome, or something might happen to me. But she knew I had made up my mind to live in Todos Santos.

"When you move in," said Mary, "I'll return with you and stay a few days. Then I shall be sure that you are comfortably settled and Julio and I won't worry so much about you."

For a while we rode in silence and I thought about the Indians of Todos Santos with whom I would be living in a few weeks' time. I wondered if I would ever see again the old man with the incense burner, the man with the piercing eyes whom I had named to myself "The Sage." I asked Mary if she remembered him.

"Yes," she answered, "and you will probably see him again when you move into the pueblo."

"I hope so," I said. "The presence of that old man influenced me strongly in my final decision to live in Todos Santos. I feel happy about it. I feel it is right and, no matter how difficult life there may prove to be, something good will come of it, probably what I least expect."

Urging my horse ahead I looked at the farms and mountains about me. Taking a deep breath of the good air, I thought to myself: "This will soon be my landscape, and Todos Santos my pueblo."

CHAPTER THREE

Two weeks later Mary and I sat in the convent yard at Chiantla at six in the morning, surrounded by crates, valises, chests, and bundles. This was the place agreed upon with the *Intendente* to take off by mule for Todos Santos. I knew that the two shops there sold nothing that would help me out and so I had stocked up on everything I would need in my new house; cotton mattresses, blankets, and all household necessities like pots and pans, a pail, washbasins, a water filter, medical supplies, tools, some tinned food, wine and a bottle of brandy, books, stationery, and clothing.

I had along also a three-months-old pup that looked like a cross between a police dog and a coyote. He was coal-black, with ears that stood up, and large yellow eyes. I named him Tequila after the local drink, but as a male he should have been called Tequilo.

The two horses we had hired to ride were ready, but as yet there was no sign of the cargo mules. After the usual three-quarters of an hour wait, a lone Indian in red-and-white striped pants appeared at the gate.

"The others will be here in a minute, but first I want to see what has to go," he said, as he counted the boxes and tested their weight. One box, I knew, contained books, many of them on comparative ethnological work that had been done in Guatemala, and I wondered if it would be too heavy. Not at all, the man lifted it with great ease.

By this time the other *mozos*, or hired men, had begun to arrive. They were a picturesque group, hats tilted at a rakish angle, black woolen smock coats over red-striped pants, limp corn-leaf cigarettes hanging from their mouths, murderous-looking machetes

in their hands. Actually they looked like highway robbers, and this, alas, they soon proved to be.

"We want two dollars a mule, and we want to be paid before we load," said the man with the drooping mustache, who seemed to be the leader. "Two dollars a mule!" said Mary. My Spanish was improving, but I hadn't yet enough fluency to make a scene. "You are robbers! The *Intendente* told us the price would be one dollar a mule."

"No," said the man, "we had to leave yesterday to be here so early; besides that we had to buy food for our mules and ourselves. It will be late afternoon before we get to the pueblo with this load—two dollars is little enough—we will not load till we are paid."

Here we were, surrounded by baggage which we had to get to Todos Santos. We were in a spot, and they knew it. We could only give in.

This, my third trip, was by another route, the long, hard way to Todos Santos, the trail that had been pointed out to us as we crossed the pass at The Windy Place that first day. It was the ancient trail, the animal trail. The Huehuetenango taxis could never have taken all my heavy stuff up the grade to Paquix.

As we climbed the sheer rocky path the sun came up and the clouds rose rapidly and soon engulfed us in their wet density.

I felt I was in a land of dreams. "Is this me riding in this dream?" I asked myself. "Will I wake up and find myself in bed in New York, or am I really going to live in Todos Santos, and will I get what I am going for?"

Tequila rode in a basket tied to my saddle, and slept most of the way, trying to digest the two pounds of soup meat he had stolen and eaten from our supplies the night before. (Wouldn't my dog Psyche be jealous if she knew!) Our robber muleteers joked and

sang. They were delighted that they had forced me to pay double the fee. Wouldn't they enjoy themselves telling how they had gypped the blonde *gringa*! Little did they know that for overcharging us the *Intendente* would later force them to make a trip gratis for the municipality!

After nine hours in the saddle we arrived half dead at my Todos Santos home, where we dismounted stiffly with sighs of relief. There at the end of the yard stood the gleaming new outhouse. Inside the main building was a brand-new wooden floor.

The house itself, rectangular and divided into three rooms, had a covered porch running full length on the yard side. The opposite side fronted the street, which was really nothing but a muddy trail. From this one entered the largest and nicest of the three rooms. Here were two windows on the porch side, a chimney that did not work, and an archway leading into the center room, which was small, narrow, and more of a hallway. This had one window on the street side and a door which opened on the porch. It also had an archway that led into the third room. This room was lighted by only one window and had also a door opening onto the porch. Five doorways in one little house! It was into this room, used before to house the pigs and chickens, that we had the *mozos* put all our things when they unloaded the mules. By this time the cold was intense within and without, for the clouds had descended and we could not see beyond the yard. There was no way of shutting out the dampness and cold; the windows had no glass and if we shut the shutters we shut out the light.

Adrián and Alonzo, the carpenters, came to greet us and see if we approved of the work they had done. We told them we were delighted, and they smiled, very proud of their craftsmanship. We asked if it was possible to get some wood for the kitchen fire, and where were the two chairs and kitchen table we had ordered?

They returned with them in a few minutes and an Indian boy accompanied them with wood on his back.

Then a good-looking, smiling Indian came to the door and walked in without knocking. He removed the straw hat perched on the back of his head, introduced himself, and shook hands.

"Señoras, I am your neighbor Domingo. You will need water from the *pila*. If you would like my son Andrés to carry it for you, he will do it whenever you wish." We told him that we would need some right now and that we would pay Andrés a cent a pailful.

Then we unpacked essentials with an audience of Indian neighbors peering in every door and window.

Water, pure water, was unknown in this part of the world. So when Andrés returned with a bucketful I dipped some out into a saucepan and carried it out the door and into the little cook-shack which was built onto the covered porch on the other side of the house. The stove consisted of a thick adobe table built into the wall, open underneath to store wood. On top of this were three rocks arranged in the form of a triangle, far enough apart to allow room for the fire and yet close enough to support a clay pot. I started the fire by taking a machete and chopping off splinters from a piece of resinous pine wood called *ocote*. This pitch is very inflammable, and in a second I had the fire crackling and all the smoke of it in my eyes, for the slanting roof was not steep enough to carry it out the two openings at the top of the wall.

When the water had boiled I took it back into the living room, where Mary had set up the porcelain filter, much to the amazement of the audience looking on from outside. Into this I poured the boiled water, which was now sanitary but not yet clean.

As darkness descended we shut the shutters, closing out the

many curious faces, lit the two kerosene lanterns, and tossed a coin to see who would sleep on the table, and who on the folding cot. I drew the table. It was so cold that Mary wore knitted gloves to keep her hands warm, and we both wore sweaters and coats. After we had had whiskey and hot soup and something to eat we both felt warm and revived. Hearing a knock, I unlocked the door and found my neighbor Domingo smiling at me.

He begged our pardon, but did we have a little bit of sugar we could spare? All the time he was talking he was looking past me with great interest to see how we had prepared ourselves for the night. We gave him some sugar, and he said that Andrés would bring us water in the morning and said good night with an amazed look in his large childlike eyes.

Tired as we were, Mary and I had a good laugh when I had shut the door. She had on a voluminous nightgown made of flannel, with a high neck and long sleeves. My costume was pale-blue cotton-knit pajamas, exactly like a child's, even to the back flap. We decided we were funny enough to scare any tribe, primitive or other.

What beauty I saw as I opened the door at five in the morning to let Tequila out! An almost full moon, and more stars than I thought the sky could hold. On three sides I was enclosed by mountain walls; the one opposite, the highest, was cut in half by a white ribbon of cloud.

Not a sound except for the crowing cocks announcing dawn. I felt so insignificant standing there with all the vastness of nature about me that I said a little prayer of thanks and of hope that things would continue to open for me as they had so far. As if in answer, I felt a strange power in the air and I shivered, but not from the cold. Then I went into the cookshack and

started a fire to heat water for coffee, and put on a skirt and sweater. I had decided to wear trousers only when I rode horseback because I knew that Indians don't like women in pants.

After we had finished breakfast and cleaned up the living room, a rather large Indian woman came to call with two little daughters, one of them on her back.

"Señoras, I am your neighbor Margarita Elón, and I live right above you."

We invited her in and offered her a cigarette. The baby on her back screamed so loudly when she saw our white faces that Margarita sent her off on the back of her older sister. As we smoked I noticed Margarita's little eyes taking in everything, including ourselves. This woman was powerfully built, with a full face that would have been beautiful had it not been for her small eyes and the meanness I sensed was there, in spite of her outward smiles.

"Señoras," she began, "that *natural* [*naturales* are what the Indians call themselves] who came to call on you yesterday and last night, his name is Domingo. He is no good, he is not honest, his whole family are not honest, they will steal your things."

We thanked her, and then Mary asked her if she knew of an Indian maid who would work for me?

"There are plenty of Ladinos who would like to work for the Señorita," said Margarita, "but I know of no *natural*."

"I don't want any Ladinos working for me," I said, "for I don't trust Ladinos." Margarita gave me a look, but said nothing.

Andrés came in bringing us water, and from the glances that he gave Margarita and she gave him, we could see that there was trouble between the two families. Andrés was an entrancing boy—about thirteen years old, slender, and very good-looking, with a sweet smile. He knew only a few words in Spanish, so conversation was difficult.

When Margarita left I watched her strong figure climb the steep short trail to her house. It almost overhung my property, and I suddenly realized that my yard was the dump for the garbage and personal filth of Margarita's family. This accounted for the millions of flies that were everywhere. I also realized that there was no sanitation of any kind in the whole village, as there were only a few outhouses for several thousand people. During meals we had to fight to keep off the flies, for if we shut the shutters we had no light; moreover, I had no DDT, as it was impossible as yet to get it in Guatemala. Fortunately Julio, Mary's husband, had given me a cooler, which was a box with shelves completely screened with fine wire netting. Here I kept food in safety from the insects.

Mary stayed with me four days. In this time we cleaned the house thoroughly. The dirt was appalling. Always we had an audience of Indians in every window and door.

"Maud, you must take the greatest care of what you eat and drink," said Mary as she shook a dust cloth out the window in the face of a child. "You know well what precautions Julio and I take at the Mayan Inn, and even then tourists get dysentery. You must boil and filter all drinking water as you are doing, and when you go on trips use chlorine tablets. All your dishes and utensils must be washed in boiling water. Also, Maud, you must eat only fruit you can peel, and nothing green."

Mary sat on the table, lit a cigarette, and continued: "And don't let your enthusiasm for the Indians influence your judgment. Don't forget the experience you had at Chichicastenango when the drunken Indian chased you with lust in his eye and a machete in his hand. When the Indians are drunk they are completely untrustworthy and often dangerous."

As I looked at Mary I realized how much I was going to miss her. She had been of such help in a thousand ways, and I never could have done what I had without her.

The morning she rode off, and I waved good-by, I must admit that I had a sinking feeling inside, and wondered what I was doing all alone in this strange village.

CHAPTER FOUR

After Mary left and I was alone with the Mames and the mountains, I was luckily kept busy supervising Adrián and Alonzo.

The first thing they did was take the roof off the chimney. When I asked why it had been built there in the first place Alonzo said: "Señorita, this house was built about four years ago by a *gringo* from your country. He was here on an agricultural survey. He lived in it only a few months. After he left we all moved in. One day in a windstorm the chimney was blown off at roof level and as the roof leaked we reshingled it and covered the chimney rather than build another."

"But wasn't the fireplace necessary to give warmth?"

"No, we are not accustomed to fireplaces, we are better off without them," said Alonzo.

As a matter of fact I had already noticed that no houses had chimneys, that the smoke found its way up and out through the thatched roofs.

I peered up the flue and saw it was full of soot, so Adrián stood on the roof and lowered a rock covered with an old sack on the end of a rope. This he pulled up and down, dislodging chunks of soot, which fell into the fireplace and broke, scattering, into the room.

Margarita was so curious to know what was going on in the house that she spent most of the morning looking down into my yard. Finally, to get a closer look, she came to call with her husband, Satero. He was a tall, indolent, good-natured Indian dressed in Ladino clothes like Adrián. I asked him where he had learned to speak Spanish so well and he told me that he had worked a great deal on *fincas*, or agricultural estates, and there everyone spoke Spanish.

"Señorita, I am now an agent of a *finca*, and both Margarita and I are butchers," said Satero, boasting. "When we slaughter a beef, we will let you know."

I thanked him, and asked him if he had always worn Ladino dress.

"No, only in the last few years since I have become an agent. Adrián, Chimán Pascual Pablo, and myself are the only *naturales* in the pueblo who dress like Ladinos," he said with a pleased expression.

We all had a smoke and I gave a piece of candy to Marcelina, their little daughter. She was still too afraid to take it from me, so her mother gave it to her. Marcelina smiled at me, and I must admit I have never seen a more adorable child—about six years old and dressed just like her mother, in fact she was a duplicate without her mother's mean expression.

"Señorita," said Margarita, "I once had eight children, now only three girls; the boys all died."

"What did they die of?" I asked.

"Three of them died of much fever, and the others just died when they were very young," she said. Then in a whisper: "Be careful of Domingo, your neighbor; he steals and all his children steal."

"You told me that before, Margarita," I said. "Thank you for warning me."

"Señorita," said Satero, "I have a very sore throat. Have you medicine that will cure it?"

"Yes, I have some medicine that may help if you follow my directions," I said. I gave him bicarbonate of soda, as I was sure his trouble was acidity from drinking so much *aguardiente*. After all, he was one of a group of dancers who were dancing almost every night in different houses, already preparing for next year's *fiesta*. He thanked me for the soda and told me proudly

at tomorrow the dancers would be at his house. Then they both left.

A Deer Dance being rehearsed almost in my own yard—what break! What wonderful luck! I thought.

The next morning, looking out the door at my new world, I began to take in my surroundings. A white adobe house, my neighbor's, rose terraced above mine. It had the usual high thatched roof with crossed sticks at each end, seemingly pointing to the blue sky, and on these sticks sat several vultures—the garbage-disposal unit of the village. Next to it was a sweat bath; every Indian house had one. It was about five feet high and built of mud-bricks and adobe, and large enough to hold two people. To take a bath, a fire is built within the shelter to heat the rocks. When the rocks are sufficiently hot, the fire is raked out, and water poured over the rocks to create steam. The bather sits inside, steaming himself, with a blanket over the door.

Out the other window that opened into the yard I saw a ladder leaning against my cookshack, the roof of which was to be raised so that the smoke from the fire would leave the kitchen and not get in my eyes. At the foot of the ladder stood Andrés, my water boy. On his back, slung over his red and white blouse, was a goat-skin for protection from the load of shingles that he was to carry up the ladder to Adrián. Andrés's young brother, Pablo, trundled a tiny wheelbarrow that belonged to one of Adrián's sons. His dirty costume was in rags, and his sweet shy smile made me overlook his running nose. Also by the ladder stood three sons of Adrián's, nice Indian boys dressed like Ladinos.

The half-open door that led into the street was completely crowded out by the usual curious faces of Indian passers-by. As usual I was being peppered with questions. Was I the wife or sister of the *gringo* who once lived in the house? They could not get over the fact that I was alone.

"Are you not sad and lonely?"

"When will the Señora return?"

"Do you wish to buy my eggs, or wood, or corn?"

"Do you sell cigarettes?"

"If this house isn't a *tienda*, what, then, arrived on those ten pack mules?"

"How long does it take to reach your country on foot?"

I got up and walked out of the living room and looked out the door that opened onto the porch. I could see the new out-house sticking up like a sore thumb. It had such an air of distinction and held such a prominent position in my small back yard that I named it the "Casa Contenta" after the swank hotel on Lake Atitlán. As I strolled out into the yard the superb view of the valley opened up. The overpowering ragged mountains opposite were full of mystery and beauty—on their slopes, seemingly impossible to cultivate, were little dots of houses. Down in the valley lay the plaza, church, school, and main street where the Ladinos lived. In this yard of mine was a small peach tree, some roses, purple iris, which grew wild, and a huge patch of violets, and calla lilies, all mixed with garbage and junk which had been accumulating through the years.

I was picking some violets in a trance when the peace of the morning was shattered by a fusillade of marimba music. Tequila began to bark and I went around front to see what it was. Satero's dancers had arrived with a vengeance.

There they were in the yard above—their backdrop the hills and mountains—Deer Dancers in gay costumes of velvet, gold fringe, glittering mirrors, plumed hats, but without masks, as this was just a rehearsal. Margarita looked very important in her best blouse and only gave me a fleeting glance as she bustled about busily. I was fascinated by it all; the mass of color made by the costumes of the dancers, the figures prancing to the beat of

the music, and even the tune itself. There was something very catching about it, and as I re-entered the house I found myself keeping step to it.

Adrián and Alonzo had moved inside to commence whitewashing the walls. "Adrián," I asked, "how does it happen that the dancers have costumes today? I thought they were just rented for the *fiesta*."

"They probably haven't returned them yet," said Adrián as he prepared a bucket of lime.

"How many days will they dance at Margarita's and Satero's?"

"From one to five days and nights, depending on Satero's generosity. They are his guests and he is obliged to supply them with food and *aguardiente*," answered Adrián as he lifted up the bucket and handed Alonzo one of two strange-looking brushes that looked like hearthbrooms.

I had visualized nice even white walls throughout my house, but when I saw the brushes I knew it would be impossible. They dipped them in the liquid and splashed and patted it on. Naturally it went on unevenly and all over the place. Moreover the walls and ceiling were so filthy that it turned the whitewash grey. However it gave a clean feeling.

They talked with every passer-by and only worked when they felt like it. I certainly had to learn patience in this land of *mañana!*

Two Ladino girls came in to offer their services as maids, and the workmen overheard me telling them as I sent them on their way that I wanted only an Indian. Adrián said he knew a *natural* girl who, he thought, would like to work for me, that she had worked for Ladinos, and was honest; her name was Simona, and he would ask her to come to see me. I asked him what maids were paid.

"They are paid sixty cents a month, and have two meals a day, and you must supply them with their aprons."

"You mean sixty cents a week?" I asked.

"No, sixty cents a month. That's why so few girls want to be maids."

"But how could they possibly make a living if they have to supply their blouses and skirts? Besides that, they would have other expenses. I certainly shall pay my maid more than that. I never heard anything so unfair," I said.

He looked at me but said nothing.

Later on, with my audience of curious Indians watching, I cleaned up the mess Alonzo and Adrián had made. Since Mary left, the people stopped to peer in much more often. Two white women had been formidable, but not one alone—except to the children, who looked with fear and excitement in their black eyes. If I walked near the window they screamed with terror mixed with delight and rushed down the street. I felt as if I were on exhibition, like an animal in the zoo.

That night, when it was dark, I shut and locked the shutters and doors and I built the first fire in the fireplace and cooked my supper to the tune of the marimba. It was quite a celebration; the room was warm, and the fire friendly, yet I missed Mary very much and had a strange feeling of being suspended in space and time.

The next morning it was so cold in the room that I could plainly see my breath. I was amazed at how I was adjusting myself, for here I sat in a freezing room with the doors and windows open to the winds, and though I was cold, I still could forget about it and work. About noon I was reading about the Mayans, the ancestors of these Indians, when I was so startled by the opening notes of the marimba that I almost dropped the book. From the porch I saw the dancers were at it again. I made a point

of not paying much attention to what went on above as I did not wish to give the Indians an impression that I was spying on them.

A few moments later a large batch of mail arrived. It was brought by a brother of Alonzo's, Orvidio, who was assistant in the post office. I noticed that most of the stamps were missing from the envelopes.

"Orvidio," I asked, "where are the stamps on my letters?"

"I don't know, Señorita," he said. "They probably fell off in the mail bag." He kept drawing in the dust with his big toe, and by the expression on his face I knew he was lying.

"Very well, I shall write a letter to the head of the post office at Huehuetenango, and also I shall go speak to your boss Cheppi about it."

Orvidio vanished and in ten minutes he was back with the stamps.

"Señorita, I found these on the floor of the post office. They must have fallen out of the bag."

"Orvidio, I don't like liars, and I don't like thieves. If you had told me you were collecting stamps I would have given them to you with pleasure. From now on your conduct will determine whether I shall give you my American stamps or not."

He beamed and assured me of the care he would take with my letters. After that I got my mail before anyone else.

The post and telegraph offices were in one room of the *Juzgado* and run by a Ladino called Cheppi. Each municipality had some means of communication with Huehuetenango, either by telephone or telegraph, in case of an Indian uprising. Todos Santos had a wire but no telephone. The mail came six times a week from Chiantla and was carried by an Indian runner. It took four days for the mail to come from Guatemala City. I had read in Oliver La Farge's book on Jacaltenango of one Todos Santos mail carrier who was frozen to death crossing the pass in April.

If money is being sent by mail the post office is notified in advance. If it is more than fifty dollars, a soldier is sent with the mail carrier. If large sums are sent, many soldiers guard it, as there are brigands in the mountains who often hold up travellers.

I sat in the back yard opening my mail and trying to forget the din of the music. A little card fluttered out of an envelope and landed on some old refuse near my feet. Stooping to pick it up I read:

COURTESY OF SAKS FIFTH AVENUE

This is an identification card to facilitate

Miss Maud van Cortlandt Oakes

In her Christmas shopping

The marimba went on all afternoon and I wondered how much longer I could take it. The irritating thing was that the same tune was played over and over and over. When darkness came I tried to shut it out by closing the shutters, but to no avail; the music was with me, I could not get away from it.

Even with the warmth of the fire I found that night hard to endure. Not only on account of the marimba and the drunken Indians at Satero's, but the twelve hours that lay ahead of me without light. On account of the war it was impossible, as yet, to buy gasoline or a decent kerosene lamp. I had no radio and no one to talk to but Tequila. I put a notebook between the two workman's lanterns, straining my eyes, and tried to concentrate in order to write the events of the day. It was no use; the tune had now entered my head.

The daddy longlegs swarmed down from the attic as they did each night. I wondered what attracted them; was it the heat, the light, or my aversion to them? One thing I knew was that they

were not all "daddies," for they came down in pairs and mated, their shadows from the lamp making designs on the wall. I sketched them, having nothing better to do.

Passing drunken Indians fell against my house, or relieved themselves in my yard. The din became more than I could bear and I asked myself: "What are you doing all alone in this strange village? You will never succeed in what you have come for."

In desperation I packed my ears with cotton and went to bed. Just before I put out the light I saw a family of mice on the rug near the fire—Mama, Papa, and two babies. Tequila lazily looked at the mice and at me as I blew out the lamp.

The next morning I felt cross and irritable. The cold was intense, my hands hurt and I noticed that on each finger around the nails were open cracks, probably from the hard water. The flies, swarms of them, settled on the ceiling; from there they made their aerial attacks. I had to fight them when I ate my breakfast, for I knew they carried the dysentery germ. I wondered where the DDT was that had been promised to me, and also the windows I had ordered from Huehuetenango. It gave me an unsettled feeling not to be able to unpack. Adrián and Alonzo were still working, making cupboards, putting in a mantel, and making their usual mess. Added to this was the total lack of privacy. I was always under the scrutiny of some pair of black eyes. This exasperated me and sometimes made me uneasy.

By this time I had lost all interest in the dancers above and prayed that Satero and Margarita would live up to their reputation for meanness and not dine and wine their friends, so that they would leave.

Orvidio brought me several letters as I was sunning myself in the back yard: one from the Foundation saying they had sent the DDT; others from friends, full of the life in New York and the coming Christmas holidays; and one from my mother saying that

Psyche, my poodle dog Psyche, had been run over and killed on the twentieth day of November—the day I had moved into Todos Santos with Tequila hanging in a basket from the saddle. This really upset me, and as I sat in the yard and cried, I felt alone and completely forgotten.

The following day was strangely quiet, and Adrián and Alonzo explained that Satero's generosity had given out and the dancers had moved on to another house. I would now have a little peace, thank the Lord! Further relief arrived in the person of Simona, who came with them to be interviewed. I liked her immediately. She was rather small, plump, very pretty, which she knew well, and had an air of being intelligent and good-natured.

Adrián said to me in front of her, "Señorita, Simona is a good girl as long as she does not drink. You will find her honest, clean, and willing. Her only faults are *aguardiente* and men, too many men."

Simona tossed her head and smiled, quite pleased with Adrián's recommendations. We talked over the work and what I wanted, and it was decided that Simona would come in a few days. She was to sleep at her own house and come each morning at nine o'clock, and stay until four. I would buy her two new aprons and pay her one dollar and fifty cents a month.

Margarita rushed down when she saw Simona in my house, and told me that Simona was a good girl as long as she did not drink. Satero came down after she had left and again I was advised: "Señorita, Simona is an honest girl, but she has too many men."

"How many men Simona has is not my affair," I said, "as long as she has them in her own house. But if I find her drunk in my house or entertaining men here, she will have to leave."

As soon as they left, Domingo came to call. He had a bunch of long cock feathers in his hat. I knew that this meant that he too

had once been a dancer, and with fear and trembling I asked him if the dancers were going to come to his house.

"Why, Señorita," he replied, "I am much too poor now to be a part of a dancing group."

"Domingo, I have never met your wife, Patrona. Is she sick?" I asked.

"Yes, Señorita, she has been very ill. When you and the Señora first came we thought she would die that very night, but after that she became better; soon you will see Patrona," he said.

"How many children have you and Patrona?"

"We had nine, but four died. My eldest son is Andrés who carries your water, then come Pablo and Victoria, they are *gemelos* and are about nine, and then there is Julio, and a baby a year old. Señorita, in four months there will be another baby."

"What does *gemelos* mean, Domingo?"

"It means when two babies come at the same time."

"That is wonderful," I said. "My mother was a twin."

"Señorita, is Simona going to work for you?"

"Yes, Domingo, she is."

"She will be a good maid and you can trust her with your things as long as she does not get drunk. She has too many men; but she is a good girl."

During all this conversation Julio, who must have been about five, hung onto his father's pants leg. He had the most beguiling smile, but was so shy that he always hung his head so that all I saw were two large, curious eyes, unless he raised his head and exposed his devastating smile. He also was in rags, and his nose forever running.

I offered Domingo a cigarette, which I did to every Indian who came to call. There is something wonderful about smoking. I always did this when I worked with the Navahos, and found it was a pipe of peace, a real invitation to friendship.

The next day he brought his wife, Patrona, to call. She had a lovely face, full of character and intelligence. The twins, Victoria and Pablo, and Julio came with her. Victoria had the year-old baby on her back, and she looked too frail to carry such a heavy load. Patrona spoke very broken Spanish but managed to tell me how ill she had been, and thanked me for the coffee and sugar and other things I had given them.

Domingo said: "Señorita, as soon as you moved into this house I said to Patrona that I would like to be the Señorita's *mozo*. Don Hernando wants me to be his *caporal*, but that would give me only twelve dollars a month. I would have to work for him every day, and I would have no time to work my own land. If I worked for you, Señorita, as your *mozo*, I could go to Huehuetenango whenever you asked and bring back what you wanted. If you went on trips I would go with you, and when you did not want me, I could work my own land. What do you think, Señorita?"

My instinct told me to hire him. I liked his face. His expression, although it was childish in a way, was shrewd and faithful.

"Domingo," I said, "I like you and Patrona and your family. If you work for me and are always honest, it will repay you, for I will do things for you and your family. If you are not honest—that will be the end."

"Señorita," Domingo said, with his eyes large with earnestness, "I have told my children many times: 'If you go into the house of the Señorita you must never touch anything. It belongs to the Señorita and she will not like it if you touch anything, you will never be allowed in her house again.' Have they touched anything, Señorita?"

"No, Domingo, they have been very good. And I am sure you will be a good *mozo*. You are hired."

They all left, looking delighted. I was sure Margarita would be furious when she heard.

The days flowed by like a swift stream. As I studied them I found there were cool days, reflections of mountains, sky and sun; other days dark and depressing, full of rapids and sluggish eddies; then there were full days with maybe a glimpse of what I was seeking in the transparent depths of a pool; on the surface the reflection of my image. If I looked deeply and truly, accepting the challenge of the day and receiving it with humility, my image vanished, and I saw clearly and became one with the day.

Andrés and his brother Pablo came to work for me one morning. It was grey; even the mountains were covered with mist, which soon turned to rain. The Indians said it was the new moon and that the rain would last three days, or five. The boys had their goatskins on for protection against the rain. As the leather was not properly cured, it stank. The boys' job was to clean out the dump heaps in the yard below Margarita's house. They could not imagine why, for they knew very well that as soon as my back was turned she would throw down more. I had asked her many times not to, but she continued when she thought I was not looking.

Even though the day was grey without, it was not so in the house, for Simona had arrived that morning all smiles and giggles. Her face fell when I told her that as yet I had not bought her new aprons; Domingo would buy them in a few days, as he was going to Huehuetenango to buy supplies for me.

I soon found out that Simona knew nothing about sweeping a wooden floor. She was accustomed to the earth floor that all Indian and most Ladino houses had. She put so much energy into it that she swept everything into the air. I asked Adrián to explain to her in Mam about sweeping, but even that did no good, so I illustrated, saying: "*Despacio, despacio*" (slowly), and

then the three of us laughed. Also I told her through Adrián that all dishes and utensils had to be washed in soap and boiling water, and rinsed in boiling water.

When it was time for lunch, Simona came to ask what I wished put on the table. I showed her a large piece of oilcloth gayly decorated with leaves and red cherries, which she immediately fell in love with. I showed her where the dishes and utensils were kept. Then, without any previous thought or plan, I asked if she would like to eat with me. She assented, so I told her to set two places.

As I look back on this it always amazes me. For this action of mine, without my knowing it, helped to lay the foundation of real friendship with the Indians. I remember one of my closest Indian friends saying to me a year later: "Señorita, when you asked Simona to eat with you, it made us *naturales* curious, for a Ladino would never do that. It changed our feeling for you."

A Ladino looks down on an Indian and considers a *gringo* his superior. Most Ladinos exploit the Indians and treat them worse than animals. It would honor a Ladino if a *gringo* asked him to a meal, but it would offend his dignity to have to eat with an Indian.

The greater part of the Indians that I saw in Guatemala looked conquered, downtrodden, and meek; with the exception of the Ixil Indians and the *Todosanteros*. These last endured the Ladino and his attitude because they were intelligent enough to know they had to, but they were not meek or downtrodden, for in their hearts they had great pride in their own race and only contempt and hate for the Ladino. As I grew to know the Indians I found that they did not class us with the Ladinos, but apart; for fear is connected with us. We represent an unknown quantity and they attribute to us supernatural powers. The idea that men can fly,

for instance, is only associated with us. "No Ladino could fly," they have said to me, "but *gringos*, they could."

Simona told me, while we were having lunch, that Adrián and Satero were the richest Indians in the pueblo, and from her point of view that was why they wore Ladino clothes.

I could see Simona was a great talker and from her I would learn all the gossip. She told me that when her father died, and her mother, and she was left without family, she became a maid and worked for Ladinos.

"Señorita," she said, "when a *natural* works for a Ladino she works all day, carrying water from the *pila* for the whole family and grinding the corn for *tortillas* for the family, and besides that the washing. Señorita, they never gave me sweet bread, or even just what they ate, the way you do. They gave me plenty of beans and *tortillas*, but little meat. Only sixty cents a month and my apron, but I had to buy the cotton for my *huipil*, and buy my skirt. When I had a debt at the *tienda* they would wait till it was big and then send me off to a *finca* to work it off. When the Ladinos hear that you pay me one dollar and fifty cents a month and give me *tortillas* to take home they won't like it. They will say you should not change the customs of the pueblo."

"When I think a custom is unfair, for instance sixty cents a month to a maid who works all day long, I shall change it," I said, as I got up.

As soon as Simona had cleared the table she rushed up to Margarita's to say I had asked her to sit and eat with me, at least so I guessed. She then went to Domingo's and Patrona's, and so the news spread. The Ladinos were scandalized. I was told this later, and my neighbors were pleased, for they knew it would upset the Ladinos. I noticed a difference in the attitude of the Indians from then on during my walks to the post office. Before this, only some greeted me when we passed, but now many more. They would

stop and talk a little, which they had not done before. The attitude of the *chimanes*, or medicine-priests, however, did not change. If I met one on the path he would raise his red neckerchief over his mouth. I guess they felt I contaminated the air. Adrián had told me that the most important *chimán* of the pueblo was Macario Bautista, called "El Rey" by the people. I realized at the time the importance of this bit of information, and asked him why he was called "El Rey."

"He is called 'El Rey' because his father and grandfather were called 'El Rey' before him," said Adrián. "A very important man is Tata Macario!"

My Spanish, I realized, was very weak, and my knowledge of Indian, or Mam as they called it, nil. In order to do any personal investigation at all I would have to learn to communicate with these people more freely.

One day at the post office I recognized the polite Ladino schoolmistress who had spoken with Mary and me on our first visit to Todos Santos. I asked her if she could give me Spanish lessons, and she said: "Señorita, it would give me great pleasure to instruct you in the Spanish language. Unfortunately I am unable to do so, as I am a wife and a mother as well as schoolteacher. May I be bold enough to suggest my husband, Francisco Palacios, who at present has little to do. May he come and call on you one day?"

I said yes, for I knew I would want to look him over. After all he was a Ladino, and probably our ideas would be worlds apart, and also I might feel that he would be detrimental to my real work, which was to make friends with the Indians.

The thing that pleased Simona the most was the mirror I gave her to hang in the kitchen. She spent most of her time looking at herself in it, winding colored ribbons around the strands of her hair and making a crown of the tresses. Margarita too spent a

great deal of time fixing her hair in front of the mirror, and pretending she was fond of Simona, though I sensed she was really jealous of her.

One morning Margarita and Satero butchered a steer. He had brought it from the lowlands the night before, and when it arrived it looked thin, tired, and old. A Ladino and an Indian helped kill it and skin it and cut it up. All the dogs of the neighborhood, including Tequila, watched. Margarita had come very early to borrow my knife, as she said the animal must be butchered before the sun was well up. I saw her later wielding it with great gusto as she called down to me: "Señorita, if you want meat it will be ten cents a pound including bone, if you want pure meat it will be twelve cents a pound." As it was cut up it was carried down to the market place. Margarita had a small butcher shop there, and the next day, Saturday, would be market day.

Food was quite a problem. Few people wished to sell their chickens, as they liked to keep the hens for laying and the roosters for sacrifices. It was the same with turkeys, for turkey eggs were used for *costumbre*—the Indian word for prayer, ritual, and ceremony—and the birds sold for sacrifice. The only meat was sheep, goat, and, twice a month, beef. The animals were so old and thin that when they were slaughtered the meat was impossible to eat even though it was cooked for hours. I used to drink the soup of the meat and eat the vegetables cooked in it, and now and then treat myself to tinned meat or fish. I had no oven or grill; all the cooking was done in clay pots, or a skillet. The only vegetables they had in the market were potatoes, corn, and a thing called *huisquil*. It was green, prickly, full of starch, and completely tasteless. At least four days out of the week I had a stew of meat, *huisquil*, and potatoes. How tired of it I grew! Later I used another vegetable, which Simona introduced me to. It was

grown in Todos Santos and was called *chilacayote*; it was the size and color of a watermelon, but inside more like a pumpkin. The Indians sliced it and put it in a pot with water and brown sugar and steamed it, and I thought I had never tasted anything so good. At the market one could buy eggs, oranges, limes, bananas, grenadines, and, in season, alligator pears and mangoes. My milk was powdered, my coffee I bought green at the market and Simona toasted it on a *tortilla* tray and then ground it, and it was full of flavor. Mary and Julio used now and then to send me butter in a cardboard box by mail, which was a great treat. Later I used to dispatch Domingo once or twice a month to buy vegetables in Huehuetenango, and bread, for I must say that though I grew fond of *tortillas* I missed bread. The Ladinos in Todos Santos baked a heavy sweet bread with pig fat in it. The Indians loved this, and though I ate it now and then in desperation, I always regretted it; besides it was dangerous, as it was baked in unsanitary conditions and well walked over by the flies before I ever saw it. Simona told me that a Doña Raquel, the sister of Cheppi, made a very good, clean bread, but she was away at the time, and so I got the *tortilla* habit.

At last Adrián arrived with the bed that he had made to my specifications. It had no inner springs or beauty-rest features—just wooden slats and a thin cotton mattress—but I liked it as I preferred a hard bed. Until then I had been sleeping on a camp cot. The furnishings of my room now consisted of this bed, a long table, two chairs, all roughly made and not sandpapered, a stand for the washbasin which I had made out of two packing boxes and a table for the water filter. Adrián had also built two cupboards for storage purposes. On the walls of the room I had hung large gaily colored woven Quiché cloths that had animal symbols on them; also two red silk head coverings. The large table I had

painted a warm leaf green, and the chairs dark green. The bed I planned to paint black and the cupboard grey. So the gay touches were the wall coverings, mostly red, and the blanket on my bed, which was a design of black, white, and blue.

As I was putting the finishing touches on the grey washstand there was a knock on the door. The Indians never knocked before they entered. This could be only a Ladino. I called out: "Come in!" and the door opened, and there stood a short, wiry, well-built man of about fifty with a dark, clean-shaven face and intelligent eyes. He wore a shiny black serge suit and held a whip in his hand.

"Good morning, Señorita, I am Francisco Palacios. My wife told me you wanted a Spanish instructor."

"Won't you come in, Señor?"

"With great pleasure, Señorita," he said with a half-bow, "but first may I tie my horse Pichón in your yard where I can keep my eye on him?"

"Of course," I said and watched him lead the animal around the house. As he did so he greeted Domingo and Simona, addressing them with friendliness, and they returned his greeting warmly, calling him "Don Pancho."

How unlike the other Ladinos that I had seen!

"Let us sit at this table," I suggested as I offered him a cigarette. "What did you say you called your horse?"

"Pichón," he answered; "*pichón* means pigeon. He is a good horse."

"And what name did I hear Domingo address you by?"

"Everyone calls me Don Pancho, Señorita, and it would give me great pleasure if you would so address me, as Francisco Palacios is a difficult name for a foreigner."

And then he went on to tell me that his wife with whom I had spoken was his second wife. By his first marriage he had had five

children; now they were all grown and married. The school-teacher, by her first marriage, had had four children, and now, by this marriage, they already had four more. At present he had no job as he was some kind of a nonprofessional doctor of the community. This brought in very little money, so that giving me conversation lessons would help. "Señorita, I have lived in every part of Guatemala. When I was young, after I left school, I was in the Army, and from then on many different jobs. Though my real desire had been to be a doctor, my family had no money to continue my education. So I went from one position to another, always changing from one part of the country to the other. During this time I lived among many different tribes of Indians, and of all of them I prefer the *Todosanteros*. You will find them honest, more honest than any Ladinos, intelligent, and if they like you, completely dependable. They are like children. Señorita, as you know, I am a Ladino, but I would never hire a Ladino maid for she would steal everything she could lay her hands on; an Indian would never do this. You are lucky to have Simona, she is an intelligent and honest girl, her only trouble is *aguardiente*, and men. She has had many men, but as long as she does not sleep in your house you will not be bothered by her vices. Simona worked for us once, so I know her well."

"Don Pancho, how can Simona be otherwise on sixty cents a month? She has to have extra money to buy clothes and other necessities, so she gets it from men."

"It is true, but the men don't give her much. As an example: she worked for Don Hernando who keeps the *tienda* opposite Doña Raquel. When Simona ran up a sufficient debt, he shipped her off to a coffee *finca* to work it off, as he is an agent. Señorita, you see before you a poor, humble, but honest man. I have been offered the job of agent by many a *finca*. This would have brought me in a salary every month. All I had to do was get the Indians

drunk or in debt, and sign them up. Do you think I would make money that way by living off the poor Indians?" He drew himself up with great pride and dignity. "The Indians are my friends, you can ask any one of them.

"Señorita, I have now spoken enough about myself. Would you think it inquisitive of me to ask your reasons for coming to our little village of Todos Santos?"

I told him about the Foundation that had sent me to gather material on what survived of the ancient Mayan religion among the Indians of Guatemala. He seemed to grasp what I was saying and questioned me further. Something told me I could trust this man, and I heard myself saying:

"You probably learned in school, Don Pancho, that the growth of a man from a single cell to an evolved human being is but a repetition of the evolution of all organic life."

"Yes, Señorita, I have read this."

Speaking slowly and choosing the words carefully from my limited vocabulary, I went on: "There is now a theory held by some people that the soul of man, his *ánima*, as you call it, undergoes the same kind of development. This soul can best be observed and understood by studying the soul of all mankind."

"How do you study the soul of mankind?" asked Don Pancho.

"By studying the religions. Unfortunately, pure religious forms are fast disappearing. There exist at present few areas in the world untouched by our present civilization. I hope to find here in this remote village religious customs that still exist from the Mayans, the ancestors of these Indians. You know, Don Pancho, that the Mayan was one of the greatest civilizations of the past, and there were no better astronomers or mathematicians."

Don Pancho's eyes opened wide and I wondered if they registered astonishment or disbelief in what I had just said. "Señorita, I never knew that the Mayans were great astronomers

and mathematicians. I know by their ruins, the ones I have seen in the lowlands, that they were remarkable artists and builders."

"Don Pancho, you know now why I am here, but I must ask you not to reveal what I have told you. My plan is to live here quietly, and slowly make friends with the Indians. I am now writing a daily account of everything I see and hear. If they ever knew all this, it would be the end of my getting any information from them. If anyone asks, you can say that I have come here to find peace and quiet to write a book."

"Your work will be my secret, as well as yours. You can trust me, Señorita." Rising from the table, he continued: "I will come as we said, three times a week for Spanish conversation. Señorita, it has been a pleasure to meet you. I have great respect for your country, a very intelligent country that has done much for Guatemala." He bowed deeply and strutted out.

CHAPTER SIX

Night and day at any hour, ever changing beauty everywhere, even during rain and storms. Not only the mountains were part of this beauty, but the creeping mists, the clouds at dawn and sunset, the moon and all things growing—vegetable, animal, and human; a spider web spun among the calla lilies covered with dew; the violets hiding beneath their foliage; small pink and red roses opening to the sun; the different colored mosses—from a dried corn-colored moss to an acid green growing on beige-brown thatched roofs; men's gay striped pants and women's blouses hanging on a line against the blue sky; the simple, honest expressions on Indian faces, smiles full of the love of living; women bathing nude and washing clothes in the icy stream; Indian children going to school, smiles, greetings, giving off a feeling of young trees growing; yellow *tortillas* cooking on a white lime-coated plaque; clay jars and jugs of beautiful form and color; the two crosses on the hilltop above the town with dead flower petals, candle drippings, and incense scattered about. Time for me did not exist. It was just a division of light and darkness.

The mornings that I went to the post office early I almost always saw one or two of the *chimanes* swinging their *pichachas* in front of the two crosses by the church. A *pichacha* is a clay bowl with holes in the bottom and a wire handle. The *chimán* puts burning charcoal into it and on top of this he drops copal, which is an incense and has a nice smell. As he swings the *pichacha* he intones a prayer.

Chimán Calmo, whom I met on the road almost every day, still covered his mouth whenever he passed me, and it rather annoyed me. I thought it might be amusing if I did the same thing, but I decided against it.

At lunch I asked Simona if Chimán Calmo was a good *chimán*.

"Yes, Señorita. He is a very important *chimán*."

But not as important as El Rey, I judged. I wondered if El Rey would prove to be the man I had named "The Sage."

While we were eating strawberry jello, which Simona loved, the bells tolled, a sign that someone had died. A few seconds later a wasp came into the room. Not knowing the name for wasp, I said: "What a big fly!"

"It is the spirit of the dead," said Simona, and a few minutes later: "When a person dies in a family, the family eat during the day just *tortillas* and a cup of blood."

"Fresh blood?" I asked, "or is it cooked blood like soup?"

"Fresh, from an animal that has just been killed."

"A sheep or a goat?"

"If possible a goat; if not, a sheep," said Simona.

"Every country has its customs, Simona, and they are all quite different, aren't they?"

"Yes," she replied, "for instance, which way do you lie in bed?"

When I told her with my head to the east she said: "That is right, for death lies in the west, and so we sleep with our heads to the east."

I mentally filed her information for my notebook.

Simona's table manners were excellent, with the exception of her habit of throwing bones under the table to Tequila and spitting out on the floor anything she did not like. This was an Indian custom. I could see her point of view, for it was immediately after lunch that I had told her to sweep all the rooms. So I said nothing. In fact, after a time I found myself throwing bones to Tequila. Maybe later I would spit!

As Simona cleared off the table and swept the room I sat outside on the porch surrounded by my neighbors' children. I rubbed vaseline into my hands, as they bothered me a great deal; they

looked like a charwoman's hands with their ground-in dirt, broken nails, and cracks from the cold. The only satisfaction was they were working hands. The children had lost all fear of me now and were in and out of the house all day long. I bought their friendship with candy, not with my charms, and they bought mine with their smiles, flowers, and good manners. The older school-boys, too, greeted me each day as they went to school, but not the girls. They were still terrified of me.

After my manicure I took a walk to the ruins of Cumanchúm above the town. I had not been there since Mary left. Although I would have liked to take some photographs, I thought it more discreet not to take a camera up to the sacred place. Girls were washing large leaves at the *pila* as I passed, leaves which would be used to roll tamales in. I was amazed at how many houses there were above mine; each one with its tiny window, one foot square, and wisps of smoke curling up through the thatched roofs. Beans of various colors, and bunches of herbs, were drying on blankets in front of some of the houses. Pigs, chickens, turkeys, and dogs were everywhere. Children scampered inside their houses when they saw me, as if I were a witch coming to gobble them up. Maybe their parents told them I was.

As I climbed up the hill I passed several men who were loaded down with *chilacayote*.

From the ruins, what a view! The village below, the gleaming white church, and the unfolding valley to the lowlands and Mexico. I climbed to the top of one of the small pyramids, the one that was overgrown with grass and in poor condition. It seemed to be the more holy of the two, for around it were evidences of *costumbre*. On top, in the long grass, I noticed all kinds of things rotting away—parts of a table, an old guitar, red beans, and other objects embedded in the earth. Thank God that I touched nothing, for later I learned that when a *chimán* dies all his belongings used in his

religious practices, such as his table, his chair, his bag of beans and crystals that are used for prognostication, and all medicine equipment were put on the top of this pyramid. The Indians believed, and also most of the Ladinos, that if anyone touched these things, death would come to him, and also to his family. In the old days, more often than now, the bodies of the dead were left all night on top of this pyramid. I suspected that now only the bodies of the *chimanes* were so treated.

As I was descending a small path, a short cut, I met an old man who greeted me politely by raising his hat with a clawlike hand, obviously crippled with arthritis. He had a nice, kind face and gentle and very intelligent eyes. He looked rather Chinese with his goatee. He asked my name and when he could not pronounce it, I said: "That is my name in English. In Spanish it is Matilda Robles. What is your name?"

"I am called Ponciano Ramírez, Señorita Matilda." Then we both laughed and I decided I liked him, and I think he liked me. He asked me all kinds of questions about my country, and if I was the sister of the American who used to live in my house. We walked down the hill together and along a path that went past his house. By his door, on the porch, lay a new-born goat.

"It will die of the cold if the mother doesn't come soon," he said.

"Where is the mother?" I asked.

"My grandchild has taken it to pasture but he will be back soon."

As I said good-by and thanked him for directing me, I gave him a cigarette. He kissed it, and held it up to the sky in his crippled hand and then thanked me, and I went home.

When the frames and glass were put in the windows, what a difference it made! The door which opened on the street I turned into a large window, giving plenty of light. I had to put a thin curtain over the lower half of it, though, as the children were fas-

inated by the glass, which they had never seen before, and rubbed their hands and noses over it and scratched on it and peered in. What was wonderful was to be free of flies!

But it seemed I had even more visitors than before, now that the house was finished. With the most flimsy excuses the Indians would walk in to examine the interior and me. It was considered a great compliment to ask the price of everything. One old man admired my bed and felt the blanket, and asked its price. Then he looked right at me and said: "Señorita, is it true what the people say about you?"

"What do they say?" I asked.

"That you sleep all alone in this beautiful bed."

"Yes, it is true," I said.

"*Muy triste*," he said shaking his head. "*Muy triste*" (very sad). His curiosity satisfied, he shook my hand formally and departed.

One night I heard a tap on the pane of glass. Opening the window, I saw one of the most beautiful young men I had ever seen. His hand was wrapped in a filthy cloth and covered with blood. He spoke no Spanish, but unwound the rag and said: "Machete." I could see that he had almost cut his thumb off, and motioned him to enter by the door. He took three hesitant steps into the room and then turned and fled into the night. The next evening the same thing happened, only this time he dared to enter farther into the house. The thumb was wrapped in a dirty piece of paper. I removed this and saw that it was healing, so I just wrapped it up in a new bandage and told him not to put his hand in water, and to keep it clean. I doubted if he understood, but he was pleased with the bandage and the cigarette I gave him. The next afternoon, as I was working in the yard, he passed and held up his white thumb and said: "*Limpio*" (clean), and smiled all over.

The large calla lilies had been killed by the frost and I was cutting them back. I had to punish Tequila for crushing the violet patch, where he took his sun bath stretched full length, breathing in violet fragrance and squashing the flowers flat. The peach tree amazed me. How could it bloom in December in such cold weather? Then I noticed that someone had been picking my roses. The culprits were probably Margarita or her children, who felt that what was mine was theirs.

Hearing great wails of grief mixed with song coming from a house near by, I called to Simona to ask if someone had died. "No, Señorita, they are just getting drunk together at Lencha's house," Simona answered sweetly.

When Simona's work was finished for the day, she left, and I noticed that it was not to her house she went but to Lencha's. Later I heard her voice floating on the breeze, but not in grief.

Adrián called, as his work was finished and he wished to be paid. He laughed when he heard the drunken singing, and said: "Lencha is no good, she is a bad influence for Simona. She has a big mouth like Margarita, talks too much." He pocketed his money and left. I sighed with relief, for now at last all was in order inside the house.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Just as I was finishing chopping the *ocote* for the fire that evening, I noticed that it had very suddenly grown dark. The church bells commenced ringing violently, and at the same time the sound of rattles and the beating of tin pans began. Margarita called from above, telling me to go into the house as outside it was *muy delicado*. It turned out to be an eclipse of the sun. During this time, about three hours, the bells rang and the whole village shook with rattling and beating noises. I heard later that some Indians carried candles to the church and to the crosses in front of the church and to the ruins of Cumanchúm.

The Indians feel that this period of eclipse is very delicate and dangerous, as the moon eats the sun; and that making noises, burning candles, and praying keeps the evil away.

At dawn the full moon hung in the west; a huge orb in the pale sky, outlining a hill and a few stalks of dried dead corn; so beautiful, so sad, so guilty.

Margarita came down after I had finished breakfast and before Simona came to work, to discuss the eclipse. As she did her hair before the mirror, she told me that El Rey had told the village that an eclipse was coming. Then she said: "Simona drank a great deal last night." And with a shrug of her shoulders: "But what else could you expect from a maid, Señorita?"

I could hardly believe my ears. "What do you mean, Margarita, when you say that she is only a maid?"

"I have a maid also, a very stupid girl she is, and Simona is only a maid. Not much good is Simona."

"Why, Margarita, I thought Simona was your friend. That she is a maid and works, and you are a butcher and work—what difference is there? You are both earning money to live."

Margarita tossed her head and changed the subject. "Señorita," she said, "why don't you keep your wood in the house instead of on the veranda? For several nights now I have seen the two daughters of the Ladino family down the road stealing your wood. They know it is your custom to shut your shutters when darkness comes and cook your dinner by your fire. One watched your door, and the other took the wood."

I thanked Margarita, and as soon as Simona came we moved the wood into the junk room.

"Those pigs of Ladinos," said Simona, "and she is the one you lent money to."

It was true, the mother of these two girls told me that she had no money to buy food, as her husband was away, so I lent her some, which she promised to give back. A few days later, having repaid nothing, she asked for more, and remembering the advice Mary had given me, I gave her nothing. Not one Indian so far had asked for money, but many Ladinos had. The Ladino in whose house Mary and I stayed over *fiesta* time, for example, came one day with a huge bunch of flowers, and an insincere smile written on her greedy face. After some conversation she asked me to give her ten dollars. When I refused she looked astonished and reduced the amount to five dollars. I said: "Why should I give you money? You have a husband and two grown sons who work. Your husband has several horses, he has land, and sheep. If I have five dollars to spare I shall send it to my own family."

I gave free medicine to anyone who needed it, Ladinos or Indians, though I always insisted they furnish their own bottles. Some Ladinos offered to pay, but most did not. The Indians always offered to pay, and even if I said it was a gift, they returned later with some corn or an egg. Several Indian women asked permission to pick herbs in my yard and always offered to pay, but naturally I did not accept.

As we finished stacking the wood, I said: "Christmas, the most important *fiesta* of the year in my country, is almost here."

"What do you do during this *fiesta*?" Simona asked.

I told her of how we chose the most beautiful pine tree we could find, how we decorated it with colored balls, lit candles, put a silver star at the top and presents for all beneath its branches. Her eyes were wide with interest and she asked if the tree was an offering to the gods.

"Yes," I answered, "it is an offering to God, to celebrate the birth of his Son. It is more a *fiesta* for children, as everyone is so happy that God has been kind enough to give them babies. All people celebrate and eat a big *fiesta* dinner together."

"Señorita, what do they eat?"

I described in detail what we ate, and as I did, I felt the saliva flowing around in my mouth for I had not had a tasty meal in a long time.

"Señorita, the Ladinos celebrate this *fiesta*, but not the *naturales*. Will we have a *fiesta*, and will you give me a present?"

"Yes, Simona, that is why I sent Domingo yesterday to Huehuetenango to the big market. He will arrive this afternoon, and not only will he bring food, but the two canvas chairs I ordered a month ago." I went on to explain that I had sent a note to Señor Maldonado asking him to buy certain things for me: a special kind of sweet bread they made for the Ladinos at Christmas, French bread, two small live chickens, carrots, onions, avocados, and plenty of candy for the children.

Just then some Indians came to tell me that an American man had arrived in the pueblo, and that he was to stay at the *Juzgado*. Within ten minutes he knocked at my door and introduced himself—a botanist working on a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation. So I introduced myself and told him I was also working on a grant. He was a typical American, blond, clean-shaven, with a

nice friendly smile. I was delighted to see one of my countrymen and asked how long he would be in the vicinity.

"I will be on my way the day after tomorrow," he said.

"I am sorry you won't be here longer. We might have had Christmas dinner together."

"What do you mean?" he said. "Why, tonight is Christmas Eve; tomorrow will be Christmas Day."

I laughed and said: "See what happens up here? One loses all sense of time." So I invited him to lunch the next day at noon, and he accepted with pleasure, and departed.

Domingo arrived from Huehuetenango with the chairs and goodies on his back, and, tied to the chairs, two small, flapping chickens. He could hardly wait to unpack the chairs, set them up, and try them out. I gave him extra money, and to the children candy and lots of pennies, and for Patrona's stew several bunches of onions. He was pleased with the gifts, but more pleased about the chairs. I could see he hated to move out of the one he was sitting in, so I motioned him to stay where he was. We had a smoke while he told me all the details of his journey. Domingo was a born storyteller; his eyes always glistened with delight when he spoke, and he would tell every detail with gusto. His children hung on to his pants, as well as his words, which they probably did not understand, but their eyes followed his gestures. He told me that Señor Maldonado had enclosed a small gift for me, and, sure enough, there on top of the pack I found a pork sausage, which I knew I would not eat after its many hours in the sun.

After Domingo and his children left, I put the chickens to bed, shut the windows, lit the fire, and made a chocolate dessert for Christmas dinner. I had lit the lamp and was closing the shutters when Margarita came to call so that she could sit in the new chairs. I gave her candy for her children, of which she consumed half herself. She questioned me as to where the *gringo* would sleep. When

I told her, I could see by her expression that she was disappointed to find he was staying at the *Juzgado*.

As I wished to be alone I told Margarita I was tired, and she took the hint and left. In front of the open fire I had a glass of port while I waited for the milk to heat. When this was done I made cocoa malt, and with it had toast and honey. After supper I put a big pot of water in the fire for my bath. When it was boiling, I laid a *petate*, or woven mat, in front of the fire and on this a tin wash-basin and a pail of cold water, and started washing my head and worked down, ending by standing in the basin. I laughed to myself, as it was difficult balancing on one foot while I washed the other. When my bath was finished, Tequila and I sat in front of the fire.

The next morning, as usual, I was up at five. The half-moon in the sky and all the stars said: "Merry Christmas." I lit the fire and cooked a good solid breakfast: eggs fried in a skillet over the flames, toasted French bread from Huehuetenango, and coffee; put the chickens out and with Tequila's help chased away the neighbors' cocks, which had come to fight my new, lone little rooster.

In a jug on the mantelpiece I had put small calla lilies, which survived the cold better than the larger ones. Deep purple and white wild iris from the ruins of Cumanchúm and mauve wild flowers that the children had brought me were in another jug; and in a small vase, little red and pink roses mixed with violets from the garden. The Christmas tree was a branch of fuchsia of the mountain, and looked like a decorated tree with its tiny bell-shaped red blossoms hanging down.

Simona came at nine and was thrilled with the present I gave her of fancy pink soap, as she had admired mine so often. I also gave her money, and told her we would have a Señor from my country to dinner. She was all smiles and excitement and rushed

to her mirror to do her hair again. Some Ladino children came with flowers to wish me a happy Christmas, and I gave them all candy. Poor little things, they looked frozen in their thin cotton dresses.

The botanist arrived at noon, and there were so many Indians looking in the windows and door that we forgot in our self-consciousness to give Christmas greetings to each other. We ate my favorite hen, boiled with squash, onions, potatoes, and carrots; then the chocolate dessert, and cake, coffee, and beer. The botanist stuffed himself and said it would be his last good meal in many a day. He added that he could have eaten more if there had not been so many Indians watching him. Dressed in her best, Simona waited on the table with many smiles and giggles, as she knew she was being watched by her friends at the windows.

I rather liked the botanist and was particularly interested to hear that he owned an altimeter. He told me that the altitude of Todos Santos was 8,200 feet and the pass called the Windy Place was 11,200 feet. He told me of his work and questioned me about mine. When he asked how I would go about gathering material on the religious practices of the Indians, I told him that I had learned from the Navahos in the three years I had worked with them, on a previous grant, that the most important thing for me to establish was a basis of friendship. When the Indians trusted me then things might happen. But in no way must I force myself or give them a feeling that I was curious. I must have patience and complete faith.

Later he wanted to take some pictures of the ruins, with Simona for human interest, so the three of us walked up there. She posed for him like a Powers model. There were Indians praying in front of the two crosses with offerings of flowers, and next to them stood a *chimán* swinging his *pichacha* and muttering prayers. I warned

my friend not to photograph them, and he asked me if the *costumbre* they were doing was for Christmas.

"Christmas means nothing to Indians," I explained; "they have their own gods, and their own calendar."

We started back as a smokelike mist was coming in. The pine trees through it, and the outline of the hills, were as in a Chinese landscape.

As I closed my shutters and prepared to settle in for the night, Domingo came to the door, knocking softly. I opened and asked what he wanted. He smirked and smiled and kept trying to peer past the blanket I had hung on the door, and finally succeeded in having a good look into the room. I was amused, for they all thought the Señor would spend the night with me and warm my beautiful bed. Poor Domingo, he left so disappointed when he found me alone. After him came Juan the woodman with two of his brother's children and a load of wood. He had by far the best wood of any of the Indians, for it was well-seasoned oak. As I paid him a fair price and gave him two cigarettes each time he came, he sold his wood only to me. Juan was an older man, short and powerfully built, with a good-natured face. He lived alone and the Indians used to laugh and say that Juan had never had a woman. I told him that this day was a big *fiesta* in my country so I would pay him double and give him a package of cigarettes, and the children candy. They were all delighted and came in by the fire to get warm.

"Juan," I asked, "why haven't you a woman in your house—making your *tortillas* and looking after you?"

"Señorita, in my house is peace. My brother's woman makes my *tortillas*. If I take a woman in my house, no peace, just talk, talk, talk."

"You have a good reason, but just the same I think you should have a wife and family."

When he finished his cigarette he thanked and blessed me, and left. He spoke only a few words of Spanish but we got along.

The fire hissed and the kettle sang and I was happy in my heart for I had had a nice Christmas; but I was tired and could hardly wait to get to bed. Just as I was starting to undress I heard footsteps and then a knock. Opening the door I found to my utter astonishment two middle-aged American women, with the botanist behind them. In a stilted manner he introduced them, telling me that they were schoolteachers from Guatemala City; that they had just arrived from Huehuetenango to stay one day and expected to find lodgings and beds. All the *Intendente* had to offer them was an empty and cold schoolhouse. They had only one blanket apiece and nothing but fruit to eat, so naturally I had to take them in for the night.

I'm afraid my greeting was not very cordial, and with shame I realized why. They had shattered a picture I had painted of myself for myself. Mary and Julio had asked me to Chichicastenango for Christmas and I had refused. I wanted to spend my first Christmas in Todos Santos alone. I had visualized a martyr role for myself—white woman all alone in the mountains of Guatemala for Christmas—something like that. I guess I wanted to feel sorry for myself. But no such luck. They must have thought me very ungracious and inhospitable.

As someone had watered the kerosene and neither lamp would work, I gave them hot soup by candlelight. That was all they wished, as they were tired and wanted only to get to bed. We were making up a bed—the hay mattress on the floor—when there was a loud knock at the door. Outside stood a Ladino schoolteacher and his wife, whom I knew just by sight. They greeted me with a hurried Christmas greeting and asked if I would be kind enough to lend them twenty dollars. I promptly said no, as

Don Pancho had told me plenty about them. They said: "But we have to have it."

"I do not lend money," I said, "and anyway I haven't got such a sum. Why don't you ask your friends or your family?"

"Señorita, if you won't lend us the money, maybe your two friends will," they said.

"My friends have just arrived, they are very tired and wish to go to bed, and they have no money to lend, and certainly not to strangers. Good night." And I shut the door in their faces.

What a Christmas! I had lived in Todos Santos over one month and had never seen an American or an outsider during that time. To have three Americans in the house in one day, and that day Christmas!

CHAPTER EIGHT

A few days after Christmas, as I was walking up the main street of the pueblo with my camera, I saw a very old woman carding wool. Her son, Don Raimundo, a fat, greasy man whom I instinctively distrusted, was sitting in a chair beside her. I asked his permission to take her photograph and he told me that she was over a hundred years old. She made a beautiful picture—a tiny, slim figure against the large wooden wheel, in her hand the white wool, and in her deeply lined face eyes so sunken that I could not see their expression. In fact, her face was so timeless, so devoid of expression, she seemed to be a wooden figure, part of the wheel. Her son told me that she first came to Todos Santos with her father when she was twelve years old. They were the first Ladinos in the pueblo. Don Raimundo was a widower with a son and six daughters from the ages of twelve to thirty. He ruled his daughters with a rod of iron and so far none of them had married. I knew his two older daughters; they had offered their services to me as maids. One day his youngest girl was standing with me in my yard when I said good day to a passing Indian.

“Señorita,” she had said, “you must never greet an Indian first, you must wait till he greets you.”

“In my country all people are equal, it makes no difference who greets whom first. You are no better than an Indian. We are all equal.”

She had looked at me in a baffled way, and rushed home to tell her family.

A few days after I photographed their grandmother, two of the girls came to ask if I would take a picture of the baby of their brother, his first child, who had just died that morning at the age of one month. I sympathized with them, but knowing how

dark their house was, I was afraid that with my simple equipment it would be impossible. They begged and begged, so finally I said: "I will come to your house and see. If it is possible to photograph the child by daylight, I will."

Simona, Tequila, and I went again to Don Raimundo's house. We entered the dark oblong room, out of which all the furniture had been removed except for the chairs and boxes which lined the walls. On these sat people of all ages, but more children than grownups. They were all very solemn, and at the same time curious about the *gringa* who had come to photograph the dead baby that lay dressed in its best on a huge table. Its little dark face looked healthy enough—just as if it were sleeping. Upright sticks had been nailed around three sides of the table and on these hung garlands of cut paper of brilliant hues, forming a background. At the baby's feet stood a large lighted candle. People were crying and wailing. Which of them were the parents I had no idea. Grandpa Don Raimundo was very much in evidence with his large protruding tummy, his rather good-natured unshaven face dominated by a huge hooked nose. The Indian strain in his blood was certainly dominant.

Simona and I sat for a moment while I looked the situation over. I could see that it would be impossible to photograph the baby without more light, and yet I hated to disturb it. I told this to the father, to whom I was introduced, so the table was moved to the door that led out into the garden. I set up the camera on the tripod and looked in the finder. There was Tequila standing under the table with his tail wagging happily, and no matter how I coaxed him, he refused to come out, much to my embarrassment. Finally I had to collar him and tie him to a tree in the garden.

It was a difficult picture to take. I sat on the steps and adjusted the camera to the child's face. Then I noticed that the mother

had come and was sitting at the side of the table opposite me. Pretty, young, and so sad. She was posing too for her picture. I never told her that she did not figure in the composition. After I had taken several pictures I packed up my equipment and started to leave. Don Raimundo conducted me out the door and down the street, saying: "Every man has his destiny in life and when it is the time to go, it is the time. Thank you, Señorita, we shall look forward to seeing the photographs." Then, as most Ladinos did, he urged me to come again to visit them.

As it was wash day, on our arrival at the house Simona took the soiled clothes to the river, and I went with her to wash my hair and to take photographs. We did not go to the large river where all the Ladinos go, but to one on the west side of the village. We walked upstream where the water was clear, Simona leading the way with all the laundry in a tin bowl on top of her head. Below us I could see the bridge over which passed the people and animals bound for, or from, the lowlands, each figure outlined against the mountains. It made a lovely picture, so I photographed it. I also took a picture of Simona wringing out the clothes in the river, with her gleaming, round brown arms and long, wet hair. I gave myself a shampoo with black soap the size and shape of a tennis ball, made from the fat of the pig. Then I rinsed my hair in lime juice. Simona spread the washed clothes all over the rocks to dry. An old woman who had been a friend of Simona's mother came and sat with us.

"Señorita," she said, "you must look after Simona and see that she does not drink too much. You must be a mother to her, for she has no mother."

It was strange, her saying this, for Simona had been half an hour late for her work that morning. Her excuse had been *mal de ojos* (sore eyes). I had taken one look at her face and said: "*Mal*

de ojos nothing! It is *mala* of you to have taken so much *aguardiente*."

A few minutes later she had said: "Señorita, I have a headache and it comes from using my arms so much grinding corn."

"Nonsense, you have used your arms too much holding the bottle," I had said, and then we both had a good laugh.

I told the old woman I would do what I could, but that it was really up to Simona.

When I got home I found Don Pancho awaiting me for my conversation lesson. He was always so interested in what he said, or what I said, that he never corrected me, and forgot his role of teacher. This day he told me that in Jacaltenango there used to live a Spanish priest. This priest had developed a lump on his leg which soon spread and became malignant. Don Pancho knew him quite well, and saw the leg and suspected it was cancer. The priest went to Guatemala to see the doctor, who told him that it was indeed cancer, and that he should go to the States for an operation, otherwise there would be no chance of his recovery. Not having the necessary money, he returned to Jacaltenango and his leg grew rapidly worse. Having given himself up, he decided to visit a *chimán* of the pueblo of whose healing powers he had heard glowing reports from both the Ladinos and Indians. The *chimán* examined the leg and said that he could cure it if the priest would faithfully carry out his instructions. Each day fresh poultices were made by the *chimán* and put on the leg. After forty days the cancer was arrested, and in six months cured. Don Pancho had seen the leg before and after. He was so amazed by what he saw that he went to see the *chimán* to ask if he would divulge what he had used. The *chimán* told Don Pancho that he would reveal his medicine if Don Pancho would give him the little stick that went in the mouth of a sick one and told whether he had heat or not. Don Pancho agreed and a month later presented the thermometer to the *chimán*, and

in exchange was given the following information. The *chimán* had made poultices of the pulp of a small cactus that is rare and only grows at a high altitude, and with this pulp he had mixed lime.

"Señorita," said Don Pancho, "I will show you this cactus; in fact I think Doña Raquel has one growing in her patio. She is the Señora that I told you made good bread and she returned yesterday from Huehuetenango. Señorita, I wish someone would investigate this, for I feel it would absolutely cure skin cancer. Having no doctor's license, I would have little chance of getting it before a medical board in Guatemala."

"It is a most interesting story; I would like to see the cactus. I feel the way you do, Don Pancho, and shall send your information to friends in the States, and maybe something will come of it. Don Pancho, we will not be able to have our lesson the day after tomorrow, for that will be the first day of the year, and Domingo tells me it is a *fiesta* for all the pueblo."

"Yes, Señorita, that is so, also tomorrow, the thirty-first, will be half a *fiesta*, and the pueblo will be full of excitement. The municipal officers for 1946 will be elected, and the members of the religious body appointed. On the first of January they will all take office. In the time of President Ubico the Indians were allowed to vote, and as the majority of the pueblo of Todos Santos was Indian, they naturally elected their own Mayor, called the *Alcalde Civil*. Since that time a new government came into power and appointed the Ladino mayors, called *intendentes*. Naturally they brought into the pueblo as many Ladinos as they could, buying up the land the Indians were forced to sell when they were in debt, and exploiting them when they could. This, as you can imagine, the Indians resented. Now, however, still another party is in power, and the Indians will have their vote again. The whole village is elated, Señorita, for they know without doubt that the new Mayor will be an Indian."

I then asked Don Pancho about the population and the government, and he told me that the population of Todos Santos consisted of 6,400 Indians and 150 Ladinos. The pueblo embraced 7 *aldeas* or hamlets, the largest of which was called San Martín Cuchumatán, where the greater percentage of Ladinos lived. In Todos Santos there were only about ten Ladino families. The municipality which governed the hamlets as well as the pueblo consisted of the Mayor, who was also the judge, and a Treasurer and Secretary. These last two posts were always held by Ladinos appointed from Huehuetenango. Few Indians could read and write, and these positions had to be held by men trained in accounting and typing. Besides these there were a Syndic, a Commissioner of Police, six policemen, and fifty-two other minor officials. All these were elected each year.

I thanked him for all this information, and he apologized for turning the Spanish lesson into a lecture on politics.

That evening Domingo, Simona, and Margarita asked me whom they should vote for.

"Vote for a *natural*, one of your own people. If you vote for a Ladino he will always think first of a Ladino." They agreed, and I wondered if they were just testing me to see what I would say.

The morning and afternoon of the thirty-first, in honor of the elections, the Deer Dancers danced in front of the church. A safe distance, thank God, from my house, with crowds of Indians watching. They had come in from the surrounding countryside to celebrate their new Mayor. That night there was much drinking, and dancing to the marimba.

This, as Don Pancho had told me, was not only the time of the municipal elections, about which I really didn't care, but also the period when the religious officials took office.

At dawn from my back yard I could see the *Caja Real*, the Sacred Coffer, being carried to the schoolhouse and put on the

porch. Here the new *Alcalde Rezador* or Chief Prayermaker received it. Later he would take it to his house, where he would be its guardian for the whole year. During this year, he and the First Prayermaker must remain celibate or harm might come to the village and the *Caja Real*.

Later in the morning I went down to see the *Intendente* hand over his key of office to the entering *Alcalde*. A marimba played on the porch of the *Juzgado*, and when the new Mayor received the key there was great rejoicing. From there I went to the grounds in front of the schoolhouse to have a closer look at the Sacred Coffin. There were crowds of Indians all dressed in their best, and they stared at me as much as I stared at them. The throng seemed to be divided into two groups: the first, which I did not join, surrounded the Deer Dancers and their marimba; the second, which was at a discreet distance, encircled the *Caja Real*. The crowd was so dense here, and some of the Indians were so drunk, that I hesitated to push my way through, fearing that they might resent my presence. But when Don Pancho and an Indian butcher joined forces with me we managed to find a good place where I could really see.

The *Caja Real* stood on a small table decorated with branches of cypress. It was about two feet high and three feet long; and it was simply constructed, with no carvings of any kind that I could see. So encrusted was it with the smoke of incense and candles that I could not make out from what wood it was made. In front of the box, with their backs turned to me, stood three men with candles in their hands, heads bowed in deep reverence. Don Pancho whispered to me that one was the retiring Chief Prayermaker, the other the new Chief Prayermaker, and the third was El Rey, Calendar Priest, *chimán* of the pueblo of Todos Santos. I could see that he had white hair and could hardly wait to get a look at his face, for I hoped that he might prove to be "The Sage"—the beautiful old man

I had been looking for. He was very drunk, and as he held a tremendous candle in his hand he swayed back and forth. Other Indians came with their candles to pay homage to the Sacred Coffer, and with great reverence they greeted El Rey, who blessed them by raising his right hand, or by allowing them to kiss it. The Indians did not seem to resent our watching, and as different officials joined El Rey and prayed in front of the coffer, I watched impatiently for him to turn around.

At last a procession formed of about fifteen officials. Don Pancho explained who each was. The procession was led by the new Chief Prayermaker, who was very drunk, then came the First Prayermaker carrying the *Caja Real* suspended from a leather band around his neck. He had remained sober, as he knew that he would have to carry the box and, if it fell, disaster would come to him, the whole religious body, and the people of the pueblo. After him came twelve Prayermakers, a man playing the flute and another the tambor. El Rey in great dignity brought up the rear, swaying as he walked. As they moved away from us toward the church I realized I would not see his face unless I reached the door before he did. So without a word I left Don Pancho and ran around the church, arriving at the entrance ahead of the procession and in time to have a good look at El Rey. He was almost as beautiful as the "Sage," but he had a white beard and was not the man I sought.

The marimba played all day and all night, and most of the population became very drunk. I had given Simona the day off, and late that evening I saw her reeling down the street with a vacant expression on her face.

With the new year comes the clearing of the land. Cattle are allowed to eat and trample on it, and what remains is burned. Then with wooden plows or hoes the Indians turn the earth so

that it will be ready to receive the seeds, once its winter frigidity has been melted away by the sun.

Before planting, the Indian calls in his *chimán* to purify and bless the seeds and soil and to pray to the gods to look kindly on his plot of land, so that its growth may be fruitful and unharmed by insects, storms, and lack of rain. There was a lesson in all this for me, I realized.

I had hired an Indian to spade up the earth in my garden to be. He was a willing worker and asked me what kinds of tools were used in my country—what did they use in place of a machete? I did a drawing of a hatchet to illustrate, which amused him, and when I told him that our plows were made of metal and drawn by horses or machines he was amazed.

By eleven o'clock Simona had not made her appearance, so I sent the man to find out what had become of her. He returned smiling and said: "*Chispando*"—that she was asleep in bed from too much drink. In about fifteen minutes Simona dragged herself in, looking as if she had been put through a meat grinder, hair matted and hanging down in complete disarray, dirty face, hands, and feet, *huipil* messy and skirt awry. On her face, a stupid hang-dog expression, and a bruise between her eyes. Out the window I could see Margarita peering down trying to listen to what I would say.

"Simona, do you know what you look like?" I said. "Do you know what time it is? I like you when you are clean and neat and do your work well and do not drink. But when you are like this, drinking and working badly, as you have these past few days, I do not like you. If it occurs again I shall look for another maid, and you for another place. If you want to continue working for me you must stop drinking except on *fiesta* days. You must be here promptly at nine and with your mind on your work

and not on your boy friends. I don't want you here like this, and before you come tomorrow, think well. Go home now."

During all this she kept her head down and twisted her skirt in her hands. When I finished she started to cry and said: "Señorita, I drink because I am unhappy. I miss my *nana*; I am all alone. I am sad in my heart because my people talk against me."

As she left I noticed Margarita with a triumphant expression, so I knew she had missed nothing.

The next morning Simona arrived at eight-thirty, saying: "Señorita Matilda, what have you to say to me?"

"Nothing more than what I said to you yesterday."

"I have thought. I don't want to drink, but Manuel makes me. I want to work for you, Señorita."

"As long as you behave, Simona, you may stay."

As it was Saturday I told her to get the baskets out, for we would go to market. She did not want to go, which was very unusual for her, but I insisted—and understood later.

Market day was the event of the week, not only for the Indians but also for the Ladinos. Each one dressed in his best clothes, for there would be people from the lowlands as well as the mountain regions. From the lowlands they brought sugar cane, *panela* or low-grade brown sugar, coffee, rope, cheese, oranges, bananas, limes, avocados, and whatever other fruit was in season. From Jacaltenango and Concepción came white corn, woven straw hats, and woven colored bands for women's hair. The black woven woolen material and *capixaijs* or coats came from Saloma, clay pottery from Huehuetenango. From San Juan Atitán came many Indians, usually with tropical fruits from Colotenango or San Pedro Necta. The *Todosanteros* sold only corn, potatoes, wood, eggs, turkeys, and chickens.

We bought *ocote*, potatoes, grenadines, and were just about to buy some bananas, when four of the *mayores* (officials) of the

municipality, holding in their right hands their silver-headed canes of office, came up to Simona and talked to her in Mam for about fifteen minutes. Simona became very excited, but they talked so slowly and with such dignity that she seemed to calm down.

Walking home, Simona told me that two nights ago when she had been so drunk, the man she was with had beaten her up so badly that she had complained to the *mayor*. When we reached the house she showed me bruises on her arms, legs, and chest, and the one between the eyes which I had already noticed. As we were finishing lunch, three *mayores* came and told her that Manuel, the man in question, was locked up in the *Juzgado* and that she would have to show her bruises to the *Alcalde* immediately. Simona became so excited by all this that she did everything wrong. I told her to calm down, and we both laughed. A very nice-looking girl came to go with Simona to the *Alcalde*. I was astonished when Simona introduced her as her sister. When I hired Simona she told me she was all alone in the world and had no family. Since then I had met an aunt and several cousins, and now a sister.

The next morning Simona came in all smiles, for Manuel was to be locked up for fifteen days or pay a heavy fine. All her friends came to talk with her and she was extremely proud of herself.

When Simona went home Margarita descended with her three daughters. She told me again that Simona was no good, just a servant, and to illustrate her feelings she screamed from the window for her poor little browbeaten maid and handed over the baby to her with the gestures of a queen. I laughed to myself and said to her: "Simona is a good girl when she is not drunk; she is extremely honest, and she is a servant because she is poor and has to make money. The neighbors tell me that you were once

poor, but that now you are the richest woman in Todos Santos."

"Señorita, that is not true," said Margarita. "The people talk because they have big mouths. We are poor, Señorita."

"Nonsense," I said. "I hear you have chests of silver."

I was delighted to see Satero at the door, for I was irritated by Margarita. She stood for everything I despised, and though I knew Simona was weak and probably no good, she at least had a heart and was generous. Satero joined us for a smoke and a gossip. He wanted to buy Tequila, and then my machete. This is always a compliment. The Indians only offer to buy objects they admire.

At times I did feel very far away and alone, but I loved the simple companions of my loneliness. There was a tiny lizard that lived in the outhouse and always sunned himself on the steps. To me he was a great character. So was one of my hens. She was pure white and very sophisticated. She knew the ways of the world and was bored to death with the attentions of Domingo's rooster, who was forever at her side. She always walked through my house as if she owned it. When she had the urge to lay, she would scold Simona if she were in the kitchen. It was there that I had fixed her box with hay in it. This was not only for laying eggs, but where she spent the night so the coyotes would not eat her. I became so fond of her that I knew I never could make a meal of her. She was christened the Aristocratic Hen.

One day I was cooking the rooster I had bought at Christmas time over charcoal in an oil tin. This was an event, my first grilled meat. The Aristocratic Hen entered the kitchen, went over and took a nip of the sizzling rooster, and gobbled it down with obvious pleasure. I said: "Simona, she is eating her lover."

"Señorita, many women eat their lovers," replied Simona, and we both burst into roars of laughter. We were still laughing when

Alonzo arrived to do some work. I had decided to fence in my two yards to keep out the stray pigs, dogs, and chickens. I was going to plant a vegetable garden when the time came, as vegetables were impossible to get. Also, as I was gradually increasing my flock of chickens, it would keep them from straying. I had planned to have the fence built very high on Margarita's side to keep her from dumping garbage.

As I was standing in the yard watching Alonzo nail some saplings together, El Rey passed up the trail by the house with his smoking *pichacha* in his hand and two men following him at a respectful distance. I saw one woman bow low and kiss his hand as he passed, and both Domingo's and Margarita's children stopped playing when they saw him and watched silently as he passed.

Here it was the twentieth of January. I had been in Todos Santos two months, my house was in order, and I was slowly making friends with my neighbors. But how I was going to proceed with my work, how I was going to get in touch with the religious body, I still did not know. They were an esoteric group, not only to the Ladinos and myself but to the ordinary Indians of the pueblo.

Early one morning Patrona came to see me. Her eyes were swollen from crying and her face was filled with despair and tragedy. Her two little boys clung to her skirts, and Victoria pressed close to her mother, who had the baby on her back. It was obvious that soon there would be an addition to the family. In her almost incoherent Spanish she told me that, the year before, Domingo and Andrés had almost died of a very bad fever. Domingo had been unable to work for two months, so that when they were badly in need of food and money he had gone to Señor

López, the owner of the *tienda* near the *Juzgado*. Señor López had given Domingo sixteen dollars and Domingo had signed a contract for himself and Andrés to work at a coffee *finca*. Now Señor López demanded the sum of money, or they would have to go off to the *finca*.

"Señorita, I will be left with the four youngest children, who are too little to help me. We have no money, we have no food. On account of Domingo's sickness the land has not yet been planted for corn. Señorita, who will bring me wood, and who will help me when the baby comes?" With that she cried and cried, and Victoria sobbed. I patted her and suggested our having a smoke and talking it over. As I lit our cigarettes, Domingo came in and explained more fully.

"Señorita, my debt to Señor López is sixteen dollars. If I do not pay it immediately he will put me in jail and they will ship us off to the *finca*."

"For what length of time is your contract?" I asked Domingo.

"We will have to work sixty-four days, both Andrés and myself."

"That would be about eight weeks, so each of you would be earning one dollar a week. Why, Domingo, that is completely unfair. How would you get there, and are you given food and a place to sleep?"

"Señorita, it will take us five days to walk there, and when we arrive they give us unground corn, and a shack to sleep in, that's all."

Patrona spoke up. "Señorita, who will grind their corn when they get there, and make their *tortillas*? When they have worked off their contract they will have to walk home five days, bringing no money, and probably sickness. Everyone brings back sickness from the *fincas*, Señorita." With that Patrona began to cry again.

"Señorita," said Domingo, "if you could pay my debt to Señor López, Andrés and I will work for you till we pay you back the sixteen dollars."

I had already made up my mind to pay the debt but I knew it would be poor psychology to make it seem easy.

"Domingo, sixteen dollars is a large sum of money. But don't worry. I shall see what I can do about it."

"Señorita, I will pay you back if you will pay Señor López," said Domingo.

"I shall talk to Don Pancho and see what can be arranged. You and Patrona go home and I shall let you know."

Tequila and I went to see Don Pancho. He was in his little house looking after the children while his wife was teaching school. I told him of the situation and asked him to talk to Señor López for me, as they were friends. He said he would be delighted and would let me know later when he came to give me my lesson.

"The Indians in this pueblo have difficulties, as there is not enough land to make them self-sufficient," said Don Pancho. "There is no work near by, consequently when they need extra money for food, sickness, farm implements, cotton for clothes, or other things, they have to go to one of the *finca* agents. There is no one else who lends money. The agents are always waiting to sign them up when they get in debt or sickness comes, as with Domingo. The two *tiendas* are owned by agents and besides that there are six more. So you can see, Señorita, that life is difficult for Indians like Domingo, and difficult for Ladinos like myself."

"Thank you, Don Pancho, for explaining the situation to me, and I would appreciate it if you would arrange everything for me."

"I will let you know the results when I see you later. By the

way, Señorita, have you heard from your friends about the cancer cure?"

"No, Don Pancho, none of them seem to be interested. So I guess there is nothing we can do about it."

In the late afternoon Don Pancho came and told me that López would cancel Domingo's contract if I would sign for the sixteen dollars or pay him in cash. Señor López thought me very foolish to take on Domingo's debt, for he considered Domingo no good, and I would be out the money.

"I am not thinking of Domingo," I said, "as much as I am thinking of his poor pregnant wife, the children, and especially young Andrés, who is too young to work on a *finca*."

"Señorita," said Don Pancho, "Señor López said that in the morning the native police will come to lock Domingo up, as now it is too late to cancel the papers. But later in the morning I am to go, as I represent you; then they will let Domingo out."

At six the next morning I heard the police go into Domingo's house and take him away. Margarita, of course, was outside observing all the goings-on. Later, Patrona, with tears in her eyes, brought me a gift of potatoes.

When Domingo came from the jail he came first to my house, and his gratitude was childlike and touching. He offered to sell a small plot of land by the river to help pay me the money. Naturally I told him he must hold on to it for his children. He thanked me and suggested that I keep an account in a book of the times he would work for me. He assured me that he and his family would never forget what a good friend I had been to them.

So on the morrow Domingo and Andrés came to work off the debt. In fact the whole family came. They dug up rocks in the garden and turned over the earth so I could plant. They were curious about the rows I marked with string, the envelopes with the pictures on them, and the actual seed itself. Domingo could

not understand why I did not plant all the seeds at once the way he did corn, beans, and squash. He did not understand crop rotation. When he went home that evening he took with him all the empty seed envelopes with their colored pictures, to decorate his house.

CHAPTER NINE

The times I felt most alone were when I experienced great beauty and wished to share it with someone; or when I was sick. So the day I came down with an attack of dysentery was a bad day. After twenty-four hours I became worried, as no medicine gave me relief. What with cramps, fever, and the continual walks between the house and outhouse all day and night, I decided to take off for Huehuetenango.

At six o'clock on the morning of the third day, I pulled myself weakly onto Pichón, whom I had rented from Don Pancho, and Andrés and Domingo carried my baggage. Both of them knew what was wrong with me, so as I rode along Domingo entertained me with tales of Indians he had known who had died of dysentery. Our trip was through damp clouds till we reached the top of the pass. The taxi met us at Paquix and I was delighted that there had been no hitch, as I felt very weak and had had to dismount many times. Down through the clouds we went, plumbing their depths as we followed the well-made mountain road till we hit the floor of the cloud sea and the distant valley suddenly lay beneath us with Huehuetenango bathed in sunlight.

Señor Maldonado, with a plaid wool cap on his head and a welcoming smile, greeted me.

"Señorita," he said, "the water is hot, especially heated for you, for I know in Todos Santos you have none of the comforts of a hotel." I told him his hotel was the Ritz to me, though I never let on that, before, it had seemed quite second rate. A hot shower, my first real bath in two months, was a sensuous delight; after that some hot soup and then I was ready to call on the doctor. I was shown into the salon by mistake, and there I sat for half an hour, but I would not have missed it for anything. It was a

large oblong room on one side of which were three French windows, with white curtains tied back with large baby-blue bows. Four pairs of chairs stood between and beside the windows, and between each pair was a high white china spittoon with a floral design. On the other walls hung a variety of things. First, two large decorated china plates depicting the seaside, each with a cut-out photo of a woman in a bathing suit glued onto it so that her fanny and legs were firmly placed on the sand and her unglued torso and head stuck out from the plate. Then there were four life-sized plaster heads with the back halves cut off so that the other halves hung flat against the wall; two were of American Indians, feathers and all, and the other two of a white woman painted in vivid colors. Five large portrait photos hung in heavy gilt frames; and then came the essence of surrealism: a home-made painting of a queen sitting on a throne which was placed at the end of a carpet of flowers and painted with a decided Persian influence. It was entitled, in large gilt letters: "Her Majesty Elena I." The queen's face was a glued-on photo, the same face as that of the bathing beauty, the two plaster heads, and two of the large portraits. Later I learned that these were all pictures of the doctor's wife.

From the salon I was finally ushered into a dirty waiting room and from there into a dark, dingy office. If I had been intelligent I would have left immediately. I told the doctor my troubles and that I had had amoebic dysentery eight months before and it had taken me two months to get over it; that I was worried that it might be a recurrence and wished a laboratory examination. He said that would not be possible in Huehuetenango, as they did not have even a microscope; that it would not be necessary anyway, as he would give me three injections of emetine over a period of three days, and that I would be cured.

After three days I felt no better, so I reserved a place on a bus

bound for Quezaltenango and Guatemala City, one that would leave at 4 A.M.

It was pouring rain and dark when I took my seat and wrapped myself in a blanket. We were only four in the rickety, ancient station wagon. In front sat the chauffeur and his young assistant. Next to me sat a man with his head completely swathed in a bandage; only his eyes showed, and there was an opening for his mouth, and on top of it all a hat was perched. The chauffeur stalled the car twice in starting and with great difficulty got it going. My first thought was that he did not know the car. Every time he would begin to shift the gears we veered toward the edge of the road only to be pulled back on by the assistant driver—for the chauffeur's eyes were glued to the gear shift. To my horror, I realized the man was just learning to drive—and on one of the worst mountain roads in Guatemala. Although my companion slept like a log, I never relaxed for an instant till we reached the first stop for coffee.

A flimsy shack perched on the side of the road, the room inside decorated with cut colored paper. Before a charcoal fire a large blowzy woman sat stirring something in a pot, her hair hanging down in greasy strands over her face, flushed from the heat of the fire. The fat of her body oozed out and over the cinched places. Bold black eyes, gruff hoarse voice, her familiarity with the men and theirs with her, gave me the impression that she had been a madam and with her savings had bought this place.

The swathed man opened the bandage enough to pour down a bottle of *aguardiente*. The chauffeur and his assistant, to my horror, did likewise. On top of this, hot coffee, and off we started for the pass above, which because of the rain and snow had been impassable during the night. Chauffeured by a completely inexperienced and well-liquored man, the rest of the trip was a nightmare of slithering around corners in deep and icy mud on the

edges of precipices. Every hour or so the three would get out of the car and come back radiating good will and *aguardiente* fumes. I gave myself into the hands of the gods and tried to relax. The liquor added to the chauffeur's confidence and he told me with great pride that this was his first trip. The assistant moved into the seat with Bandages and myself and immediately fell asleep, and the two of them kept bumping into me as we jogged over the rough road. The trip lasted six hours, although it seemed double the time to me. In Quezaltenango I had a cup of hot tea with brandy in it to give me the necessary strength to continue the journey. This time I luckily found a seat in a tour car, which felt as safe as a perambulator, and by that evening we were in Guatemala City.

The next morning I saw the doctor, who was a Guatemalan. When I told him that Huehuetenango had no microscope he said: "Señorita, if they had one they would not know which end to look through."

Guatemala was on the verge of another revolution, and everyone prepared to dive into the cellar till it subsided. This was a frequent occurrence, so I was not very much alarmed. The city had great charm and was clean, and the people were very polite. One encountered charming things like the morning milking of flocks of goats two blocks from the main avenue, or the bullock carts in the heart of the city. The market was a delight with its flowers, fruit, and vegetables. Beautiful Indian women in their colorful native costumes walked through the streets with huge baskets on their heads filled with a variety of flowers and vegetables.

I indulged myself with a room and bath and, as I began to feel better, good food and a little diversion. Then I was ready to return to my mountain home. I bought dysentery medicine with the prescription the doctor had given me, and medicine for Tequila, who had had several fits just before I left. I also

bought plenty of presents for my Indian neighbors. From the Kodak store I collected the photographs I had mailed from Todos Santos to be developed, the many portraits I had taken at the request of my neighbors and their friends. The picture of the dead baby had turned out well.

The welcome home made me feel warm inside. All my neighbors came to tell me how sad the house had been without me and how they had missed me. They came bringing gifts of flowers, or an egg, or cooked squash. In return I had something for each one.

Simona told me that she had been sick in bed for five days and had been unable to water my garden. Margarita had a different story. She said that Simona had been on a binge.

As I sat by the fire that night reading by the gasoline lamp I had bought in Guatemala City, I felt extremely happy and realized that it was for several reasons. I really felt at home and a part of the community. Furthermore, living alone in this place made me very conscious of what went on in the world of nature. I had become part of it; I had forgotten myself. My life was run not by radios, alarm clocks, and engagement books but by nature's cycles: the dawn, the day, and the night; the weather, good and bad. I could see that the whole cycle of growth, of death and rebirth, would influence me as it did those about me. I now could comprehend clearly why primitive man was a nature worshipper; why the foundations of all ancient religions rested on nature and man's place in it.

Our twentieth-century material world is far removed from nature. We are so egotistical, so wrapped up in our petty lives, run by gadgets and inventions, and with mediocre entertainment as the only relaxation, that we have lost touch with the great life-giving forces. With these high thoughts in mind I got myself

quickly into my cotton pajamas and went to bed, with Tequila curled contentedly on a rug by the fire.

The next morning I caught Margarita throwing a lot of filthy garbage on my side of the fence. I offered her one of my kerosene lanterns which she had admired, if she and her maid would stop throwing their dirt in my yard. She agreed with pleasure, knowing she had got the best of the bargain.

After I had been home a few days, Basilia, a friend of Simona's and Margarita's, came to see me with her baby, having heard that I was kind and helped people. She had a lovely face with a classical profile, although her hairline was too low. She was thin and sickly. Her little boy, a year and a half old, looked very ill and I found he had a fever of 104. She told me that she had only just returned from working two months on a *finca*. She had left before her time was up, because the baby became so ill and she had felt so weak. The baby had not been able to retain his food for over a month, and she felt sick all over with headaches, chills, and stomach-ache. It was obvious that she had malaria, and this naturally would upset her milk. I gave the baby some paregoric and a little later gave them both oatmeal. They had just finished eating when the native police arrived to take her to jail as she had not finished her time at the *finca*. I told the police that if they put her in the freezing jail the baby would certainly die. They told me they had their orders and marched her off. I sent Simona after her to find out who the agent was who demanded her arrest. She returned in a few minutes to say that it was the lover of the woman who owned my house. I had seen him lounging around, tall, lanky, with a no-good face, never working, just waiting to catch some Indian to send off to a *finca* and collect the agent's fee.

I went with Simona to see the Mayor. He was not there, so I

spoke to the Secretary, who was a Ladino, and asked about the girl's case.

"Señorita," he said, "she owes \$4.25 that has not been worked off at the *finca*, plus one dollar bus fare from Quezaltenango to Huehuetenango, as she was too sick to walk. She has eight days to pay the agent and if she does not find the money by that time she will be sent back to the *finca*. In the meantime, we will keep her in the jail."

"I will be responsible for her," I said, "and you must let her out immediately or you will have a dead baby on your hands."

The Secretary himself had a little boy, and as I had once given him medicine for his baby he could hardly refuse my request. "If you will sign a paper that you will be responsible for the girl, I will let her out, Señorita," he said.

So I signed the paper and took the girl back to the house, and between Simona and Basilia I learned her story. About six years before, she had been the mistress of Cheppi, the Ladino telegraph operator, and by him she had a son named Octavio. They had been very happy together for two years, he had loved his son very much and been kind to Basilia. One day without warning he brought from Huehuetenango a Ladino woman, his mother's maid, and took her for his wife—a wife in name only, as the Ladinos in Todos Santos rarely married their women. He told Basilia it would make no difference between them; that he would continue to support her and his son and maintain two establishments. Basilia took to going around with Simona and drinking a great deal, and also flirting. She soon left Cheppi, leaving her son with him and the Ladino wife. She then became the mistress of Señor López's son, but he lost interest when she became pregnant and gave her nothing when her time came, and nothing for his son when he was born. Basilia then took a job as maid. She only earned sixty cents a month and had great difficulty supporting

the baby and herself. The father of the child would give her nothing, so she had to sign a contract to get money. At the end of a year the Ladino family she worked for sent her to the *finca* to work off her debt. Before she left, she went to the father of her child, hoping he might help her, but all he gave her was a dollar. Basilia walked the whole way to the *finca* with the baby on her back, and it took her five days.

"Señorita," she said, "my baby was fat, with red cheeks, when I went to the *finca*, and look at him now."

I was shocked by her story.

"You see, Señorita," said Simona, "why I never have anything to do with Ladinos. It is better so. All I would get would be a cigarette."

Basilia told me she had no money and no clothes, not even a blanket, but did have friends she could stay with. I told her she could eat at my house, and that I wanted her to bring the baby three times a day for oatmeal and milk. I gave her a blanket, and some atabrine to take over a period of ten days for her malaria. Later, when the baby was stronger, we would give it worm medicine.

Eight days later I went with Basilia to the *Alcalde* to pay her fine. Beforehand I told her that I would pay the \$4.25; that I was not lending it to her; it was a gift. But I said that the one dollar would have to be paid by her family and friends—each one to contribute ten cents. This decision I came to after much thought. It would have been much simpler to pay the whole thing, but I knew the Indians would have more respect for me if I made them also have a feeling of responsibility in helping her.

The Indian *Alcalde* was more than polite and fixed everything up for us. When the papers were signed, a stamp that cost five cents had to be put on the paper. The Ladino agent said: "The

Señorita must pay for the stamp." The *Alcalde* said: "Not at all. It is you who pay for the stamp." I was rather amused, and Basilia was delighted. Gratitude shone from her lovely face, and her carriage was erect and full of pride as we walked out of the municipal building. She told me that by now her sickness was almost gone and the baby was much better.

Simona told me that the Lladinos all thought I was quite mad. Who had ever heard of paying the debt of an Indian, and someone you did not know? They asked Simona why I paid her one dollar and fifty cents when all she did was to work from nine to four. I told her not to tell them that I had given her a skirt as a present and sold a *huipil* for her to some friends in Guatemala City. That really would have shocked them.

The day that Chimán Calmo came to call on me was in a way a red-letter day. Don Pancho and I had finished our conversation hour and I had taken him into the yard to show him the vegetable garden; a few little green shoots were just beginning to appear. As we were standing talking, I saw Chimán Calmo walking down the trail, and to my surprise he stopped at my gate and asked if he could enter. He had recently taken to greeting me when we met, but this time he didn't raise his handkerchief over his mouth. He shook hands and talked with us, though Don Pancho carried on most of the conversation. I felt the old *chimán* giving me the once-over, and I reciprocated. He was about seventy years old, tall, proud, and with an interesting face. He had a high forehead, aquiline nose, a grey beard, and powerful eyes that were too close together. I went to shut the gate, and later Don Pancho told me that the *chimán* had said to him that he wished to speak to me alone. When I rejoined them he asked: "Señorita, may I enter your house?"

We went in and he examined the room carefully, admiring the symbolic Quiché cloths I had on the wall, and also my blanket. He walked into the other room, where I stored wood, in fact he looked everywhere, and I wondered if he was looking to see if I had any Catholic saints about. We sat down and smoked.

"Señorita," he said, "I like very much the way you have arranged the house. My name is Domingo Calmo."

"I know your name," I said. "Your people tell me that you are a man who knows all."

He was pleased and asked my name, then told me that he

could not hear very well in his left ear. Did I have any medicine that would help his hearing?

"I have no medicine but I have olive oil from the olive tree. If you have wax in your ear it will help to remove it."

I gave him some oil in a small bottle, and some cotton, and showed him how to use it. He thanked me, kissed the bottle, held it up giving thanks to God, and said he would return it. This was all done with great formality of manner.

"My house, Señorita, is near by, every day I walk to the *Convento*. (This was where the religious group had its headquarters.) Often I pass by your house, and I would like now and then to stop and have a friendly talk."

"It would be a great pleasure to me," I said, and my heart gave an extra beat. Instead of shaking hands he put his hand on my shoulder and I did likewise, as this is a friendly form of greeting among the Indians.

After he left I lit another cigarette with trembling hands and thought: "Things never happen the way one expects!" Here I had been worrying about how to get in touch with a *chimán*, and now a *chimán* had come to me. I could see that Simona too was impressed, for other reasons, and more so when I told her he wanted medicine for his ear. I also noticed after the *chimán* left that Margarita had, as usual, observed everything.

On my way through Huehuetenango I had bought \$11.50 worth of water pipe, for I saw no reason why I could not pipe water from the public *pila* above to a *pila* in my yard, as water was most necessary to my vegetable garden. Alonzo had told me it was possible if I could get permission from Margarita and Satero for the pipe to cross their land, and also permission from the *Alcalde*.

The pipe had arrived, carried on the shoulders of four men. Satero had given permission, as I had told him his family could

use my *pila*. So the decision rested with the *Alcalde* and the municipality. They were a most formal group as they walked into my yard, each with his silver-headed cane of office in one hand. They doffed their hats most politely, we all shook hands, and I offered them cigarettes. They examined the lay of the land and gave permission if I would pay the \$11 water tax. I agreed and thanked them and they departed.

During all this Margarita hung conspicuously over the fence, not so much to see as to be seen, especially by the *Alcalde*, who, Simona thought, was her lover.

The men were no sooner out of sight than Simona and Margarita had the most dreadful fight and almost came to blows. They screamed and yelled insults at each other, while all the neighbors listened with delight and passers-by stopped. Most of it was in Mam, but now and then they would lapse into Spanish or a mixture of both. I could make out that Margarita was accusing Simona of not looking after my house in my absence, and of sleeping with different men in my kitchen. There was one insult that they screamed at each other over and over, much to the delight of the audience. Finally from sheer exhaustion they stopped. Later in the afternoon Simona told me that Margarita had reported her to the *Alcalde*, and as the *Alcalde* had a weakness for Margarita, Simona wouldn't stand a chance. I went to see Margarita and told her that words between women were not important enough to bother the *Alcalde* with.

"Señorita," said Margarita, "Simona called me vile names. The most insulting was that my private parts were my face, the openings, my nose and mouth." She told me this in front of several Indians, acting it out not only once, but several times, so that I could not possibly miss the meaning. Much to her surprise I just burst out laughing. I could not control myself, and we all laughed together.

After this I went to the *Juzgado* to pay the water tax. The *Alcalde* greeted me like a friend and conducted me himself to the Treasurer's office instead of sending me with a *mayor*. This courtesy, I think, was due to the fact that he realized I was trying to help his people, not to cheat them the way the Ladinos do.

The next morning the native police came for Simona and she was fined \$1.50 for insulting Margarita. Simona told me that Margarita was a bitch, and that she would never speak to her again.

Margarita was not only a troublemaker among her friends but also created friction in her own family. Simona told me that she had talked so violently to her husband that he had called in a *chimán*. The *chimán* came five mornings in succession. I saw him praying in Margarita's and Satero's yard. First he faced the east, prayed and swung his *pichacha* so that clouds of incense and its wonderful smell filled the air; then he prayed to the south, the north, the west. Then he faced the house itself and ended by entering the door. Apparently the unhappy couple were sitting inside. Here he prayed and swung the *pichacha* so that clouds of incense purified the occupants and the house itself. I thought of some of my married friends on Long Island and how they might profit by this unique treatment.

After I had been in Todos Santos three months I realized that the Indians were beginning to accept and trust me. I knew that I must not pry into their religious affairs or even ask questions unless they came into the conversation naturally, for any action on my part that seemed suspicious would destroy the confidence I was slowly building up. Basically their whole upbringing had been one of distrust and suspicion of strangers. Since my return from Guatemala City I had been besieged by sick people who came to me for help, so now I felt I had graduated from the role of the town photographer to that of town doctor. I believed that

much would come to me in just daily living. My broken Spanish and the fact that I was a woman were assets, as was the fact that my house was open to the Indians and that I treated them as equals; but I needed someone to ask the questions which in my position I was unable to ask.

When Don Pancho came for my lesson and we were seated and smoking, I explained to him my position and said: "Don Pancho, you are the only Ladino in the pueblo who shares my views and, more than that, the only Ladino the Indians trust and like. Maybe it's because you give them pills and in their eyes you are almost a *chimán*, or because you are friendly to them. Anyway, I need your help and wonder if you would be interested in asking questions for me. If you are, I will tell you what I want to know, such as the days of their month, the comparative *costumbres* of the Quiché and Jacaltenango Indians. But you must never let any Ladino or Indian know that you are working for me, and when you come here to discuss your work, to the outsider you are just giving me Spanish lessons. I feel you could do this very well and at the same time be earning money for your family."

"Señorita, you are most amiable to make such a suggestion. With the greatest of interest I shall work for you. It will be kept secret as you suggest, only naturally I shall tell my wife. She will be pleased, as it will give me a chance, as you say, to earn some extra money."

"Yes, you may tell your wife, for she does not seem to be the type who would gossip."

"At one time in my life, Señorita, I was a detective, so I am very good at asking questions without the person knowing he is being questioned. Thank you again, Señorita, for your thought of me. I accept with the greatest of pleasure."

So Don Pancho became my informant—and an excellent one. The first information that he gathered was that the religious body

was called the "Guardians of the *Caja Real*" and consisted of the *Alcalde Rezador*, or Chief Prayermaker, and thirteen other *rezadores*, an interpreter, four *mayores*, and the Calendar Priest, El Rey. Besides these were men who looked after the church building. Although the church was a Catholic church, it was only used for Christian worship when the Catholic priest came to Todos Santos a few times a year. Otherwise the church was used by the religious body for their pagan *costumbres*. All officials were elected each year with the exception of El Rey. This was a life office, one of lineal descent. The Chief and First Prayermakers had to swear to celibacy during their year of office. I found out later that El Rey was called, in Mam, *Chimán Nam*, which meant the *chimán* of the pueblo, and that he was the unrecognized head of Todos Santos and had the final word in all matters religious and civil. His decisions were made by prognostication, the throwing of red beans, which the Indians called *mixes*, and the counting of them in relation to the calendar.

By this time I knew the calendar well and realized that each of the twenty days of the month was a god. Commencing with *K'mané* or *Ee*, the most important gods were every fifth day; these were called *Alcaldes del Mundo*, and it was on these days that the religious body went to church and Cumanchúm to make *costumbre*. As there were eighteen months of twenty days, making a total of three hundred and sixty days, they added on five days at the end of the year, as did their ancestors, the Mayans, making the three hundred and sixty-five days. These five days were considered evil. Each *alcalde* took his turn at commencing the year. That is why they were called *Alcaldes del Mundo* and also Year Bearers, for they carried the year. The *alcalde* that began the year was the chief god for that year.

I had figured out that their new year would soon be upon us. So before Don Pancho left I told him his next assignment would

be to ask around and find out if and how they would celebrate their new year.

Shortly thereafter Tequila had another fit. It was almost a daily occurrence now, and the medicine I had bought for him in Guatemala City did little good. It was a pitiful sight, and horrible, too, for his yellow coyote eyes took on a wild look before he fell, and he looked like a mad dog. My neighbors did not look at poor Tequila but at the new *pila* with water running into it. Alonzo had made one of wood for me, like a small tank. It stood on legs. Next to it was a washboard box for Simona to do the laundry in. Simona was so proud of everything that she illustrated to one and all how the faucet worked and her washboard. The children were fascinated and I could see that they would always be in the yard turning the water on and off.

Tequila's increasing attacks really worried me and I felt sad that I could do nothing to help the poor dog. I talked the matter over with my neighbors and they thought a *chimán* might be able to help him, so one day Simona and I started off for Chimán Pascual Pablo's with Tequila. Pascual Pablo was Margarita's *chimán*.

On our way we passed men seeding corn. They carried the corn in bags that hung from their waists in front. They made a hole in the earth with their planting sticks and dropped into it three or four seeds and covered it over with earth. Crossing the main route we saw many teams of oxen return from tilling the soil, and mules heavily laden with last year's corn going to the market at Huehuetenango. The *chimán's* house was a short distance outside the pueblo, situated on a high bluff that looked down on part of the village and into the valley toward Mexico. As we approached the house, Tequila had another fit. Simona and I had to carry him the rest of the way. The *chimán* was not there, but his wife was, a very nice old lady with a strong face and a glint of humor in her eyes. She asked Simona what we

wished and Simona talked to her in Mam. The old woman asked us to wait on a bench outside the flimsy wooden one-room shack. I could look within through the wide cracks of the wall of the house. A fire was going between three stones; on top of it was laid the flat clay *tortilla* platter. The colors of *tortilla* making are very beautiful—round clay platter white with lime, pale yellow *tortillas* flipped over by a dark expert hand, pale yellow edges that soon darken to join the others stacked in the basket. High up over the fire hung ears of corn and meat to dry. We sat and waited while the wind blew, watched a bluejay hopping about on an apple tree in full bloom. Four little puppies played near by. The mother dog growled at Tequila, who was unable to move. The old man's pick and hoe leaned against the house next to me, the wooden handles gleaming with a luster that comes only with much use. Facing us was the usual sweat bath, in front of which was a small family of turkeys—white turkeys with black-tipped tail feathers.

After half an hour the old man arrived with a sack of corn slung on his back. He was tall, thin, and very old, with a long face and a beautiful Mayan nose. He greeted us and asked why we were there. Simona talked to him and I heard her mention my name and Tequila's. He spoke Spanish to me quite fluently and told me that he might be able to help Tequila, but we would have to wait till he brewed the medicine. He entered his shack and I could see him take out his medicine bag, which was made of deer-skin. He dumped the contents onto the earth floor; herbs, stones, lumps of crystal, and four sticks about a foot long—rather like spindles of prayer sticks. Then he took herbs and put them in a pot and while the medicine brewed he ate his *tortillas* and meat, asking Simona questions about me between mouthfuls.

When the medicine cooled he put it in a bottle. We tied Tequila's legs and while I held a stick in his mouth to keep it

open the *chimán* poured the liquid down. We waited a while to watch the effect. I commented on his magnificent view, and he told me he had sold the place, for he and his wife were both old and soon would die, and they might as well eat up the money.

"Haven't you any children to leave your house to?" I asked.

"My children are all married, with their children, and they all have houses and land," he said.

After a short time we left. The fee was ten cents. Our return journey was most difficult, as we had to carry Tequila and he was heavy.

Margarita came down to greet us and I told her we had been to the Chimán Pascual Pablo. I happened to mention to her what an old man the *chimán* was.

"Pascual is not such an old man, Señorita," she said. "He is in his seventies and the only *chimán* who dresses in Ladino clothes."

"But this man was not in Ladino clothes and he was at least eighty or more," and I explained where his house was.

"Señorita! Simona took you to her *chimán*, and not to Pascual. She is a wicked girl, for Pascual is the better *chimán*, and she did it because she did not want you to go to my *chimán*."

Simona later confessed that she had taken me to her *chimán* as she thought he cured animals better than Pascual.

It was now a week into February. The sun rose each morning about six, lighting the clouds which encompassed the whole upper part of the ridge of mountains opposite. Slowly they would move away, uncurtaining the sheer, ragged, dominating sweep. It thrilled me and made me feel insignificant and humble.

There were always the morning sounds of my neighbors. Domingo chopping wood for the fire that would heat his *tortillas* and coffee; padding feet around my *pila*; water running into clay jars; the cackle of chickens allowed out; the bark of dogs; and

the hum of energy from all the houses. It was nice music, a friendly hum, and I always revelled in it.

Each morning now I treated the eyes of all of Domingo's children, for they had pink-eye. It was difficult to stop infection; Patrona used the same rag for each of them and soon they all had it. To explain sanitation to the Indians seemed an impossible task, for they hadn't the faintest idea what I was talking about. Their spitting was so natural to them that they all spat on the wooden floor of my room though I asked them not to. At first I was horrified for it was the room I lived, worked, and slept in, but after a while I took it for granted. I also found it very difficult to train Simona to wash the dishes in boiling water and to wipe them with a clean cloth. Twice I saw her pick up a dish towel she had dropped on the earth floor of the kitchen where she spat, and where the dogs and chickens roamed, and then she used it to dry the dishes. When I scolded her she looked at me with wide eyes, and lurking in their depths was the suspicion that I was crazy.

When the children discovered that they received a gift of candy every time they brought flowers, it gave their life a real purpose and my room was almost overstocked. My friend Manuel, age five, brought me a bunch of weeds with great anticipation. He was the cutest, filthiest child I ever saw. His mother, Cayetana, one of the beauties of the pueblo, was without a husband and very poor, so poor that Manuel had no pants, just a woven cotton blouse that came below his spanker. He was a little devil but manly, with the most erect little figure. His head had been shaven as it was full of lice, and was a mass of scabs. I had dressed an infected foot of his one day while he ate his lemon drops, and after this he came daily to show me every little scratch on his body. He would stand and look at me with a bewitching smile, his tummy, probably full of worms, protruding so much that his

shirt stuck right out in front. One day I said: "Manuel, you are not a baby, you are a man." "Sí," he said (it was the only Spanish word he knew) and with that he pulled up his shirt and showed me proudly that he was very much a man.

I became very fond of the Indians. The older ones had accepted me, and now the children had too, though when I went into other parts of the pueblo they still ran from me in great fear.

The weather was wonderful. The tender green shoots of corn pushing up out of the earth gave me a happy feeling. All the pueblo's turkeys and chickens were tied so that they would not eat the new growth, and the dogs that might trample the young crop were kept indoors or leashed. Poor Tequila did not have to be tied up, as he was too weak to wander.

When a week had passed and he had not had another attack I thought maybe the *chimán* had cured him, but I had no sooner indulged in this optimistic thought than he had a fit, and I gave up all hope of his being cured.

At the lunch table, one day, Simona announced with a full mouth that she had a new boy friend called Juan and that he was married, with three children. Juan was urging her to leave me and live in his house.

"But Simona, hasn't Juan a wife?" I asked.

"Yes, Señorita, but if Juan wants me in his house and his wife doesn't like it, she can leave," said Simona with a toss of her pretty head.

"But what about the children?"

"Oh, they can go with her or stay," she said, giving Tequila a bone. "Juan has a mother. She could look after the children. What do you think I had better do, Señorita?"

"If you want to leave me, Simona, that's your affair, but I certainly would not drive Juan's wife out of her house or away from her children. If you do you will regret it."

As we were talking we heard a man call through the window in the storeroom; I sent Simona to find out what he wanted.

“Señorita, he wants to know if you will find something that he has lost.”

I went to the window and saw a nice-looking older man whom I had never seen before. We shook hands through the window and I told him I would like to help but that I did not have the power of sight. He was most insistent, saying the people had told him that I had the power to heal and to see, and that he was sure I could find his lost sheep. He said he had come all the way from Concepción on foot (about half a day's journey or more) and that he was willing to pay me my fee. I asked him to come in and told Simona to give him coffee and *tortillas*. When he had finished he had a smoke and then, through Simona, as he spoke little Spanish, I told him that I had the power to heal, but not to see. He shook his head saying that people had told him that I had found things for them. We ended the conversation by my ordering corn from him which he would bring the next market day.

It was good to hear from a stranger that the people thought I had the power to see and to heal. This might help me in my work, for the Indians feel that the gifts of healing and seeing were given by the gods.

Early the next morning Domingo came to tell me that Patrona had given birth to a baby boy at midnight with the aid of her sister Rosa, who was a midwife. He was beaming and smiling and so were all the children, who had come with him. I gave them cigarettes and told Domingo to come over in the evening and we would drink to the happiness of the new arrival, that this was a custom of my country.

About noon, when Simona and I were about to have lunch, I looked out the window and saw Patrona wrapped in a blanket

walking unaided into the sweat bath, the midwife following her. I asked Simona if Patrona was going to have a bath.

"Yes, Señorita," said Simona, "it is the custom that all women take a bath within half a day after the baby has been born, and the baby is washed with warm water. Patrona will have to take a sweat bath every other day for twenty days. It is our custom."

That evening Domingo came over with all the children and the midwife Rosa. She was a wonderful soul, old and wrinkled but good-humored and intelligent. I got out a bottle of *aguardiente* and Simona joined us and we all drank to the baby and to Patrona, and then we smoked.

Aguardiente is a dreadful drink, the rawest liquor I have ever tasted in my life. It was the custom to drink it down in one gulp the way vodka is drunk, and all out of the same cup, passed around. I had no scruples about doing this because I didn't think any microbes could survive the powerful liquor.

After several rounds we were all warmed up and became talkative.

"What is your full name?" I asked Rosa.

"My name, Señorita, is Rosa Bautista. I am Patrona's half-sister."

"Are you of the same family as Chimán El Rey?"

"Yes, Señorita, I am the sister of Macario Bautista."

My heart gave a leap for I knew that here was a gold mine of information, but I decided to go easy on questions. We smoked and talked and Domingo told me that Rosa lived outside San Martín, but moved all over the place as she was not only midwife but also could cure.

"Rosa, you must be a *chimancita*," I said.

"Oh no, Señorita, I am not a *chimancita*. I would be afraid to be a *chimancita*. I just help people. Señorita, I hear that you too help people and have the power to cure."

"Yes, but it is not I, it is the God above," I said.

"It is the same with me, Señorita," said old Rosa. "Señorita, my sister and Domingo have told me how kind you have been to them, and that you paid Domingo's contract."

"Why shouldn't I? Domingo and Patrona are my friends."

After three drinks and much conversation Rosa said she must get back to Patrona. She patted me on the shoulder and said she would be back the next day. Domingo and the children also left, and I was so excited by the fact that Rosa was the sister of El Rey that I did not feel sleepy. What luck, I thought. Could anything better have happened?

When Patrona's baby was three days old, Rosa came over and asked me to come to see it. Domingo's house was about fifteen feet square, made of adobe bricks with a high thatched roof. Patrona lay on a mat next to the fire with a sweet, contented smile. In one corner was a platform of wood a foot off the floor, and on this were blankets; where the seven of them slept was beyond me. A young pretty neighbor was grinding corn in the corner near the only window, which was one foot square, and in another corner sat a suspicious brown hen on her eggs. Rose proudly showed me the red-faced baby wrapped in an old rag. The rest of the family gathered around watching alternately the baby and my face. Above their heads hung corn from the smoke-darkened roof—beautiful ears gleaming with the luster of gold, and to the Indians just as valuable. I complimented Patrona on having such a beautiful boy, and also Rosa for bringing it into the world so successfully, and thanked them all for inviting me over.

On the baby's fifth day Andrés came to borrow my carving knife, for he was to kill a goat in celebration of the baby. I asked him if they would drink the blood and he said yes, but I am not sure he understood me.

In the afternoon Rosa came to call. We now had become great

friends and she was delighted when I gave her a ribbon she admired. We sat and smoked and talked of the baby and then I decided to ask her a straight question.

"Rosa, every country has different customs; what do you do with the umbilical cord? What is your custom?"

"Señorita, the cord is wrapped in a red cloth, and twenty days after the birth the *chimán* takes it to the mountains, if the baby is a boy, and puts it in a fork of a tree."

"If it is a baby girl what does the *chimán* do?" I asked.

"The *chimán* takes it to a damp or wet place and with a planting stick makes a hole in the ground and into it puts the umbilical cord and covers it over with a rock."

"Do you mean the stick you plant corn with?"

"Yes, Señorita," said Rosa.

We talked some more, and with very polite salutations Rosa left. I thought over what she had told me. The male, the positive generative force, placed in a tree, the symbol of life, and in the mountains, the nearest to the sky world; probably offering it to the sun god. The female, the passive, negative, fertile force, planted with a stick like seeding corn, back into the earth. Wet earth—water—waters of the unconscious. A female symbol and also the earth—Mother Earth. It reminded me of a Navaho ceremony, a puberty ceremony for a young girl. It was performed when she first menstruated and lasted half a day and night and was most interesting. A corn cake—a ceremonial cake—was made and baked in honor of the sun. It was baked in a hole in the earth all night and at dawn the hole was opened and the cake with great ceremony was cut by the girl. The first cut was from east to west, the second from north to south. Half the cake was divided among the guests, one quarter among the girl's family, and the last quarter given to the medicine man. But where the four sections touched in the center a little sliver was cut off each

and left in the hole and mixed with the earth. What the earth gives forth is returned, symbolizing life's great rhythmic cycle of creation and destruction. Here in Todos Santos it was the same.

I suddenly, for no apparent reason, felt lonely; maybe because I wished to share this wonderful information, or because I longed for a talk with someone who spoke my language—and by this I did not mean English. Anyway, I walked up to the ruins, for I had found that this place gave off a great strength and a soothing quality. The Indians said that the spirit of the pyramid lived here, and no Ladino would go near the place at night for it was occupied by an evil spirit.

The trail passed through the land of Chimán Calmo; and there he was, seeding corn, dropping the grains into the holes made with his planting stick. He saluted me and we sat on the earth together and smoked. By this time we had become friendly; he had called on me many times; yet I felt he did not trust me and I had somewhat the same feeling about him, though I liked him. He asked me the usual questions. Was I all alone? Why wasn't I married? The fact that I was not married and did not have a man seemed to bother the Indians more than anything. I told him that I preferred being alone as I was my own boss. We laughed, and then I rose and said: "Tata Calmo, I am going up to Cumanchúm and later to the church with my candle, for today is *Alcalde Noj*, the next days *Ajmak* and *Ik*. Soon the new year will be here."

He looked at me and said: "You know?"

"Yes, I know," I said, and we shook hands and I went on my way.

The ruins were lovely and did my heart good. The view on all sides was unbelievable, and nature so vast, so overpowering that I forgot myself. I speculated on the ceremonies that had taken

place here, the processions, the *costumbres*, and the offerings, all against such a beautiful background. I thought of the Mayans, the direct ancestors of these Indians, and what astronomers and mathematicians they had been. It always amazed me to think that they knew and used the zero before the Arabs gave it to Europe. If the Mayans could now see their progeny in bondage to the Ladinos they would be horror-struck. I thought of my own country and people; of the war which had recently ended and of the thousands of lives that had been lost each day, and for what purpose? Then I thought how lucky I was to be living now with these descendants of the Mayans, such wonderful people, and how much I could learn from them.

When I returned to the house I found Basilia there with her child. She told me that she now felt fine and that the baby was better except for his continual cough.

"Señorita," she said, "Simona is probably going to leave you the middle of the month and go off with Juan. If she does I will come and work for you."

"I would like to have you, Basilia; but haven't you already a place?"

"Yes, but I will leave them. You were kind to me, and you will need a maid and besides you pay more than the people I work for."

We laughed and I told her I would like to have her if Simona left.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“Good morning, Don Pancho,” I said, before he could say it to me.

“*Buenos días*, Señorita Matilda,” he replied with an eager look on his face. “I have some information for you of the greatest importance.”

I felt like saying: “Spill the beans,” but instead I gave him my most bewitching smile and offered him a chair and a cigarette. Don Pancho had a peculiar way of sitting down; it was always done in a gingerly fashion, as if he expected the chair to collapse.

“Señorita, I have discovered that the Mames will celebrate their new year about the twelfth or fifteenth of March. It is called the *Fiesta* of the *Chimanes*. Each Indian will go to the house of his *chimán* the night of the *fiesta* bearing a gift of a chicken or a turkey, and the *chimán* will answer all questions and forecast for the new year.”

“I am delighted to have this information. Rosa has already told me the same thing, only she says the date is the tenth. Don Pancho, have you ever heard of a village not far from here called Santiago Chimaltenango? I have been reading in a report written by the American who built this house that the Indians of Santiago Chimaltenango are Mames who are little touched by civilization and apparently not hostile and they still carry on the customs of their ancestors.”

“Yes, Señorita, I have passed through the village many times and once I spent the night there with a Ladino family, friends of mine. The wife used to live here in Todos Santos and speaks Mam fluently. There are only about three Ladino families in the village, and the Indians are very much like the Indians here.”

“Don Pancho, I should like you to go to the village tomorrow

and find out if they will celebrate the *fiesta* of the new year, and if it will be on the tenth as Rosa told me, or on the twelfth or fifteenth as you have been told. Also, find out any other information that comes easily. I will pay all your expenses besides what I am giving you."

Don Pancho returned in three days with glowing reports. "Señorita, when I reached the house of Doña María San José at Chimaltenango, I explained to her that I would like to see a *chimán*, so she introduced me to one called Pedro Sánchez. 'Are you a *chimán*?' I asked him, 'and if you are, will you cast your beans? Will you tell the *mixes* for me?'

"Yes, I am a *chimán*, but one who asks God to give health to the people of the pueblo. I am a diviner. I know only the four gods that serve me. In five days it is the first day of the year—*T'ce*. A very important day is *T'ce*.'

"Señorita, I then became the detective, and I said: 'Chimán Sánchez, in my pueblo in five days the *chimanes* will have a big *fiesta*. Is it the custom for you here to celebrate it the night of the fourth day, or the fifth?'

"Señor, it is the custom everywhere to celebrate it the night of the fourth day, for *T'ce* is born when the first cock crows on the fifth day. Have you a question to ask my stone, Señor?'

"Señorita, he took out of a red cloth a small stone of quartz, and holding it in his hand, he answered my question. I gave him ten cents, which I hope is not too much, and five cigarettes. Doña María also checked the date for me, so the new year is the tenth, as Rosa told you, and the *fiesta* is the night of the ninth."

"Don Pancho," I said, "you should have given the *chimán* a package of cigarettes. You have done a wonderful job. I have now decided to go to Chimaltenango myself the morning of the ninth and see if luck is with me. Maybe I could get into one of the *chimanes'* houses. I know that Chimán Calmo will not ask me

here. I shall take Domingo and Andrés with me and would be delighted if you would like to come along. I will pay you whatever you feel is just."

"Señorita, I would be contented to take you to Chimaltenango. You can sleep in the house of my friends, or at the *Juzgado*."

At six-thirty on the morning of March 9 we were on our way to Santiago Chimaltenango. Don Pancho and I rode, he on Pichón and I on a rented horse. Andrés carried my army cot, Domingo the blankets, tinned food, and medicine. Their loads were slung from leather straps across their foreheads.

I had no plans, but I hoped that the god of luck would smile on me, for in my hand I carried eight candles wrapped in a red cloth, as was the custom for those going on a holy mission.

The sun shone as we climbed through the clouds back of my house. We passed through new country. We dipped down into deep valleys, thick with ferns and strange flowering bushes and plants, and by rushing brooks, where we watered our horses. Then up steep trails through forests of oaks covered with moss and parasitic flowering plants. We often rode along the tops of the mountain ranges in the teeth of a strong cold wind, a wind that blew the clouds away and revealed to us another world. As far as the eye could see there rose one mountain range after another, and to the north there stretched the distant lowlands of Chiapas in Mexico. I noticed that daisies grew everywhere here, but without stems. They spread sideways and grew to a large size and looked as if they were stars fallen to earth.

During the six hours that we rode we saw only one pueblo in the distance, San Juan Atitán, though we did pass, now and then, a few Indians going to the market at Todos Santos. During the last hour we saw no one, but were not surprised for we knew that the Indians were off worshipping in the mountains or in their houses, this day being the last of the five that preceded the

new year. The modern Indians considered these five days evil, as the Mayans had done long ago. Those Indians who still live by this calendar do not work, eat meat, overeat, or have sexual relations on these days. Nor can the *chimanes* prognosticate, tell their *mixes*, or lead their normal everyday lives.

We descended into Santiago Chimaltenango, situated about halfway down a steep mountain, each house on its terrace—a patchwork of thatched roofs with no sign of life, not even smoke. As we passed down the steep, narrow path to the plaza a few curious Indians poked their heads out of their houses to take a look at us. Their costumes were striking. The women wore bright red *huipiles* with fine lines of yellow-white through them. In front and above the breasts there were six designs of different colors. They had wide, stiff woolen belts of black, white, and red, lovely in design, and blue skirts. Their hair was worn up and held in place by a red woven band. The men wore white cotton trousers, and sometimes blue-and-white striped blouses. They wore red scarves around their shoulders or wrapped like turbans around their heads. Over the blouses they wore dark-brown or black woolen *capixaijs*.

On one side of the small plaza stood their church, primitive but charming, with a cross in front of it, and on an adjoining side the *Juzgado*, which served as meeting place, court, and jail, and in which we were to spend the night. This building consisted of one big rectangular room with a large table, a bench, and a government telephone. A few friendly Indians watched us unload and with great interest observed me wash at the *pila* in the center of the plaza. When we were ready, we went to call on Don Pancho's Ladino friends. The husband was away, but his wife, seven children, two pigs, two ducks, chickens, and dogs were all very much in evidence. The wife, named Maroka, had a long Spanish face, full of character but weary and worn out. Not only did she cook,

wash, clean and look after the children, but she also baked bread for the pueblo. Indians love sweet bread. She had lived in Santiago Chimaltenango most of her life, though at one time she had lived in Todos Santos, and spoke Mam like a native. I could see she was very much respected by the local Indians.

She told us that all the Indians were in the mountains or in their houses and that the *chimanes* would receive in their houses, that night, those Indians who had questions to ask or who wished to hear the prognostications for the coming year; that is, if the Spirit should come. She informed us that roosters and turkeys would be sacrificed that night and the next day in front of the church and the cross.

I asked if it would be possible for us to go that night to the house of one of the *chimanes*. Maroka said she would ask but doubted it very much, as no outsiders or Ladinos were allowed at any of their religious rites. Nevertheless she sent one of the children to the house of a woman *chimán*, only to discover that she had already gone to the mountains. By chance, however, a woman whose son was learning to be a *chimán* passed by. Maroka told her in Mam that Don Pancho and I wanted very much to go to the house of a *chimán*, that I had come from a distant country, and that, in my country, I was used to visiting *chimanes*, especially for the new year ceremony. She also said that I had come all the way from Todos Santos to see a *chimán* on this special night and to burn my candles. As she said this, Maroka pointed to my candles wrapped in the red cloth, and then she told the woman that we were her friends and were like members of her family. The woman asked why I had not gone to the ceremony at Todos Santos. Maroka passed this on to me, and I told her to tell the woman that the *chimanes* in Todos Santos did not have sufficient power. The woman thereupon said that she would speak to her son, who was going that night to the house of his teacher,

and perhaps he would speak to the *chimán* who was doing *costumbre*. In about half an hour she returned and said that the *chimán* teacher did not like the idea, for he felt that we would not have sufficient respect and might think their customs ludicrous, and that the Spirit might not enter the house if we were there. We tried to convince her of our sincerity and respect for Indian *costumbre*, gave her twenty-five cents by way of additional persuasion, and told her that we would bring the *chimán* the customary presents and pay him besides. I would never have dared put on this much pressure in Todos Santos for fear of what I might lose if it didn't work.

She returned in an hour and a half and said: "If you are willing to walk eight miles up into the mountains to the house of the *chimán* in order to be looked over, and if he then approves, you can stay through the night and return at dawn. If he does not approve you will have to return immediately to the pueblo."

If we agreed to this, she said, she would take us there herself, leaving at six in the afternoon. We accepted, little knowing what was ahead of us. I was tired, for I had gotten up early and had a cold, but I knew this was an opportunity in a million. I bought four bottles of *aguardiente*—which is always used in Indian ceremonies and is a customary gift to the *chimán*—six packages of cigarettes, and eight candles for Don Pancho. Andrés was left behind to watch our baggage, and at six we were on our way. Our guide was about sixty years old, with bright eyes and a pleasant smile, and I could tell she was not sure she was doing the right thing. She reminded me of a little bird every time she looked back over her shoulder to see if we were following. We were all on foot, our guide padding along on bare feet. Up and up we went, until breathing became difficult. I wondered how far we had to go and if my strength would hold out. Now and then I would pause to catch my breath and admire the view.

We were stopped by numerous Indians returning from the coast to celebrate the new year. They questioned Domingo and our guide, and I could see by their faces that they did not like the idea of our journey.

When we reached the top of the ridge the sun was just setting and a glorious view spread for miles before us: range after range of mountains of all colors, deep mysterious valleys, and, like a king of kings, the huge volcano Tajumulco keeping watch over his domain. For a long time we went along the crest, then down into a small valley, then up again until we came to a section called Florida on the other side. In the darkness we could see the glow of several fires. Domingo said these were houses of *chimanes* who were receiving. Our guide pointed out a distant light halfway down in the valley, our destination. Both Don Pancho and I were relieved that the rest of the way would be downhill. Suddenly I remembered that we had left our flashlights behind. We had a good laugh over our carelessness, for this was the night we needed them most. We turned off the main trail and then followed a tortuous one through brush and trees where it was so dark that I could hardly see Domingo ahead of me. When I had about given up hope of reaching the place we stepped out from the trees into the light of a blazing fire. We had arrived.

As we approached the house there was great excitement and we were led into the light of the fire so that the *chimán* could look us over. He was dark in complexion, with large penetrating eyes, a short black beard, a strong face, and a powerful build. I noticed another, much older man watching us from the other side of the fire. He had a long face, pensive grey eyes, a beautiful Mayan nose, and two deep lines that ran down the sides of his face from nose to mouth. One sensed great strength, dignity, and also sadness in him. The two men talked together, looking at us intently, and then asked Domingo several questions about me. I was being

appraised and judged, and I felt naked and inadequate as I stood there, the focus of all eyes. When Domingo told us the *chimán* said we could stay, he seemed to me like a guardian who had been ordered to open wide the portals to the inner sanctum.

The outside of the house was decorated with pine branches, and around the door were placed the leaves of the *pacaya* plant. As I went inside I saw a large rectangular room, with several fires burning on the right, and on the dirt floor lay many clay vessels of all sizes and shapes, steaming, with women busy about them. We sat to the left of the door on a narrow bench against the wall. Opposite us, built into the corner, was the *corral* of the *chimán*, a little enclosure made of cane; around the doorless entrance was another decoration of *pacaya* leaves. Within was an altar. The floor was covered with pine needles. This was the room from which the *chimán* would answer questions if the Spirit, or *Dueño de Cerro* (Master of the Mountaintop) came.

A small fire was built at our feet, and by its light the faces were revealed. The *chimán*, who did not speak Spanish, asked us through the older man—whom I termed “Mayan Nose”—why we had come. He also questioned Domingo, who spoke the same tongue. I was deeply impressed by their sincerity and friendliness. First passing around cigarettes, I then answered what he had asked:

“I have come tonight with my candles and questions for I am far away from my country, my family, and my friends. In my country there are also *chimanés*, and since I am unable to go to them, I come to you. This night is an important night. We are leaving *Ik* and entering into *T’ce*, a good year. My thoughts turn to my country and my family and so my question is: ‘How are my mother, sister, and brother?’”

Domingo translated this to the *chimán*, who seemed impressed, as was also “Mayan Nose,” he of the sad face, of whom I was more

acutely aware than of the *chimán*. Don Pancho, for his part, said that he had come because of a strange buzzing in his left ear which he had now had for over a year and which no doctor could cure.

The *chimán* asked if we had brought our candles and *aguardiente*, and as I handed him the candles I said: "Here they are for the four *Alcaldes del Mundo*, two for each," as I knew this was the custom. He went into his little *corral* and put the candles and the two bottles (I gave him only two of the four) on the altar with the other offerings.

To the left, in the shadows, two musicians played, one being the brother of the *chimán*. They played on a home-made violin and guitar. Their music was good and I felt that they improvised as they went along. They played all night, seldom the same tune, and never anything gay or violent. Their music expressed nature—the sad side of nature.

The men all crowded around us, those who spoke Spanish questioning and then translating. Domingo gave a long oration, and though I could not understand it, I felt it was about me, how I had cured people and paid off his contract. I watched the faces of the men and boys around me: strong, good faces, well modelled and aristocratic, the contours standing out boldly when touched by the light of the fire, then melting into the mysterious darkness that filled the room. These were pure Mayan, and probably none of them realized what a great civilization they had sprung from.

The roof was very high and steep and carried out and up through the thatch the smoke of the fires. From the roof hung a platform which was about seven feet from the earth floor and about four feet from the walls. It was used, I could see, for storage.

The *chimán* told us that it was their custom for all to eat together on this night before the Spirit came. We ate *tortillas* and drank coffee and smoked cigarettes given us by the *chimán*. I

noticed that "Mayan Nose" had gone into the little room of the *chimán* and was keeping a fire of *ocote* sticks going. He had a beautiful profile, very much like one of the priests on the carvings of Palenque. I wondered who he was. Domingo asked someone and told me:

"He is the teacher of the *chimán*, and the *chimán* is the teacher of the son of the woman who guided us."

About ten-thirty the *chimán* spread pine needles all over the floor of the house and then entered his *corral*. Shortly after, I was called in and, although I had no idea what was customary, I knelt before the altar on the pine needles between the two older men. The *chimán* was on my left in front of the altar, the teacher on my right. As the space was tiny, we were crowded close together. Around the altar I noticed a band of the same leaves I had seen before, together with bananas. The altar, which was the table of the *chimán*, was covered with a white cloth with a band of red on it. On the altar were two carved gourd bowls, in each a small gourd cup.

Rosa Bautista explained to me later: "The gourd cup, or *gualcito*, is used by the *chimán* to put *aguardiente* in; he can drink the spirit of God which presents itself during the hours of prayer. The gourd bowls or cups—*jicaritas*—are used for drinking *batido* [a ceremonial drink made of ground corn, sugar, and water]. When one drinks it, it signifies the union of all the participants, that all are one."

Between the two bowls lay the candles and the gifts of *aguardiente* from the people. At the back of the table were four sky-rockets, and on the floor in front six clay candleholders. "Mayan Nose" asked me the names of the members of my family and gave them to the *chimán*, who took my candles in both hands and, speaking in a quick, strong voice, pressed them against my shoulder. He held them there as he prayed. The only words I could

understand were Santiago (Saint James) who is patron saint of the pueblo, the four *Alcaldes del Mundo*, and the names of the members of my family. He then went to the altar and prayed for a long time before lighting my candles and putting them in the six holders. The two extra ones he stood on the floor. As he sat to the left of the altar I noticed a heavy metal chain like a dog chain lying on the floor at his feet, and wondered what it was. It seemed strangely out of place.

The *chimán* now opened one of the bottles and took from the altar a crystal wine glass with a broken stem, filled it with *aguardiente*, and passed it first to his teacher, then to me, then to himself, and finally to his pupil. I drank a toast to them and to the four *Alcaldes* and drained the glass in one gulp, that being the proper custom. I was asked to put ten cents on the altar, and they were more than pleased when I put twenty-five cents there. Thereupon the *chimán* motioned to me to leave and I got up and left to make room for Don Pancho. When they were finished with him they called me back with the *chimán's* young pupil and the *chimán's* wife. We drank again and again and the *chimán* became very much agitated. His hands trembled and the force from his voice was awe-inspiring. All this time the teacher stood there, calm, cool, and sad. Again I was offered a drink, but instead of taking it I passed it to the wife of the *chimán*, who seemed grateful for it. We went back to our bench and the *chimán* came with us. The teacher remained praying while we drank coffee and smoked.

Just before midnight the wife of the *chimán* carried into the room a beautiful white rooster and handed it to the three *chimanés* who sacrificed it in the *corral*. Of this I caught only a glimpse because a man standing in the doorway obstructed my view. A *pichacha* with copal stood on the floor in front of the altar. The two *chimanés* held the rooster, head down, while the one officiating cut its throat. The rooster flapped its wings as the blood

flowed into the *pichacha* onto the copal. A few minutes later the woman came out carrying the limp body of the fowl. Then two turkeys were sacrificed. By that time it was nearly midnight. A boy sitting next to me told me that since sunset many birds had been sacrificed, twenty in all—possibly, I thought, for the twenty days of the calendar. A blanket was placed over the entrance to the *chimán's corral*, leaving the three *chimanes* inside. All fires in the outer room were put out and we sat in darkness.

The *chimán* now began to pray in a strong voice, and as he spoke I could smell burning blood mixed with the copal. He pronounced the names of the *Alcaldes del Mundo* and Santiago and, I assumed, called on the Spirit to come. He must have stood there supplicating for a good half-hour when suddenly his voice changed. It was as if it had been spurred on to a double tempo. He spoke so fast and with such force that it sounded like a machine gun. I could feel the force invade me, and I tingled all over. During this time, when his voice was the strongest, I suddenly saw in the darkness a blue light. It seemed to move about the room at head level. It was indigo blue and about the size of a hand. I kept shutting my eyes because I thought it might be an optical illusion, but when I opened them it was still there, though it did not stay long. The voice of the *chimán* never stopped for breath until he began to make what seemed to be statements and to answer questions. He would call: "*Chucia Chuán,*" and his wife, who was in the outer room with us, would answer. What she said sounded like: "Yes, Father, we are here. Do not leave us."

This went on for a good hour and a half. Among other things, I heard him say: "*Estados Unidos,*" so I knew he was answering my question. The bench I was sitting on was so uncomfortable that I could scarcely bear it. I had to close my eyes to keep the smoke out of them, and moreover it was all I could do to keep awake. Suddenly I felt something touch my head. I looked up.

It was "Mayan Nose" passing me on his way to send off a skyrocket, for the Spirit had gone.

When the *chimán* came out from his *corral* he was bathed in sweat and looked exhausted. I felt strongly that here was no fake. We all had coffee and a smoke and were told what the Spirit had said. The Spirit had accepted us and said that we were all right, that my family was well but that my mother was sad because I was so far away; that the Spirit said I must come three years in succession, then I would be well for the rest of my life. Don Pancho's ear trouble could be cured, but he had on him the sin of his father or grandfather, who had shot and killed a man. I told Don Pancho to give the *chimán* another bottle, which he did, and we were then called again into his *corral* for another drink. The *chimán*, through "Mayan Nose," told Don Pancho that because of the sin he had on him he would have to make an offering to the church next morning of two turkey eggs, copal and ten candles. Don Pancho got out of it by giving the *chimán* thirty-five cents so that he might perform the *costumbre* for him.

As I came out into the large room I saw the women putting the plucked and cleaned birds in a huge pot. The *chimán's* brother, the musician, came over to me and asked me if I could cure him, that he was very sick; he could not eat, and when he did he lost his meal; that he had no strength and had chills all the time. I questioned him a little more. It was obvious he had malaria.

"Yes, I can help you," I told him, "if you take two pills a day of the twenty yellow pills I shall give you. Then you will be relieved." I laughed to myself at the thought that the brother of the *chimán* would come to me to be cured, and at such a time and in such a place.

The lights were put out again and the *chimán* went into another trance behind the blanketed doorway. He repeated what he had done before, though this time I saw no light. When the Spirit

had departed the second time another skyrocket was sent off. When he came out the fires were relit. He carried in a red cloth the bananas that had decorated his altar. They were cut on the red cloth into as many pieces as there were people, about thirty-five or forty. They were put into hats and passed around, and whatever was left, such as the skin, was very carefully collected and put into the red cloth and burned.

I invited the *chimanes* to visit me if they came to Todos Santos, and they both seemed pleased. We left about four in the morning, though they begged us to wait and eat of the sacrificed birds and to see the last skyrocket, which would be set off at dawn. I thanked them for their kindness in letting me come and said that we had a long trip ahead but that I would be back in a year.

Though I was exhausted, the return journey seemed short. The night smells, the sound of rustling in the bushes and among the trees, the flickering pine torch that Domingo carried, and the light it cast on the trees and on my companions, all contributed to my elation; but the real fuel that gave me strength was that I knew I had been a part of an esoteric ceremony, a ceremony that had probably been performed by the Mayans themselves long before Columbus discovered America. What I had witnessed would contribute greatly to my work. So far as I knew I was the first outsider who had ever been admitted to a Year Bearer ceremony.

CHAPTER TWELVE

We arrived home at noon, tired and dirty, to find Simona with her head hanging in shame. During lunch she told me a garbled story that made no sense, and I could see by her face that she had been drinking heavily. After lunch Margarita and Satero came to call. Margarita swept in like a queen with never a look at Simona, who was out in the kitchen. Her eyes were snapping with excitement and she could hardly wait to announce:

“Señorita, Satero and I like you. You are our neighbor and when you are away we watch your house for you. Since you have been away Simona has been sleeping in the kitchen with Juan, her friend. Sunday night she and Basilia entertained four Ladino men in your kitchen. Simona became very drunk and they all made much noise. I was sitting in my house with Satero when bang, something heavy landed on our roof, so we went out and saw in the darkness that the Ladinos were in your garden throwing rocks at your house. They were so drunk that the rocks were going in all directions, some even hitting our house. Satero sent for the police and the Ladinos escaped over your fence. The police found Simona so drunk that she fell on the earth. Basilia, who was slightly drunk, told the police that she had tried to persuade the Ladinos and Simona to go to Simona’s house and drink, that it was not respectful to the Señorita to drink in her house, but they would not move. When Juan, Simona’s man, arrived, the Ladinos left but threw rocks at the house because the girls were with an Indian and not with them. The police carried Simona home and told her they would report all to the Señorita when she returned.”

Up to this time Satero hadn’t had a chance to get in a word, but he nodded in agreement with all Margarita said.

“Señorita,” he finally put in, “Simona is no good; she drinks too much; it is better to get rid of her, Señorita.”

“Yes, send Simona away,” said Margarita. “I can find you a good maid.”

I thanked them for watching out for my house, but when they asked what I was going to do, I told them that first I must talk to Simona alone and then I would decide. They took the hint and left with a triumphant air.

After they had gone I sent for Simona.

“Is it true, Simona, what Margarita and Satero have just told me?”

“Yes, Señorita, it is true. But it is none of Margarita’s affair. She is a troublemaker and has a big mouth. I am sorry, Señorita. It will not happen again.”

“It certainly will not happen again. You remember, Simona, that I told you if you got drunk again what would happen. How can I go away on trips and feel that my house is safe when I know that as soon as I leave you will get drunk and entertain Ladinos in it? You were going to leave the middle of the month, so you might just as well leave now. I want you to clean the house thoroughly and after that you can leave. Simona, I am fond of you, but you are not a responsible person, for that reason I don’t want you.”

“Yes, Señorita, it is just as well, for I shall go off with Juan.”

“Before you start cleaning the house please bring Basilia here.”

Soon Simona returned with Basilia, who looked frightened and shamefaced and held her hand over her nose and mouth.

“Basilia,” I said, “it is very difficult for me to believe that you would act the way you did, and in my house when I was not here. When I helped you I did it because I liked you and felt sorry for you and your son. You were both sick, you were a friend of Simona’s and Margarita’s, so I did what I could for you, and this

is the way you repay me. By getting drunk with Ladinos in my house. Thank you, Basilia.”

She started to sob and said: “Señorita, I tried hard to move them away from your house. I said: ‘It is not respectful to the Señorita,’ but they would not move. Señorita, I have respect for you and I am sorry for what I did.”

“We won’t talk any more about it, Basilia. Simona is leaving as soon as she cleans the house—that is all, you may go.”

In the afternoon Chimán Calmo came to call. We sat and smoked and I told him of going to the house of the *chimán* in Chimaltenango, that the Spirit had come, and of seeing the blue light. He made no comment, just looked at me. After he left, Rosa called and told me if she didn’t have a house in San Martín to look after she would willingly come to work for me. I said I would be delighted to have her, and if she changed her mind to let me know. Her eyes lit up as I got out the bottle of *aguardiente*. Pouring her a drink, I said: “Rosa, do you know that in the house of the *chimán* where I was in Santiago Chimaltenango the Spirit came twice? But can you believe what someone told me, that the people waited in vain at another *chimán*’s house? They waited all night; the Spirit never manifested itself.”

“Señorita, this often happens, so much depends on the contact that the *chimán* has with the Spirit; it is *muy delicado*; few *chiman*es nowadays are strong.”

“The one I visited had much strength.”

Then I decided to ask Rosa the question which was still puzzling me. “When the *chimán* invited me to enter his *corral* for the burning of the candles I saw that he had a chain. What does the chain signify?”

Rosa looked to see if anyone was at the windows, and as it was getting dark I shut the shutters and the door, then gave her another drink. When she was sure no one could hear she said: “Ev-

ery *chimán* has a chain. It is used to chain the Spirit to the *chimán* so that the Spirit will obey the *chimán* and his supplications. The chain is thin and long with a ring at the end of it. When the *chimán* evokes the Spirit he passes the whole length of the chain through the ring. If there comes a time when the *chimán* wishes to break his contact with the Spirit he goes to the mountain with the chain and breaks it, though it might mean death."

"Who is the woman that stands in front of the door of the altar of the *chimán*, the first person that the Spirit speaks to?"

"This woman is the wife of the *chimán* who gives the Mass and officiates that night. The Spirit says: '*Chucia Chuán*, are you there?' She says: '*Sí, Tata*, I am here, enter.'"

And then I dared to ask: "What is the work of the wife of the *chimán*?"

"She does all the Spirit asks of her. Sometimes he wants *aguardiente*, other times water. Sometimes he wants her to dance with him. She is always outside the *corral* of the altar, he inside. If she does not obey he whips her, and often in a hard manner."

Her answers were so natural and offered so willingly, I felt safe in asking one more question:

"What is the use of the bananas that decorate the table of the *chimán*?"

"After the fruit has received the blessings of the Spirit and the Spirit has gone, the bananas are cut into as many pieces as there are people present. When they eat of it, their sins leave them. The leftover part must be collected and burned carefully, for if a child eats or touches this, he will receive the sins of all who have eaten of the fruit. If a woman has had intercourse with the man who has cut the fruit, or during the five evil days, she cannot eat or touch the fruit for it will bring sickness and possibly death to her."

I was elated over the information Rosa had given me. Here was material which I knew had never been recorded and must be very

valuable. I was so pleased I gave her a present of a baby-blue silk ribbon for her hair, which, of course, delighted her.

Later, as we were smoking and drinking, Domingo and Andrés joined us. Domingo thought I was wise in getting rid of Simona and said he would ask around for another maid. I told him that Basilia might replace Simona.

A few days later Patrona came to call with a good-sized gourd full of a brewed liquid of ground corn and cocoa beans.

"Señorita, today is the twentieth day since the birth of my baby. It is a custom that the family and friends of the family drink this drink, so this is for you."

I thanked her and took the carved gourd in my hand and realized that this was the ceremonial drink called *batido*.

"To your son! May he have a life of happiness and health," I said as I tasted the thick, rich mixture. "Patrona, this is the first time you have been to my house since the baby was born."

"Yes, Señorita, this is also a custom. For twenty days after the birth the woman stays at home. It is a very delicate period, she must take a sweat bath every two or three days during this period and think no evil. Now I go to the church with my candle and pray for my baby."

"Thank you, Patrona, for thinking of me and bringing me this delicious drink. Wait a minute and I will get a cigarette from the other room." I made this excuse because the concoction was too rich and I knew I would be sick if I finished it. I poured some of it out the window, praying that no one would see, and came back into the room with cigarettes and an empty gourd, and we had a good smoke.

My neighbors, knowing I was without a maid, were all most kind. They brought me gifts of steamed ears of corn, chili, and *tortillas*. Several Ladino girls came to ask for the job, even Don

Raimundo's two daughters came again. I thanked them all but said I wanted an Indian maid or none at all.

After I had been a week without a maid, Basilia came to call.

"Señorita," she said, "you are all alone, you have no maid, you helped me, you cured me of malaria, and also you cured my baby, so I shall work for you. I shall leave the Señora of the *tienda* and come to work for you."

"Basilia, I appreciate your thought of me, but what of the Señora?"

"I am not happy with the Señora. I will be happy with you. I am coming to work for you. Do you remember the first time you came to Todos Santos you stopped by the *tienda* where I was working and offered to buy my blouse?"

"So that was you, Basilia. I am pleased, and I would like to have you come to work for me as a maid."

The next day Basilia came and told me that Don Hernando, the husband of the Señora, would not let her leave unless she paid a debt of three dollars she owed them.

"Señorita, he says that if I leave he will have the police lock me up. I am afraid they will send me and my child back to the *finca*." And she looked at me with troubled black eyes. I suggested that she go back and ask if she could not give him fifty cents each month till the debt was paid. She returned in a few minutes just as Don Pancho came to give me my lesson. She told him the whole story and that Don Hernando would not agree to her paying it off monthly.

"Señorita Matilda," he said, "I have an idea. You give Margarita or Patrona the three dollars and they will go with Basilia to the *tienda* and say that they are lending the money for Basilia to pay off her debt. Then Basilia can come to you and Don Hernando won't think that you are paying more of Basilia's debts."

Though this did not seem honest I agreed, and so did Margarita, who was eager to have a part in the intrigue, and to have Basilia replace Simona. So within a few hours Basilia and her baby, Carlos, moved in. I found she had no blanket, so I gave her two, and they slept on a *petate* on the floor, with the blankets over them. The next morning Basilia came to me and said that she thought it was better that she eat by herself on account of Carlos—she was sure he would annoy me at the table. So I agreed, and was really much relieved. Wherever she went Carlos went, tied to her back. If she left him for a second he would scream. It was difficult for her, especially when she ground corn and swept the house. At first he screamed every time he saw me, as he associated me with the medicine I had given him, but this wore off when he saw all the other children come to me with no fear at all. Basilia fitted into my household much better than Simona, and I found her a very sweet, thoughtful girl.

I continued my way of life, which was to get up before dawn and cook my breakfast in the fireplace. Basilia got up an hour later, and it amused me to see her stagger out to the *pila* with her eyes half closed and splash ice-cold water on her face and shake it off, rinse her mouth out with a handful of water, spit it out, and comb her hair. Then she was ready for her breakfast. When this was finished I could hear her grinding corn on the *metate*. It was a rhythmical, soothing sound that I always enjoyed hearing while I read or wrote.

In the mornings Basilia usually received her guests in the kitchen. They would sit on the adobe table next to the fire, drink coffee, and gossip. If she were weaving they would sit on the porch. Margarita loved to gossip with Basilia, and they would spend hours doing their hair in front of Simona's mirror and giggling.

Often in the evenings Basilia would have a bowl of soup with me by the fire. Carlos would be asleep on her back, and she would

slowly turn over the pages of the American magazines. She adored doing this and would ask me endless questions about the women of my country.

One evening two policemen stopped by to call on Basilia, and I asked them in for a smoke. They began looking at *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* and were enchanted. I noticed that one of them looked at advertisements upside down, and they seemed just as interesting to him that way. What seemed to attract them the most were the pictures of autos, planes, and trucks. They asked if they could take one with them, and after that, till I left Todos Santos for good, I was besieged by requests for magazines.

One morning as Margarita descended to my domain she found a hen of mine with her head caught between two slats of the fence.

"Señorita," she said, "your hen needs a man."

I agreed, and that afternoon bought her one of Don Pancho's roosters, a beautiful white one with black-tipped tail feathers. It was love at first sight and from then on she did not try to escape into the world but reconciled herself to a domestic life.

Not only did I have trouble with the hen but also with a baby coyote I bought from a passing Indian. Poor Tequila loathed it, and Basilia feared it and said it was dangerous, so I gave it away to a Ladino boy.

"Why is it dangerous to own a coyote?" I asked Basilia.

"Because the coyote will always turn and bite you or eat your chickens. I heard of a family that took in a coyote, and do you know what he did?"

"No."

"He bit off the penis of their son just the age of Carlos. That's why I feared for Carlos when you bought the coyote."

"Don't worry, Basilia, I won't buy any more," I said, smiling to myself for I was sure her story was not true.

As we were talking, Simona stopped by to see us. She had a huge bump on her forehead and asked if I could give her medicine for it.

“How did you get such a bump?” I asked Simona.

“The wife of the schoolmaster threw a rock at me. She thinks I am after her husband. Señorita Matilda, I am not chasing her husband, he is chasing me. These Ladinos!” she said with a shake of her head and her rear, but with quite a pleased expression on her pretty face.

In the late afternoon Chimán Calmo with his wife and grandchild came to call. The wife was short and plump, with a sweet, friendly face that once must have been very beautiful. We sat and smoked and the *chimán* explained to his wife the meaning of the different Quiché cloths hanging on the wall. He told me that his wife was his second wife, and that she did not speak Spanish. The little girl, all eyes and pretty as a picture, peeked at me from behind her grandmother’s skirts. I gave her a candy and soon she forgot that I had a white face and played happily by herself. The old *chimán* explained to me that he had come to ask for medicine—worm medicine for his grandchild.

“I will be delighted to give you the medicine, but first you must bring your own bottle, second you must follow my instructions carefully.”

“I have brought a bottle, Señorita Matilda.” He apparently knew the rules of my dispensary. I filled it and gave him instructions.

“Where is Simona?” the *chimán* asked. I told him the whole story, and the *chimán* said: “You have done right, Señorita, Basilia will be better for you because she has a baby and will be more responsible.”

Then the *chimán* rose and with an air of mystery looked out each window and door to see that no one was around. He motioned to his wife to rise and pulled back the hair over her ear. I could see

back of the ear, and in it, eruptions and cracks and dried blood. It looked very sore and seemed to be some skin infection.

"Can you cure my wife, Señorita?"

I was amazed.

"Yes, Tata Chimán, I can cure your wife if you follow my instructions. First I shall clean it. Then in three days she is to come again for a treatment. I will give you some white salve and you must put it on the sores each night." I showed him how to do it after I had washed her ear with disinfectant soap and warm water. He took the bottle of worm medicine and the jar of salve and kissed them both, then held them out toward me, thanking me; toward God, mumbling some prayers I did not understand; then they departed after a few shoulder pats all around.

I was filled with excitement for Chimán Calmo was one of the most important *chimanés* in the pueblo. That he would bring his family for treatment was a triumph for a number of reasons. I prayed that the salve would work for I hadn't the faintest idea what her trouble was. As a matter of fact the salve had been given to me by my mother's cook, who had told me it was good for all skin troubles.

Though the *chimán* thought no one had heard him talking to me, Basilia had. Already she was telling Margarita and Patrona that the Señorita was treating the wife of the *chimán*, so I knew that shortly the whole village would know.

In three days the *chimán* returned with his wife. Her ear was much better, so after I treated it again we sat and smoked. I thought this the time to ask a question.

"Tata Chimán, what are the obligations of the *Alcalde Reizador*?"

"He prays on the mountaintops for the good of the pueblo," said the old *chimán*. For the first time he was really opening up.

"Does he go to pray with the *rezadores* and *mayores*?"

"No. He sends them in his place. Only the first of the year do they all go together."

"Who tells them when to worship?" I asked.

"The *Chimán Nam* of the pueblo, Macario Bautista, he knows well. He is old. Young men know nothing."

"I hear that you are in charge of the church, Tata Chimán. What is your work?"

"I am called a *fiscal*; there are two of us. We do what the *Chimán Nam* orders, on the day. We see that the church is clean, that candles are there. We greet the Catholic priests that pass by, and give them food."

"Tata Chimán, when was the earth born?" I asked.

"When was the earth born?" he repeated. "My grandparents told me that in the beginning there were no Ladinos, just *naturales*. *Tata Dios* put Todos Santos in the middle of the sky." The *chimán* then stood up to illustrate Todos Santos in the middle of the sky. Then he said with gestures: "The sun rose here," and he pointed out the four directions. "God said: 'Todos Santos is in the center of the world, it is the heart of the world. When all is destroyed, Todos Santos will still exist—who knows how long!'"

The old *chimán* sat down and we smoked again, and then he in turn asked me some questions. Why I wasn't married, and other personal matters. I told Basilia to bring in coffee and sweet bread and to have it with us. Before the *chimán* and his wife touched their coffee they thanked me and God above, and they talked to Basilia in Mam.

"I have been telling Basilia how lucky she is to be with you," said the old *chimán* to me, "that she must be a good girl and not drink *aguardiente*."

I thanked him, and when they rose to go I told his wife to come back in three days, and by that time she would be well. She patted me and thanked me, and they both left.

Working in the garden a few days later, I realized that soon it would be April. I might have known it by the perfect weather we were having. The days were clear and dry and I was thankful I had the *pila* of water, for it was most necessary for the vegetable garden. The lettuce had headed and I was thrilled by my first vegetable, even though I had to soak it in a solution of chloride to kill the dysentery germs before I could eat it.

Hearing the sound of a flute and a drum I looked through the fence and could see Indians laying clay tiles on the church roof. Domingo, who was working with me, told me that every Indian man and woman in Todos Santos had to contribute so many hours of free labor on the church, as they had formerly had to do on the government buildings. If they could present to the *Alcalde* an adequate excuse for not working they could get off by paying one dollar. The Ladinos, on the other hand, were not obliged to work and if they did they were paid. The municipality in its turn supplied free music while the Indians worked. This consisted of the marimba or flute and drum. If one of the saints or a cross in the church had to be moved, a skyrocket was set off or the bells were rung during the process. I had noticed that labor for the municipality was almost always accompanied by the music of the marimba or the beat of the *tambor*. For instance, a week before I had seen enormous hand-hewn beams being hauled down the mountain to repair the church roof. They passed my house, twenty men in single file led by a man beating the *tambor*. As I continued watching the peaceful scene I saw the wife of Chimán Calmo coming up the path. She had a basket on her arm and asked if she could enter. I went around and let her in the gate. She handed me the basket, which was full of corn and potatoes, and said, through Basilia, that she was cured and that the vegetables were a gift of gratitude. Later in the day the old *chimán* passed by and said: "Señorita,

may the God thank you for curing my wife, you are my friend, and I thank you."

I said: "Don't thank me, thank God above," pointing to the sky. He seemed pleased with this and, with a wave of his hand, passed down the path to the *Convento*. The *Convento* adjoined the church and was a huge room used by the religious body.

Coming up the other path was a procession of the prayermakers, staffs of office in hand. The Chief Prayermaker was leading with a smoking *pichacha* and El Rey brought up the rear with another *pichacha*. These processions had been going on every day for a week or more. Sometimes they aired the Catholic saints in the church in a procession. Domingo said that this one was to pray for rain at Cumanchúm. All the prayermakers were going to the mountaintops these days to sacrifice and pray for the much needed rain.

The corn was at this time two feet tall and it had done its part. Now it awaited the water to give it strength to grow upward and produce the maize so necessary to the Indians' existence.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Don Pancho had talked to me several times about some ruins he had seen in the lowlands. He told me that they were on the *finca* of a friend of his, and the government knew nothing of them.

"Señorita," he said, "often the men working on the *finca* find lovely Mayan things. They throw them away or give them to the overseer, for they are not interested. The *finca* is called Nojoya, and it is not far from Santa Ana Huista, a two-day journey."

I told him it would interest me very much to visit the ruins. Maybe I could find, or buy, an ancient Mayan object. We decided to go the first week in April before the rains came and the roads became difficult.

Travelling on the trails of Guatemala means climbing up and down one mountain range after another. One has to be prepared for anything in the way of storms, heat, cold, and forest fires. The places of importance are the springs and streams, as the stretches without water are long. With the sun's heat and the sheer climbs without shade it is hard on both men and animals. In early April the trails are thick with dust, the earth cracked and dry, awaiting the downpouring waters. We met the usual laden Indians and mules going to the market at Todos Santos. In the distance we saw a skyrocket set off at the house where a dance of the "Moors" was to be held. Farther on we passed one of the dancers himself, dressed in his Conquistador costume, the plumes in his hat waving as he walked along the trail.

We passed through country covered with bushes of huge white roses, and Don Pancho told me that they could not be cultivated. We had lunch by a waterfall, the last water before we would reach Jacaltenango. The *mozos* built a fire, boiled water,

and toasted *tortillas*. We ate and rested, watching and greeting the passing Indians. I looked at the faces of my companions: Domingo, a good face, like that of a ten-year-old child; Andrés, alert, and for a boy of thirteen intelligent and wise; Don Pancho, lighter in color, with a Latin cast of features, a strong, kind face. Due to his Ladino inferiority, he had a very evident ego. He was forever showing off. When a Ladino or Indian on the trail greeted him by name, he would turn to me and say: "See, everyone knows me."

Climbing the trail, we passed women and girls carrying jars of water to their pueblo, Concepción, perched high in the mountains.

Our route was one the Mayans travelled over long before the Spaniards invaded the country. We rode between two huge boulders just before we reached the top of the pass. On one I could see the vestiges of Mayan glyphs. I dismounted to see if I could make out any of them, but due to the wear and tear of centuries nothing was clear.

Descending the other side, we saw the town of Jacaltenango way below; beyond it, through the smoky haze, small rolling hills and the flat plains of the *tierra caliente*. The pines and spruce thinned out as we went down the sheer slopes, and finally the trees vanished, to be replaced by corn fields, some of them rented by Todos Santos Indians so that they could have two seasons of corn. The fields were being cleared and burned to prepare the earth for the seeds.

Jacaltenango was a straggling town on a flat plain; it was green with trees and growing things at one end of the town, where the river flowed. The houses were thatched and the streets thick with dust. We stayed that night in a sort of junk room off the kitchen of a house belonging to one of the numerous daughters of Don Pancho. The floor had not been swept in months, and the one bench was thick with dust. I did nothing about it, as I was too

tired. There was no outhouse and practically no water; so we washed sparingly out of a tin can. We had supper at the house of an Indian near by and I found the little house clean and the food good.

Before supper, tired as we were from our nine-hour ride, we went to see an old *chimán* whom Don Pancho knew. I was anxious to gather some comparative material, as the Jacaltenango Indians were also descendants of the Mayans, but a different tribe from the Mames.

Walking through the dusty streets one had the feeling that the whole rhythm of the village was standing still, awaiting the rain. The Indians looked as if the Spaniards had been quartered in Jacaltenango a long time. We arrived at the *chimán's* house as he returned from work, and he bade us enter. The room was large and oblong in shape—in the center, against the wall, stood an altar with pictures of Catholic saints. In one corner a pregnant woman was grinding corn, and at the other end an older woman made *tortillas* over a fire that had a family of clay pots about it. From the beams hung meat and ears of corn, drying.

The old man asked what we wanted, and I told him I had a very important question to ask his *mixes*. So we smoked and looked each other over. He had great dignity, a kindly face, very much wrinkled, and small eyes full of power. He covered a table stool with his black wool coat and took out of the skin bag at his waist a red handkerchief which held the beans: My question: "A friend of mine who is far away has been ill. I have not heard from her, and I wish to know how she is."

He cast and told the *mixes*, and then said to me: "Your friend is not a Catholic but an Evangelist." I agreed. In Guatemala if you are not Catholic you are automatically *evangelista*. Then he said: "If she is not a Catholic, what can I tell you?"

I said: "What do you mean? She is a person with a heart and great faith." I was indignant.

He gave me a quizzical look and then continued his divination. Later I realized he was just testing me, for I learned that the Catholic priest in Jacaltenango was against *chimanes*. He then told me my friend was not sick, nor her family, but there was something wrong, something upsetting. If I wanted him to work for her I had to write her name on a piece of paper, which I did. He took the paper in his right hand, and as he walked toward the altar I saw him grasp the chain of office that was around his waist with his left hand. On the end of it hung a small carved piece of wood, so I knew that these *chimanes* also had chains. He reached up on top of the altar and put the paper into a small wooden box which stood there. I gave him twenty-five cents, with which he was pleased, and thanked him for relieving me of the anxiety I had had over my faraway friend. He repeated again that he would pray for her.

In the shack where we were to spend the night I fixed my baggage so the rats and mice could not get at it, and spread blankets on my cot, and so to bed. Don Pancho slept on a *petate* on the floor, with the *mozos*.

The next morning, hot and thoroughly bitten by fleas, we were up at five. We breakfasted on eggs poached in tomato juice, beans, *tortillas*, and coffee, and then went to the shoemaker's on the outskirts of the town. A stream flowed past his bamboo house. Near by were two wooden tanks; in each one was the blown-up skin of a cow. One tank held lime and the other tannic acid. Don Pancho explained that the skins cured two months in lime, and four in the acid. Then they were stretched, and dried in the sun. I ordered sandals for my two *mozos* as theirs were worn out and hurt their feet. As we watched the making of the sandals, which took scarcely half an hour, other Indians stopped by to order also, and

were astonished that I was giving a present of sandals to Domingo and Andrés. From there we went to the market, and I was not impressed by the Indians or their wares. The church was close by, so I went to see the priest. He was one of the American Maryknoll Fathers, a nice-looking man in his early thirties, who treated the Indians medically and did a great deal of good in this way. One of his jobs was to convert the Indians, and to do this he had to try to stamp out the *chimanes* and all the ancient customs. He told me what harm *chimanes* do, and gave as an example the *brujo* (sorcerer) who was being tried at that time at Huehuetenango for killing a man. I had been following the story in the paper.

"There is a lot of difference between a *brujo* and a *chimán*," I said. "If you call a *chimán* a *brujo* it is the greatest insult. A *chimán's* life is dedicated to doing only good, while a *brujo* is just the opposite." The priest looked at me and said nothing.

After lunch we went on our way to Santa Ana Huista, a two-hour ride over the mountains. The sun beat down, and the climb was difficult for horses and *mozos*. We passed flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle, and quite a few Todos Santos Indians carrying corn home to their pueblo. When we reached the top of the pass we joined the Indians resting under pine trees. A breeze cooled our hot bodies and, after a cigarette, down we plunged into an inferno of heat and dust. Away in the valley below we could see, like an oasis, a bright-green patch of sugar cane bounded by banana palms.

Santa Ana Huista, a Ladino pueblo, was lovely. The houses all had gardens of tropical foliage, flowers, and trees. The white church and plaza were neat and small in scale. The *fincas* near by grew sugar cane, bananas, oranges, limes, and tobacco. The whole town, however, was full of sickness, the children listless and pallid, with old faces and tired eyes. We stopped at a house

of a friend of Don Pancho's. It was just off the plaza. The husband and wife were busy making suits and dresses for the townspeople for Easter. Don Pancho asked if they would be kind enough to put us up for the night. They agreed, and the husband opened up the door into his patio for our horses to enter. It was small, and crowded by a couple of fruit trees and two enormous pigs. Opening off this was a large room which contained one double bed and a hammock. In the corner where we dumped our baggage were boxes of *panela*. This is a third-grade sugar, brown in color and used by Indians and poor Ladinos. Here we were to sleep with some of the family. As there were no restaurants, we went to the house of a friend of Don Pancho's where they served us eggs, *tortillas*, and coffee in the same room with a girl of sixteen who was sick in bed with flu.

The people we stayed with, a family of seven, had no outhouse; they used the small patio where the tall clay jar of drinking water stood, and which opened onto the kitchen. The pigs which were kept in the patio ate the human excrement, and the people ate the pigs. In no way did these people try to improve their living conditions. For six dollars they could have built an outhouse and, for little more, screened a few windows against the flies and malaria mosquitoes.

The following morning, before starting for the ruins, we went to see a collection of Mayan objects belonging to one of the rich *finca* owners of the town. He had some lovely things, all dug up in the vicinity. I hoped I would be able to get some at the *finca* where we were going.

The sun was back of us as we rode down in the shade through pine and cedar trees. After an hour's descent we passed over a large river and out into great heat. Our dusty trail climbed up along the side of the river, and as it ascended, the river sank into a deep gorge, until finally it was about one thousand feet below. The first

ruins we came to were the Cimientos (Foundations). They had an ideal situation for defense on a triangular peninsula. On one side was the great canyon, the river so far down that it was invisible, and on the other a sheer ravine. We dismounted and walked to the ruins. We came first to a high stone wall of defense, which we climbed over. On the other side we found many rectangular tombs. I say "tombs" because on top of each the stones had sunk in the center, and I assumed that they must have caved into an inner tomb. As I stood on top of one of these tombs, I had the greatest desire to investigate, but I curbed myself. We then walked down toward the end of the peninsula and came upon six or seven small pyramids formed in a circle with a temple on the tip end. From here we had a superb view, and I thought what a difficult place it would be to attack if the defenders could hold the high wall we had climbed. Looking down, I saw another small temple halfway down on a point jutting out. Domingo told me that his father-in-law had told him there were many caves near by with large stone idols in them, and stone balls the size of cartwheels. I could see that the ruins were of an early period, as there was no sign of the rough stones being cemented together.

On we went, passing bamboo huts and banana palms, and at last we came to the *finca* where the other ruins were. Fields and fields of sugar cane stretched around us, all very well irrigated.

The process of extracting the sugar was a primitive one. Under a thatched roof two slow-moving oxen were driven around and around by a small boy with a stick. The oxen turned a horizontal wheel, and this in turn operated a press into which a man fed sugar cane, one piece at a time. The juice was then poured by hand into a vat that hung above a fire. All the houses were of bamboo and surrounded by flowering bushes and trees of all kinds. The owner of the *finca* was away, but the foreman asked us to lunch. We accepted, but first we went to look at the ruins called

Pueblo Viejo, the Old Village. The foreman warned us that the land was not cleared, consequently full of ticks. We rode through the fields of cane and then up through dense, dry undergrowth, as high as our horses' heads, till we came to the gorge. Ruins were everywhere but hard to see because of the height and thickness of the growth. There were temples and pyramids, but of a later period than the other ruins, for here the stones were cut and held together by a kind of cement. I noticed two crosses on new graves close to a tree that grew out of a pile of ancient stones. These formed an altar, and on it were fresh flowers. The ruins were interesting, and I was sorry not to have time to study the plan. Because of the midday sun and the ticks, which turned out to be chiggers, we did not explore much.

The foreman's house was beside a brook. Here I washed and tried to remove the little red insects. We had lunch on the porch, and it was carried from the bamboo cookshack by a maid, the foreman's sick-looking wife. Lunch consisted of beans, *tortillas*, and coffee. The foreman was pleasant but not very bright. He had a bad case of malaria, but I noticed that there was no netting on his windows. He told me many Indians had formerly lived near the ruins, but they had been driven off ten years ago when the Ladino owner started cultivating the land. Also, a man down the road had unearthed a number of curious objects, one of them a metal ring with a sun symbol on it. I asked him how much I owed for lunch. He said: "Nothing." Yet he charged Domingo and Andrés ten cents, which I paid them later. We started back immediately, for we planned to return to Jacaltenango that night—a long trip. On the way we stopped at the house of the man who had the ring, but he was not there. I was disappointed, for I wanted to see what he had found in the ruins.

The trip back was dreadful, what with the heat and the dust. As we rode along I could feel the ticks making themselves at home

under my skin. The mountain we had descended in shade was now in full sunlight. As we toiled upward a friendly Indian joined us. He was on foot, driving two mules. He told us he made his living by packing corn, black beans, and avocados to the coast and bringing back dried fish. We arrived in Jacaltenango in time for supper and bed.

The next day brought more agony because of the heat and dust, the ticks, and the ten-hour ride. As I rode along I thought how really disappointing the whole trip had been. The ruins, except for the first ones, were almost hidden. Not one Mayan object had I seen at the *finca*, not even the ring the overseer had told me about.

In the mail that greeted me on my homecoming was an invitation from Mary and Julio asking me to Chichicastenango for Easter. As I had to go to Guatemala City in any event to check my passport and see the doctor, I decided to do both in one trip. Easter meant nothing to the Indians of Todos Santos anyway, so I would take off in a few days.

Margarita came to call with Marcelina, knowing I had sent Basilia over to Domingo's. We sat and smoked, and now and then Marcelina would take a puff of her mother's cigarette. She was always adorable and well behaved. Margarita the troublemaker was personally neat and clean, she kept her children and house in the same condition.

"Señorita," said Margarita, "your old maid, Simona, is being supported by Juan. He has given her clothes and each night they get drunk together."

"What of his wife and children?" I asked.

"He has left them, but he may go back. His wife is very beautiful, and they have three children. Señorita, even though Juan supports Simona, she wants to come back to work for you."

"But Margarita, I have no thought of taking Simona back. I am very contented with Basilia; she is like my daughter. Even if Basilia were not here, I would not take back Simona. You can tell her for me that I have no such idea."

That evening as I was sitting by the fire, Basilia came into the room with tears in her eyes.

"Señorita, I am happy here; Carlos is happy; and now Simona wants to come back to you. Señorita, I will water your garden, I will take care of your house when you are away. I will put the chickens in at night and feed Tequila. Señorita, I do want to stay with you."

"Basilia, I am fond of you and Carlos. You do your work well, and I like to feel when I go away on a trip, like the one I am going on in a few days, that there is someone responsible in my house. Who told you that I was going to take Simona back?"

"Simona herself told me that she was returning to you, and Margarita told me that if Simona wished to return, you would get rid of me."

"Don't let Margarita worry you with her talk, Basilia. As long as you do your work well you can stay here. Now go to bed and forget it."

She left the room with a sweet smile, Carlos sound asleep on her back. I was worried about the little boy, for, though I had been giving him cod liver oil and vitamins he had not thrown off his cough, which he had had since I first saw him.

The next morning I was writing in my room and Basilia was washing at the *pila*. I heard Margarita call out something to Basilia from above, and then commenced a fight between the two, in Mam—such screaming as I've never heard before! Looking through the window, I saw Basilia scoop up water in her hand and take it in her mouth as she listened to the insults Margarita was hurling down at her. She then spat the water back into the *pila*

with an expression of disgust on her face and screamed insults in return at Margarita. It was really funny, but I controlled my face, opened the window, and asked Basilia what it was all about.

"Señorita, Margarita is a troublemaker. She told Simona what you said, and now she is trying to make trouble between all three of us."

By this time Margarita was in my yard, screaming at the top of her voice and shaking her fist at Basilia, her face purple and her little wicked eyes gleaming with rage. All the neighbors were out watching, and also the passers-by. I walked out with all the dignity I could muster and said: "Margarita, that is enough. You are always making trouble, first with Simona, now with Basilia. I want peace in my house and in my yard, and I want no more of this." She turned and climbed back up to her house.

A little later, Patrona came over to get water from the *pila*. I was washing my hair in a tin basin I had put on a chair near the *pila*. Patrona, in her quiet way, told both Basilia and me that, since Margarita had money and felt she was "someone," she always made trouble. Margarita's keen ears caught even this, and from above she began screaming insults all over again, but this time at Patrona. With soap in my eyes and hair dripping, I shouted the shouting down and told Margarita to stop immediately. She said she would do what she wished from her own yard. So the fight continued, and I retired to dry my hair. I noticed there was one phrase they used over and over that seemed to be the greatest insult of all. I asked Basilia what it meant. She was too embarrassed to tell me.

When Don Pancho came I told him of the fight and the bad feeling between Margarita and Basilia, and that I did not like the idea of leaving the next day with Margarita and Basilia at swords' points.

"Señorita Matilda," he said, "why don't you go to the *Alcalde*

and report her. Margarita is a dangerous woman. Once she hit Satero so hard in the face that it took him a month to get over it. Another day, in her butcher shop, she knocked Simona flat on the floor with one blow. She is a wicked woman and a dangerous one. You must go to the *Alcalde*, especially as you are going away."

I thanked Don Pancho and told him I would think it over. After he left I sat and smoked, when suddenly a bright idea came to me and, knowing Margarita as well as I did, I decided to carry it out.

When it was just growing dark I saw three elderly Indians and a Ladino who works for Satero enter Satero's house. This was the audience I needed. I waited a short time and then climbed the steep ascent to their house, walked in, and sat down near the fire which was built in one corner of the room on the earthen floor.

From where I sat, I faced Margarita and Satero, and they both greeted me as though the scene of the afternoon had not occurred. We talked of my proposed trip on the morrow, and I waited until I felt the right moment had come. Looking at Satero I said: "I have come here tonight to talk to you and Margarita. You are my neighbors, but are you my friends? As you know, I am very fond of your children." Then I looked Margarita right in the eyes and said: "Margarita, you have too large a mouth, you talk too much. You make trouble. You are a troublemaker. I do not like it. I want peace in my house, in my yard, and with my neighbors. With your loud mouth, peace is impossible."

Satero said: "Yes, Señorita, Margarita does talk too much."

To my surprise Margarita said in a sincere way: "I know I talk too much, but from my heart I do not think to make trouble, for I have much heart."

I thought: "Like hell you have!"

“Señorita, I do not want to make trouble. I think of you as my friend. After tonight I will not talk.”

The onlookers loved the whole scene, for Margarita was what they called *muy brava* with them all.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I enjoyed Guatemala City, for it was such a contrast to my life in Todos Santos. To soak in a hot bath and to sleep between white sheets was the essence of sensual delight; to go to the movies, to dress up and dine with friends, and to talk the English language gave me intense pleasure. But at the end of five days, after I had done all my errands and been checked over by the doctor, my thoughts turned to Todos Santos. I was more than ready to take the bus that left at five in the morning for Chichicastenango, where I would spend the night and Easter Sunday with Mary and Julio.

It was good to see them again. They told me some new jokes, teased me a bit, then got down to the serious business of showing me how their clinic had grown.

I was amazed at the work the clinic was doing and the number of children they examined and treated. The Guatemalan Bureau of Sanitation had contributed a nurse and the doctor at Quiché came to the clinic once a week. My friends not only gave money for the upkeep but also the time they could spare from their work at the inn. Friends of theirs, as well as some tourists, also contributed money. Mary and Julio gave me plenty of medicine for my Indians and lots of sound medical advice.

Over the cocktails that evening I told them that my doctor in Guatemala City had encouraged me greatly in my medical work with the Indians, even though I told him that my only previous training had been working in a children's ward in a New York hospital when I was a debutante, and two Red Cross first-aid courses. He had given me serum and vaccine for them, and lots of other medical supplies, and offered to advise me by mail if I had difficult cases. He also told me that there was no danger of

my being sued if a patient died, as long as I had not accepted money in payment. This rather relieved me for I had wondered about it. But in contrast to this, his American-trained nurse had asked me if I realized the risk I was taking, treating the Indians. If one of them died, she had pointed out, they might all turn against me and kill me. I must say I had thought of this.

"Your friend the manager of the hotel in Guatemala City," I went on, "told me of a tourist, an amateur magician, who had gone to Todos Santos with a guide last year. He showed some of his tricks to the *Todosanteros* as he had done at many other pueblos. The next morning, early, the *Intendente* told the man's guide that they must leave at once as the Indians were in an uproar. They believed the tourist was a black magician and would bring harm on the pueblo and to the people."

"You had better be careful, Maud," said Julio, "and if you feel any danger, take off immediately."

I said I would, and asked Mary if there was any chance of her paying me a visit soon in my mountain home. She told me that they were so busy with tourists, she doubted very much if she could get away. But when she did she would bring everything that was necessary for us to vaccinate and inoculate the children of both the girls' and boys' schools.

It was true, tourists were everywhere. I had forgotten about tourists. On Easter morning I went to Mass with Mary, and afterward I stood in front of the church watching what went on. Indians, kneeling on the steps, burned their candles and prayed. Wrapped in the smoke of the incense and the prayers of their ancestors, the "ancient ones," they were oblivious of the many tourists who were milling about. Click-click went the cameras held in tourists' hands, souvenirs to take home of pagans praying. The white faces peered at the dark ones as though they were animals in the zoo. They had no respect for these Indians or their ancient

customs. For the first time in my life I was ashamed of my fellow countrymen, and shocked that they could be so insensitive and ill bred.

Smiles and flowers for me from the children, who in return received candy. For Basilia a new skirt and apron; for little Victoria and for Marcelina, tiny aprons, exact duplicates of their mothers'; for Domingo and his two eldest sons, red bandanas, and the same for Chimán Calmo. And for the corn, for the people and the pueblo—the rains; for they came at last, upon my return. The sky opened and down poured the water for a good two hours. The road past my house was a raging torrent carrying rocks and debris with it. The yard turned into a lake in a few minutes and overflowed into the house. I took firewood, and earth from window boxes, and made dikes while Basilia swept the water out of the house. The chickens and Tequila ran in and out adding to the confusion. With a hoe I dug a trench back of the kitchen so that the water had an outlet. I was drenched to the skin but loved the excitement, and so did Basilia. When it was over I saw that all my newly planted seeds were washed away and the porch and yard were a mess, but luckily the rest of my garden was unhurt. By now I had spinach, chard, beets, carrots, string beans, lettuce, and onions. We were luckier than most neighbors, who lost young chickens and baby turkeys. One lost a kitten.

The people told me that this storm ushered in the rainy season, lasting until the end of October. During this time many Indians go to the coast or work their land in the low country. There are no *fiestas* or *costumbres* till the fall. All the Indians have to do is to keep their corn well weeded and free from animals that might harm it. I decided that the best time to take the six weeks' vacation that was due me would be in June, getting back in July.

By nightfall I began to feel peculiar, and so did Basilia. Either

it was just a chill caught during the storm or we were both coming down with flu. Anyway, I began to feel lonesome and sorry for myself and I thought: "What if this is pneumonia? I could die up here and no one would come to see me, and maybe they wouldn't even miss me." I went to the medicine chest and took out the thermometer, and before I could get it in my mouth, dropped it and broke it. Probably the best thing that could have happened, for I never knew how high my fever was. That night Basilia and I each took two aspirins and a strong hot whiskey toddy. The next morning, no fever, but I felt weak, and laughed at my thoughts of the night before, saying to myself: "Maud Oakes, you are a true Gemini; Mercury is certainly your planet. You are either in the heights or the depths. How about finding a middle place?"

As I sat mulling over my bad qualities, and what day I would leave for my vacation, Simona suddenly turned up. I invited her to smoke with me and have a cup of coffee. She had a black eye, and I could see she was in a bad nervous state. Her hand trembled so she could not hold a cup, and she could not sit still a second.

"Señorita," she said, "I don't know why I ever left you."

"I know very well why you left me, and so do you, Simona," I said.

"Señorita, Juan will not give up his wife, so we are not going off together. Last night we quarrelled. He was *bravo* and he gave me this black eye. The old woman in whose house I have been staying wants me to move. She says I have too many men. Señorita, I am so unhappy; if only my mother were alive. Señorita, I have no money to pay the old woman. I owe her four dollars. Will you lend it to me and I will pay you back in six months?" She said all this very fast, and with downcast eyes.

"Simona," I said, "if you bring the old woman here I will pay

her the four dollars, but I will not give it to you for I know that you would buy *aguardiente* with it, and not pay her."

By Simona's expression I could see that she was not pleased, but she left and within five minutes returned with the old woman, who looked like a crow.

"Señorita," said Simona, "here she is, and I made a mistake, it is three dollars that I owe her."

I paid the old crow, who hopped about with delight at receiving money which she thought she never would get.

"I am happy that Juan won't go off with Simona," said Patrona. She had come over after Simona left, and I told her of our conversation. "Simona is a bad girl. She likes to go after men who have families. There are plenty of men in Todos Santos without wives. Why doesn't she choose one of them?"

Basilía, who had returned and was listening to us, said: "Señorita, have you noticed that I see very little of Simona now? And if there is a dance or a *fiesta*, I go for a short time but I don't drink."

"Yes, Basilía, I have noticed, and I am very pleased with you. I am contented that you and Carlos are here with me, and not out drinking with Simona."

That night as darkness came I shut the shutters and lit the fire as usual and invited Basilía to have hot soup and toasted *tortillas* with me. After this we smoked and talked and she asked me the following questions.

"Is it true, Señorita," she began, "that if a *natural* like me went to your country they would slit her throat?"

"Why, Basilía, where did you ever hear a thing like that?" I asked.

"All my life I have been told this, Señorita."

A few days before, when I had spoken of a friend who had died, she had acted surprised.

"Why, Señorita," she said, "I thought no one ever died in your country."

When I had questioned her she told me she thought only Indians and some Ladinos died, but *gringos* lived forever.

"Señorita," she now asked, "do you know when a person is honest, and can you tell when he lies?"

"I usually can tell by the face. I knew Simona stole food from me, and she lied to me many times. You also lie at times, Basilia; it is written all over you, and it's so stupid of you. When people are honest with me I have respect for them and help them. But if they lie, like most Ladinos, I will never help them."

During all this Basilia had covered her mouth and nose with her hand and looked at me with her big dark eyes. This gesture was characteristic of Basilia whenever she was embarrassed or self-conscious. As I studied her face I thought she would be quite beautiful if she did not have such a low hairline, though she considered her hairline and her thick hair a great sign of beauty. Simona had always complained of her sparse hair and asked many times if I could not give her something to make it thick and long.

The next day, late in the afternoon, Chimán Calmo and his wife came to call just as it began to rain very hard. At the same moment a present of a cake came from Doña Raquel. I invited them in and lit a fire and sent Basilia for Patrona and Domingo, for I decided we would have a party and eat the cake. We were six adults and five children. The rain without and the fire within made us all feel warm and cozy.

I told my friends that I had made up my mind to return to my own country for six weeks to see my family; that I would leave for Huehuetenango in ten days and from there take the bus to Chichicastenango to see my friend Mary, and then go to Guatemala City, whence I would leave for the United States.

Domingo looked at me with his wide, childlike eyes and said:

“Señorita, when you get to your country maybe you won’t return. Oh, Señorita, I hope you will want to come back.”

“I will return, Domingo. Basilia and Carlos will stay in the house and look after all my things and the garden in my absence. When I return I shall bring you all presents.”

As we were talking, Ponciano Ramírez entered. He took off his hat in a most gallant way, and we shook his arthritic hand. He joined our circle about the fire. Basilia gave him coffee and cake and I gave him a cigarette. He thanked me and thanked God, which seems to be a custom only of the older generation. His face was most interesting—my idea of what a Tibetan priest would look like—a long face, rather high cheekbones, very intelligent eyes, and a goatee.

Chimán Calmo asked how I would get to my country, so I told them that I would fly from Guatemala City to Nueva York, the city where I lived in the United States. We then talked of flying, a subject the Indians love but can’t as yet quite understand as they have never seen a plane except far away in the air, or from pictures in magazines.

Domingo and his family left first, then the *chimán* and his wife—all of them with a handshake, or a pat on the shoulder, and verbal thanks. Ponciano Ramírez stayed on and we smoked and talked. He spoke Spanish fluently and was most friendly. He asked me to call him Tata Julián, which was what his friends called him. Then he told me his eyes bothered him a great deal. I examined them and could see that they were infected. I washed them out with boric acid solution and then put in them the 5 per cent sulfa ointment that the doctor had given me. I told him to come every day and that I thought I might be able to help him. He thanked me and left, with delight on his face, as I had made him a present of a *Saturday Evening Post*.

The next morning I met the *chimán* on the path to the post

office. I asked him if he would cast the beans for me to see if my journey would be a straight one or not. He told me to come to his house any day.

"I will come tomorrow," I said, "as it is the day *K'mané*. But what time of day is best for you, Tata Chimán? I know it is a day of *costumbre*."

"Come late in the afternoon, Señorita Matilda, and I shall await you," said he.

At the post office I told Cheppi that I was going home for my vacation and instructed him to forward my mail. In all, I would be gone six weeks. I was leaving Basilia in charge of my house, garden, and animals and I hoped she would behave herself.

"Señorita, don't you worry," said Cheppi, "Basilia is a good girl, and I have told her many times how lucky she is to be with you and to have such a home for her son Carlos. As you know, Señorita, Octavio, my son, is also the son of Basilia. Simona is a very bad influence on Basilia. It was that Simona who taught her to drink. I was always good to Basilia, for she is the mother of my child. I gave her a house, food and clothes for Octavio. We were happy together, but then she began to drink with Simona and go with other men. Finally she left me. Don't you worry, Señorita, I shall talk to Basilia and see that she takes care of your house."

"You are very kind to do this for me, Cheppi, and I thank you," I said. But I was amused that in his story of his relations with Basilia he never mentioned that the real reason Basilia took to drink and other men was because Cheppi brought back from Huehuetenango a Ladino girl to live with him.

The following afternoon I left the house and started up the hill past Margarita's. She was sitting outside with her children about her, working on a *huipil*.

"Where are you going, Señorita?" she asked, as she did every time I passed her house.

"I am going to my *chimán's* to ask him a question about my journey," I answered.

"That is good," said Margarita. "We shall be sad when you go away, *Señorita*."

"I will be thinking of you and your family when I am far, far away," I replied and continued on my way.

The clouds had already come into the valley and the mountains on both sides were hidden. Against this cloud background were several women at the public *pila* filling their water jars, washing large leaves to roll their tamales in, and gossiping. They looked lovely in their dark-blue skirts and colorful *huipiles*. We greeted each other and I took the narrow path that led to the *chimán's* through his corn field. Besides very sturdy, healthy-looking corn he had black bean plants with bright vermilion blossoms.

The *chimán* owned two houses. The large one was occupied by his daughter and her family. It was out of this house that his wife and grandchild came to greet me. She led me to the small house where the *chimán* awaited me. Entering, we found him already seated at his table of *costumbre* which was in his special little *corral* opposite the door which faced east, like the one in the house near Chimaltenango. In another corner was a platform of wood which was their bed, and in the middle of the room a fire burned beneath water boiling in a clay pot. All kinds of odds and ends hung from the low ceiling or on the walls. The room was so small that I wondered how he could receive many people, and the walls were so full of wide cracks I wondered how they kept warm.

The *chimán* greeted me and took out his beans, which were wrapped in their sacred cloth. This was made of hand-woven cotton, white, with four red lines in it which probably represented the four *Alcaldes del Mundo*. He put a cloth on the table and kissed the beans which he held in his hands, and then held them up as if offering them to the gods and at the same time mumbled some-

thing in his beard. He then emptied them onto the cloth in the center of the table. They were a cadmium red and glowed like uncut jewels. Mixed in with the beans were two coins and four pieces of quartz, two small and two large. The two large pieces of quartz he stood at opposite corners of the table, and they were like guardians watching what went on.

The *chimán* knew my question, which was: "Will everything be all right on my journey, and will I find my family in good health?" He laid his hands on the beans and began moving them around as he prayed. The whole movement of his hands and the beans was rhythmical and soothing, and his prayer like a chant. I felt myself relaxing and becoming part of this prayer and movement. The little grandchild and the wife sat silently watching. I heard him mention the four *Alcaldes*, Santo Todos Santos, and my name, so I gathered he was asking my question. Then with his right hand he separated a handful from the rest and counted them off in groups of four. If the pile that remained was an even number they were put to the right, if odd to the left. This he did twenty times, repeating my question and talking to the beans, whom he addressed as *Nana T'ui*, which meant, I gathered, that his spirit was female. When this was finished he counted carefully both the even and the odd piles, naming each by one of twenty days of the Mam calendar.

"Señorita Matilda, there are more beans in the even pile so this is favorable. Everything is good; your road is direct and you will find your family well, and on your return also your road will be direct."

I thanked the old *chimán* and laid twenty-five cents on the table, which pleased him, as ten cents is the ordinary fee. I also gave him and his wife each a handful of cigarettes.

"Señorita, I shall pray for you that your journey will be safe and that you will return soon. Tomorrow there will be a *fiesta* in the

church, a *fiesta* to celebrate the new roof. Why don't you come and burn your candle?"

"Thank you, Tata Chimán. I feel happy about my journey now. Also, thank you for telling me about the *fiesta*. I shall come and burn my candle." As I left they patted me on my shoulders and I reciprocated and then returned to my house, but not without telling Margarita, and then Basilia, what the *chimán* had said.

The next morning I could hear Patrona beating cotton next door. Many times I had watched her, now I visualized her removing the seeds from the cotton, pulling it apart, and laying it on pieces of sacking. Then, with her two double-pronged oak sticks, she beat the cotton in a fast rhythmical movement very much like a man beating a drum. After this she carded it.

Basilia was talking to her son in a happy voice as she ground corn. The whole village hummed with preparation, for this day was market day.

I heard Basilia notifying the *caporales* who worked for Satero that she was about to take a bath. She filled a basin full of warm water and retired to the garden. Putting the basin in the sun she stripped to the waist and proceeded to bathe herself, knowing that the *caporales* were lining the fence. They called out several remarks to her which, I am sure, were naughty, as she would answer with a toss of her head and they would all roar with laughter. By this time she had quite an audience and I must say she looked lovely, her skin shining in the sun, in contrast to her blue-black hair, which was dripping wet and hanging down her back. To climax the bath she proceeded to powder herself all over with a gardenia bath powder that I had given her.

Margarita paced above biting her lip in annoyance that Basilia had such an admiring audience and that Satero, her husband, was part of it.

When Basilia was all fixed up with a new ribbon in her hair

we went to market, both of us carrying baskets. The marimba was playing in front of the municipal building as it always did on market day, and this in itself was gay and festive. After we had bought all we needed, I told Basilia that I was going to the church, that she could carry the things back to the house and then have an hour with her friends. As Saturday was the day all the Indians came to town, I knew that Basilia would want to join them and gossip.

As I approached the church I could hear another marimba playing within because this was a *fiesta* day to celebrate the completion of the reroofing of the church. Chimán Calmo was inside with some elderly men. He greeted me and I told him that it would give me great pleasure to buy four large candles for the altar and that I would send them to the *Convento* by Basilia. He thanked me and I returned to the market to buy four big ones for the *chimán* and four small ones for myself. Then I went to the post office, where again I saw the *chimán*. I gave him the large candles. He thanked me many times and, seeing the small ones, asked when I was going to the church.

"As soon as I mail this letter," I said.

"I will await you in the church, Señorita," said he.

In a few minutes I re-entered the church and the *chimán* was waiting for me just inside the door. Taking my small candles in his hand he said: "Have no fear, Señorita, come to the altar with me."

As we walked toward it I noticed there were many Indians and they all were watching us. The *chimán* stood in front of the altar with the candles in his hand, and I knelt. He prayed over them and held them up. Then he turned and looked at me several times as he prayed. When this was finished he lit the candles and prayed some more and then put them in a box full of sand especially made to hold them. I experienced a wonderful feeling in

the church and a great peace within myself. I thanked the *chimán*, and he told me that later he would light the large candles and say a prayer for me, and ask that my journey would be a safe one and that I would return soon to the pueblo.

On my way home it began to rain just as I bumped into Don Pancho, who told me in an undertone that he had made great friends with Chimán Pascual Pablo; that the *chimán* had given him the names of the twenty days of their calendar and had answered the questions I had told Don Pancho to ask. As a present he had given the *chimán* aspirin to give his patients, and he had suggested that Pascual Pablo should teach him, Don Pancho, how to be a *chimán* in exchange for medical advice and free medicine.

“Señorita, he did not say no, so maybe some day he will. He dresses like a Ladino and is more open to our ways than other *chimanés*.”

I congratulated Don Pancho and went on home in a hurry as the rain was increasing.

After lunch the sky had cleared and I was sitting in the garden in the sun, when old Chimán Calmo entered all out of breath from his climb.

“Señorita Matilda, your four big candles are burning on the altar, I put them there and I lit them, and I have come to tell you, so that you will return to the church.”

I thanked him for telling me and said that I would go to the church later. His face looked so disappointed when he left that I knew I had not done the right thing, that I should have gone with him. When I thought of the effort of the old man climbing the hill just to tell me, I knew I must go right away. So Basilia and I went together. The church was crowded with Indians. They had three marimbas this time, but at the moment only one was playing. Chimán Calmo and some of the prayermakers sat on a bench to the left of the altar, on which were burning eight large

candles, four in each of the two lovely old candelabra. In front knelt the *Alcalde Municipal* praying, with a candle in his hand. My *chimán* looked so pleased when he saw me that I knew I had now done the right thing. We knelt and prayed, and as I arose from my knees I was horrified to see Tequila enter the church. With his unsteady gait, due to his still having fits, he went straight to an offering that a family had made on the floor. The candles about it were just flickering out, so he calmly ate the offerings of ground corn and cacao laid on a few corn leaves. An Indian back of me roared with laughter, saying that Tequila wished to talk to Santo Santiago. The only way I could get him out was to lead him out myself. This I did by making a leash and collar out of my belt.

As I passed Margarita's house, leading Tequila, I saw two large vultures making a power dive on her meat which was drying in the sun on a line. I screamed and the whole family came rushing out of the house, screaming also. The birds flew away in a panic and we all laughed and Tequila barked.

Later in the afternoon I was packing on the porch when an old man called Feliciano came to see me about his daughter.

"Señorita," he said, "she has had heart palpitations since she was struck by lightning a month ago."

I questioned him and found out that his daughter lived half a day's distance away by horse, that she was twenty-eight years old and was not actually struck by lightning but was in a house that was struck. Ever since this time she had been ill. Yesterday his daughter's best friend had died. As he said this, the old man looked around to see if anyone was listening. I suggested that we go in the house and have a smoke. After we had lit our cigarettes and he was sure that no one could hear, he said in a low voice: "Since yesterday, since the death of my daughter's friend, all the neighbors have been saying that my daughter was the cause of

her friend's death. They say she is full of the lightning that struck her. For this reason she has killed her friend. When my daughter heard what they were saying she had an attack, and Señorita, she will die, I am sure. She can't sleep at night and she has attacks all the time. Señorita, can't you help my daughter?"

"Feliciano," I said, "it is very difficult for me to give medicine without seeing your daughter; as I am going to my country in a few days I can't make the trip to see her now. But if your daughter follows the directions I shall give you, she will sleep, have no heart palpitations, and the effects of the lightning will leave her."

"Señorita, she will do as you say," he said.

While we had been talking, a bright idea had occurred to me. I said with great force: "Feliciano, you tell your daughter, and you tell your neighbors, that I say your daughter did not kill her friend. The friend died because God sent for her—it was her time. Your daughter is to take one of these red pills [seconal] every night before she goes to bed. During the day she is to take two of these [large black pills that contained iron], one with her morning coffee and one with her afternoon coffee. This medicine she is to take for five days and during this time she must observe the color of her *caca* and if it is black [I knew it would be, from the iron] it is the sickness from the lightning leaving her body. In three days you must come to me with a bottle, and I will give you medicine to cleanse out your daughter. This she is to take on the fifth day." (It would be castor oil.)

"Señorita, she will do as you say and I will tell the neighbors. How much do I owe you, Señorita?"

"Nothing, but if your daughter is cured you can bring me an egg." After he left I had a good laugh for I knew that the evacuation of her bowels from the black pills would be very black indeed.

Domingo followed me around like a faithful dog. He had the

idea in his head that I would not return, and kept repeating over and over:

"Señorita, what if you do not come back? You may like your country so much that you will not return. Your family may be so ill that you will stay with them."

"Domingo, I shall return. The *chimán* says that I shall return. If I were not returning I would not leave my things here. I expect you and Patrona to keep watch on my house while I am away, and when I return I shall bring you all presents."

The day before I left, Feliciano came to see me with four eggs as a present. He told me the neighbors had stopped talking, and his daughter was much better and was sleeping. Since taking the medicine she had had only one attack. I gave him the castor oil and he went off with such gratitude in his eyes that I felt a bit guilty at the trick I had played.

That night I told Basilia that if she guarded my house well, fed Tequila and the chickens, and looked after the garden, I would bring her back a lovely present and also one for Carlos. Every Friday, the day before market day, she was to go to Don Pancho, who would give her the money for her food and her wages. And for anything that came up in which she needed advice she was to go to Don Pancho or Cheppi.

"Never fear, Señorita," said Basilia, "I will look after everything." Then she looked at me with her big eyes and said, "Señorita, the house will be sad without you. Carlos and I will be sad."

As we were talking, Tata Julián tapped on the window and Basilia let him in. He had come for the last of his daily treatments. His eyes were so much better, I was very pleased. He had brought with him a battered old flashlight he wanted me to fix. I knew that it was a hint to bring him back a new one but I promised nothing. I gave him a pile of magazines and he left smiling, wishing me a happy journey and a safe return.

The next morning at dawn, with two extra *mozos* to carry all the luggage, I took off. All my neighbors bade me good-by and a safe return. Basilia and Patrona looked sad and I had a twinge in my heart, for by this time I knew that I really loved my Indian friends.

PART II

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It felt very strange indeed to be dumped from the peace of Todos Santos into the madness of New York City. It had taken me twenty hours of actual travelling by horse, taxi, and bus to get from Todos Santos to Guatemala City. The plane trip from there to New York had taken only seventeen.

The first week I felt separated from my family and friends as though by a thick pane of glass. They could not reach me and I could not reach them and yet we could see each other. It took me a long time to adjust myself to the rhythm of the city and to get used to the expression on people's faces of discontent, hopelessness, strain, and boredom.

After a few weeks my thoughts had already returned to Todos Santos and I looked forward to my departure with pleasure. When people would say to me: "How brave you are! How can you live there all alone? Aren't you afraid, living among those savages?" I said: "It takes more courage to live in New York City than in Todos Santos." What I thought and did not say was: "We are the savages, not the Indians."

Soon I followed my thoughts and was flying through space en route to Guatemala.

With an ear-to-ear smile Domingo met me at the bus in Huehuetenango. He could hardly wait to tell me how much he and his family had missed me and how sad the house had been without me.

"Señorita, Basilia has kept your house in order. She did not drink with Simona and has had no men in your house. But she has done no work in your garden. She sold your vegetables to Ladinos," he added indignantly, "or gave them away. When Andrés and I saw the state of your garden we were so sad we

weeded it. Simona has been drunk most of the time and has had one man after another. Our little baby almost died and now the middle one is sick. Margarita has been *brava* to us all, but there have been no fights between her and Basilia. Señorita, we are happy that you have come home. Julio asks every day: 'Where is *Nula?*'"

The next morning at dawn we took off for Todos Santos in the usual broken-down station wagon—Domingo, another Indian who had asked for a ride, the wife of the Ladino Secretary of Todos Santos, her baby, with a bad chest cold, and myself—all solidly packed in with clay pots from the Huehuetenango market, candy, cigarettes, a live white turkey, a case of medical supplies from Guatemala City, and all my luggage.

During the drive I told Domingo about the details of my flight, the inside of the plane, the way the crew ran it; his large eyes widened when I described the dinner that had been served me.

Of course all of this had to be relayed in Mam to Andrés and the two *mozos* who met us at Paquix with the horses.

As we rode down the valley through the wild flowers toward the pueblo, I was struck by the beauty of the corn. Such a great height, and so heavily laden with ears! Not like the sparse corn I had seen on the bus from Guatemala to Huehuetenango. Passing Indians greeted me, saying: "You have come home, Señorita, to your pueblo." On the outskirts of Todos Santos several of Domingo's children met us, and by the time we reached my house the neighborhood had arrived. Basilia smiled self-consciously, and Carlos peeked out shyly from behind her back. Tequila jumped all over me. The house looked clean and was filled with flowers that Don Pancho and his wife had sent. The vegetable garden was in bad shape, it is true, but I was glad to see that the pansies and zinnias I had seeded were flowering. Only one white chick had hatched from the nine eggs that the hen was setting on when

I left. Domingo said it was because Basilia did not have "setting hands," but she explained that it was due to an earthquake.

For the next two days I was besieged by callers, both Indian and Ladino.

Red is the Indian's favorite color, and this had influenced me in my purchases. To Basilia I gave a red and white plastic waterproof apron, red stone earrings, an elaborate ribbon for her hair, a red comb, and perfumed soap. She immediately rushed to the mirror to put the ribbon in her hair and the earrings on, and then dressed Carlos in his new clothes. I had brought him sweaters and overalls. To Domingo I gave a bright red plastic flashlight, which he adored, and to Andrés a machete, as I knew that in the family there was only one old blade without a handle.

"Andrés," I said, "I am giving you this machete because you are now a man, and with this you can help earn money for your family."

He took the blade, tested its sharpness, then snapped his finger against the steel to see if it rang true. Then he grasped the handle to try its weight and balance. With each swing he stood more erect, his chest swelling with manly pride.

"Is it too heavy for you, Andrés?" I asked.

With a grand manner he said: "Certainly not, Señorita." Then with a shy, sweet, almost afraid-to-express-his-feelings smile, he said: "Señorita, thank you, thank you," and rushed from the room. In ten minutes he returned with a young rooster in his arms as a present for me. I was deeply touched for I knew it was his personal chicken and a chicken means a lot to a poor Indian.

To the women and girls I brought things from the ten-cent store like plastic aprons, ribbons, colored combs, jewelry, soap, and the colored rickrack that they sew on their *huipiles*. To the men and boys, flashlights, knives, bandanas for their heads. To Mar-

garita I gave scissors, and to Satero a butcher knife. I had to laugh to myself; sharp things for those who are sharp.

To my three Ladino friends, Cheppi, Don Pancho and Alonzo the carpenter, I gave flashlights, and to Don Pancho's wife an apron and a sweater for their new baby.

The next morning old Chimán Calmo came to call. He looked very well and seemed as pleased to see me as I was to see him. If his eyes were not so close together, I thought, he would be a very handsome old man. I told him that what he had foretold with the *mixes* had come true, and he beamed with pleasure.

"Señorita," he said, "there are good people and bad people in this world. You are good, and Margarita who lives above you is bad."

I gave him the flashlight I had brought him, and he held it between his hands and prayed, motioning toward me in his prayers. He touched the ground with his hand, then made the sign of the cross, touching his forehead, solar plexus, and each side of his chest. He then kissed the flashlight and held it up to the gods, then toward me, mentioning in his mumblings Santo Santiago, Santo Cristo, Santo Tomás, and *K'mané*. Then I gave him a ribbon and a comb for his wife and told him that it was a custom in my country to celebrate with one's friends a safe return from a long journey like mine; that it would give me pleasure if he and his wife would come this evening for coffee, cake, and *aguardiente*. He accepted ceremoniously and left.

In the middle of the afternoon he returned and, with great solemnity, drew from his sack two beautiful ears of yellow corn and two potatoes, and presented them to me, saying: "Señorita Matilda, these are for you, from my garden, and there are more potatoes in the sack."

"Thank you, Tata Chimán. This means a great deal to me; the first corn of the year, and from your garden." I admired the ears

and he was pleased. And then he asked: "Are there any Ladinos coming tonight?" And when I told him no, he said he would come. All the time we were talking, the boys from the school stared through my window at the *chimán* and myself, and scratched on the panes with their nails. Seeing that I was annoyed, the *chimán* ordered them away and they fled. He himself left soon, as it had started to rain.

That afternoon two different Ladino families came to call and sat staring at me as if I had just descended from Mars. They were always uneasy in my house and never knew when to go home. However, by six o'clock the coast was clear. Domingo and his whole family arrived, and then the *chimán* with his wife and grandchild and an Indian called Anselmo. We were seven adults and many children. The *chimán* sat nearest the fire, his long legs in their red-and-white striped pants outstretched toward the heat. The others addressed him as "Chimán" with great respect, and for the whole evening he held the center of the stage. His little old wife, with but a single tooth in her head, sat next to me and kept patting me. We all drank *aguardiente* out of the same glass. It loosened tongues, especially Domingo's. His face beaming with good will and pride, he recounted for the third time my trip in the plane. After two glasses apiece of *aguardiente*, everyone began to joke. The *chimán* with a gleam in his eye said: "Two drinks are enough for me. If I take one more I shall remain with the Señorita and ask her to be my new wife." This was greeted with roars of laughter from everyone, and we spent the rest of the evening drinking coffee and eating the cake I had brought with me from Huehuetenango.

Basilia's Carlos did not seem to improve in health, and this worried me. He had a continual cough, and appetite only for his mother's milk. She always had to carry him on her back, for if

she laid him down he would scream until she picked him up again. This meant that she had to carry him when she ground the corn, swept the house, and washed the clothes. I had given him cough medicine and vitamins, neither of which seemed to do any good. In fact it seemed he had never recovered from the sickness he had when he returned from the *finca*. I thought he might have tuberculosis, although he ran no temperature.

An average of five or six really sick patients called on me every day, besides many Indians and Ladinos who needed only simple remedies such as castor oil, worm medicine, camphorated oil, aspirin, and soda. Many of the patients had infected wounds; eye trouble was common, as well as malaria and colds. The children all had worms. I was often amused at the situation in which I found myself. Before I came to Guatemala, if anyone near me had a cold, I was sure I would catch it. Here I received all the patients in the one room, combined workroom and bedroom. Although I constantly asked them not to spit on the floor they all continued to do so. It was so natural to them that they forgot. At first it had bothered me, but worry was soon replaced by a feeling that nothing would happen to me, a growing faith that I was being watched over and protected.

Old Tata Julián still came to me about three evenings a week. He usually arrived when I was just finishing supper, which Basilia now sometimes had with me. He would tap on the pane of glass and I would say: "Tata Julián, come in, we are still eating."

He would enter and, taking off his hat with his clawlike hands, would say in fluent Spanish: "Eat well, Señorita Matilda, eat well. I shall just sit here by the fire quietly and wait till you are finished." Usually I had toasted *tortillas* and a cup of cocoa milk which I made from powdered milk and cocoa malt. One evening I offered him a cup. He loved it as I had put an extra amount of sugar in it. He always took it for granted that I would give him an eye treat-

ment. I could see nothing wrong with his eyes now, so I just washed them out with boric acid solution. The real reason he came was that he loved to speak Spanish with me and look at *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.

One evening he said: "Señorita Matilda, I have been *Alcalde Municipal* two times and I am the only man in Todos Santos who has been to college in Guatemala City. I was there two years, but left because I was so sick."

"But Tata Julián, if you have been educated why don't you send your grandchildren to school?" I asked.

"Señorita Matilda, look at my hands. They are crippled with rheumatism. That is what comes from education."

"What do you mean, Tata Julián? I don't understand."

"Señorita, when I was a young man I was sent to Guatemala City to high school. Two of us were sent, two from every pueblo. The government paid our expenses. We all lived in one place and all went to school together. The food was bad. It had no strength to it and we all became weak. Señorita, as you know the *naturales* are accustomed to sweat baths. In the college we had to bathe in cold water. I went to the superintendent and said: 'Señor, it is the custom in my pueblo for the *naturales* to take sweat baths. Here there is no sweat bath. Will you give me permission to heat a little water for a bath?' He would not give me permission. After we had been there a year and six months, we all became sick with much *chor* [dysentery]. All of us were very sick, sick every day. They gave us just tea; no coffee. Many *naturales* died. We became so weak we could not walk. More and more of the *naturales* died. I saw them carry the bodies out. Then my thoughts went back to Todos Santos. I knew that if I did not escape I would never see my pueblo again. Señorita, weak as I was, I ran away one night and I returned to my pueblo. I told my father all that had happened. He understood and said: 'Go off to the mountains with the sheep, and

do not return till I send for you.' Señorita, the government sent soldiers after me; they questioned my father. He told them he had not seen me for many months, that I was still in Guatemala City. Señorita, I had been so long without a sweat bath that my hands began to hurt me and they became like this. That is why I don't want my grandson to go to school."

"I understand perfectly, Tata Julián, and if I had been in your place I would have done likewise. What a dreadful experience! How wise you were to return to your pueblo and to hide in the mountains."

"Señorita," he asked hopefully, "can you cure my hands?"

"No, Tata Julián, only God can cure your hands."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

“Would you consider selling me Pichón?” I asked Don Pancho one day. I had ridden him many times and knew he was sure-footed and easy-gaited and I liked him. I was really lost without a horse, and if I rented one every time I went anywhere it was expensive. After talking it over with his wife, Don Pancho told me that they had decided they needed the money and could possibly buy and train a much younger horse for less, and therefore I could have Pichón and the saddle and bridle for eighty-five dollars, which I considered reasonable.

Don Pancho suggested that I keep Pichón in his stable and have little Andrés look after him for me. We talked of how much I should pay Andrés and decided that five dollars a month was all right.

“No Ladino would pay that, Señorita,” said Don Pancho. “Andrés would be lucky to get three dollars a month; he is only thirteen years old, and he will only have to feed and water Pichón twice a day and keep the stable clean.”

Satero came to see me after Don Pancho left and said: “Señorita, I have room for Pichón in my stable. The *caporales* who work for me can take care of him. I will charge you two dollars a month plus his food.”

I thanked Satero but told him I would think it over as I had other plans. I then sent Basilia next door for Andrés, and when he came I offered him the job, for I knew his family needed the money. His face glowed with delight and he accepted, but said he must first go home and talk it over.

That night Domingo called alone, looking rather pleased with himself. As we sat by the fire and smoked he said: “Señorita, Andrés tells me that you have offered him the job of looking after

Pichón, and that you will pay five dollars a month. Andrés would like to work for you, Señorita, but he feels you should pay him seven dollars a month." I could hardly believe my ears.

Seeing the gleam of greed in Domingo's eyes, I felt a flush of anger and said: "Domingo, I don't believe that Andrés wants seven dollars a month. I can see by your eyes that this is all your idea. You know well that a man, a *caporal*, gets only four dollars a month, with no time to himself. I am offering one dollar more a month to a mere boy who will have half of the day to himself. I offered Andrés more so that he could help his family. After all I have done for you and your family, what do you do for me? You are worse than a Ladino, you are a *ladrón*, a robber. If you ever try a thing like this again, it will be the end of my friendship for you."

In the middle of this outburst, Andrés entered with a scared face, and when I had finished he said: "Señorita, I am satisfied with the five dollars. It was my father's thought, the seven dollars."

I turned to Domingo and said: "Go home. I am disgusted with you!"

Satero's offer of the morning occurred to me, and I decided I would try it out for at least a week to teach Domingo a lesson.

The next week, when little Marcelina ran down into my yard with Satero's bill for Pichón's board and keep, I looked at it and was appalled. He had overcharged me outrageously. I walked up to their house. On the bench outside sat Satero dressed in his blue Ladino suit, a black felt hat on the back of his head. Opposite him at the table lounged his Ladino accountant who wrote and read for him. Satero was studying the *finca* accounts through his dark glasses. Margarita stood in the doorway.

"Satero," I said before they even greeted me, "you must think I am a very stupid woman for you have charged me for three bundles of *sacate* a day. I know that a horse never eats more than two at most. You have charged me ten cents a bundle when I

know that the price ranges from five to eight cents. I try to do nice things for you and your family. What do you do for me? You cheat me. I do not like this. Your ways are the ways of a *ladrón*. If I am to lose money I'd rather lose it to someone who is poor, not to the richest man in the pueblo."

They all three looked at me dumbfounded. A meek "Yes, Señorita," was all that Satero could find to say.

"Satero, if you had been honest with me I would have left Pichón in your care. Now I shall build my own stable, for I have learned I cannot trust you." With this I left and returned to my house and told Basilia what I had said.

"Señorita, did you know that Margarita and Satero are so mean they do not even give their maid a *petate* to sleep on, or a blanket to cover her?"

"Then where does this poor girl sleep?" I asked.

"On the earth floor with nothing over her, while Satero and Margarita lie in their big bed. They're almost as bad as Ladinós!"

From the next room I could hear little Carlos's cough. It had become so much worse that I said to her: "Basilia, I want you to take Carlos to the doctor in Huehuetenango and have him examined. So you won't have to carry him, I will pay your brother Juan to do this. I will also ask Andrés to go along and bring back things for me. You will leave the day after tomorrow, as that will be market day in Huehuetenango.

The morning they were to leave it was raining. Through the window I could see the Indians coming and going, wrapped in their waterproof palm-leaf capes. Basilia and the boys were making their final preparations. I had given Basilia a raincoat and an umbrella, and a blanket to wrap Carlos in. Suddenly I realized that both Juan and Andrés had heavy packs on their backs and Basilia was left carrying Carlos.

"What is this, Basilia?" I called. "Juan is to carry Carlos."

"Señorita," explained Basilia, "when Don Pancho heard yesterday that we were going to the city, he asked me if Juan and Andrés could carry two small bundles to his family in Huehuetenango. He said he would give each one five cents. He brought the packages this morning, and you can see, Señorita, that they are much cargo, large packs of potatoes and apples. What can we do?"

"You can leave one of them here," I said. "I want Juan to carry Carlos, and I shall speak to Don Pancho later."

Three times within a week I had been taken advantage of, and it made me angry, especially this last time. Don Pancho, of all people! I could hardly wait for my lesson hour to come.

"If you want my *mozos* to carry things for you," I fired at him as he came in the door, "ask me, not Basilia. I paid Juan to carry Carlos, and not your cargo, Don Pancho. If Juan had but little to carry, I would be delighted to have him help you out. But I don't like the way you did this."

He agreed that he should not have done it. I could see it hurt his ego to be told off like this and he was genuinely ashamed he had been caught in one of the typical Ladino tricks we had talked about so many times.

The Spanish lesson was a little strained.

Basilia and the boys returned late the next afternoon. They were bubbling over with news of the preparations in Chiantla for the big *fiesta* which always took place the first part of September. Basilia brought back to me a letter from the doctor in Huehuetenango which said that Carlos did not have tuberculosis but chronic asthma. I wondered how he could be so positive, knowing how limited his facilities were. He stated that he had sent injections to Don Pancho to be given every third day to Carlos. The doctor knew Don Pancho, who had given injections for him before. I was relieved, as instinctively I felt Carlos had not much

longer to live and I did not want to be blamed for anything that might happen.

And then I had a bright idea.

"Basilia," I said, "if you can get your mother to come and look after my house, the animals, and the chickens, I will take you all to the *fiesta* at Chiantla. You, Carlos, Juan, Andrés, and the twins, who have never been there. Domingo had also better come along to carry some cargo and keep an eye on his children. Juan, you go immediately to San Martín to see if your mother can come."

The faces of Juan, Andrés, and Basilia opened like the sun. Andrés rushed to his house and came back with the twins, who were enchanted with the idea. Poor little Julio, who was too young to go, looked sad.

"Andrés, tell Julio that in the spring I will take him to the big fair at Chiantla. He will be old enough to go by then."

Patrona came over with the baby on her back, her eyes red-lidded from the smoke of the fire.

"Señorita," she asked, "are you sure that Victoria and Pablo won't be too much for you to take to the *fiesta*?"

"No, Patrona. With Andrés and Domingo along it won't be difficult at all, and in the spring you and Julio must come with us."

I could see that Margarita was listening from above. She was furious that I was taking Patrona's children and not hers. Knowing that Satero had money enough to take the whole family, I was not worried about them.

The next morning at five-thirty we were on our way to the *fiesta* at Chiantla. Basilia and Juan were to take turns with Carlos, and Domingo and Andrés carried the bedding for all. The twins were so excited that they ran in circles like puppies. I wondered if it would be too long a trip for them. Victoria had on sandals for the first time in her life. I noticed that it wasn't long before she had taken them off and given them to her father to carry. All of my

caravan were dressed in their best, as Indians always are for a *fiesta*. The trail was filled with animals and people going to the fair. There were whole families of happy Indians, joking all the way, and many Ladinos from the *tierra caliente*, driving horses to sell or mules heavily laden. Most Ladinos wore large sombreros and their women rode side saddle.

As we went along I discussed with Domingo the stable for Pichón. We decided to have Alonzo build a floor, and a roof supported by four poles, and to put it on Domingo's land. He and Andrés could look after Pichón at the price I had originally offered and they could profit by the manure.

After we had climbed for an hour or so I took Victoria back of me on the horse. She held on to my belt and sat on the rubber cape which I had tied on the back of the saddle. At first she clung to me in terror but soon became accustomed to it. Later I took little Carlos from Basilia and held him up in front of the saddle, and although he screamed with fear at first, he too grew to love it. Passing Indians would ask me if Carlos were my son and I would say: "Yes," and then we would all laugh.

After we had crossed the pass called the Windy Place we took the long trail down to Chiantla; it was the same way I had come the day I moved into Todos Santos with bag and baggage on ten mules. After about an hour we came to a stream, where we rested and had a second breakfast. I had brought boiled eggs for all of us, and we made coffee and toasted *tortillas* over a fire that Domingo and Juan made. Near by was a group of Indians eating and laughing. Their many pack mules grazed in the vicinity. The women wore new *huipiles*, and all of them looked clean and gay in their red and white costumes. As we sat smoking we saw an old man ride by on a white mule, holding in his arms a small child. His long legs in their striped pants hung way below the belly of the mule, and the elongated face under the straw hat looked like

that of a Mongol emperor. By his side trotted a pretty young woman. There was an air of importance about him that made me ask Domingo who he was.

"Señorita, he is called Chimán Rafael and he is as important as Chimán Calmo." Then in a low voice he added: "Some people say he is a *brujo*."

I looked at the retreating figure with even more attention, as one of my greatest desires was to gather material on *brujos*.

We continued our way, feeling refreshed, and about twelve-thirty sighted Chiantla far below, its two squares black with people, the roads leading to the village crowded with antlike forms. We were still a good hour away, going down a very steep trail flanked with sharp rolling rocks and precipitous slopes.

Chiantla is a small town three miles from Huehuetenango, nestled against the mountain range that we were descending. It is an old town, renowned for its lovely colonial church and plaza. Thomas Gage spoke of it in his travels in 1626. Chiantla is famous not only for its animal fair and its display of local Indian wares, but also for its religious pilgrimages. Every February Ladinos, and even many Indians, come here to burn candles and pray before the solid silver Virgin that the church houses. This *fiesta* is called Candlemas, and the one we were on our way to is known as the Nativity of the Virgin.

At one-thirty we entered the crowded town. I had great difficulty in managing Pichón as he reared and whirled, frightened by all the people. Domingo found a good room, large enough to keep Pichón in one end and the rest of us in the other. After the horse had been unsaddled and fed we locked him in the room and went out to the buzzing market place. I had asked them all to lunch with me. We found many open kitchens with tables, chairs, and filthy tablecloths covered with flies. In front of the kitchens steamed huge clay pots exuding appetizing smells. One had mutton stew, another

beef, and still another turkey. We all chose turkey cooked in a yellow sauce flavored with chili. With it we had rice, *tortillas*, and coffee. Although there was a drunken Ladino asleep under the table, I was so hungry from the nine-hour ride that I sat down and ate with a hearty appetite. The children stuffed themselves with food that they rarely had at home, their eyes wide with wonder, observing everything. As it was not the custom, none of us used forks. We dipped up juice, or a tasty morsel, with our *tortillas*, and, awkward as it was, I learned it could be a very neat method.

After lunch we wandered through the gaudily colored market. I had given ten cents each to the children—though I did feel a bit like John D. Rockefeller—and they were having a wonderful time spending it. In booths decorated with gay paper garlands were displayed gourds of all sizes and shapes, some carved, some painted; little figures of people and animals made of brightly decorated clay from Sacapulas; candles to be burned in front of the silver Virgin, ranging from simple tapers to elaborately wrought works of art; many kinds of sweet breads and fancy cookies; pink and white candies on trays all covered with flies—which made little difference to my friends. In fact, there was everything to tempt the Indian.

Basilia couldn't resist borrowing some of her salary from me to buy a cheap silk shawl. I gave Andrés a new pair of sandals, as his had gone to pieces on the trip. We stopped at the sandalmakers' and watched them make his pair. Then we looked at blankets, all kinds of materials, and everything one could think of for a horse. With Andrés's advice I bought a lasso for Pichón.

Domingo had discovered a fortuneteller with a parakeet on a stick that drew cards from a box for a penny. He had his fortune told and then insisted that I have mine told also.

"Señorita," he said, "you remember that you came to Todos Santos last November for the *fiesta*? Then you took Natalia's house and moved in later."

"Yes, Domingo, I remember."

"Señorita, the year before you came, both Andrés and I had been very sick, so sick we were as dead for over a month. We were not strong enough to plant corn, so we became very poor. A year ago I was carrying cargo to this Chiantla *fiesta* to make a little money and I paid a penny to have my fortune told by this same little bird. Señorita, it said: 'Luck is coming to you from afar.' Soon you came with Doña María and all those mules and moved into the house. I said to Patrona, who was very sick at the time: 'Patrona, the Señorita is our luck coming from afar.' I knew it, Señorita, and that's why I asked to be your *mozo*."

He looked at me with his trusting eyes, and I said: "Domingo, why haven't you told me this before?"

He said, embarrassed: "Señorita, we did not know you before. Now we know you, and that's why I tell you this."

Domingo and I found the animal fair the most interesting part of the *fiesta*. Here were many people of my pueblo, even the *Alcalde Civil*, who greeted me warmly and answered my questions about the livestock. The price of a young well-trained horse runs between thirty and fifty dollars. A young mule brings seventy-five to ninety, an older one a hundred and ten to a hundred and fifty. The Todos Santos Indians prize a mule more than a horse, for he is more sure-footed, can carry more cargo, and eats less.

All afternoon I had noticed that the Ladinos observed us with curious looks. Several young men made remarks to Domingo that I did not understand. When I asked Domingo what they said he told me that they had told him an Indian should walk behind the Señorita, not with her. "In my country, Domingo, all friends walk together," I said.

Suddenly I realized that I too had been peering at the tightly packed throng of people, but for a different reason. And my search was in vain, for nowhere among the crowd did I find any face

that even resembled the serenely beautiful one which belonged to "The Sage"; the face I had seen on my first day in Todos Santos and had been looking for ever since.

A ten-hour rainy ride home the next day successfully dampened our holiday spirits, and to cap it all, on arrival my gasoline lamp, the one source of light in the house, refused to function. The only man in town who knew about lamps was Cheppi. Reliable, efficient Cheppi had to be sent for, and he came and fixed it. He questioned me about our trip to Chiantla, and, wanting to hear the Ladino reaction to *brujos*, I told him of my seeing the old *chimán* riding on the white mule.

"Señorita," said Cheppi, "some people say Chimán Rafael is a *brujo* and I think they are right. In 1943, when the *Intendente* of this pueblo was a Ladino, Fortunato Ríos Hidalgo, an Indian presented himself one day at the *Juzgado*, saying that he had just encountered Chimán Rafael in the cemetery making a burial for the purpose of doing evil against someone, and so he had come to the authorities to have them intervene. Immediately the *Intendente* sent the Commissioner of Police to the cemetery to see if it was true. Chimán Rafael was there, but he would give no explanation as to why he was in the cemetery and what he was doing. The Commissioner took him to the *Intendente*, who questioned him in various ways but still received no proper answers. Finally the *Intendente* said that if the *chimán* did not answer his questions he would send him to the judge in Huehuetenango. After these threats the *chimán* could only confess and talk. Yes, it was true he was doing evil, but only because the one against whom he was doing evil had cast a spell on someone else, the man whom he was defending. All this he said in a plaintive voice. Yes, he was making a burial in the cemetery that would kill this evil person. The *Intendente* sent the *chimán* to the cemetery accompanied by the police, who were to investigate the burial. The Commissioner saw

the *chimán* open a hole that had been closed by a rock. Inside was half of a snake and also a small figure made of dirty rags so tied that it looked like a human form. The other half of the snake was in another hole at a certain distance. All of this was put on the table of the *Intendente*, and he warned the *chimán* that he was to be put in prison and could only leave when he had paid his fine. I know the truth of this, Señorita, for I sat at the table when the *chimán* was judged.”

“That is a most interesting story, Cheppi. I feel as you do, that the old boy is a *brujo*.”

After Cheppi left I dropped into bed, exhausted but at the same time pleased—pleased at the bit of information on *brujos* that had come my way.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Usually at this time of year the early mornings were cold and clear, with an unfulfilled promise in the air. About eight came the cloud mist; soon the town below was buried, and as it crept slowly upward it engulfed us on its way. For the rest of the day we were in a damp fog. About two, rain started—either a persistent, gentle rain or a torrent that continued far into the night. Walking became difficult, as the path past the house was a river of adobe mud. Out of every three weeks we would have a day or so of sun, which was always an event. On these days Basilia did the washing, and I sunned my mattress and blankets and worked in the vegetable garden, which was being devoured by pests above and below the earth. The flies were beyond human understanding. They were everywhere—millions. When they stung they drew blood. If I sprayed the room with DDT they all dropped dead, but the new arrivals were not bothered at all. When they got in my hair it was more than I could stand.

I had been feeling very depressed, what with the weather, a cold coming on, and so many sick Indians and Ladinos to look after. I lost my temper several times: at Domingo, for going off without feeding Pichón, which meant that I had to carry armfuls of wet, muddy *sacate* to the horse; at the people who kept entering and not shutting the gate, so that Basilia and I would have to run after our wandering fowl; at the children who, sensing my mood, did everything I had asked them not to do. They chased the chickens, they teased the dogs, they threw mud into the *pila*, and when they broke the heads off my roses I sent them packing.

In this mood of depression I began to dwell on my work. What had I accomplished? As yet I had gathered very little data on the

Indians' religious customs. I wondered how I would ever get in touch with the religious body in Todos Santos. It was a discouraging thought, and yet I tried to be positive about it. "Have faith," I admonished myself; "faith that you will get the material you want, and probably when you least expect it." After all, I had gained the confidence, and even the friendship, of quite a few Indians, and my medical practice was growing rapidly. Through this, perhaps, I could make the necessary contacts. Furthermore, Basilia had told me recently that some of the Indians referred to me now as *chimancita*. This could be both good and bad. For the worst of it was that most of the patients were brought to me when they were half dead; when they had become discouraged by their *chimán*, or when he had given them up as hopeless. I knew what a risk I ran in accepting some of them. If they died I would probably be blamed for their deaths, and this might easily mean the end of my stay in Todos Santos, and even the end of my work.

"What is the difference between *alote* and *maiz*?" I asked Don Pancho. We were having a Spanish lesson.

"Señorita, *alote* is the young, tender ear of corn, and *maiz* is just corn."

"Don Pancho, the longer I live in the pueblo the more I realize that life here revolves around the corn cycle. If I ask: 'What time of the year are the flies the worst?' I am answered: 'When the corn is green.' Or if I ask: 'When will the rainy season be over?' 'When the fruit of the corn is ready to gather.' Or: 'When is the end of the cold season?' 'When it is time to seed the corn.' The Indians must have a god of corn, like the Mayans, their ancestors, and some day we'll find out what his name is."

"That is interesting, I have never given it thought. But

Señorita, I think I have important information for you," said Don Pancho proudly. Our Spanish lesson had turned into its usual gossip and business talk.

"Señorita, some of the Indians feel I am a *chimán*. Several have come to me with questions about where their lost cattle are. Since you taught me their calendar, and since I have been working for you, asking them questions and visiting different *chimanas*, I have learned how to cast the *mixes*—at least well enough to fool any Indian who is not a *chimán*. I have answered their questions, and they tell me what I have predicted has come true."

"Where did you get the red beans?" I asked.

"I took most of them from the top of the pyramid: the beans, the bag, and the crystals, and also the little idol I showed you last year."

"Have you no fear that the Indians will find out that you have defiled their burying ground and that the curse of death will be on you?"

"No, Señorita, I have no fear of anything," he said in his grandiose way.

"But they might recognize the medicine bag or the crystals."

"No, for there is no mark on the bag. It is just white woven cotton with four red lines through it, and the crystals are just ordinary. Besides, I have added several stones of my own."

"Well, if you have no fear, go ahead. You will probably gather good material, and maybe you will become a *chimán* in their eyes," I said. "But not in mine," I added to myself.

Before Don Pancho left I showed him a new addition to our family, a young cat that the wife of the Ladino Secretary had given me as a present for treating her child. Basilia named him Micho. He attached himself to Carlos and Basilia, probably sensing that I was not overly fond of cats.

I packed my medicine kit, saddled and bridled Pichón, putting the kit into the saddle bag. Margarita called down from above asking me her usual question of where I was going.

"I am off to see the sick ones, those too ill to come to me," I answered as I swung into the saddle and turned Pichón's head down the trail.

On the crest of the hill outside the pueblo I came upon an approaching procession made up of the entire religious body and a few of the municipality. I realized that they were coming from the Chief Prayermaker's house, where the *Caja Real* was kept, and they were probably celebrating the approaching *fiesta* of San Francisco which would be in ten days, on October 2. Pichón was so frightened of the drum that I had to dismount and hold him. By that time they were upon me. I saw Chimán Calmo step out of the group, and to my surprise he came to me and shook hands, asked how I was, and then rejoined the procession. The *Alcalde Municipal*, who brought up the rear on horseback, also rode over and shook hands and asked how I was.

A sense of peace and elation filled me. Never before had I seen important Indians greet anyone from a procession. I knew it was an honor.

After they all had passed I mounted Pichón again and headed for the country. I loved these trips alone on Pichón with nature all around me. The Indians always seemed to know when I was coming, for those in need would stop me as I rode by. They were appreciative and grateful people, as was demonstrated on my return by my bulging saddle bags—gifts from them of potatoes and corn.

Carlos had become so much worse that I was really worried. His cough was now chronic and he would take little nourishment, but just look at Basilia and myself with large dark eyes. Don

Pancho had received from the doctor in Huehuetenango a cough medicine which did little good. I was sure the child had tuberculosis and would not live long. I said this to Don Pancho, and he shrugged his shoulders. As Basilia's mother was visiting us, I told both of the women that Carlos was very ill and I was worried. If Basilia wished to take him again to the doctor in Huehuetenango I would send her, and pay for it. Basilia thanked me and said she would think it over.

In the afternoon Basilia and Margarita came to me, and Basilia said: "Señorita, much medicine has Carlos taken. Now the time has come when Carlos's body wants no more medicine but *costumbre*. We are *naturales*, Señorita, and our doctors are *chimanes*. We think Carlos must see a *chimán*."

Margarita said: "The mother of Basilia came to me today and said: 'Margarita, we are *naturales*. Basilia is a *natural*, but her ears are turned to the ways of Ladinos. Much medicine has Carlos taken and I feel he should go to a *chimán*!'"

"Basilia," I said, "you know well that I have great respect for *chimanes*, and whenever I have a question I go to my *chimán*. If you feel Carlos's body wants no more medicine and needs *costumbre*, take him to a *chimán*. I know you have no money, but I will pay for it."

They argued a few minutes over their respective *chimanes* and decided that Chimán Rafael would be the best. He was the one that Cheppi had said was a *brujo*. Basilia went off to him, carrying Carlos, and returned in about an hour.

"Señorita, Rafael and his assistant, a young *chimán* called Luis Elón, looked at Carlos, and then Rafael cast the *mixes*. He told me that Carlos was very ill, that he could cure him with a *costumbre* if I bought the following things and carried them to his house."

During this recital Patrona had arrived and she suggested that I

make a list of the things Rafael demanded, and count the cost of them. They were:

2 young turkeys	\$1.00
4 young roosters	1.00
5 turkey eggs	.25
6 hen eggs	.12
8 skyrockets	.40
1 large bottle of <i>aguardiente</i>	1.10
15 ordinary candles of tallow	.15
2 candles of beeswax	.10
Copal	.20
Fee for <i>chimán</i>	.50
Total	<u>\$4.82</u>

Both Patrona and Basilia's mother thought this was too expensive.

"Basilia," said Patrona, "Rafael is very expensive, and people say he is a *brujo*. His assistant, Chimán Luis Elón, is not expensive. He is my *chimán*. He saved the life of Andrés when he was so sick more than a year ago. Andrés had much fever and one night he lost two bowls of blood from his nose and lay like one dead. Luis Elón made *costumbre* and then Andrés recovered. He is of your family, Basilia, and if you go to him this evening with Domingo he can do a more simple *costumbre* which will cost less money."

Both Basilia and her mother thought this an excellent idea. About seven Basilia went with Domingo, carrying Carlos on her back. As it was pouring rain I lent her a raincoat to put over Carlos and insisted that she carry an umbrella. She returned later with tears in her eyes and told me that the young *chimán* had cast the *mixes*, and they said that Carlos was very ill because he was filled with Ladino medicine; that his body did not want this and the

only thing that could save him was a *costumbre*. First a small *costumbre* and, if he lived, after twenty days a big *costumbre*. She was to bring in the morning one medium-sized rooster, two turkey eggs, some copal, one medium-sized bottle of *aguardiente*, and candles. Tonight she was to burn five candles in the church. I gave her the money and she went out again to buy and burn the candles.

The next day was *K'mané*; the day after would be the *fiesta* of San Francisco, the patron saint of the pueblo, and the bells had been tolling for it for fifteen days. I woke up early and went to the church to burn my candle as I always did on the day *K'mané*. I found the church filled with Indians offering flowers and candles. I also learned that last evening two prayermakers had returned from Huehuetenango carrying a box with very special candles in it for the *fiesta*. The candles were put in the house of the Chief Prayermaker and a skyrocket was sent off announcing their arrival. All the prayermakers, as well as El Rey, gathered there and celebrated all night to the music of a marimba. A candle was kept burning on the box of candles as well as before the *Caja Real*. This would be repeated again the coming night.

Carlos seemed much worse, and Basilia was like a frantic hen. For months she had been pouring the concoctions of different people down the poor child's throat. She would go to Rosa and get her medicine, then the medicine of the Huehuetenango doctor, then Don Pancho's, and now she had been giving Carlos something a Ladino had brewed. I had long ago ceased to prescribe.

"Basilia," I said, "you are going to kill your child if you do not think clearly. You told me the *chimán* said that Carlos must not drink Ladino medicine, and now you are giving it to him. You must decide who is to cure Carlos and stick to that person."

That night in the pouring rain she went again to the *chimán*

with Carlos on her back. She carried everything but the rooster, which was to be sacrificed in the morning. She returned in an hour and a half and told me the *chimán* had cast the *mixes* again and said that Carlos might live. They lit candles, and he prayed and offered *aguardiente* to the Spirit and they both drank. He then went into his *corral*, which he covered with a blanket. The Spirit came, but Basilia could not understand what he said. I knew she did not want to tell me what he said.

The next morning I had to wake her up at four, and she went off into the darkness with Carlos wrapped in a blanket on her back, the rooster in her hand. When she returned she told me that just before dawn the *chimán* sacrificed the rooster before the crosses in front of the church. She said that first he cut off its head and allowed the blood to flow onto the copal in the *pichacha* and into a small bowl. Then he cut off its feet and wings and put these into the *pichacha*, which was full of hot coals, copal, and blood. These he burned as he swung the *pichacha* back and forth and prayed.

By this I learned what happened to the feet and wings and head of the chicken, which, I had suspected, the Indians did not eat—another piece of the puzzle in place!

Carlos became steadily worse and soon could not hold up his head. He refused to take nourishment. Basilia came to me with a tragic expression, her hand over her nose and mouth.

“Señorita, I am going to take Carlos to Rosa.”

I said nothing as she went out the door, but she was back in five minutes.

“Senorita, I did not go to Rosa, as I remembered the old man who came to see you about his daughter’s baby, and the baby died as soon as Rosa saw him, late that night.”

“Basilia,” I said, “I wish I could cure Carlos. I don’t know what his sickness is. As I have told you, he never recovered from what he caught at the *finca*. I believe the trouble is in his lungs and I

have no medicine for that. It makes me sad that I can't help poor little Carlos."

Basilía cried and cried, and when Don Pancho came to see Carlos he shook his head and said there was nothing to do.

Later in the day Rosa came to call, for I had not seen her since my return from New York. She was^udelighted with her presents, especially the bright red earrings I had brought from Woolworth's.

"Señorita, Carlos will not live," she said. "God"—and she pointed to the sky—"will send for him."

"You are right, Rosa. I have felt it for a long time. God gives and God takes away. I only hope it will not happen while I am gone. I have to go to Guatemala City in a few days and I hate to go at this time, but I have to see about my residential permit from the government."

"If you have to go, Señorita, you have to go. I shall be here for several weeks and if you wish I can stay here with Basilía."

"That will be good, Rosa, that is, if Basilía's mother doesn't come." I then offered her a drink, as it was a cold day. So Rosa, who never refused a drink, Basilía, and I had a couple of drinks and some cigarettes, and the room became warm and cozy. Rosa kept patting me. She really was a wonderful old character with her wrinkled face and her bright eyes that always crinkled with humor. During my stay in Todos Santos I checked much of my material with this remarkable woman who had been married to a *chimán*, was now about to marry another, and whose brother was El Rey, the calendar priest of Todos Santos.

That night I thought Carlos would die. I forced him to take a little orange juice with gelatin in it, as gelatin is almost pure protein, and I had him stay in my room, which was warmer. Several families of Indians called, the children peering at Carlos as if he were already dead. Domingo and his family came, and as he looked at Carlos, he shook his head.

"Señorita, the *chimán* never should have allowed Basilia to bring Carlos the morning he sacrificed the rooster. It is bad luck, and that is why he is so sick. While Patrona was washing clothes today the droppings of a vulture splashed right next to her. This is very bad luck, Señorita. I hope it does not mean the death of Carlos."

"I hope not," I said. "Poor little Carlos, I wish I could help him. Domingo, I have to go to Guatemala City about my papers. I hate to go when Carlos is so sick. But I have arranged for Basilia's mother to come and stay with her; Don Pancho will help if he is needed and Cheppi has promised to telegraph me about Carlos's condition. We shall leave the day after tomorrow and I shall be gone ten days."

Domingo must have spread the news, for the next day many Indians came to ask me to do errands for them. Tata Julián wanted new bandanas for himself and his son for the *fiesta*. The father of a patient wanted gourd cups. Many women asked me to buy rickrack for the new *huipiles* they were making for the Todos Santos *fiesta*.

The next morning at five Domingo, his brother Presidencio, Andrés, and I were ready to start. I said good-by to Basilia and her mother. The poor girl looked sad at my departure. In darkness and pouring rain we picked our way along the trail. I thanked God that I was on an animal with four legs, for the mud was deep and slippery. In places the trail was filled with water, more like a stream than a trail. The Todos Santos River was overflowing so that its water went over the bridges. As I was no judge of the safeness of the bridges I left it up to Pichón whether we would cross them or not.

It was a strange ride, rather like a dream. From the time I left the pueblo I never saw my *mozos*. I rode alone through dense cloud mists and pouring rain. Now and then the clouds would

open, revealing the top of a mountain or a distant tree. Pichón's ears were my eyes. If an animal was near, one ear would go forward and one back; if a human, both ears forward. Most of the time I could not see beyond his head and I must admit some of the stories of robbers came to my mind. Two of them had held up a man on this trail only two weeks ago and were now in prison in Huehuetenango. I knew there was also a possibility of the trail being washed away, of rolling stones or landslides. I might even lose my way in the dense fog. However, for some reason I had complete confidence that none of these things would happen, consequently no fear. I realized the reason I had no fear was that something had been slowly happening to me. Having divorced myself from family and friends to live among primitive people, in a strange country, far from the civilization I knew, I lived at first as if I were in a sort of vacuum. Slowly I had begun to feel and think as the Indian did. I was becoming part of a whole—part of nature. I felt strongly that I was in Todos Santos for a purpose, and that I was in the hands of the gods—just the way the Indian felt. I knew that I was never unprotected and alone—I belonged. This gave me an inner relaxation and complete faith, and therefore fear never entered my mind.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Ten days later I returned to Todos Santos with a heavy heart. While in the city I had received news of the death of one of my dearest friends—a friend who had given me faith in myself and also in my work at Todos Santos.

As we came to the outskirts of the pueblo, I saw Basilia's youngest brother and Domingo's sons who had come out to meet me. I knew what they had to tell me, as Cheppi had sent me a telegram. They looked at me wide-eyed and with self-conscious smiles said: "Carlos died."

"Yes, it is very sad," I said. "Poor Carlos, poor Basilia."

Basilia did not come to the gate to greet me, but her mother did, also Tequila, who jumped all over me, and Micho the cat, who rubbed against my leg. Basilia was in the kitchen and when she saw me she put her hand over her nose and mouth and then burst into sobs and cried and cried. I gave her a hug and patted her, saying: "It is very sad for you, Basilia. I realize how heavy your heart is. But God knows best; he took Carlos to the Sky World where he will be happy and not sick all the time."

Patrona came over with all her children, and Margarita came with all of hers. They told me in great detail what had happened and described the wake and the burial. Carlos had died in the early afternoon. From the description of his death I was sure he died of tuberculosis. They had cleared everything out of Basilia's room except a long table, and a bench that a neighbor had loaned. Carlos was laid on this, dressed in his best clothes, those I had brought him from New York. All night long, candles were kept burning, and neighbors, many of them Ladinos, came with gifts of candles. Basilia was well liked by the Ladinos as well as by her own race. She and her mother served the guests coffee, bread, and

aguardiente, which was customary. The next morning Carlos was buried in a wooden box that cost three dollars. This was put in a cement box that cost six dollars. The plot of ground in the cemetery cost fifty cents. All of this was donated by Cheppi, though he was not the father of Carlos but of Octavio, Basilia's first child. The real father gave nothing. Señor López, the grandfather who kept the *tienda*, let Basilia have five dollars' worth of necessary things for nothing, which they thought quite generous of him.

That evening all my Indian friends came to call, so I opened a bottle of *aguardiente*. Over this we all discussed the death of Carlos.

"Señorita," said Domingo, "at the time of Carlos's death I saw a chameleon in the woodpile in the room with Carlos. Maybe his spirit went into it, for a chameleon in the room is bad luck."

Basilia said: "Señorita, I burn a candle every day in the cemetery on the box of Carlos. On the ninth day since his death the room in which he died must be whitewashed, and I must burn candles all night long. Señorita, I can't sleep alone in the room that Carlos died in. When my mother leaves I shall sleep in your room with you."

"That is all right, Basilia," I said, realizing that I had to adapt myself to the situation, "you may sleep in my room. But where do you sleep now?"

"Mother and I are sleeping in the kitchen."

"Señorita," resumed Domingo, "many Ladinos came and brought large candles, candles that cost ten cents apiece. Much *aguardiente* was served. Basilia drank and drank, but she was not drunk, she was like one asleep."

"Yes, Señorita," said Basilia, "I did not know what I was doing, so many people came, they made me drink—to me it was like water."

Patrona added: "Señorita, Basilia's oldest friend, Simona, never came at all."

"Why, I never heard of anything so mean! She is not your friend, Basilia, or she would have come. When one is sad is the time one needs friends."

"She was too busy with her men," said Patrona with a toss of her head. "Domingo and I were here all night. We helped make coffee. Domingo carried over our cups and stools. Margarita only came once, and Satero not at all."

"I am not surprised to hear of the behavior of Simona, Margarita, and Satero," I said, but to change the subject I added: "Tomorrow morning I have a few gifts that I want to give to you all. Now I am tired so I shall say good night. Thank you for looking after Basilia for me."

The next morning they were all over early. To my women neighbors, including Margarita, I gave rickrack for their *huipiles* and ribbons for their hair; to the men, bandanas. After this I went to the post office to pay Cheppi for the telegram he had sent me.

"Cheppi, I have heard how kind and generous you have been. I do not think you should pay for all the expenses of the funeral and I should like to pay you back half of the cost of the two boxes."

"Señorita Matilda, I would not think of it. It gave me great pleasure to help Basilia, for remember, she is the mother of my son Octavio. Also you have already been more than kind to me. Rest assured that I have done this for Basilia, for I am fond of her."

"Cheppi, you are really a very kind man. Basilia is so fond of Octavio, why don't you allow him to come up and see her now and then? It might help her to forget Carlos."

"Señorita Matilda, I will do this, if he will not be a bother to you."

"Not at all. I hardly know Octavio, but I think he is a most in-

telligent child and it will give me pleasure as well as comfort to Basilia."

"Thank you, thank you, Señorita," he said.

When I returned to my house I found a line of patients waiting, and after treating them I went to see two Ladino children sick with measles. Both had high temperatures and bad coughs.

After lunch Patrona came to tell me that she had lost her favorite hen just as it was about to set. She had seen it in the morning, and at noon no sign of it when she had called it for food. She was sure someone had stolen it; she suspected Margarita or the Ladino who lived on the hill above us.

"Margarita hates us, Señorita. When you were away she would scream at my children if they went near your *pila*. She hates us for she believes we took Pichón from Satero."

"The *pila* is for all my neighbors and not just for Margarita. Patrona, if Chimán Calmo comes I will speak to him about your chicken and see if he can help you."

Don Pancho told me that many children had measles and that many Indian children would die if they continued to practice their custom of sweat baths. When the children came out of the baths they caught cold and died.

"I shall have to warn my neighbors against this," I said. Don Pancho had been very helpful to me in the past in nosing out material, and just now I needed his aid again in a special case.

"Don Pancho," I asked, "how would you like to do some more work for me? I will pay you a monthly salary and any expenses you incur. The job will be to make friends with Chimán Rafael and Chimán Pascual Pablo. When they come to your *tienda*, offer them free drinks, ask them certain questions that I shall give you. Don't ask too many questions, and do it naturally, without arousing their suspicions."

Don Pancho drew himself up very erect and said: "Señorita Ma-

tilda, did I not tell you that I was once in the secret police? I know well how to ask questions. They will never suspect me, for I know how. Yes, Señorita, I would like the work, for you have made me interested in the customs of the Indians."

"It will not take much time, Don Pancho, maybe two days a week, so that you will be able to do other work on the side. What information you collect I shall check with Chimán Calmo, Rosa, and Tata Julián, who has been *Alcalde Municipal* twice. His brother is also one of the *principales*. So your job starts now."

Don Pancho strutted out, a big smile on his face.

Late in the afternoon Chimán Calmo came to call and I gave him a present of a red bandana and ribbons for his wife's hair. He kissed them and thanked God, and me.

"Señorita," he said, "now that you have returned, the sadness in the house has gone. We have missed you."

I told him about my trip and how sorry I was to be away when Carlos died. Then I told him of Patrona's chicken and asked if he would help her.

"Yes, you can send for her. But first, have you medicine for much air in the stomach?"

I advised bicarbonate of soda and he thanked me, saying he would give it to his wife and maybe take it himself. I sent Basilia for Patrona and she came immediately. She greeted the *chimán* with great respect and told him in Mam all about her loss. He put his left hand on his right leg below the knee pushing his pants leg up out of the way. He bowed his head and shut his eyes and mumbled behind his beard, and after a few minutes he opened his eyes and said: "Your chicken is still alive. It is in someone's house. They will kill it later." She asked if it could be in Margarita's house, and he repeated the same pants-and-beard act, saying: "Yes, it might be in Margarita's. Go look around."

She thanked the *chimán* and went out on her quest. He too took his leave, as it had started to rain.

The next morning I visited five Ladino families whose children had measles. Many Indians came to see me with sick children wrapped in blankets on their backs. To all I gave the same advice, and told them to pass the word about. All children must be kept in the house well covered. No children should be given sweat baths, it might mean their death. They must be kept away from light and drafts. To those who had bad colds with the measles, I gave sulfa tablets and soda.

When the patients had left, Basilia, little Marcelina, and I decided to go to the cemetery. The child, neat and clean and looking very pretty, picked her own flowers from the garden, saying: "These are for poor Carlos."

The cemetery was a beautiful spot, wind-swept, sun-drenched, with a wide view down the valley toward the *tierra caliente*. Instead of mounds and tombstones there were cement boxes, square and oblong, above the ground, for those who could afford them; for those who could not, just graves. As there were not many boxes, I gathered that they belonged mostly to Ladinos. It was a law that deaths must be registered and fifty cents must be paid for a plot. Many Indians avoided this expense by not reporting a death.

I noticed stalks of corn growing on some graves and asked Basilia if it were the custom.

"Yes, Señorita, some *naturales* seed the corn when they put the body in the earth."

What a fitting representation of new life, I thought.

We lit the candles I had bought on the way through the village and put them on top of Carlos's box, and also laid the flowers around the candles, and talked of death. I felt very close to my two friends dressed in their gay red and white *huipiles*.

A bell tolled twice and Basilia said: "Señorita, that tells us a child has died. When it rings once it means a grownup." After a silence she said:

"Señorita, what happens after death? I have talked often with my friends. Some think we go to a fiery place, as Ladinos believe; others feel death is the end. But most of us *naturales* believe there is another world—the Sky World. Children go there immediately when the God of the Sky sends for them. As for the grownups, they wander around till God calls for them."

"I believe as you do, Basilia. Children go to the Sky World immediately, for their hearts are clean. With the grownups it depends on what kind of lives they have led. Carlos is in the Sky World now and, I am sure, much happier than we are here."

Little Marcelina pointed to the sky, saying: "Carlos is there." We all looked at the sky and we could see the clouds racing down, covering the mountains and soon hiding the village above us. A wind came up. Darker clouds formed and it began to rain so hard that we started home, leaving the sputtering candles on the cold cement box.

I found Chimán Calmo, his wife, and two grandchildren awaiting me on the doorstep. They had presents for me of corn, potatoes, and two eggs. I gave the grandchildren gay ribbons for their hair. We sat inside smoking and talking. And through the open window from the direction of Margarita's house drifted the smell of boiling chicken. Calmo and I exchanged glances. "Señorita, in this world"—and here he repeated his favorite phrase—"there are good people and bad."

The bells of the church tolled again. We all listened.

"Another child has died, Señorita. That makes eight today."

"Yes, Tata Chimán. It is very serious. You must be sure not to put your grandchildren in the sweat bath if they get sick. Also tell all your neighbors this."

Basilía came into the room to tell us that it was the son of Adrián the carpenter who had died. I had offered Adrián medicine the day before, but he told me he could not take it as Don Pancho and the Señora of the *tienda* were curing him.

"Now Adrián has only six sons," said Basilía.

"Was it an older one who died?" I asked.

"No, one about seven, the one who used to come with him when he came to work here to your house."

"He had better watch out for his other sons," I said. "Measles is very contagious."

Chimán Calmo rose to go, and also his wife. With their usual courtesy they thanked me for their grandchildren's presents and their cigarettes, and filed out the door, the *chimán* leading the procession.

That night I had a very peculiar dream. I dreamed that I was standing in the public square of a city with a fountain on my right. It was night and there seemed to be no one about. Suddenly I saw an old man walking toward me. He had a wise face and a beard. When he reached me he gave me a long, searching look, rather like "The Sage," the old *chimán* who had looked at Mary and me as we sat on the steps of the church on my first trip to Todos Santos.

He said to me: "I want you to take the masculine lead in a play that I am presenting."

"How can I play the masculine lead when I am a woman?" I asked.

"It makes no difference, you must play the lead, and the lead is a man," he replied.

"What will people think of a woman taking a man's part?" I thought, but I agreed to do it. The old man vanished, and I saw that dawn was coming. I looked at the fountain, and water

was shooting out of it. Suddenly the same old man appeared and looked me up and down and said: "Yes, you will do very well in the part." When I looked down, I saw I was dressed completely in the costume of a male Todos Santos Indian.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

When I first took on the job of doctor or *chimancita* of Todos Santos, I hadn't the faintest inkling of the role I would have to play.

From early morning until six or seven at night I did nothing but see sick people. As soon as I had made my morning rounds and returned to the house, I started work all over again. My bedroom, which had become office and dispensary as well, stank from the sick, unwashed bodies, and from the floor which was constantly spat upon, or wee-wee'd on by babies. I tried to see the patients on the porch or in the corridor, but in cold, wet weather this was impossible. I hardly had time to eat, and the only time I had to myself was when I fell into bed exhausted at the end of the day.

The epidemic had become so bad and of such a virulent form that I telegraphed the head of the Sanitation Department in Huehuetenango to send help, and also typhoid serum. He wired back that he would dispatch an inspector if I would send a horse to meet him at Paquix. All was arranged, and then I received another wire saying he could not spare him, for there was too much sickness in Huehuetenango.

I got much help from a wonderful book on diseases and diagnosis that a friend sent me, and Mary and Julio kept me supplied with medicine and serum.

Basilia loved her job as my interpreter. It took her mind off Carlos and made her feel important, as most of the Indian women could not speak a word of Spanish. With both Indians and Ladinos I had to explain over and over how the different medicines were to be taken. As an example: if a child was to have half a sulfa three times a day with water and soda, I would make three distinct piles on waxed paper. On each I laid half a sulfa pill and a pinch

of soda. In a glass I put water and said: "*Muy temprano*, very early," and I would point to where the sun rose. I demonstrated that the soda went in the water, the pill was to be powdered, and all was to be given to the child. Then I would point to the sun in the heavens, for noon, and repeat the performance for when the sun set. I had Basilia repeat the whole thing and then had the Indian do it again, always with the warning that if they did not do exactly as I said, the child might die.

I was called in to see a sick Ladino girl whose baby brother had died while I was in Guatemala City. Don Pancho had told me that he had treated the boy. It was a case of typhoid fever. He had prescribed sulfa and told the grandmother that it would be a long illness, but if she followed his directions the child would live. After two days she listened to a neighbor who thought herself a healer and who advised worm medicine. This naturally killed the child, and they turned around and said Don Pancho had done it.

I remembered this as I entered the dark room. The aunt and grandmother told me that the mother was a schoolteacher in a distant pueblo and that the child had been ill with a high fever for three days, with vomiting and dysentery. Her temperature was 104½. There were no signs of spots and her pulse was very slow, so I was sure she had typhoid and not typhus.

I said to them: "The child has typhoid, contracted from her brother who died. Typhoid without the help of a real doctor is difficult to cure. The cure depends on the strength of the child and your following my directions carefully. It is a long, slow illness. If she lasts ten days she will probably live. I have one of the best medicines for this illness, and it will be up to God and the medicine to pull her through. If you go to other people and mix their medicine with mine, as you did with Don Pancho's, I will have nothing more to do with the case and the child will certainly die."

"Señorita, we will do what you say and we will go to no one else, but how will she have strength if she takes no nourishment?"

"Give her the water of boiled rice sweetened with sugar, every hour. No children must be allowed in this room, as this disease is contagious. Also you must wire the mother to come immediately."

"Señorita, she is already on her way; she left this morning on foot. It will take her three and a half days in this weather."

"Why don't you send a horse to meet her part way? There are plenty of her friends here in the pueblo who have horses."

"Señorita, I have already asked. No one will give his horse, as the road is so bad due to the rains. No one will even rent us a horse."

"What fine neighbors you have, that they can't help a friend in need! I need my horse today, as I have to visit some sick people, but you can send your husband for it tomorrow morning and he can ride the horse to meet her, and she can ride it back."

During this epidemic I really saw at first hand the selfishness, stupidity, and avariciousness of the Ladino.

Augusto was the name of one little Ladino boy, aged eight. I had seen him in the market place several times. A bright, dirty-looking child, with plenty of personality. His mother begged me to come and see him, as he was very ill. She was a hatchet-faced individual who ran what might be called the bawdy house of the pueblo. Though it was not called this, it was open to Indians and Ladinos alike.

I walked with her down to the house, which, I found, had three rooms all opening into each other. There were three beds, and two rouged-up girls, who, I think, were her daughters.

The child had a raging fever, congested lungs, and a very bad cough. He was between two doors, lying on the damp earth floor on a *petate*, over him a thin blanket. Sick as he was, he smiled when I entered and greeted me politely. The door by his feet led

outside, and wind poured in through the cracks. The mother's bed was in the corner, free of drafts and radiating comfort to beguile customers. I asked if she wanted the child to live, and when she assented I asked why he was not in her bed.

"Señorita, I can't have him in my bed. This is the only place he can stay and not interfere with my work."

All this time Augusto was watching me with his large black eyes. About five neighbors had gathered to listen. I was thankful for this, as I wanted them as witnesses.

"If one of you will come back with me to my house I will give you my hot water bag. His feet must be kept warm, and also he must have another blanket." I smiled to myself, as the hot-water bag had been used by about every Ladino family in the pueblo. Besides that, it had a chewed-up look, for I had cut pieces out of the top collar to make washers for my water filter. I added: "It is up to you. If you move your sick boy out of the draft and sacrifice your own comfort and profession a little bit, he will have a good chance to live."

The bells tolled incessantly for the dead. I heard through my neighbors that El Rey and the prayermakers were making *costumbre* on the mountaintops to avert the epidemic.

Just as I was finishing my coffee before dawn the next morning, the Ladino came for Pichón. A few minutes later an Indian entered, stood in front of me, and started to speak in broken Spanish.

"Señorita," he said, "you must come with me immediately."

He then told me that his brother, called Manuel, lived up above the pueblo. He had arrived last night from Huehuetenango with four bombs with which to celebrate the *fiesta*. When he joined the family circle around the fire, he placed the bombs next to his outstretched leg. A spark landed on them and they all blew up. Though some of the family were burned, and all were scared, he was the only one really hurt.

“Señorita, we called in Chimán Rafael last night and he says Manuel will die. But Manuel’s wife does not believe this and she has sent me to fetch you.”

Basilia, who had listened to the story and helped to translate it, told me Manuel was a good man. She helped me pack my bag, and off I went with the Indian on foot. We walked through the upper part of the village, which was just coming to life, and passed Chimán Rafael’s house. I did not see him, but I was sure he watched us through his doorway. Up a sheer ridge we climbed, way above the pueblo. Whenever I was out of breath I stopped to admire the view of the village spread out below. I loved the peace and the beauty of it; the dark shadows that accented the freshly whitewashed houses; the thatched roofs through which the smoke drifted; the bright red specks of women weaving their *huipiles* and the men’s striped suits for the *fiesta*. The pueblo was sheltered on both sides by high mountains slanting downward toward Mexico. To me it was as if the pueblo were held in the two hands of a god. The fingers, which tapered and pointed downward, formed the valley, the way to the lowlands, Mexico, and the north. No wonder Chimán Calmo said the pueblo was “put by God in the middle of the sky.”

The wind blew hard and our walk seemed endless, but at last we arrived at the house of Manuel. We found him lying outside on a *petate*, with all the family and neighbors gathered around. He was suffering so much that his breath came in gasps. I liked his lean face, his eyes, and his mouth, though it was twisted in pain. Over his leg was thrown a filthy cloth, and when this was removed I could hardly conceal the horror I felt. From ankle to knee his leg had been split open and folded back by the blast of the bombs. The folded-back part was black and hard, like wood. The whole foot and leg were black and badly burned.

I asked for boiling water and a cup and, while I waited, I gave

Manuel a cigarette and took one myself, for I was so upset I needed it. With iodine soap I washed my hands and the cup in boiling water. In the cup, with my fingers—for I had nothing else to use—I mixed white vaseline and sulfa powder. I cut away all the crisp flesh. By this time quite a crowd had gathered. I had one man hold the scissors, another the bandage, saying: "Don't let that touch your dirty goatskin." They all laughed at this as it meant nothing to them.

I rubbed the vaseline with the sulfa onto strips of gauze, holding them hanging from my fingers. I laid them lightly on the leg, fighting off the flies, which hovered like vultures over their prey. When the whole leg and foot were covered loosely by the strips, Manuel felt immediate relief and his smile rewarded me.

"Manuel," I said, "I will return in the late afternoon with medicine that will make you sleep, and a flour sack to put over your leg so that the flies will not get at it. Flies carry dirt and when they land on your leg they leave this dirt in your wound. This makes it very difficult for your leg to heal. Till I come I want your wife or children to watch your leg and see that no flies get near it." Then, to my amazement, I heard myself say: "Manuel, you will not die, if you follow my directions. It will take a long time for your leg to heal—more than a month, and more than two months before you can walk. If you have patience and obey my instructions your leg will heal."

He thanked me, and I offered everyone a cigarette.

"Señorita," Manuel said then, "you don't remember me, do you? Last year, during the *fiesta* of Todos Santos you were here with a Señora. When you left the pueblo on the road to La Ventosa the pack of your mule slipped, so I fixed it for you. You gave me as a present a brand-new hat that you had bought at the *fiesta*. I gave it to my wife, and she wears it now."

"Yes, I remember the day well, and now I remember you. You

were most kind to help us with the mule. Just think, that was a year ago.”

Manuel's wife smiled at me and brought out the hat to show, and the whole thing made us all feel most friendly.

On my way home I thought of poor Manuel, his leg, and the hat. Then I questioned myself. I had been here a year, and what had I accomplished? The Indians were slowly becoming my friends and trusting me, I told myself. I had made valuable contacts like Rosa Bautista, Tata Julián, and Chimán Calmo. They were giving me valuable information and so was Don Pancho. Then I thought of the epidemic. I knew it could be a great hindrance to my work, and yet it might also be made into a help.

When I paid my daily call on the typhoid child I arrived just in time to hear a Ladino woman telling the aunt to give the girl worm medicine, as she had passed a worm that morning. I blew up.

“If you give worm medicine to this child, it will kill her. The child's brother was killed by the same advice. I should think you would have learned from that experience. Today her fever is lower, and if she holds out a few more days, she will live. Continue to give her rice and corn water. When her fever is lower you can give her chicken soup, and purée of cooked apples, as it has pectin in it, which is good for her intestines. She may pass more worms, and she may have discomfort from them, as they do not like her high fever and lack of food. But understand this: the worms are not a cause of this illness and if you even think of giving worm medicine I shall have no more to do with the case. Go to the church with your candle and pray to God for the recovery of this child and the safe return of the mother.”

Later, Chimán Calmo and his wife came and we had a cup of coffee and a cigarette.

I said: "Tata Chimán, I am very fond of this pueblo and all you *naturales*. I would like to give a gift to the Chief Prayermaker for candles for the *fiesta*. As I do not know the *Alcalde Rezador* I will give it to you to give to him." I handed the *chimán* five dollars.

He took it in his hand, kissed it, and thanked me and the God above. He mumbled some words in his beard and thanked me again, saying he would give it to the *Alcalde Rezador*.

As he started to go I said: "Tata Chimán, I have had a dream that bothers me and would like you to do the *mixes* to find out out if it is a good dream or a bad dream."

"That is good. In the morning, early, I have to do *costumbre* in front of the church, but on my way home I will stop by and you can come with me to my house and I will cast the *mixes*. With much pleasure I will cast the *mixes* for you, Señorita."

That night I went out into the yard to pray for Manuel and the girl with typhoid. At such times, which became steadily more frequent, I found it more satisfactory to pray outdoors than in the house. I often thought how silly this was, for no matter where you are, God is.

As I stood with my feet on the earth, my hands turned upward toward the sky in a gesture of receiving, it seemed to me I was tuned to a wave length beyond my world. I sensed that I was too egotistical and inadequate to comprehend the message, so I prayed, saying: "God, or whatever you are called, please help me to be humble, to be ego-less, and to be open to receive. Please give me the strength and the knowledge to serve. Please save Manuel and the typhoid child." I felt a tingling in my hands and a great force enter my body. I felt at peace, for I knew that I belonged; that I was part of a whole and that I would be allowed to serve. I now had faith that Manuel and the child would be saved.

In the morning Basilia was all excited because day after tomorrow would be the *fiesta*. She had asked me a few days before

if her mother and sister and brother could stay with us, and I had assented on condition that they would all sleep in the kitchen.

The bells tolled out their rhythmical sounds, sounds that were both joyous and sad. If they rang continuously they were joyous notes for the *fiesta*, but if they rang once or twice they were notes of sadness, announcements of death, which were increasing daily.

At eight the *chimán* passed my house, but as I had several patients waiting I told him I would join him at his house in half an hour.

Walking up toward the *chimán's*, I passed many San Juan Indians, all dressed in their best. The *pila* above was thronged with gossiping women busily washing their hair or *huipiles* for the *fiesta*. In the *chimán's* yard were Indians from Colotenango unloading from their mules a cargo of tropical fruit. So, along with the *chimán* and his family, I bargained for oranges, limes, and bananas.

After this the *chimán* and I retired to his little house and he took out the beans, covered his table with a cloth, and asked me my dream. I told him about my being asked to play a part in the costume of a *Todosantero*. He said nothing, but cast the beans. When he had finished and summed up the results he said: "Señorita, it is a bad dream. You must buy two large candles and bring them to me and I will work for you."

I thanked him and left, carrying the oranges and bananas I had bought. I found Basilia in a state. She was standing by the *pila* filling her mouth with water from the faucet and spitting it with great force back into the *pila*. I knew from experience this meant something had disturbed her. Her eyes were snapping and she was so angry that she hardly saw me.

"What is the matter, Basilia?" I asked.

"Señorita, there is a woman who lives above here whose man is the first man I ever slept with; but that was long ago. Two years

ago the child of this man and woman died and she accused me of killing it. She came here while you were at the *chimán's* and told me that I had killed her child two years ago, and that was why Carlos had died."

"But Basilia, how could you kill the child?" I asked, for it gave me a wonderful opening.

"Señorita, she thought I had gone to a *chimán* to have him cast an evil spell."

"But Basilia, *chimanes* don't do evil, only *brujos*."

"Señorita, there are good *chimanes* here, and there are bad *chimanes* who are *brujos*."

"How do you know when a *chimán* is a *brujo*?"

"When he does evil, like casting a spell, then he is a *brujo*. Many people say Chimán Rafael is a *brujo*."

The first signs of dawn were greeted by a skyrocket sent off from the houses of the *chimanes* and the *Alcalde Rezador*. Through my fence I saw the village throw off its cloak of darkness and emerge to the sound of marimba music. Small bells hanging from the costumes of dancers returning from their *costumbre* on the mountaintops added to the paradoxical holiday feeling. They had danced all night, and the next night they would dance at the Chief Prayermaker's house and drink much *aguardiente* with all the religious body, the *Alcalde Municipal* and the *principales*. On the morrow, the day of the *fiesta*, they would hold the savage rooster race that I had seen the year before.

Basilia's family arrived, dressed in their best. I gave Basilia's mother and sister new ribbons for their hair, and they were delighted. They and Margarita spent most of the day in front of the mirror in the kitchen combing their hair and admiring themselves. Margarita's *huipil* was by far the most beautiful, and

she knew it. Marcelina and her two little sisters looked adorable in their new blouses trimmed with the rickrack that I had given them.

Right up to lunch time I visited sick people. The typhoid child I found much better, probably because her mother had arrived. The poor soul was enormously grateful for the horse I had loaned her and for the help I had given. The child was now just skin and bones, and I told the mother she must feed her up, that we would buy a chicken and she was to make chicken soup and give her a little every hour.

I went up to see Manuel. He was sitting outside with his mother, a handsome old woman with an aristocratic air.

"Señorita," said Manuel, "I have slept well with the red medicine you gave me [I had given him seconal sleeping capsules that were vermilion in color] and my leg feels better. We think you should wash my leg with water today."

As I took off the bandages I told him water could only harm his leg. I found the bandages soaked with a pussy liquid; but the leg was normal in size and there was no sign of infection. I was really pleased, and told him so and explained that he must not touch it, and I would try and come every day and change the bandages when it was necessary. By this time I had quite an audience of neighbors.

A very pretty young woman said: "Señorita, I feel as if I had a lump right here," and she pointed to her tummy. "What do you think it can be?"

"Maybe your lump is a baby," I said with a smile, and everyone roared with laughter, for apparently she was not married.

A woman whom I did not like kept asking me for different things, and finally in exasperation I said: "You must be a midwife or a *pulsera*, trying to get a lot of medicine for nothing." Again laughter, for it seems she was a midwife.

On my way home to lunch I stopped at the butcher's to buy some stew meat.

Outside the butcher's house was tied a tired, thin ram that was to be slaughtered for the *fiesta*. Near by hung meat drying, covered with flies. I liked the butcher and his wife. He was an old, tired-looking man, a Ladino, and she rather a handsome woman who looked very Indian. In the one room a cartwheel took up most of the space. It was about two feet off the floor, and hanging from it were candles in the making for the *fiesta*. String is attached to the underside of such wheels, one piece of string for each candle. As the wheel is turned, hot tallow is poured down each string, the extra tallow being caught in a bowl beneath. After many coatings of tallow and a final coating of paraffin the candles are ready to be sold at the *fiesta*.

On *fiesta* day I made an early start for Manuel's in order to return in time to lend my saddle to a neighbor who was to ride in the rooster race. I was surprised to see a marimba and dancers in the house next door to Manuel's. All were drunk, and one man, who was tall and arrogant, glanced at me with hate in his eyes. Manuel said something to him and he lurched away, much to my relief, as I knew drunken Indians.

"Señorita," said Manuel, "there are so many drunken *naturales*, it is better that you cure my leg in the house."

I agreed, and this time I changed the bandages with only the family for audience.

Riding homeward I heard a groan and, looking down the side of a steep drop, I saw a drunken dancer passed out in his Conquistador's costume. It made a strange picture, the prone body resplendent in its cheap finery, and the teeming village below. From every roof oozed smoke, and there were flashes of red as men and women moved about in their *fiesta* clothes. It was early, but the

roads were filled with travellers, both Indians and Ladinos, coming to enjoy the *fiesta*.

As I passed Chimán Rafael's house I saw him sitting outside in a drunken stupor. I knew that he, as well as the other *chimanes*, had been busy all night praying over the race course. They had sprinkled the blood of sacrificed roosters up and down the street, praying to the *Dueño de Cerro* that no harm would come to rider or horse. All this had been done under the stimulating effects of much *aguardiente* supplied by the riders. After midnight the riders had gone to the Chief Prayermaker's house to celebrate with the dancers and the religious body, and before dawn they had all gone to the mountaintops with their respective *chimanes* for a *costumbre* that took place before sunrise.

I felt, as everyone else did, the excitement of the village. The streets filled with Indians from many different pueblos, all dressed in their best; the throngs in the church burning candles and making thanksgiving offerings to their gods for the good crops that had been given to them and for the cessation of the epidemic; the skyrockets, the beat of the *tambor*, the jingling marimba music, the continual sound of mules' hoofs slipping on the trail outside my house, and the constant hum of work that rose from all houses.

I was at my table writing, with Tequila and Micho at my feet, when Francisco came for the saddle. He looked stunning with red ribbons around his hat, across his chest, and hanging from his arms like streamers. In fact they hung wherever he could put them.

"How handsome you look!" I said to him. "Why aren't you drunk like the others?"

"Señorita, Satero and I know better. We pretended to drink, but we know if we are not drunk we won't fall off our horses. Thank you, Señorita, for the saddle. How much do I owe you?"

"You owe me nothing, Francisco. You are my neighbor, so I am lending it to you."

Windows and doors were my picture frames. I had little time to glance through them, but when I did I saw the sights that I had seen with Mary one year ago, only this time it was from backstage.

The main street was crowded with spectators, every possible space filled with human forms in the vivid costumes of their particular pueblo; the rope stretched across the street with the poor fluttering birds hanging from it. When the race started I kept my eyes on my work, for the fate of the roosters I well knew, and the fate of the riders I was in no mood to care about. I could hear the excited hum of the crowds; the hoofbeats of the galloping horses; the shouts of the riders; and the cries of the onlookers when a horseman fell to the ground. In the pauses between races, when the teams awaited the signal to start, I could hear the faint beat of the *tambor*, and the metallic notes of the marimba, as the Conquistadores danced on.

It happened just as I feared. Seven men were thrown from their mounts that day, and of course I was called from my rounds to do first aid work. One turned out to be Telespio Mendoza, the son of Chimán Calmo's wife, who lived not far from me. They called me to his house, and I found a crowd of wailing Indians about the body of Telespio lying outside on the ground. His son told me that his father had fallen on his head and his horse had stepped on his wrist, which hung there ripped open. He was unconscious and covered with blood. Though he was bleeding badly I could see the artery was not cut.

Next to him was a dignified old man with a beard. I did not know him, but was sure he was Telespio's *chimán*.

"I also cure, Señorita," he said.

"Yes, *chimán*, I am sure you cure, and cure well."

The son and wife, both drunk, were wailing and moaning, fearful that Telespio would die. I told them to stop crying, that Tata Mendoza would not die, and that I needed their help. First I applied boiling water and soap, and, as I could not see well, the *chimán* motioned the crowd that encircled me to step back. I spread on the earth a newspaper in which I had wrapped my equipment. On this I put my medicines and instruments on Kleenex, and started to work. I washed around the wound but did not clean it, as it was bleeding too profusely. Then I poured sulfa powder in it. The *chimán* wanted to know what the powder was and I explained that it was a powerful medicine that could cure people. What amused me was that he asked me to put on more, which I did, to please him. Then I bound the wound tightly and told the family to hold the injured man's hand high for at least an hour, and if it continued to bleed to come and get me. His head was so covered with dried blood that I had to cut off a lot of hair before I could find the scalp wound. It was not deep. I put the hair on a piece of paper and instructed the *chimán* to see that it was burned, because hair is sometimes used to cast a spell. When I poured the iodine on the wound the patient came to suddenly and asked his son what was happening. The son spoke in Mam and used my name. My patient said something and closed his eyes and lost consciousness again. I instructed the *chimán* to move him inside and cover him with a blanket, and said I would come to see him the next day.

On my way home I saw drunken Indians everywhere. Some were beardless youths still in their teens, making love or trying to force their girl friends to drink more. Both the girls and the youths were amazingly beautiful.

Basilia's mother told me on my arrival that Basilia had vanished, and this did not upset me at all; it was to be expected on a *fiesta* that came only once a year.

That night I too decided to celebrate. To all Indians who stopped by I gave a shot of *aguardiente*—I had bought a large bottle for the *fiesta*.

The next morning Basilia returned, drunk—very drunk. I could see that she had fallen on her face because it was all scratched. She had lost her belt and two bracelets and, worst of all, the four dollars I had given her the night before—money that I had saved for her. She lay on a *petate* on the porch and her mother covered her with a blanket.

The wife of Telespio Mendoza came for me so I went with her to their house. I dressed his wrist and head, which had no sign of infection.

Still a bit drunk, he said: “Señorita, when I opened my eyes and saw you I said to my son: ‘If I am being cured by the Señorita I am in good hands,’ so I went to sleep.”

As I left their house, Tata Julián stopped me and asked if I would come to his house, for there were two men staying with him who had been badly hurt. I entered and saw at once that one of the men was the one they had told me about whose face had been stepped on by a horse. The hoof had landed below the eye, his cheek and part of his nose were hanging open and full of dirt. The eye was undamaged but it was most difficult to clean, as he had waited so long. I washed it out as best I could with swabs made of matches and cotton. I lifted it up and taped it but did not dare sew it as I knew all the dirt was not out. He was obviously suffering greatly, and I was sorry that with all my medical planning I had never thought to bring an anesthetic. I told him to come to my house that afternoon and I would syringe it out and sew it up, and then he could return to his hamlet. The other man just had a sprained shoulder, so I told him to go to his *chimán*, as they

were much better at that kind of thing than I was. They were often excellent osteopaths and even bonesetters.

When I got back to the house I found a patriarchal old man groaning on my doorstep. I was furious at Basilia, who had such a hangover that she never even offered the old man a chair. Soon I had him comfortable with a cigarette in his mouth and he told me his story, punctuated with groans.

“Señorita, God has punished me. With my white hair I should be wise. Yesterday, because it was *fiesta*, I drank a little. I met friends and we drank a little more. Before I knew it I fell on the road and one of the galloping horses stepped on my leg.” He then let out a deep moan.

And well he might, for his wound was in the calf of the leg, and at least seven inches long. The wound was deep and dirty. I feared that the muscles had been torn.

I looked at his aristocratic face with its high forehead and hooked nose and the long, full, white beard. He looked about seventy-five or eighty, but with his clear eyes and alert face it was difficult to tell.

“Where have you come from?” I asked as I dressed his leg.

“Señorita, I was so drunk they carried me home. I suffered so all night that I told my son: ‘I am an old man and my leg is so bad I am going to the house of *la gringa*.’”

“Where is your house?” I asked again.

“You know where the double bridge is. It is up the mountain from there, about a kilometer more.”

“You must have walked three kilometers and a half, which is not good for you or your leg.”

“It is not good, Señorita, but I have no horse like you, and I have no mule.”

Basilia was still lying in the sun on a *petate*. Angrily I said: “Get out of the sun, Basilia, it’s the worst thing for you. Go make

two cups of strong coffee, one for yourself and one for this poor man. It will make you both feel better. And then go and ask Domingo to saddle Pichón to take the patient home!"

I finished dressing his very swollen leg as he drank the coffee, and told him that if his son would come for me in the morning to show me the way to his house, I would visit him.

"Señorita," Basilia said to me when they had left, "I feel so sick."

"I'm glad that you do. You had better take a dose of salts. What happened to your belt, your bracelets, and your money?"

"With one dollar I bought a bottle of *aguardiente* and went to Simona's. Some friends were there. We drank and we danced. After that I don't remember." Here she hiccuped. "This morning I awoke in Simona's house on the floor—with no belt, and my skirt on the floor beside me."

All this she told me with her characteristic gesture of hand over mouth and squirming all over.

"This will teach you not to drink too much. If you lost your belt, and your skirt was off, you will probably get more than you bargained for. What a poor friend Simona was to you!"

"Oh no, Señorita, not a baby. What you think never happened."

"How do you know, if you don't remember?"

She hung her head and squirmed some more just as Margarita entered with a superior air. She started to give me a full account of Basilia's evening. I cut her short.

"Basilia has told me all about it, Margarita. Have you an extra belt?"

"I have one for one dollar."

The belt was necessary, as without it the wrap-around skirt would fall down.

"All right, bring it down," I said. "Basilia can pay for the belt out of her salary."

Margarita left to get the belt and Chimán Calmo entered with three friends, all extremely drunk. He called me *madre mía* and *chimancita* and kissed me, of all places, right on my chest! Then, in Mam, he told his friends I had the power to heal; that I was a *sabia*, a wise woman, and a *chimancita*. It took all my tact and patience and three glasses of *aguardiente* to get rid of them.

On the morrow the son of the patriarch called for me and led the way to his father's house, and I followed on Pichón. We passed countless Indians who asked where we were going. My guide would stop and tell them in full detail, which rather held up our journey. At the double bridge we turned off and started up a very slippery and insecure path. I got off Pichón and walked. The house was one of about ten, part of the hamlet of El Rancho. As we rounded the corner to the old man's house I saw him lying on a *petate* in the sun. When he saw me coming he let out with groans, which amused me no end.

"Tata Marcelino, your leg can't hurt as much as all that." We all laughed, including his daughter-in-law, who had an appealing face. When I looked at his leg I saw that he had been fooling with the bandage. "Tata Marcelino, you took off the bandage," I said.

"Oh, no, Señorita, it just moved in the night," said the old liar.

"Tata Marcelino, do you want me to cure your leg?"

"How can you doubt it, Señorita? Why would I have walked that long distance in pain to your house?" And with this he let out another groan.

"If you want me to cure your leg, keep your hands off the bandage. It will take a month before your leg will be well; old people heal slowly. You must have patience, Tata Marcelino."

"Yes, Señorita. What is your name?" I told him my name in English and Spanish, and then he asked if I was married, if I had children, and if all the people in my country had the power to cure.

"No, not all my people can cure," I answered. "What about your *chimanes*; can all of them cure?"

"In my father's time all the *chimanes* could cure. God gave them this gift. Nowadays some know well how to cure, others are *brujos*."

"How do you know when a *chimán* is a *brujo*?" I asked.

"You know it if he does evil," he said.

The daughter brought us hot coffee and sweet bread and we talked and smoked.

On my way back, just as I neared the pueblo, I was called into a house to see a lovely-looking young woman of about eighteen lying on a blanket near the fire. She was terrified of me. I told her husband to tell her I would do her no harm; I just wanted to take her pulse and see if she had fever. They told me that spots had appeared five days before, that she had eaten nothing, and for the last three days had breathed the way she was breathing now, in short gasps. I covered her up and turned and left the room. I knew there was nothing I could do, for she was in the last stages of pneumonia. Her heartbeat could scarcely be felt. I went outside with the husband and told him I could do nothing; that he should go and burn his candle at the church.

I saw death many times, as I was called in on cases that the *chimanes* had given up. However, I was glad to see that the typhoid child had recovered, as did all the measles cases I had treated from the beginning.

Some people came to me with strange maladies that I could not diagnose, so I told them to go to the doctor in Huehuetenango, though I knew they would not. Several men had venereal diseases and I sent them to Don Pancho.

Needless to say, all of this had opened the doors for me as nothing else could have done. I was received in almost all the houses as a friend, and as a *chimancita* who did good; any questions I

asked were answered willingly and without suspicion. But the more I got into the doctor role, the more I realized that when I saved a life, or helped in any way, it was not Maud Oakes who did it, but some higher force. My daily life was full of proof of this force. It had not failed me once when I prayed and asked for help. I realized also how true my dream had been, for I was doing a man-sized job in my role as *chimán* in Todos Santos.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The bells continued to toll for the dead. El Rey and the prayermakers were offering sacrifices on the mountaintops, praying to their gods to end this epidemic, or else to reveal why this misfortune had come to the pueblo. Basilia and I were counting the number of times the bells rang, when Chimán Calmo's wife came to call. We patted each other on the shoulder in greeting and then sat by the fire and smoked. She waited till Basilia was out of the room and then in a mixture of Mam, Spanish, and the sign language, asked me if I had given Tata Calmo the five dollars for himself or for the *Alcalde Rezador*. I explained that it was a present for the *rezadores* for candles for the *fiesta*.

She then put her hand on mine and, lowering her voice in great earnestness, said: "*Nanita, Tata Chimán muy malo. Dinero no Alcalde Rezador, dinero aguardiente.*" The pert little old woman acted out Tata Calmo holding a huge bottle of *aguardiente* in his hands and pouring it down his throat. Then with a sad expression and a shake of her head she pointed to herself, saying: "*No aguardiente nada, Tata Chimán muy malo, muy malo hombre.*"

I was sure that if he had given her a few sips from the bottle, she probably never would have come to tell me. I agreed with her that Tata Calmo was a bad man, that for a *chimán* and a *principal* to do such a thing was wicked. Then I pointed upward: "*Dios sabe todo.*"

She put her fingers to her lips and told me not to tell Tata Calmo, and I assured her I would not. As she rose to go I put my arm around her shoulder and gave her a hug, for I was fond of the sweet old lady. She had amazed me by telling on her husband.

During the conversation, out of the corner of my eye, I had seen Basilia listening from behind the door and this time I was really annoyed.

"Basilia, you are to repeat to no one what you have heard and, in the future, when I shut the door, I want you to remain in your own room or in the kitchen."

She put her hand over her mouth and said: "He is a bad man, a *ladrón*, to take money that is for the church. You should tell the *Alcalde Rezador*, Señorita."

"No, I think it is better to say nothing. I will let him know without words that I know, and he will be punished."

"Señorita, many people say he is a *brujo*."

"Maybe he is," I said.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by a voice calling. Tequila barked and I went to the window, which was always open. It was Patrona begging me to let her in. So I opened the door, and she entered with the baby on her back and Victoria, who was sobbing. By that time Basilia was wide awake. Between sobs Patrona told us that Domingo had returned to the house drunk and mean. He had hit Andrés several times, hard blows, and she was so afraid he would beat her that she had come to me for help. I told her the best thing to do was to spend the night with us. Basilia brought blankets and a *petate*, and soon I had four Indians sleeping with me, for as yet Basilia would not sleep in the room where Carlos had died. Twice in the night I heard Domingo and Andrés calling Patrona, and at five-thirty Domingo's head appeared in the window. He asked for his wife.

"She will return after her breakfast. Stop calling out and bothering us," I said.

Later I heard both sides of the story. This was a typical aftermath of the *fiesta*. It seemed that Patrona's sister, who, Domingo

said, was no good, had come to call on Patrona that evening while Domingo was out. She had brought a bottle of *aguardiente* with her and the two sisters gossiped and drank. Domingo had come back with friends and not only insulted Patrona's sister, but Patrona herself. Patrona told him that she was leaving, and would return to her father. In anger, Domingo hit Andrés, who stood up for his mother and aunt. This, for some reason, surprised me.

We talked it over and I told them that they were both wrong and that if they had not drunk so much *aguardiente* it never would have happened. What interested me was that during the explanation it came out that Patrona had been married to Domingo by a priest. This she had done because she knew that, if they were not married, Domingo could go off and leave her with nothing. Now everything belonged to her as well as to Domingo. What a wise woman she was, I thought.

A letter came from Mary Matheu one morning which delighted me. She was coming to visit me in Todos Santos at last, bringing the medicines and different kinds of vaccine that I had asked for, and together we would vaccinate the children of both schools and inoculate them against typhus and typhoid. This hadn't been done for many years and was, of course, badly needed, as Todos Santos was in the typhus belt.

Later in the afternoon Domingo came to see me. With much secrecy he told me that he had a friend who had a very important question to ask me. This friend had built a house near the ruins of Cumanchúm, and one day when he was digging in the corner of his house he had found a small ancient pot. Since then a *chimán* had told him that there was money buried there. Day and night there was much noise in the house. He wondered what caused it and whether the *chimán* was right.

"Señorita, he would like to have you come and tell him if there is money and, if so, where to dig."

"Domingo, you tell him that I try to help sick people but that I do not do the kind of thing he asks. Maybe Don Pancho can do it. You tell your friend that tomorrow I will bring Don Pancho at four o'clock in the afternoon. It is a good time when the sun is sinking," I added, realizing that this was a wonderful setup. "If he does not want Don Pancho because he is a Ladino, let me know."

Domingo departed with a look of importance, and I went to work in my vegetable garden, which by this time was really producing. I had no more than entered the garden when I heard Pichón neighing. He always did this when he wanted something. I went over and found that they had forgotten to feed him. Pichón and I had grown very fond of each other. Every day I gave him carrots, which he adored, and he followed me around like Tequila whenever he could.

Before eight the next morning I had taken stitches out of a torn lip that I had sewn up, and had changed some dressings on a burn and an infected cut. Then I went on my rounds, which took the rest of the morning. After lunch, on Pichón I went to see Manuel. As I rode up the ridge, way above the pueblo, I could see a distant group of dancers bobbing about in their vivid costumes in a yard far below. The marimba music reached me as a faint tinkle; this was the tail end of the *fiesta*.

Manuel's leg was much better. It was healing slowly but cleanly. Every day I made him move his toes a bit, even if it was painful. I was afraid that if he didn't it might heal so that he could not move them at all.

As I was dressing his leg he had his wife feed Pichón and afterwards he gave me a gift of potatoes, saying: "This is so little for all that you are doing for me."

"It is a great deal," I said, "they are beautiful potatoes."

Manuel and his family and I had become great friends. They

sent me patients all the time. In fact, most of the patients whom I had helped were sending their sick and ailing friends to me to be cured. I was glad that Mary was coming with her medical supplies and good advice. This doctor role was beginning to be too much for me to handle alone. While Manuel and his family and I were talking, we saw a storm coming. They asked me where my hat was, and when I told them that I had forgotten it, they insisted that I take his wife's hat, the one I had given him the year before. I hesitated, as I knew every woman in the pueblo had lice in her hair. One of the great feminine sports, in fact, was combing lice out of each other's hair, like monkeys. They were so insistent, however, that rather than hurt his feelings I put on the hat, full of misgivings, although I knew I could have a shampoo when I got home. By this time the rain was coming down in sheets.

In spite of the downpour I rode on to El Rancho to see Tata Marcelino, whose leg was much better. I was horrified to find he had put a dirty piece of cheese on it. We had coffee, and as I departed he said what he always said: "Thank you, Señorita, may your journey be a safe one. When will you come again?"

During these visits to Tata Marcelino, a former *alcalde*, I had gathered lots of information; for whenever he questioned me, which he did often, I felt free to question him.

At four o'clock that afternoon Don Pancho, Domingo, and I climbed the small path past the ruins to the house of the buried treasure. Blue-purple iris were growing everywhere. White iris, I noticed, only grew next to the cross by the pyramid where the Indians did *costumbre*. Beyond we could see the foundations of temples and even the ruins of an ancient ball court. The two pyramids behind us stood like the sentinels of the pueblo, which they really were.

The man and his family greeted us at the door and ushered us in. This was his story:

"While you were home in your country, a *gringo* came to Todos Santos and explored the ruins. He talked to me and asked permission to dig up the earth floor in my house where he would not be seen. [There is a law in Guatemala that no one can dig in ruins without special permission.] I refused." Then he repeated what the *chimán* had told him about the money.

By this time it had grown dark in the house and we could hear the rain falling. In the corner a table had been fixed. On this, by the flickering light of *ocote* torches, Don Pancho spread a cloth and onto it poured out his *mixes*. With a flourishing gesture and an air of mystery Don Pancho commenced his role of *chimán*. I must say he was good. All I had to do was to look at the intent faces about me to know. He asked two questions in a powerful voice: if there was money or an ancient tomb under the earth in the house, and what caused the noises. He prayed, mentioning the four *Alcaldes* and the twenty days of the Mam calendar, and kept asking the god of the *mixes* the questions. When he was finished he sat quietly for a few minutes with bent head, and then said in a firm voice which I hardly recognized: "The Spirit says there is nothing in the earth, no money, no tomb. The Spirit says that the noises are made by the evil thoughts of your enemies who wish to harm you."

This touched something in the husband, for he said: "Señor, the last time I went to the *tierra caliente* my wife was to follow me the next day. She never came for five days, and when she did come she was minus her hair; it had been cut off to the shoulders."

The wife spoke up. "Yes, the first night after my husband left I spent in the house of a friend. In the morning when I awoke I found my hair had been cut by an evil spirit. I went to a *chimán*, who cast the *mixes*, and the Spirit came. The Spirit said that *Chimán Calmo* had sent the evil spirit to cut my hair in the night so that he could use it for evil purposes. I had to burn candles in the church, and in the house where my hair was cut, while the *chimán*

worked for me to ward off the evil spirit of Calmo. That is why I could not join my husband for five days."

I thought to myself that more probably she had been sleeping with her lover and he had cut off her hair in a fit of jealousy and that was why she was afraid to go to her husband.

"Did you burn a candle in this room?" asked Don Pancho, who was having the time of his life.

"No, only in the room of the house of my friend."

"Tonight you must keep a candle burning all night in this room and in the morning look for a fly; but do not kill it, let it fly from the house, and when it leaves, the evil spirit of Tata Calmo will go. You must also burn a candle each day for five days in the church, and I shall work for you. That is all."

They both thanked him and when we got out of earshot I said: "Don Pancho, you were wonderful. You are a real *chimán*, and a born actor."

He beamed. "Señorita, I enjoy doing it and at the same time I believe in it. I can feel the power. Señorita, Chimán Pascual Pablo has agreed to teach me to be a *chimán*. He has already taught me the *mixes*, that is why I did them so well. During the *fiesta* I gave both Tata Pascual and Tata Rafael plenty of *aguardiente*, as you instructed me, and I have now a great deal of information for you."

"That is wonderful," I said. We had reached the house by now and were closeted for one of our so-called lessons. "Continue to give them *aguardiente*, as I have some more questions, and if Tata Pascual will teach you to be a *chimán*, go ahead and do it. I will show you how you must keep a record of everything that passes, but not in their presence, unless it is a prayer, in which case you can say you have to write it so you can memorize it. We can check information by asking Tata Marcelino, Tata Calmo, and Tata Julián and different Indians that I treat."

I then gave him the latest story about Tata Calmo.

"I am surprised," he said, "for usually an Indian as important as he is would be extremely honest. His love of *aguardiente* was stronger than his love for his religion."

"I was also surprised, Don Pancho, and surprised that the wife told me. I like Tata Calmo, but do you know, I have always felt that his eyes are too close together."

The next day Mary arrived loaded down with medicine, food, and a bottle of champagne from Julio. My, but I was happy to see her, for without realizing it I had become very tired and depressed by all the sickness.

The few days that Mary was with me we were kept very busy. We vaccinated both schools against smallpox and inoculated some children against diphtheria and whooping cough. As each child was treated, I wrote down on a large piece of paper his name and age and the date.

We had only three needles, so I was kept busy sterilizing them in a cookpot while Mary did the actual work. The teachers gave each child a piece of candy after the vaccination or inoculation. While we were doing this we had, of course, an audience of Indians. I explained what was being done and why. Some went off to fetch their children; others left with distrust on their faces.

Exhausted at the end of the long day, we made ourselves some tea. We had no more than taken a sip when another fight started between Margarita and Basilia. Such screaming back and forth! Basilia up to her old trick of spitting in the *pila*. As usual I understood little, as it was mostly in Mam, but here again I recognized one phrase that was used over and over in all those fishwife quarrels. I told Mary to let them fight it out, as I was too tired to care. From the window I could see Patrona and Domingo listening with obvious delight, and every passer-by stopped. Both Basilia and Margarita had the audience they desired, and they put on a good act.

Basilia, with her gestures and spitting, was too funny, and Margarita shook so with rage that I felt she might fall through the fence. Her face was purple, and her little pig's eyes radiated evil. When Basilia saw we were watching she became self-conscious, and so with a last insult and a flounce of her bottom in the direction of Margarita, she entered the house.

"What is it all about?" I asked.

"Señorita, she accuses me of stealing her fifty cents. She says I am a whore, that I am sleeping with Cheppi. She says that Domingo and Patrona and I will eat *caca* after you leave. She says she will tell you that I am a thief, and she and Satero will get you a new maid, an honest maid. I told her she was worse than a whore, for she had a husband but slept with every man she could, even the *Alcalde*. I told her the *Alcalde*'s face was as large as his ass, and I said even worse things about her face. Me steal? I wouldn't touch a thing in her dirty house! You know well, Señorita, that I have never touched a thing of yours."

"Yes, you are an honest girl, Basilia; what I want to know, though, is why she accuses you of stealing fifty cents?"

"I went to Margarita's after lunch to grind coffee. Afterwards I sat with her and her family while they ate their dinner. A neighbor paid her fifty cents and she put it on the chest, right next to where I was sitting. When you and Doña María returned I left Margarita's, and now she says I stole it." She was almost in tears.

"Who else was in the room when you left?" I asked.

"The Ladino who works for Satero, and his wife, and Margarita's children."

"The Ladino probably took it, knowing you would be blamed," I said.

Mary chimed in: "Basilia, the Señorita and I know you did not take it. We will talk to her."

"Basilía," I said, "tell us what the meaning is of that insult you two throw at each other."

With a little coaxing from Mary and me, Basilía finally came out with it: "It means"—and here, with gestures, she gave the Spanish equivalent of: "You know what you can do with it."

Just before supper, Mary and I went up to Margarita's and walked right in. Margarita greeted us and offered us chairs around the fire. She looked so uneasy that I came to the point immediately.

"Margarita, Basilía tells me that you accuse her of stealing fifty cents. Did you see her take it?"

"No, Señorita, I did not see her take it, but it lay right here on the chest next to Basilía."

"Were there other people in the room?" asked Mary.

"Yes, Señora. There were other people. But Basilía was nearest."

"Margarita," I said, "if Basilía wanted to steal she has plenty of chance in my house. Basilía is an honest girl and I am sure she did not take your money."

Mary said: "Come down with us and tell Basilía that you know she did not take it."

"Why should I?"

"Come along," said Mary and she talked Margarita into returning to the house with us.

The whole thing was hilarious, for Margarita did not want to apologize, and I don't think Basilía wanted an apology. Anyway Margarita said her piece, Basilía accepted it, and we all had a smoke of peace, though I knew only a flag of truce waved.

As Mary was leaving the next day, I cooked dinner while she packed. I had decided to go to Huehuetenango with her to buy more medicine and to talk to the head of the Sanitation Department about conditions in Todos Santos and the measles epidemic.

After dinner Patrona and Domingo came over, also Tata Julián and, to my great surprise, Chimán Calmo and his wife. I acted as if I knew nothing, but I made more of a fuss over Tata Julián than I did over Calmo.

As we smoked and drank *aguardiente*, Mary explained to them the purpose of vaccination, though I don't think they understood.

Mary and I arrived in Huehuetenango at noon, and after lunch went to see the doctor, a very nice Ladino who had studied in Germany nine years. Mary told him what I had been doing, and he approved of everything. He explained that the government did not have enough money really to help. His hands were tied, as they had few inspectors and insufficient medicine for the vast needs. When I had wired for help he had felt sorry that he could not keep his word about sending an inspector, and now I believed him.

The next day I was back in Todos Santos at noon. A long line of Indians had already formed at my door.

I was examining the last patient when Basilia came into the room to tell me that Chimán Rafael had come to see me. I could see him through the window, getting off his mule with his long legs, and remembered how I had first seen him on the road to Chiantla, riding along with a baby in his arms and a beautiful young woman on foot at his side. It was a surprise to me that he had come. I did not know Chimán Rafael personally, though I had met him several times at the houses of Indians, patients of his. I was sure he was not pleased that I had been called in to treat them. I did not like him and I had heard from so many sources that he was a *brujo*.

I dismissed my patient, and the *chimán* and I greeted each other. I invited him in and offered him a cigarette. It was not unusual to sit with an Indian for many minutes without speaking.

As we smoked in silence, we felt each other out. I noticed how amazingly tall he was. As he stooped when he walked, I had never realized it before. His hair was grey, as was his beard; his eyes were even closer together than Tata Calmo's.

"Señorita, I was lifting some rocks a few days ago and I slipped and fell on my knees. That is why I have come to you."

On examining his legs, I found them skinned but not seriously enough to bother me about, so I wondered what had been his real reason for coming. As I was bandaging him, a woman entered. Her whole arm from the wrist to the shoulder had been burned by a skyrocket which had exploded in her hand. As I took care of her, Chimán Rafael watched with great interest.

After she left he said: "Señorita, my baby is very sick. She has been sick nine days, too sick to eat. Can you cure her?"

"Tata Chimán, I cannot say without seeing your baby. If you want, I can come to your house in an hour."

"That is good," he said. "I shall await you." He left.

Basilia and Patrona were astonished that Rafael had come, and told me not to see his baby; that no good would come of it; that he was a *brujo*.

An hour later I walked down the trail to the *chimán's* house. Entering the door, I saw Basilia's *chimán*, the young Elón, doing *costumbre* in the little *corral* opposite the door. He was praying in front of the altar table, which was covered with a cloth and many candles.

At the other end of the room sat the old *chimán*, his two-year-old baby in his arms, rocking in a homemade rocker, low to the ground. Near by sat a beautiful young woman, his wife.

Tata Rafael, with tears in his eyes, said to me: "Señorita, I have fear that the baby will die. I love her, she is all that I have. I am an old man. I hope you can cure her."

The child's pulse was so faint I could hardly feel it. She had

a high fever and was gasping for breath. I knew that the *chimán* himself realized how ill the baby was or he never would have called me in.

"Will she live, Señorita?" he asked. "Can you save her?"

I felt sorry for them all, for I knew there was nothing I could do.

"If you had come to me a few days ago, I might have been able to do something," I said. "Only God knows now if your baby will live or not. You had better burn candles and pray."

"That is what Chimán Elón is doing now," he said.

As I went out the door I saw two stones and on each was a burning candle. I wondered if they were for the child or protection against me.

The next day the bells tolled out the deaths of six children, none of them my patients, thank the Lord, and the following day seven, one of them, we were told, the *chimán's* baby.

Basilía looked at me with her large, dark eyes, and I knew by their expression that she feared for me, feared that Chimán Rafael would say that I had killed it.

That morning I vaccinated twenty-five schoolgirls against small-pox, and fifty I inoculated against typhoid, and also the two teachers. When I sent for the boys to give them their second shots, only the two teachers came for theirs. They explained that some of the Indians' parents did not understand and they would not allow the boys to come.

Just as I was starting off on Pichón to make my afternoon calls on patients in the *aldeas*, Manuel, well enough to ride on a mule, came to call with his wife. They were both smiling and happy, and it did my heart good to know he was up and about. They brought me a present of a young rooster.

When I returned from my rounds I found one of Basilía's beaux at the house. He was an Indian, a married man, who had asked Basilía to live with him. He said that he would give her a

house. Basilia had told me this and I used to tease her about him. He was a man of about fifty with three grown sons, all of whom had had the measles. I had treated them and they recovered. Basilia told me that, aside from Satero, he was the richest Indian in Todos Santos, with much land. "But I would not live with an old man like that," she used to say.

With courtly manners he greeted me, handing me a present of a leg of lamb.

"Señorita Matilda," he said, "you are my friend, for you have cured my sons. This meat is from a young, fat animal and is a gift from me for what you have done. As you are my friend, I shall tell you that some of my people are talking against you. They say that you are a *bruja* and are here only to do harm. They are ignorant people, Señorita, and have great fear of a *gringa* like you."

I thanked him for telling me and, leaving him with Basilia, I entered my own room, mulling over in my mind what he had told me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The religious body had had a meeting at the house of the Chief Prayermaker to decide what they could do for the sickness that now had spread into all the hamlets. Before dawn the *rezadores* went up to the mountaintops to pray and sacrifice and ask their gods why this epidemic had come to their people.

The word-of-mouth recommendation of my neighbors had snowballed into a healing reputation that had already gone beyond the pueblo and its hamlets. My days were so full of caring for the sick that I no longer had time for my work, and at night I was often so tired that I threw myself into bed without supper. Sometimes I wondered how much longer I could take it.

One particularly hard day, after I had given the final typhus shots at the girls' school, Chimán Calmo and his wife walked in on me as I was sterilizing needles. I greeted him with: "I haven't seen you recently, Tata Calmo, how are you?"

"Señorita, I have not been here lately as one of my daughters died in childbirth."

"I am sorry to hear this," I said. Exchanging glances with his wife, I knew we had the same thought, that God was punishing him for the dishonest thing he had done.

He continued: "Why should this sorrow come to me and my family? And why, Señorita, do you think this sickness has come to our pueblo?" And here he looked me straight in the eyes. "These days the *rezadores* are doing much *costumbre*, you know, to ask why we are so weighed down by this infection and to pray that the sickness be taken away from the pueblo."

As we looked at each other I knew he sensed what I thought of him, but I wondered what he was thinking about. They did not stay long, and after they left I felt a strange sense of relief, and

it turned out to be just as well, as almost immediately Basilia burst into the room, saying: "Señorita, Chimán Rafael is here, and he is so drunk he can't get off his mule."

"Put chairs on the porch, Basilia. I don't want him here."

I went outside, and there was the long-legged old *chimán* astride his mule. He was apparently too drunk to dismount, as the animal refused to stand still. So I grabbed the mule's bridle and looked up into the old man's face. The look that greeted mine was so unfriendly, it was almost hate. Basilia came out, and between us we got him off his mule and onto one of the chairs.

I offered him a cigarette and then told him how sad I felt that his baby had died. He told me that now that the child was gone, he cared only for *aguardiente*. I didn't take the hint. I dressed his leg, which was practically healed, and sat on the chair opposite him.

He was really drunk. With a thick tongue he chanted some Mam songs and then told me with a leer that he needed another woman in his house.

"Señorita, will you be my woman?" And then, when I didn't answer: "Why don't you talk to me, Señorita?"

By this time I was exceedingly annoyed, so I said: "My thoughts are elsewhere, and I talk when I have something to say."

Seeing he was not going to get a drink, he mounted his mule with great difficulty and rode off. He was scarcely past Margarita's when Domingo and Patrona were already inside my gate.

"Señorita," said Patrona in a loud whisper, "I begged you not to go and see his sick baby. Señorita, burn all your combings, and don't leave any of your clothes that you wear close to your body around where the *chimán* could get them."

"Basilia," I said—for by this time we had entered the house—"that is up to you; you are the guardian of my clothes."

"Yes, Señorita," said Domingo. "Chimán Rafael is a *brujo*,

everyone knows it. Señorita, you remember when you first came to Todos Santos, how sick Patrona was, how she almost died? It was all caused by that wicked old man, Tata Rafael.

"This is how it happened: Patrona, the children, and I had been in the *tierra caliente*, working. I was paying off some of my debts. In front of the shacks at the coffee *finca* where we worked was a large pool of dirty water. Patrona looked after the children while Andrés and I picked coffee. A woman from Todos Santos who was there picking coffee asked Patrona to watch her pig. The pig loved to roll around and soak in the pool of water. One day the pig died and the woman said that Patrona had killed it by letting it roll in the water; that she should have kept it out of the water. Señorita, who ever heard of keeping a pig out of water? One might tell the children not to sit in water, but never a pig. The woman called Patrona all kinds of names and said she would pay her back. Within a month after we returned here Patrona became very ill. She felt someone had cast a spell on her, so I went to see a *chimán* who lives up over the mountains at the hacienda and told him all. The *chimán* cast the *mixes* and suggested that I should stay for the night, for the *mixes* had told him that Tata Rafael was working evil.

"It is he who cast the spell on Patrona. I shall summon the Spirit tonight,' said the *chimán*, 'and I shall ask him to find what Tata Rafael has buried in the cemetery.'

"That night the *chimán* went into his room with the *aguardiente*, copal, and candles that I had brought. The fire was put out and his wife and I sat in darkness waiting. Suddenly the Spirit came. I could hear him talking.

"The wife said: 'Are you there, Tata Dueño de Cerro?'

"Yes, I am here,' he answered, and with that there was a thump next to me as if someone had thrown a rock. When the fire was lighted I saw a bundle next to me. Wrapped in an old

cloth were four candles, copal, a small box with pine sap in it, a piece of Patrona's hair, and a small piece of her *huipil*.

"The *chimán* said: 'The Spirit found this buried in the cemetery and has brought it here.'

"We smashed the candles with rocks and burned the other things in a huge fire. I paid the *chimán* fifty cents, and in a few days Patrona was better. You see, Señorita, the *chimán* I went to had more power than Tata Rafael and could overcome the spell. An evil man is Rafael; a *brujo* is Rafael."

The next morning there were about fifteen patients awaiting me when I returned from my rounds. One was a woman with a fat, healthy-looking baby. She did not speak Spanish, so Basilia interpreted. The woman said the baby had not eaten in days, had much heat, and was very sick. I examined the child and found no sign of a fever, so I told Basilia to tell her that there was nothing wrong with it.

"Señorita," said Basilia, "she says the baby is sick, and insists on some medicine."

"Tell her I have none to give." I motioned to the next in line to come in. As the woman left she turned toward the waiting line and said something in a loud voice in Mam, which I felt was insulting. Basilia translated. "She says, Señorita: 'The reason why so many children are dying here is because the *gringa* has killed them with her medicines. She should go to her own country and take her Spirit with her.'"

This from a woman I had never seen or treated! It was a new note, and I didn't like it. I wondered if she had been sent by Tata Rafael.

The next day, market day, and also the sacred day *K'mané*, Basilia and I went, baskets in hand, to church. It was filled with Indians praying for their sick ones, or that sickness would not

come to their houses. They made offerings and burned candles. There was also a special procession of *rezadores*, El Rey, and the *principales*, who prayed to protect the people of the pueblo from the sickness and made *costumbre* in front of the two crosses at the church, and then passed on up to the ruins of Cumanchúm, El Calvario, and the house of the *Alcalde Rezador*.

When Basilia and I returned from the market, there were even more patients who had come for medicine or treatment. Two good-looking young women were at the head of the line. My first impression was that they had been drinking; they were wide-eyed, and the pupils of their eyes dilated. One told me that her eye had been watering since birth; it never stopped day or night. The other one supposedly had heart trouble. On questioning and examining them, I could find nothing wrong. My instinct told me it was a put-up job. I turned to the first one and said: "You have both been here over half an hour. I have watched your eye and not once has it watered." To the other I said: "As for you and your heart, I find nothing wrong. Maybe if you lay off the *aguardiente* your heart will improve. Go home and stop bothering me when you are not sick."

They both left in a huff and Basilia was delighted, as she knew them and disliked them. She was sure they were sent by Rafael, as was the woman with the baby, and I thought she was right.

With Don Pancho I still found time to squeeze in my so-called Spanish lessons. He told me that he was continuing his training with Chimán Pascual Pablo, and also that Chimán Rafael was stopping by now at his house each evening for a free drink and they were becoming great friends. A man named Lauriano Pablo interrupted us. He was slightly drunk and dressed in a Conquistador dancer's costume. He told me that his father had run a planting stick into his leg three weeks ago; that now his foot and leg were swollen to three times their natural size.

"My father says: 'There are animals in my leg.' He wants you to come and cure him, for he is too sick to come to see you."

"I will go," I said, and took leave of Don Pancho.

"Good, I will take you to my father."

And in a few minutes I was on my way with a Conquistador as my guide. This was the first time I had had such an honor. The ride up the valley was always new and thrilling to me, for nature's patterns are inexhaustible. A deep, wet mist hung above us, as if suspended from the different cracks and crags of the mountains that towered above on both sides. The corn stalks had been cut and gathered, and men were cleaning the fields of rocks and fertilizing the soil preparatory to the spring planting, after the new year. All along the way Lauriano had to explain to the curious Indians where we were going and why.

Victor Pablo, the father, had the courtly manners that even here only the aged seemed to have. He was tall and dignified, with a face full of character. His hair and mustache were white, the ends slightly yellowed. He was a very important man in the pueblo and had been *alcalde*.

The leg and foot were very swollen, but not three times their natural size. I syringed out the wound with hot water and a strong disinfectant, and to my horror out came a worm, a white worm. I almost threw up.

The old man said: "Señorita, I knew there was an animal in my leg."

"Why didn't you come to me when you were first hurt?" I asked.

"The first week I did nothing for it. Then when it became swollen and pained me I called in my *chimán*, for it is our custom. After another week it became more swollen and I could not sleep, so the *chimán* told me to send for you."

This bit of information aroused my curiosity. But who was his *chimán*? I decided to put off the question for another time.

"I will come again tomorrow to see if there are more animals in your leg," I said.

"That is good. Thank you, Señorita. Be careful on the road."

As I was preparing to mount Pichón, an Indian came through the gate and asked if I would come to his house, there was much sickness. I found five young people sick—three with measles, one with swollen glands, and another with a bad cough. After prescribing for them, I sat by the fire and smoked with the older people. As we talked I watched two lovely young women grinding corn on either side of the tiny window. The rhythm of their bodies was like the rhythm of a dance. Between them and the fire around which we were gathered was a small tree like a hat stand. All the branches were lopped off, leaving only enough to hold coffee cups and gourds of different forms and sizes. The clay pots sitting on the coals seemed to represent in shapes and sizes the family itself. To me a clay pot takes on a personality. As it bubbles and boils, it tells its tale.

Just as I was preparing to leave, Chimán Rafael rode up on his mule. He was sober this time, and obviously not pleased to see me there, though he did shake hands.

"How are the children in this house?" he asked.

"Three of them are ill with measles but will not die if they follow my directions, for they are not as ill as your child was." I then rode homeward.

As I was trotting along on Pichón, I met my friend the butcher, and he signalled for me to stop.

"Señorita, I have something I must tell you," he said excitedly. "There is an Indian called Marcelino Pablo who lives in the El Rancho. Last night he passed by here very drunk and in a loud voice said: "The *gringa* is the cause of all the deaths here; she has

made a list of all the children. She is a *Dueña de Cerro*. She summons evil spirits from her land to kill the children, then she eats them, for she is a *bruja*.' I asked him, Señorita, if he knew you, and he said no. 'Then why do you talk this way?' I asked him. 'She is kind to cure people, and she gives medicine away for nothing. Why don't you go to some of the intelligent people whose children she has saved, and hear what they say?' Señorita, I am glad I met you today. I am telling you this as he is a mean man and may make trouble."

I thanked him for telling me and made some sort of facetious remark to make light of it, but as I rode homeward I realized that the list he referred to must be the list of vaccinated children.

When I reached home, Basilia told me that Cayetana's baby had died. Cayetana was the mother of the little boy I had bought pants for. The night before, I had given her medicine for her baby, who had measles and congested lungs.

She came to the house later to tell Basilia of her sorrow and wept and wept. We comforted her as best we could, and I contributed some money to pay for the wake.

That night I felt tired and depressed and thought: "I will probably be blamed for the death of this baby."

I awoke with a feeling that things were not quite right. Dawn was just lighting the world as Tequila and I went out into the yard. It was a cold, unfriendly dawn, with a full moon sinking in the west. I saw it through two withered, dead corn stalks that stood like the pillars of a gate. They fitted very much into the picture of what was happening. The deaths, the corn stalks; the gateway, the challenge of what lay ahead; and the moon, which was not a good omen. Yet the moonlight was dimming, making way for the birth of the sun.

The sky was clear and full of stars, the mountains and hills so distinct, as if in sunlight, with deep, dark, contrasting shadows.

Not a sound; just that breathless beauty that one finds in high places. It seemed to intensify my anxiety. To the east, a huge star; eight-pointed, it seemed. Probably it was Venus. I thought of the beneficial effect she had always had on man.

I went within and built a fire, for it was freezing. As the flames sent out warmth, we all moved close; Micho the cat almost in the fire, Tequila in the background. The cocks crowed, a dog barked at the moon, and the spell was broken. I put the coffeepot in the flames and fried myself an egg as I thought again of what the butcher had told me. I questioned myself but, receiving no answer, I decided to relax and see what developed.

Orvidio brought me my mail. There was a letter from Mary and Julio asking me to Chichicastenango for Christmas. This was certainly a timely invitation, for not only would I love to spend Christmas with them, but it would give me a good chance to get away and rest and think things over.

That evening, Tata Julián came to call—as he did three or four evenings a week, usually about seven, for he knew that at this time I was not receiving patients and we could talk. I was having supper, and he said: “Señorita Matilda, eat, for I have already eaten. I have come to talk to you about a very important matter.”

“Sit down by the fire, Tata Julián,” I said, “and have a cigarette. I will be through in a minute. What do you wish to talk to me about?” I was wondering if he had heard the rumors.

“Señorita, last Sunday, the day of San Andrés, I was elected *Alcalde Rezador* for the year to come. I said to them at the time that I would like to accept the honor but that I was not well enough to do so. Look at my hands, Señorita, crippled with rheumatism; look at my knees; they too are in bad shape. Indeed I **am** not in good health. But the *Chimán Nam* said: ‘It is the voice of the pueblo that calls you, and if you accept this office God may cure your hands.’ Now, Señorita, I feel the people of the pueblo

know that I am not strong, that I am old and crippled. You cannot know, Señorita, what a responsibility I have to assume. The *Caja Real* will pass into my hands and will be lodged in my house on the first day of the year. I shall be the guardian of the coffer which is so ancient that I do not know how old it is. If harm comes to it when I am carrying it or when it is in my house, death will come to me and my family, and harm to the pueblo. Candles must be kept burning day and night in front of the coffer. They must never go out. I must rise each night and light new candles, and during the day I must do the same. I can never leave the pueblo, for I am guardian of the coffer. In addition, Señorita, there is the great expense entailed. On the night of the first day, when the *Caja Real* passes into my hands, I must entertain the whole religious body as well as the *principales*. I must give them food, coffee, *aguardiente*, and cigarettes. I must buy many candles, quantities of copal, turkeys, and roosters, for before dawn we must go to the four mountaintops to practice *costumbre*. There will be a *rezador* on each mountaintop and the *rezadores* will kill a turkey, burn copal, and pray to the gods for a good year for the pueblo, for the people, the animals, and the corn; they will pray also that no bad storms will come and that rain will fall when we need it. During the course of the year the *Chimán Nam* will tell me the days for *costumbre* and he will help me pray.

“Señorita, when I think of all this I worry. The people in the pueblo know I am not well. Look at my hands, Señorita. Remember also that I am poor and do not have the money now for the necessary expenses. I might send my son to Huehuetenango to sell corn, but they do not want corn now in Huehuetenango and they will not give him a good price. What do you think I should do, Señorita?”

“Tata Julián,” I answered, “it is the voice of the pueblo that asks you to be *Alcalde Rezador*; it is the *Chimán Nam*; it is God.

You have been chosen not for your crippled hands, but for your wisdom and your heart, and because you are an honest and a just man. I feel that in your heart you have already accepted. You are my friend and my neighbor. I have the greatest respect for you and your family. So if now you need money, I shall be glad to lend it to you. Tell me, how much do you need?"

"Thank you, Señorita. I need ten dollars, and may God thank you. Maybe my hands will after all be cured, and maybe I shall become strong again. As you know, Señorita, my house is small and full of members of my family, full of things. I do not know where I can put the *Caja Real*."

"Tata Julián, are you being given money for candles, copal, and turkeys?"

"Yes, Señorita, I will be given my candles. Each *rezador* and *mayor* will give what he can, but still I shall have to carry the burden of most of the expenses. Due to your kindness I shall now be able to go to Huehuetenango to buy the necessary things for the ceremonies of the first of the year."

As we were smoking another cigarette, Domingo entered and said: "Señorita, I knew you had not gone to bed, for I saw Tata Julián enter and have not seen him leave. I thought I would come over."

"Good, Domingo," I said; "I would like to talk to both of you about the people who are talking against me." And I repeated what the butcher had told me and what the woman with the baby had said.

Tata Julián reassured me. "Señorita Matilda, don't think about what people say. The important people of the pueblo like you, think much of you. Like me, you are their friend. These people who talk are ignorant and come mostly from the outlying hamlets."

"Señorita," said Domingo, "the people have big mouths. Many

of those who are talking against you do not even know you. Chímán Rafael has caused all this. He is an evil man. Señorita, the other day a man you do not know came to me and said: 'You are selling people to the Señorita; you give her their names and she summons her evil spirits from the mountaintops to kill them. Then she eats them. For the Señorita is not *gente*, she is the *Dueña* of Tajumulco. When she leaves for good she will go back and live in the volcano Tajumulco, and you will go with her, you seller of the souls of people.' Señorita, this is what I said to him: 'Willingly will I go to the country of the Señorita or even to Tajumulco with her, for I know she is good and has a heart. She is *gente*; she eats *tortillas*, potatoes, and meat and lives as we do. Indeed she is not a *Dueña de Cerro*. What harm has the Señorita done to you? Go speak to Adrián the carpenter and find out about her. She saved six of his sons. Go speak to Manuel and all his friends; go speak to the Ladinos and to other people who are her friends. If you do not know a good person from a bad one, you know nothing.'"

During this story Domingo's face shone with feeling, and I was touched by his faithfulness.

"Señorita," said Tata Julián, "the man who said that is ignorant. The people used to talk about your countryman who lived in this house. They said he was a *brujo* because he ate snakes. Señorita, don't think about it, for it's only ignorant people who talk."

As I lay in bed that night, I must admit, I did not take Tata Julián's advice. I did think about it. I knew the religious body had sacrificed countless turkeys and chickens to stop the sickness, but so far without avail. They had been asking their gods for the cause of their misfortune. I suppose it was natural that they should blame it on someone, and as I was the only white person in the village they could easily make me out the guilty one. If they did this the Indians might really turn on me. I had heard plenty of tales about

their turning against Ladinos and chopping off their heads with machetes. I tried to put these thoughts out of my mind and concentrate rather on the amazing luck that Tata Julián, one out of three thousand six hundred Indians of the Pueblo, would be the Chief Prayermaker. He, so close to me, would be able to give me priceless information. Between these two trains of thought I fell asleep.

With the light of day my sense of humor returned. The joke was on me. With all my subtle questioning on black magic and witchcraft I had turned out to be the queen of witches, the *Dueña* of Tajumulco! I felt clear and decided that if any more talking went on I would cease all treatments and all giving out of medicine.

That afternoon when I rode out on my rounds I felt that lots of Indians along the way looked at me as if I might be the *Dueña de Cerro*. Riding a white horse, with my white face and blond hair, I certainly fitted the picture. Was I becoming self-conscious? How could I not be upset when I rounded a corner and a young woman leaped over a wall in great fear and covered her face as she crouched on the other side, and later when some women covered their children's faces as they saw me coming?

At our lesson, Don Pancho said: "Señorita Matilda, I have some interesting material for you. But first I want to say that I have asked Rafael and Pascual Pablo what they think of you. You see, the other evening a drunken Indian, Marcelino Pablo by name, stopped at my *tienda* for a drink, and I have also written down all he said. There are quite a number of Indians saying things against you, and I think Chimán Rafael is back of it all. You, Señorita, without realizing it, have taken his patients away from him, and he has lost much money. Now the epidemic gives him a good chance to blame you for everything. I personally feel the epidemic is on the wane, it has now gone to Jacaltenango and Santa Ana Huista, but he can still do you much harm."

“Yes, Don Pancho, I feel Chimán Rafael is back of it all, and also, maybe, Tata Calmo, now that we are no longer so friendly. What else do the Indians say, Don Pancho?”

“When the drunken Marcelino Pablo said you were the *Dueña de Cerro*, I asked him if the people thought so, and he said: “The people say that the *gringa* is the *Dueña de Cerro*. Look when she gazes through her little black machine. She pulls out a paper and there is the face of a person, that very person. These people that she sees in the machine are alive; they have on the same hats and coats. The people of this pueblo are gentle people, but when she comes with that machine they run away for fear of what she will do. When she takes a *matrata*,”—and here instead of using the word *retratar*, which means to photograph, he used the verb *matar*, to kill—“she carries away their spirits. This is the reason so many people die; she carries away their spirits on paper. They tell me in Jacaltenango and Concepción the people ran away in fear when she was there because she took *matratas* of the pueblo, of the people, and of the church. It is for this reason that people die; she points her machine at them the way one kills a deer. Once she showed us the papers. They were people here, and the pueblo. Who knows what her ways are? At Concepción they said to me: “Why don’t you throw her out of the pueblo? Why do you stand for her?” Who knows the source of her power? You know very well that she carries away the spirit of the *gente*. I have seen them, the little images, the faces of the people were the same except that they had no color. They looked exactly as if they would speak. I have also seen papers she has given my friends. There they are, the same faces. How does she do this? Probably it is evil. She gives these papers away as presents. What is her work? Where does her money come from? Ah, who knows? She distributes medicine, gives it away free, now to one person, now to another, and they pay nothing. Ah, where is there nowadays a person who gives away

presents for nothing in return? She carries off many dead people to another pueblo. Maybe it is to the *cerro*.'”

“Don Pancho,” I said, “why do you suppose he is so against me? I don’t even know him.”

“He is probably a great friend of Rafael’s. Marcelino Pablo comes from El Rancho and Chimán Rafael is a very popular *chimán* in that hamlet.”

In the afternoon Tata Julián took me to see his brother, Abelino Ramírez, who was ill. I felt Julián was a good friend of mine and so I had not refused him. Moreover, I knew his brother was a *principal* and a very important man in the pueblo and the one who officiated at all funerals. I judged this a good opportunity to state my case. I found the patient seated by the fire with another man, almost as old as himself, whom I had treated several months before. Tata Julián told me later he was also a *principal*. We all shook hands and I sat with them and offered them cigarettes and the wife brought us coffee. They asked me politely how I was, and I said: “My heart is sad because the people are saying bad things against me.” Then I repeated what Marcelino Pablo and the others had said.

“Tata Abelino,” I said, “I like this pueblo; I like your people; I thought they were my friends. That is why I have given free medicine and care to your people; that is why I helped them. With all the money I paid for medicine I could have bought a good mule”—I knew this would impress them—“and what do I get in return? Just evil words: that I am a *Dueña de Cerro*, a *bruja*. My heart is sad. I have decided that as long as your people think this way about me, I shall not give any more medicine or treat anyone except my friends. I am going away for two weeks to the Christmas *fiesta* at Chichicastenango, and when I return, if I hear any more evil words against me, I shall do what I have just said: no more medicines, no more treatments for anyone.”

“Señorita Matilda,” said Tata Abelino, “it is not we who think this way, but only the uneducated people. Don’t listen to words of that kind. Remember they are uneducated people. Pay no attention to what they say. In the old days people had hearts and love for each other. Today they have little love for each other and speak evil of people. There are good people and bad people. In the old days the *chimanes* were real *chimanes* and very wise. They thought good and did good. Money was not important to them. If someone was sick they were able to say immediately if he would live or die. Now the *chimanes* think only of money and do not perform their *costumbre* as correctly as in the past. They do not tell you when a man will die; they just wonder how they can get more money.”

“Tata Abelino,” I dared to ask, “is Chimán Rafael a *brujo*?”

“Yes, he is a *brujo*, and people say Tata Calmo is also. Macario Bautista—no, he is not a *brujo*, but even he is not all he should be. He also thinks of money.”

I thought this was the time to ask a question about the *Caja Real*. He told me: “Long ago, when the padres first came here and built the church, the people liked it but they also wanted a special place where they could keep the objects belonging to their ancient ones. So a coffer was made and named the *Caja Real*. In this were put the sacred objects. It was kept in what was called the First House, a building which stood where the boys’ school stands now, and guarded by the *Alcalde*. There was a time when the Ladino *Alcalde* broke into our coffer. Since then the *Alcalde Rezador* guards the coffer in his house and a candle is always kept burning upon it, day and night.” Then suddenly he said: “Señorita, I have pain in the back of my head and neck. Can you help me?”

I rubbed camphorated oil into his shoulders and neck, which he seemed to like, and I gave him aspirin to take. The other *principal* wanted medicine for his wife, who had a bad cold, so after

giving them both aspirin I left. On my way home I visualized Tata Abelino and Tata Julián, with their aristocratic faces, as high officials in the days of the Mayans.

When I reached the house Basilia was awaiting me with flashing eyes. "Señorita, I went to the *tienda* to see if I could get the rice you wanted. On the way I met Cayetana. She said: 'The Señorita killed my baby, and it is the Señorita who is killing all the children. Many people say she is the *Dueña de Cerro*. She had better return to her own country.' Señorita, I told Cayetana what I thought of her after all you have done for her. I told her God would punish her for speaking evil of you."

"Thank you, Basilia. You are right in saying God knows all. Basilia, tell all the people who come that I am not helping anyone, or giving medicine. Be sure to tell them why."

The next day, to everyone who came, Basilia and I both said our speech. They all answered as Tata Julián and the others had, but I was very firm. I did ride out for a last visit to the patriarch and Tata Victor, the man with the animals in his leg. Both of them were practically healed, and I was pleased. I told them what people were saying and they answered as my friends had. Tata Victor, however, added: "Señorita, don't think about it. If they don't talk against you they will talk against a neighbor. There are many bad people now, and the women are not faithful to their husbands. In the old days, if a woman was unfaithful, she was tied up by her wrists and beaten, beaten hard so she would remember. Don't think of what people say, they are just ignorant."

The bells rang fewer and fewer times a day, so I knew Don Pancho was right—the epidemic was on the wane. The few people who came for treatments we turned away, except for one patient who was badly burned, an emergency case.

The night before I was to leave, Tata Julián came to call. We talked and smoked, and he told me he had been to the *fiesta* at

Chichicastenango once. I asked him if there was any Christmas *fiesta* in Todos Santos.

"No, Señorita, *Semana Santa* [Christmas] means nothing to a *natural*; to the Ladino, yes, but there will be no *fiesta* here. Our *fiestas* will be the last day of this month and the first day of the next. Señorita, I have come to ask a favor of you. Will you please buy for me six large gourd cups for the six *principales* who will come to my house on the first day of the year when I am *Alcalde Rezador*? Also a red handkerchief for me, and a comb for my wife? I shall pay you on your return. Señorita, will you return by the last day of this month?"

"Yes, Tata Julián, I shall return on the thirtieth, for I desire to see you take office on New Year's Day. I will buy with pleasure what you wish, Tata Julián."

The next morning, the departure day, as I was eating breakfast, I told Basilia if she looked after my house and garden well she would receive a lovely present from Guatemala City. If not, I would give it to Margarita. We both laughed. I also told her that Cayetana was not to enter my yard, or anyone who had talked ill of me.

As Domingo, Andrés, and I wound up the valley toward the mountains we had to climb, I couldn't help feeling relieved—relieved to get away from the sickness and from my own demoralized situation. I was unhappy to think that some of the people thought me a witch, and uneasy as to what they might do.

Domingo, sensing my thoughts, said: "Señorita, Marcelino Pablo, the man who said he would drive you out of the pueblo or kill you, was a *mayor* in the municipality of Todos Santos last year."

"Is it true, Domingo, that Marcelino said he would kill me?"

"That is nothing, Señorita. When a man is drunk he says anything."

PART III

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Christmas in Chichicastenango with Mary and Julio was most enjoyable. It was a great relief not to have people stare at me as if I were a witch on a broomstick. I found that no matter how many people I talked to and how much I enjoyed myself, there was always a question in the back of my mind. How would the Indians receive me on my return? I told Mary and Julio all about it and asked what they thought.

"Maud," said Julio, "if I were you, I would be careful when I went back up there. If you have the slightest feeling that the Indians are against you when you arrive, pack up your bags and leave. I know those people better than you do. Remember, Mary, the thing that happened to the boy scouts near San Marcos? I don't recall the exact details but I do know the Indians were Mames."

"Oh, don't tell that story to Maud, she'll just worry the more!"

"I think she ought to know," Julio went on. "It happened about five years ago. Some Ladino boy scouts went on an outing. They climbed the volcano Tajumulco, near San Marcos, and never returned. Search parties were sent out for them, and after several days they found some sacred altars on the top of the mountain turned over and desecrated, and later the bodies of the boys in a deep ravine near the summit of the mountain, with their heads cut off. As I remember, they never found out who actually did the deed, but they shot and killed, in revenge, a group of Mam Indians who lived near by."

"But Julio," I said, "how unfair to do such a thing! Maybe the Indians they shot were guiltless."

"Maybe they were," he replied. "They did it as an example to all the Indians. If such a crime went unpunished, Indians might stage uprisings all over Guatemala."

"I feel my Indians would not do such a thing," I said, "yet I know that I am so pro-Indian, I may be a poor judge."

"But wait, Julio, Maud's case is very different," put in Mary. "Don't forget she has spent a year up there and you can't tell me she hasn't made some real friends in that time, and after all a measles epidemic doesn't last forever."

"It isn't so much myself I'm thinking about," I said. "If I can't go on living there now, my year's work will have been for nothing. If it had only happened after I had got all my material, I wouldn't feel so upset. Do you realize that Tata Julián, of whom I've told you so much, has just been made Chief Prayermaker for the year? That is an undreamed-of break for me. I can't let the opportunity go by! And yet, living there with this cloud over me is almost as bad as not being there at all. Imagine the mothers covering their children's faces when I pass by!"

"Maud, don't let this thing get you down. Mothers in Chichi often cover their babies' faces in the presence of tourists." Then she added: "Anyway, Julio and I are here if you need us."

I was sipping a beer in the Hotel Maldonado at Huehuetenango, tired after the trip from Chichicastenango in the old bus with broken springs, when a pleasant-looking American came up to me and introduced himself. He told me that he had been waiting to see me, as he and his secretary wanted to accompany me to Todos Santos the next day. He was an artist and a photographer. He had been to Guatemala before the war, had seen the costumes of the Todos Santos men, and thought them the most beautiful he had seen. During the war he had dreamed about Guatemala and made up his mind he would go to Todos Santos when it was over. Now here he was, with a jeep, a secretary, and a job doing sketches and taking photographs for *Holiday* magazine and *Life*.

I was not very encouraging. My return to Todos Santos was al-

ready, as they say here, *muy delicado*, and I was afraid that a photographer would only make things worse.

But after dinner, when I had heard his war experiences and grown to like both him and his secretary, I decided to go to the telegraph office and wire Cheppi for two extra horses.

The next day we reached Paquix at noon, and there was Domingo with Pichón and the other mounts. I rode ahead so that Basilia would have time to clean the house and to arrange for my companions to stay with some Ladino family. They were to take their meals with me.

From the formal greetings of the Indians along the way, I was unable to tell whether they were friendly or not.

That evening Tata Julián came to collect what he had asked me to buy for him. He told me the house had been sad without me. Then he spied the gourd cups. "Oh, Señorita, the *jicaritas* are large and beautiful. Tomorrow night, the night I become *Alcalde Rezador*, the six *principales* will drink out of these *jicaritas*. Thank you, Señorita, for getting them for me. How much do I owe you?"

"You owe me thirty cents for the *jicaritas* and twenty cents for the comb and handkerchief—fifty cents in all."

"I have no money now, but I shall pay you later."

"If you haven't the money I will take corn."

"But I need all the corn I have."

"Tata Julián, you do not have to take these things; but if you do, I want to be paid in corn or money right away."

So in the end he agreed, and later in the evening his good-looking son brought me the corn. My instinct had told me to do all this so that Tata Julián would not lose respect for me, especially as I had no idea of asking him to pay back the ten dollars I had loaned him.

Both Basilia and Patrona told me that very few people had come to ask for medicine or treatment while I was away, and I

wondered if it was because the measles epidemic was waning or just because I had lost my clientele. Those who did come were told that I would treat only my friends and neighbors on my return, as I had not liked the way people were talking. Most of them said they had not talked and hadn't believed what they had heard, with the exception of one little old woman. She told Patrona that she had looked in the windows of my house one day and had seen me eating wood. "Eating wood?" asked Patrona. "Yes," said the little old woman, "I saw her eating flat pieces of wood. She must be strong to eat wood; only a *Dueña de Cerro* could eat wood."

I laughed to myself as I realized that what she had seen me eating were Ry Krisps.

"Señorita," said Basilia, "Margarita had a baby while you were away."

"Yes," said Patrona, "another girl. All she can have is girls."

"Maybe God is punishing her for all her sins by giving her girls when she wants boys," I said.

The next morning I went to market to get limes. Though it was not market day, there were a few people selling fruit. I saw my American friend sketching some Indians and taking photographs. He asked me who was the old man sitting on the steps of the *Convento*. I told him it was Chimán Calmo and explained what an important man he was in the pueblo.

"I would like to take a close-up of him," said my friend.

"If I were you I would not, and certainly not without his permission." Then I went back to the house, where he joined me later for lunch.

"I asked the old man's permission to take a photograph of him, and do you know what he did? He answered by the most obscene gesture."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He exposed himself, and all the young Indians sitting on the convent steps roared with laughter."

"I can't understand his doing this. Although we are no longer as friendly as we once were, I have never seen him anything but polite."

I got the same story that afternoon from Satero after the photographer and his secretary had left. He said it was bad of Tata Calmo and it showed he was badly educated.

Around tea time, Don Pancho called, full of news. Not only were the measles cases fewer and fewer every day, but Chimán Rafael's wife had run away from her husband, and he had come to Don Pancho, who had given him plenty of *aguardiente* to drown his sorrows.

Don Pancho had "told the beans" for the old *chimán* and had said that if he followed his wife and begged her to return, she would. Rafael apparently went after her and found her with her parents, so he took Don Pancho's advice, and sure enough she returned to him.

"Señorita," said Don Pancho, "Chimán Rafael trusts me now; he feels I am wise. I asked him the questions you gave me and also found out what he thinks of you."

"Do tell me. I would love to know what that old goat thinks of me."

"Well, this is how the subject came up. I asked him: 'Do you know the *Dueño de Cerro*, Tata Rafael? Have you talked to him?' and he answered: 'I do not know him, I have talked to him just as Cheppi in the telegraph office talks. That is how I talk to him.' Then I asked: 'What pact has a *chimán* with the *Dueño*?' and he said: 'When he receives his table, every *chimán* makes a contract with the *Dueño de Cerro*. First he goes with his teacher from one mountaintop to another. He burns copal for one entire

month of twenty days. The teacher prays and talks with the *Dueño* and tells him: "This young man wants his table; give him a little of your perception; he is a good friend." The *chimán* listens when the *Dueño* speaks. Maybe then all at once the young man will hear what the *Dueño* is saying. This then is the pact. The *Dueño* knows everything. He gives all. He speaks with one and he gives counsel on anything, such as the making of money, entering an agreement, or changing one's work. He gives advice on whatever one wants to know.'

"Then I asked him: 'Tata Rafael, is the *Dueño* well dressed?' 'I shall tell you what he looks like, but you will have to keep your mouth shut about it,' Rafael said to me. 'One day, the tenth of March, many people were at my house hoping the *Dueño de Cerro* would come to answer their questions and to make forecasts for the year to come. I had taken many drinks with the *Dueño*. He does not drink, he just breathes the drink in. The people were sitting outside my *corral*, in darkness, with the fire extinguished. I slept in my little chair with a rug over me. My first wife, and a good woman she was, waited outside with the people. When she heard no sound from me she asked if I would like a cup of coffee. I drank some. Then I remember hearing a voice say to her: "Another drink, but a small one." I asked for *ocote* to light a candle. My wife entered the room and lit the candle. On the other side of the table, which was the altar, sat the *Dueño de Cerro*. He was not tall, just of medium height. His clothes were like pure gold. My wife asked me: "Who is the dead person sitting here?" I said: "Shut your mouth, he is my *patrón* and he is drunk." Poor woman, she had looked on the face of the *Dueño de Cerro* and that brought death—death for her, my wife. In a short time, a very short time, she was not here; she had gone away. The *Dueño de Cerro* is like the *gringa*, very rich.'

"So then, Señorita, what gave me a chance to ask about you. I said: 'Is it true that the *gringa* is a *Dueña de Cerro*?' 'Yes, certainly, the people say so. Who is it that gives her all the money she has? She has been curing people, yet all the time she was making a list of the names of the children—and after this they die. Why does she give me medicine for nothing? Who pays her? She has a *mozo* who lives in the house next to her. I can't remember what the good-for-nothing is called. Before she came he was very poor, his clothes were ragged, as were those of his wife and his children. Now he has a new hat, a new coat, and his wife is fat; she has a new skirt and *huipil*. Without doubt the *gringa* is his *patrona* and gives him money. She gives away much medicine. Look, one day she sent her *mozo* to Huehuetenango to go to a *tienda*. "Go," she said, "here is a letter for one hundred and forty-five dollars for medicines. Go and bring them back. Here is the money to pay for them." She gave him only a piece of paper [a check], no money. He went to Huehuetenango and received the medicines for only a piece of paper. Yes, she has her magical power. Look how light her hair is; and she rides a white horse! She is a *Dueña de Cerro*, no question about it. She does not eat *tortillas* or meat like the rest of us, just bread. She is very rich; she has much money. She does not even count her money. I am sure she should leave the pueblo!"

"He was quite drunk, Señorita, but I wouldn't have argued with him anyway. Now comes some news that I think you will be very glad to hear," continued Don Pancho, and he drew his chair up closer and buttoned his coat—as he always did when he felt himself acting in an official capacity. "Here is what people feel now was the real cause of the epidemic.

"One of my wife's pupils, an Indian girl of about ten, told my wife the following story while you were away. About six months ago the girl's brother Francisco Pablo, accompanied by a friend,

went to see a rehearsal of the Dance of the Moors at the house of the dance captain who had organized the group. It was night and there was a full moon. As the two of them walked along the road they smoked and talked.

"The rehearsal of the dance was being held in the *aldea* T'uit Nam. For this reason they took a path that led over a bridge named Bridge of the Bells, so called because in this place are bushes with white bells—flowers that give off a heavy perfume. The bridge is on the outskirts of the town, a little below El Calvario. They confided in each other that as long as they were together they were afraid of nothing. As they came near the bridge they saw approaching from the other side two Ladino men talking loudly. One of them was unusually tall and large, the other just of ordinary size. They talked as if they were quarrelling. The two boys hid themselves beneath the bridge to hear what they were discussing. The two men walked to the middle of the bridge, and immediately the two boys smelled an odor like that of a dead animal. It was so nauseous they could hardly bear it, but they could not leave their hiding place, as they were filled with a mixture of fear and curiosity and wondered what the mysterious men were arguing about. They heard the small one say: 'How many children shall we carry away?' The other replied: 'One hundred and fifty children and two hundred women.' 'How many men?' 'About two hundred and fifty.'

"Then the men started on their way, but it was not in the direction the boys wanted to go, so they decided they would not follow, and anyway they could not stand the odor. Besides that they were frightened and wanted to return to their homes.

"The next day, Francisco and his friend told their mothers what had happened and what they had overheard, that a pestilence would come which would carry to the grave one hundred

and fifty children, two hundred women, and two hundred and fifty men of all ages. And that was the cause of the epidemic that swept through the pueblo. So, Señorita, you probably won't feel the same hostility that you did before you went to Chichicasteango, and Rafael will have lost half his power to do you harm!"

"How lucky for me that Francisco Pablo has such a wonderful imagination!" I said. I then told Don Pancho of Chimán Calmo's strange behavior to the photographer. He, also, was shocked.

"Señorita," he said, "the older men of the pueblo are always courteous to strangers. I can't imagine the *chimán* behaving in such a manner, especially when your friend asked his permission."

"I can't understand it myself," I said. "By the way, how are you and Chimán Pascual getting along?"

"He is going to teach me to be a *chimán* in return for a suit of old clothes. You know, Señorita, he dresses like a Ladino."

"Go ahead," I said, "have him teach you to be a *chimán*, and take it very seriously. You may discover some deeply esoteric material."

I admonished him again to keep a careful record of everything that took place, though not openly, and congratulated him upon his excellent progress. He left very pleased with himself, and he had a right to be.

From my back yard I watched a procession wind its way downward by the light of the half-moon and flaming torches. It was the same New Year's Eve procession that I had seen the year before. They were carrying the *Caja Real* to the schoolhouse to be received by the new *Alcalde Rezador*—my friend Tata Julián. Because I didn't want him to feel he had to stop and greet me, I didn't go to the New Year's Day ceremony, which took place on the spot where "First House" had stood. Here the religious body, that day, prayed for the pueblo and the people.

About noon the procession of the *Caja Real* began. I watched it with my neighbors, and we were all amused to see how drunk El Rey and Tata Julián were—they could hardly walk and had to be supported. From the ruins they went to Tata Julián's house, where a skyrocket was sent off. Here gathered the newly elected *rezadores* and the *principales* for whom Tata Julián gave his dinner of sacrificed turkey. From the marimba music that went on all night I was quite sure that much *bebida* was being drunk from the cups I had bought.

Tata Julián and his brother Abelino came to call on me the following evening. I congratulated Tata Julián and offered them drinks to celebrate the occasion and because they looked as if they needed a pick-me-up.

I told them about Chimán Calmo and what a bad example he had set to the younger men. They agreed that what he had done was not right, and not what a *principal* should do. I told them that I knew my countrymen often took pictures without permission, which was certainly not well-mannered, but that they did this because it was a custom. Cameras were as common in my country as machetes were here. We talked of the United States and I told them that we believed all men were equal. Most of the people were healthy and happy and had work, hence food and a home. I felt guilty after I said this. I knew well it was not true, and I wondered why I had made such a statement. Maybe it was wishful thinking on my part.

After I had put drops in Tata Julián's eyes, he and his brother buried themselves in the stack of American magazines, and I would probably have had them with me all evening if Chimán Calmo hadn't chosen that moment to drop in. I waited until the first two had left to say: "Tata Calmo, are you my friend or not?" He answered: "Senorita Matilda, you know well that I am your friend."

"If that is true, why did you insult my countryman? He told me what you did. He asked permission to take your photograph and you answered with an insult. I told him I could not understand your doing such a thing—you a *chimán* and a *principal* of the pueblo."

He looked me right in the eye and denied the whole thing. I said: "It is not just my friends but the people of the pueblo who told me what you did." Much to the *chimán's* relief, Cheppi came to call on Basilia at this point, and he used this opportunity to leave.

The next morning I woke at four with the moon shining on my face. After a bit of stretching under the blankets, for it was cold outside, I got up, and with Tequila and Micho went out into the night. It was like stepping from the lower depths into light or like standing in darkness before a huge frame. Within this, and beyond, was such beauty that I could hardly breathe and felt emotionally choked. To the left, over the hill, the huge orb of the moon was sinking rapidly, shedding light on all that rose to meet it. The trees on the hill were a white gold. The mountains opposite gave me an uneasy feeling that they might engulf me in their maw of darkness. To the east, Venus, who seemed to beckon and say: "Follow me, follow my true light to the higher realms. Step through the frame and look not to the north or west, for there lies illusion, the path to the underworld, lit by the false light of the moon. Step through the frame which is no frame and turn your face to the east. Follow me. Greet the dawn and the Great Father as he rises to banish the darkness, to light the world with warmth and light that all living things may lift their heads and grow upward."

Unfortunately I had to step back through the doorway of the house into the blackness of my world. I dipped water from the

pail into the washbasin and washed my face and hands. Later, when it was light, I saw to my horror a fat dead mouse floating in the water pail from which I had washed my face. I threw the pailful into the yard. The rooster grabbed the mouse, and off he started, with the hens in pursuit. Such was life in Todos Santos.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Basilía stayed out much later at night now, and several times didn't come home until dawn, so I was sure that Cheppi was again her lover. She was temperamental, full of aches and pains; she complained of loss of appetite, but I noticed that she still tucked away a good meal. She was always taking medicine—concoctions of her Ladino or Indian friends.

"Basilía," I said to her, "lately you have been returning very late at night; this morning it was dawn. You are old enough to lead your own life, so I shall only say: 'Be careful or you will get another baby.'"

She covered her nose and mouth with her hand and squirmed, saying through her fingers: "Señorita, I spent the night with a girl friend."

"Why do you lie to me, Basilía? I know whom you go out with every night, and I know in whose arms you spent last night."

We both laughed, and Basilía said: "It is true, but I don't want another baby. Señorita, have you ever had a baby?"

"No, Basilía, I have not."

"How many men have you slept with, Señorita?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"If you have slept with many men, I want to know what you do to keep from having babies."

Our conversation was interrupted by Orvidio with the mail.

People still continued to come to me for treatment, although the community seemed to have accepted my decision to care only for my friends and emergency cases. In a way this was a great relief to me. I now had time to record all the valuable information I had been gathering and to check on what I was getting from Don Pancho. Every once in a while, however, a medical case

would come up which I could not refuse. For instance, one day an elderly woman came to ask if I would go to her house to see her daughter who was very ill. They lived quite a distance away, below the mountain the Indians called T'ui K'oy.

At first I refused, but when she brought her husband in and I saw he was an *alcalde*, I became interested. They told me their daughter was eighteen years old, the mother of three. She had been ill more than a year, and many *costumbres* had been given over her. In the last month she had left her home and children and returned to her mother's house to die. During this month they had tried several *chimanes* but their daughter grew worse steadily and refused to eat.

The poor mother couldn't stop crying, and they both begged me to come. As it was already late afternoon, I told them I would come the next day if they would send someone to guide me.

The husband and the father of the girl came for me early the next morning. As we went along the trail to San Martín, I talked with the younger man. He had a pleasant face and an attractive smile. He pointed out his house on the other side of the valley, at the bottom of which flowed the Todos Santos River, and said his children lived there, taken care of by his sister.

As we walked along we passed many people, some driving fat hogs to Huehuetenango, others mules laden with corn, a few with bundles of dried corn stalks on their backs to sell in Todos Santos. They all wanted to know where I was going and why. After we had descended and crossed the river we climbed upward, taking a trail to the right. T'ui K'oy, the sacred mountain which towered above, was hidden by dense clouds. Looking back, I could see Todos Santos cradled in the valley. Up and up we climbed, and finally came out on a flat place. Here there were corn fields, fruit trees, and pastures. A boy came out and took Pichón, tying him where he could graze.

The house was large and important-looking. When I first entered I could see nothing, but as my eyes got used to the darkness I could make out the mother by the fire that was surrounded by the usual clay pots of all sizes. She greeted me warmly, as did a girl of about fourteen who was grinding corn. The patient lay at one side of the fire on a raised wooden platform. Her lovely face was bathed in perspiration. She was unconscious. I dried her face and smoothed back her hair. All I had to do was to look and to listen to the breath in her throat to know there was not a chance. I took her pulse, which had the faintest of beats, and looked at the family, who were watching me with anxious eyes, the mother's filled with tears. I shook my head and told them she would die within twenty-four hours; that much as I would like to help, there was nothing I could do. It was up to God, who, I felt, was going to take her away. As I was not sure what she was dying of, though I suspected tuberculosis, I told them they must wash her blankets after she died and hang them in the sun, and burn all her clothing. The family insisted that I eat with them, so with great difficulty I managed to push down some boiled chicken and coffee, always conscious of the girl lying there fighting for breath.

The next morning, market day, as Basilia and I were buying potatoes I saw the young husband and asked how the sick girl was. He told me that she was the same, but as Basilia and I walked down the steps from the market ten minutes later, he came up to me and whispered in my ear that she had died early that morning. I patted his shoulder and looked at him, trying to show how sad I felt for him; I knew he wanted me to say nothing. The reason he had whispered was that he would not report her death to the municipality, which would have involved an expense; furthermore, he wanted to bury her near where they lived.

I returned to the house, heavy-hearted because I had been un-

able to do anything for the poor girl. I found Manuel sitting smiling on my doorstep.

"How is your leg now, Manuel?" I asked.

"Look, Señorita," and with that he pulled up his trouser leg and showed that it was healed but still badly scarred. "Señorita, I can walk on my leg now, although it is still stiff."

"Little by little it will improve," I said.

"Señorita, my wife and I have been thinking. As you know, I have been sick and have been unable to work my corn. My brother helped a bit, but now we shall need ten dollars. Will you lend us this money? We shall pay it back as soon as possible."

"Yes, Manuel, I trust you, for you are my friend. Here is the ten dollars." He left with a happy look at me and a frown at Margarita, who had witnessed our transaction from above.

Tata Julián now came about four evenings a week, always bringing his little grandchild with him. She was about six, adorable, but an imp.

She could not keep from touching everything in the room, especially when her grandfather had his eyes closed and head tipped, holding in the drops. She would watch me with her bright little eyes, and I usually kept her under observation. One night Tata Julián came with many apologies and returned some scissors she had snatched. I thanked him and told him not to worry, that all children were alike. We smoked together and he told me he had a great deal of work to do, not only because he was *Alcalde Rezador* but because the new *Alcalde Municipal* had not been elected yet.

"Señorita Matilda," he said, "I am Chief Prayermaker and I have to pray a great deal for the good of the pueblo. If my faith is not strong I shall die."

"Tata Julián," I said, "you are full of faith. I can see it in your eyes."

"You can, Señorita?"

"Yes, I can."

Tata Julián told me that since the day he came into office they had done a *costumbre* every day in front of the *Caja Real*; every fifth day a larger *costumbre* at the church, the crosses outside the church, Cumanchúm, and in front of the *Caja Real*. On the twentieth a big *costumbre* would take place. Many turkeys would be sacrificed before dawn. He, El Rey, and all the *rezadores* would visit the sacred places and that evening they would eat the sacrificed turkeys at his house. I knew that I would never see these esoteric ceremonies, but I loved to hear about them.

We talked of the *Dueño de Cerro*. He told me that most housewives believed that if their houses were not kept clean and the *Dueño* passed by and saw the dirt, he would carry them away.

"That is a good belief, Tata Julián, for you men will always have clean houses." We laughed a bit over this and I asked if many people had seen the *Dueño*.

"Yes, many people have seen him. He is always well dressed, usually in red, has a fair face and golden hair, and always rides a white horse."

"Tata Julián, would you rent your mule to me for one day, so that Domingo can bring me some wood?"

"Señorita, you may have my mule. I will charge you nothing, as you are my friend and my neighbor."

"Thank you, Tata Julián, that is most generous of you."

He then took out of his sack a *Life* magazine I had lent him, and said to me:

"Señorita Matilda, you told me once that everyone was happy in your country, so please explain this to me." He opened the magazine to the page of the Nazis who had been killed by the

decision of the Nuremberg trials. These pictures had horrified me when I looked at them, and I wondered how I had ever lent him the magazine.

"Tata Julián, you know that my country with other countries was at war with the Germans."

"Yes, Señorita."

"During this war many dreadful things happened which always happen in wars. The men you see pictured here were our enemies and were tried by a court of law for the dreadful crimes they had committed. The court found them guilty, so they were killed."

"What did they do, Señorita? Why should they be killed?"

"Tata Julián, what would you and the *gente* do if the Indians of another pueblo came and burned your houses, raped your women, took your young men away, and did many other dreadful things?"

"We would avenge the death of our people. We would kill them, Señorita."

"Well, Tata Julián, that is why the men you see here were killed. They had done all these things, and were caught later and tried by a court, like the court in Huehuetenango. The *jefe* said that they must be killed: so they were killed."

This seemed to satisfy Tata Julián and he asked no more questions, but it gave me the right to question him, which I did, checking some of Don Pancho's material. He left later with the same magazine under his arm, so I gathered he would show it around and tell why the men had been killed.

The next morning, as I was picking red and pink roses and long-stemmed violets in my garden, Chimán Calmo passed by and asked: "Señorita Matilda, how are you feeling?"

"I am feeling fine, Tata Calmo, thank you." I noticed how his face fell and a great look of disappointment swept over it. Immediately something clicked, and I remembered he had asked me this question many times in the past month, always with the same

look. I wondered if he had not made a burial against me, and if he was greatly upset because it did not work. I wondered if he had managed to get some clothing of mine, or some of my hair. "Tata Calmo, how are you and your wife?" I asked.

"Señorita, she has been very ill. She fell on her face in the market place. Now she is better, but she can't move her arm."

I looked right in his eyes, saying: "Tata Calmo, I am sorry to hear about your wife; she is a good woman with a heart. Why should such misfortune come to her? Maybe someone close to her has done evil. You have had your troubles, Tata Calmo. First your daughter died, and now your wife is sick. You had better make much *costumbre*."

He looked at me and I knew that he understood what I meant. He did not even bother to say good-by but passed down the path.

Later in the day I sent Basilia up to his wife, carrying a present of cigarettes, fruit, and tamales. On her return she told me the old woman was most grateful and in a few days she would come to see me.

When she did, she brought her married daughter, and I was shocked at how she had aged. Together with Basilia and Patrona we had coffee and sweet bread and a smoke. She must have told Basilia and Patrona that she wanted to talk to me alone, for they left. With her daughter as interpreter she told me that Tata Calmo was *muy malo*; that ever since he had drunk up the five dollars of *aguardiente* without giving her one drop, misfortune had come upon them. He had done much *costumbre* but to no avail. They were poor now, very poor. Would I be kind and lend her and her daughter ten dollars? They would pay it back in a month when they would sell some corn. I told them that it would give me great pleasure, as I trusted her and she was my friend. So I gave her the money and she kissed it, held it up to the God above, and thanked me many times.

After she had gone, Basilia, up to her old trick of listening back of the door, said: "Señorita, she will return the money, she is a good woman; but Tata Calmo is a *brujo*. You must be careful, Señorita."

Margarita came sweeping down with her new baby on her back and her black eyes snapping. I knew she had some gossip to impart. "Señorita," she said, "Simona has moved into the house of the mother of the man she has been living with; you know, Juan. He was married, with three children, and was very happy till he met Simona. Now he has driven his wife away and taken his children to the house of his mother. It won't last long, Señorita, as Simona has to look after his wife's children and the animals and work around the house."

"I am sure it won't last long, Margarita. Isn't the mother the old woman who is often at Patrona's house?"

"Yes, Señorita, and she does not like Simona and was very fond of Juan's first wife. I pointed the wife out to you one day at the dance we went to. She is very beautiful, with hair down to her knees."

"I remember her," I said.

"Señorita, isn't there anything you can give me to make my hair grow?" asked Basilia.

"Your hair is all right. To be sure, it doesn't come down to your knees, but it is much longer than Simona's," I answered.

"She wants to thicken her hair for her lover," said Margarita and left with an insolent shake of her rear, knowing that her remark, with the shake, would infuriate Basilia. The girl was ready to fight till I laid my hand on her arm to calm her.

"Satero had better question who is the father of that new baby of hers," said Basilia when she had gone.

That evening Tata Julián brought a friend, a handsome man with a smile and a beard, whom he introduced as the First

Prayermaker. We sat by the fire and smoked. The First Prayermaker told me his wife was quite sick with a cold, so I gave him aspirin and soda for her. They told me that the new year of the *chimanes* would soon be coming and their time would be occupied with much *costumbre*. The First Prayermaker told me that he did not live in Todos Santos but had a farm about half an hour away. I gave Tata Julián his drops, and as he sat with his eyes shut I told him that in a few days I would like to climb to the summit of T'ui Bach, as I had heard that it commanded a superb view of the surrounding country. I said I would like to take pictures of the view with my camera if he thought the *gente* would not object; I knew it was a holy spot for *costumbre*.

"Señorita, from T'ui Bach there is a beautiful view of all the country, even to Mexico. If you go, wait till the sun hits the mountain, as before dawn the slopes are very icy and for you who are not accustomed to the path it would be dangerous. Who will guide you, Señorita?"

"Domingo and one of his sons will go with me and we will take a lunch," I answered.

"That is good, Señorita. The *rezadores* are accustomed to T'ui Bach, also to T'ui K'oy, Cilbilchax which has not a good view, and to T'ui Xolik. They do much *costumbre* there for me; I only go the first of the year, and soon I shall have to go alone to a mountain that looks down on Chiantla to do *costumbre* for the corn."

"You are a very busy and important man, Tata Julián. And so are you," I said to the First Prayermaker. After another smoke they bade me good night and I sent word by Basilia to Domingo that if the next day was clear we would go to T'ui Bach. To Basilia I said: "As long as some of the people think I am a *Dueña de Cerro*, it's about time I went to a *cerro* to inspect my home." When I joked like this about being a *dueña*, Basilia did not re-

spond at all but put her hand over her mouth and went away.

Before going to bed I went out into the night and looked at the sky, which was full of stars. Some seemingly rested on the tops of the mountains. "The lights in the houses of the *Dueños*," I thought.

By this time I had discovered that the four highest peaks—the mountains that Tata Julián had mentioned—were to the Indians not only *cerros* where only the prayermakers and *chimanes* worshipped, but that each mountain had its spirit, which was a god. These four gods were the four most important days of their calendar, the four *Alcaldes del Mundo*. As I looked up at T'ui Bach, our destination of the morrow, I wondered if I would have the strength to reach its summit—it looked so high in the sky.

The next morning we decided to go, as the sky was clear and Domingo said it would be a good day. I rode Pichón. Domingo, Andrés, and Pablo followed with the lunch and thermos bottles of water and coffee. Poor old Tequila had to be left behind. I rode for twenty minutes before the sun entered our valley and then I had to dismount and lead Pichón, as the rocks were bad and the going almost perpendicular. In a short time we came out on a plateau which had plenty of coarse grass—the kind used for thatching roofs. Here we left Andrés, the horse, and our picnic lunch.

We toiled upward on foot, through pine, cypress, and fir. The birds sang and happiness filled our hearts, as it did those of Domingo's dogs, who romped all around us. An Indian joined us. His sister had lost two sheep the day before, and now he was looking for her. She had left before dawn to search for them. We all hoped the coyotes had not found them first.

It made me think of a tale a Ladino had told me.

Not long ago, in the mountains, in the direction of San Juan Atitán, many Todos Santos Indians were pasturing their sheep.

During that time many sheep were lost and the shepherds could not understand how the sheep were taken.

One day an owner lost five sheep from his flock, and five more the next day. He then went personally to inspect the place where the sheep had been stolen. He went with his wife and eldest son, who was the one who had been looking after the sheep.

They walked in the direction of the mountains, and the son showed him where he had been pasturing the sheep when they vanished. After the father had looked the place over he sent his wife and son off to pasture the sheep, while he himself climbed the highest tree near the spot where the sheep had vanished.

He waited a long time before anything happened, and then he saw coming toward him a family of Indians consisting of a large elderly man, a woman, and three children between the ages of ten and fourteen. The elderly man looked the country over with great care and then led the family to a nearby tree. He said something to them and they all took off their clothes. When they were naked they tied their sashes around their waists so that the ends hung down in back like tails. They all made several somersaults forward and backward and then turned into coyotes. The father became a large coyote, the mother a medium-sized one, and the children small coyotes. In this order they marched off. The man in the tree waited until they were out of sight and then descended from the tree. He could not explain to himself how this had happened, but when he saw their clothes he decided on vengeance. He collected *ocote* and wood, of which there was plenty, and made a big fire. Into this he threw the dirty clothes of those who had turned themselves into coyotes. The smoke the fire gave off attracted two Todos Santos Indians who were pasturing their sheep near by. When they heard of what had happened (for they also had lost sheep and wished to see an end put to this business) they all climbed trees and waited in silence.

Not much time had passed when they saw in the distance five coyotes of different sizes, and when these came nearer, the Indians saw that each one carried a sheep about its own size slung over its back. The coyotes walked to where they had left their clothes, and when the old coyote saw no clothes he dropped his sheep, and the others did likewise, and they ran in all directions looking for their clothes. They became frantic, and when the older one saw the fire he realized that their clothes had been burned. He spoke some words to the others and they all went and rolled in the ashes of the fire. When nothing happened, they walked away with sad faces, the oldest leading as before. Without doubt they knew that never again could they regain their human forms and that their lives henceforth would be those of coyotes roaming the country.

The men climbed down from the trees, overcome with what they had witnessed, but contented, for they knew that from now on their sheep were safe. The man who burned the clothes told the others that he had recognized the Indians before they had transformed themselves. They were not Todos Santos Indians but some Indians from San Juan Atitán.

As we climbed upward we would catch views of Todos Santos far below. It looked very small, and the mountains on the other side did not seem to tower above us so much, for we were gradually rising as high as their summits.

Domingo was a wonderful guide, full of lore about nature. "Señorita," he would say, "notice the *caca* of the coyote. It is white, for it is full of the hair of the sheep." It was true, the *caca* which was all about us looked like grey-white cocoons.

"Domingo," I said, "in our country we use the same word—*caca*." He was so pleased we had a similar word that from then on he pointed out every *caca* he saw, whether it was of man, animal, or bird.

"This tree," he said, "the one with the light-green leaves, is used in the dry season when there is no grass. We cut the branches, and the sheep and goats like it and eat the leaves. Now these rocks that are light-colored, if you build a fire next to them the lime will come out." Thus his conversation went on all day.

As we looked up a steep slope we saw the woman with the two sheep, and we were delighted. As soon as we reached her we said hello and good-by and went on our way. I had to rest now and then to catch my breath because of the altitude. Finally we came out on a ridge which looked south and north. Never had I seen such a superb view. As far as the eye could see one mountain range rose after another, like the waves of the ocean. To the south emerged the huge volcano of Tajumulco, sitting in the landscape in a most dignified and important manner. To the north the *tierra caliente* and Mexico, and a range of mountains of whose existence I had not previously known. T'ui Bach, our destination, seemed as distant as ever, and I began to wonder if it was just a myth and whether we could reach the top.

The climbing now became really difficult; no trees, just rocks. I had to rest often and I noticed that Domingo's breathing had become somewhat labored and that the dogs had stopped romping. He told me that he had never been to T'ui Bach or any high *cerro* of *costumbre*. "No ordinary Indian goes there, Señorita, only *chimanes* and *rezadores*. If you have no fear, I have no fear; I will go where you go." He was pleased to find very good *ocote* all over the ground. "Now I know where the *chimanes* get the *ocote*," he said to me. There must have been a forest there at one time, I thought.

The heat of the sun and the rarefied air seemed unbearable, but on we struggled. The path was a tiny one. It wound in and out among mossy rocks that were still covered with ice and frost,

though it was late in the morning. We came to sheer drops and steep inclines.

Domingo encouraged me and helped me along these dangerous spots, and at last we reached the summit of T'ui Bach. I stretched myself flat on my back, for I had difficulty in breathing. We must have been over 12,000 feet high, for I could see La Ventosa, which has an altitude of 11,200 feet, far below. The view from this place of *costumbre*, as from all such sites I have visited since, was indescribably beautiful. To the east, south, and west the earth was spread out beneath us. We could see five volcanoes clearly, as well as the peak of Xepaxá, where the Indians go to pray for rain. My thoughts dwelt upon the *rezadores* and *chimanes*, often elderly men, making this climb in all kinds of weather, the fires they build when they reach their destination, and the sacrifice of the turkeys. To T'ui Bach, the *dueño* of this mountain, the *rezador* prays first, and then to the other *dueños*. He knows that at the same time other *rezadores* are doing at the other *cerros* just what he is doing here. He swings his *pichacha* as he prays. The smoke of the burning blood, mixed with copal, winds up into the sky as dawn lights the world spread out below. No wonder he has faith, for he is apart from the world and at one with his god; at that moment he is the mountain.

There was a sort of main altar that the Indians call *Soch*. It was waist-high and made of four flat slabs of rock, three on the sides and one on top, so that one side was open. Here I was seeing with my own eyes what Tata Julián had told me about. Around this were numerous smaller altars, also called *Soch*. At the very front lay charcoal. Everywhere there were candle drippings. Some of these altars had, on the inside, natural rocks that looked like birds or other animals. Inside the large altar I found a small idol and fragments of broken pots. After examining the idol carefully I replaced it. It was about six inches tall and carved out of stone,

primitive work, with hands meeting on chest and feet meeting below.

Luck was certainly with me, for I had only just taken my last picture when the clouds rose and engulfed us. We started homeward.

The day after our pilgrimage I felt very tired and stiff. Don Pancho came in the afternoon. Now that he was such a friend of the two *chimanes* and, especially, a pupil of Chimán Pablo—a real initiate—his material was even more fascinating. I was kept busy checking on it all and giving him more questions to ask. One problem, however, had come up which he told me hesitantly. “Señorita, my wife and my Ladino neighbors tease me now. They say that I am turning into an Indian, and although we laugh about it, I sense underneath a resentment that I should see so much of the *chimanes* and so little of them.”

“Well, Don Pancho, it won’t be so much longer now that you will be working for me.”

“Oh, Señorita,” he said, “I can’t bear the thought of your going away some day.”

That evening after supper, as Basilia and I sat by the fire, she put her hand over her face and mouth and looked at me with her big eyes. I knew she had something special to tell me that she was uneasy about.

“Señorita, Rosa examined me today and I am going to have a baby.”

“I have known it for a long time, Basilia, but I have been waiting for you to tell me.”

“How did you know, Señorita? Rosa only knew when she examined me.”

“You have been acting like a pregnant woman, that’s how I

knew." Then we both laughed. "Basilia, have you told Cheppi that he is to be a father?"

"Yes, I have told him, and he has told me not to worry, he will see that I will be taken care of. Señorita, what do women in your country do who do not want a baby—who want to get rid of it?"

"There are medicines that they try, and if these fail, they go to a man and pay a great deal of money for him to take the baby, but this is against the law and if they are caught doing this the man will be put in prison and they also will be punished. What do you *naturales* do?"

"Some midwives give a bitter medicine that makes one very ill. Simona has taken it, and one time it worked; another time it did not. Some *chimanes* have medicine, but most believe that what God gives one should accept. Don Raimundo's daughters know how to get rid of a baby but they would not tell me their secret when I asked."

"Do you want a boy or a girl, Basilia?"

"I want a girl, Señorita, for I have had two sons. I do hope you will be here when I have my baby, Señorita, and not in your country."

"When do you expect it?"

"I shall expect it in the month before the *canículas*, which would be July."

"Then I will not be here, for I shall have to go back to my country long before then. I am happy for you that you will have a baby. It will take the place of Carlos."

"Oh, Señorita, I am afraid that if you go to your country you will never return."

"I shall return, but maybe not for several years. Now, if you are pregnant you must go to bed and get a good night's sleep. Run along, Basilia, and sleep well."

The days passed quickly, maybe because I was so busy with the few patients I had, to say nothing of my work, which was approaching completion. I realized as I checked over my work and Don Pancho's that between us we had amazing material that I knew had never been recorded before.

One day Chimán Calmo stopped by to greet me. I asked him where he had been, as I had not seen him for several weeks. He was smiling this time and did not ask me how I was, for which I was relieved.

"Have you had any dreams lately, Señorita Matilda?" And when I said no, he went on: "I have been away near Jacaltenango. Now I am very busy with *costumbre*. The new year will soon be upon us. During the five evil days I will have much work to do."

"No, Tata Calmo, I have had no more dreams. You have cured me." He smiled in a strange way and then to my great surprise invited both Basilia and me to his house the night of March 9, the Mayan New Year's Eve.

He said: "Come, you are welcome, and have no fear of the Spirit. He will come, and full of force he will be."

With inner reservations I accepted, and he passed on up the path toward his house. Why the devil was he inviting me to the new year celebration at his home? There must be some reason.

I told Basilia and she looked at me and said: "If you want to go, I will go with you. But I think it's better we do not go."

"We will see when the time comes, Basilia."

"Señorita, Margarita is so jealous of Patrona because Patrona has four boys. She was so upset when this baby turned out to be a girl. When you were away she had her baby, and not one neighbor went to see her. Rosa was the midwife, but Margarita could get no one to help during the twenty days. She is so *brava*, no one wants to work for her. Satero finally has had to get his mistress to come and wash the clothes and grind the *tortillas*."

"That shows, Basilia, what the people of the pueblo think of Margarita. She deserves every bit of it."

That evening Tata Julián tapped on the windowpane and I bade him enter.

"Señorita, I invite you with pleasure to come on the day *K'mané*, the first day of the new year. Come to my house with your candle and pray and ask the Spirit of the *Caja Real* what you wish. Many people will come. They will pray, saying: 'God-Spirit of the *Caja Real*, *Tata Soch*, I implore you to give me good crops. May my corn, beans, and *chilacayote* be plentiful. May you give rain when it is needed, but no storms. May you guard my sheep, my goats, from harm, and my pigs, chickens, and turkeys. Keep the pigs of the mountains away from my corn, and the coyotes from my animals. Give health to my family and shut the mouths of those who would talk against me.'

"Señorita, there will be more *costumbre* in my house on *K'mané* than in the houses of the *chimanes*. Each *rezador* has to bring a turkey, and I myself must buy two. Most of them will be sacrificed as *K'mané* enters, but a few will be kept for when *K'mané* enters again in twenty days. It will give me great pleasure to send you a piece of the turkey."

"Thank you, Tata Julián, for inviting me to come to your house. I would like to say a prayer to *Tata Soch*. Thank you for asking me." This invitation I accepted without reservations.

"Come early, Señorita, for my grandfather always said that *Tata Soch* was stronger in the early morning. *Tata Soch* taps in the box when he comes, and then I know he is there."

"Tata Julián, is the Spirit of the *Caja Real* stronger than the Spirit of the *chimanes*?"

"Señorita Matilda, *Tata Soch* is much more powerful than the *Dueño de Cerro* of the *chimanes*. First in importance is *Tata Dios* in the sky, then comes *Tata Soch*, *Dueño* of the *Caja Real*, then

come the four *Alcaldes del Mundo*, who are *Dueños de Cerros*. *Tata Soch* is not only the Spirit of the *Caja Real* but of the pueblo and the people. He is always just. No one can tell a lie in front of the *Caja Real*. Disputes are often settled in this way. Copal and candles must be brought by the questioner. Then I swing my *pichacha* and pray, asking *Tata Soch* to give of his wisdom. For instance, today a man came to my house with his wife. He told me she had been unfaithful and he named the man. She said she was innocent. I told her to light a candle and place it in front of the *Caja Real* and *Tata Soch* would be the judge. The candle sputtered and burned up quickly with much fire. This proved she was guilty, and she is now in jail. If the candle had burned steadily and quietly she would have been innocent. Very wise is *Tata Soch*. Señorita, can you pray?"

"Certainly, I can pray; better in my language, but I can also pray in Spanish." Then he said something that touched me deeply.

"Señorita Matilda, never fear, I shall not fail you as a friend. I shall even send you some of the sacrificed turkey. It is my right as *Alcalde Rezador*. I may be a stupid Indian, but I have a heart and I like you, for you are my friend."

"Tata Julián, you are far from stupid. How can you say such a thing? You are very intelligent, and I know you are my friend. That you are an Indian and I am a *gringa* is not important, for in the eyes of God above we are one."

He departed into the night. I was thrilled that he had asked me to come on the New Year's Day, but more moved over what he had said. I considered it a great privilege to have such a friend.

Early the next morning the mother of the young woman who had died near T'ui K'oy came with a grandchild, a boy of four. A pot of boiling water had fallen and scalded his arm badly from the wrist to above the elbow. The poor child was suffering dread-

fully and screamed all the more when he saw my white face. Finally candy did the trick and he stayed still long enough for me to get a bandage on his arm.

It was proof to me of the returning confidence of these people that a family that had lost a daughter after I had examined her continued to have faith in my curing powers.

However, in spite of the rule I had made of treating only friends, I got caught once, later that day. It was a friend of Basilia's, a *mayor* with infected eyes—very tall, husky, and good-looking in an animal way. There was something about him that I did not trust or like. Several times he had walked in when it was after dark and I had told him, if he wanted his eyes treated, to come in the daytime. This evening when Basilia was away visiting her mother, he walked in and sat down by the fire. I told him I was busy, and to come the next day. He stretched out his legs insolently and looked me over from head to foot. Then he looked at my bed, saying: "Señorita, you must be lonely in that bed. How would you like me to keep you from being lonely and sad?" His eyes were bloodshot as if he had been drinking, and the expression in them was unmistakable. I could feel myself getting angry as I said: "I am neither lonely nor sad, and I have no need of you; so go, and go immediately."

He just continued to look at me with his bloodshot eyes. By that time I was so angry I got up and grabbed the poker and shouted in English: "Get the hell out of here and damn quick!" I pointed toward the door. Though he did not understand a word, he understood the tone of voice, the gesture, and the look. He jumped to his feet and left in a hurry. After I had bolted the door and window I laughed hysterically, for the blackened poker that I still held was nothing but a stick that he could have broken with one hand.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

When it was time to go to Chimán Calmo's New Year's Eve celebration, I decided I would make the effort and see what he had up his sleeve. I asked Patrona if she would like to go with Basilia and me.

"Señorita," she said, "if it were another *chimán* I would go, but not Tata Calmo. He is a *brujo* and has done things against me, and against my son who died. For that reason it does not please me to go, and I would advise you also not to go."

"In a way, I wish Basilia and I were not going, but as long as he has asked us we will go," I said.

At about seven-thirty, Basilia and I were on our way, carrying a large bottle of *aguardiente*, candles, copal, and a magnificent white rooster. It was very dark as we picked our way along the narrow path with the aid of a flashlight. A few stars were shining, but most of them were blotted out by clouds. We could see light coming through the wide cracks of Tata Calmo's house and we could hear the guitar playing. As we pushed open the door and entered I saw no sign of our host. The dark faces, the dark eyes watching me, seemed angrily to challenge my right to be here.

The *chimán's* stepson (the one whose cut wrist I had healed when he fell off his horse during the *fiesta*) greeted me with: "Good evening, Señorita, are you just passing by?" I refused this exit cue and said firmly: "I am here because Tata Calmo invited me to come. Where is he?"

"He is just taking a rest."

There on the floor lay Tata Calmo and his wife rolled up in blankets, fast asleep.

I was given a chair close to the fire, but before I sat down I put my gifts near the *corral* and offered them all cigarettes, after

which they became a little more amiable. Finally Señora Calmo came out of her drunken doze and greeted me with affection, after which her husband came to, unrolled himself from his blanket, and gave me about as unsavory a greeting as I have ever had. He asked how long I was going to stay.

I said: "I shall leave when I feel it is the time to leave."

He thanked me for the *aguardiente*, thanked God, and kissed the bottle and put it on the floor beside the altar. He then fixed a sort of stool in front of the door of his *corral*. His wife, who sat next to me, kept patting me and then relapsing into a drunken doze. The *chimán* himself had difficulty keeping awake in his chair. His stepson whispered something in his ear and he came to and answered. Basilia afterwards translated it for me: "Oh, I'll say a few prayers and then she will go."

But his wife said: "No, you must summon the Spirit, for she has been kind to us."

"Shut your mouth, I'm summoning the Spirit right now."

All the Indians were watching and listening. Calmo arose unsteadily and stumbled over me as he staggered outside to relieve himself. When he returned he had me move even closer to him and I wondered when he'd had his last bath. I was right in the doorway of his *corral*. He put my candles on the altar as he spoke my name. Then he took the white rooster in his arms and prayed over it, holding it up toward the altar and now and then giving it a slobbering kiss. He made a long prayer mentioning the usual mountains and cities, but this time I heard "New York" several times, and my name at the end.

Out of his medicine bag he finally took a knife. Then, after kissing the rooster once more, he placed the head on a flat stone while his wife held the struggling body. Putting his left hand around the neck, he plucked off one white feather, which he put in the bowl with the copal. Then he stretched the neck and at the

same time cut it part way through with his knife. He held the neck over the bowl of copal and I could hear, see, and smell the blood pouring out. I knew I must keep a straight face, as they were all watching me. But my solar plexus was vibrating as it always did when I was upset. When the blood stopped flowing he held the poor bird above the bowl and it flapped its wings, spattering blood in all directions, which meant, of course, all over me. As the bird died, the wings dropped and spread out, making the form of a cross.

The *chimán* now laid the rooster to one side and sat silent a moment, looking at me. I saw his small eyes, close together, greedy, and cunning. There was absolutely nothing spiritual in his face. His thoughts of me were not complimentary, I was sure.

His *pichacha* was filled with red coals, a black rug was put over the entrance to the *corral*, and all the lights were put out. He began to pray in Mam. I could smell the burning blood, and then I heard his voice change and I could tell he was talking into a clay pot so that it would sound strange. There was absolutely none of the sincerity in his voice that had been apparent in the sound of the Spirit I had heard the year before in the house of the *chimán* at Santiago Chimaltenango. Calmo made a swishing sound, rather like the wind, and this he continued to do all the time. The people around me exclaimed: "Enter, *Ta*." His wife kept up a continuous talk. I could not understand what she said.

Then Tata Calmo, in Spanish—for my benefit—began to intone: "I am the Spirit, I am the *Dueño* of T'ui K'oy, I am the *Dueño de Cerro*. My house is in the mountaintop. I am also the master of all the mountaintops."

He then went through the list of volcanoes and cities, including New York.

"Do not be afraid of me, Matilda, *Cristiana*," he made the Spirit say. "I have come to talk to you, to give you what you want. Your

family is well, it is true, but your mother is old and sad and has need of you. They are all awaiting impatiently the day when you will return to them. Have no fear of me, Matilda, *Cristiana*, let us talk."

I said nothing, for I realized what a fake the old *chimán* was.

Then, very rapidly, he said: "*Cristiana*, why won't you talk to me? I have come from my mountaintop to talk to you."

I still said nothing, which I was sure upset Calmo, and this delighted me.

"I am going now, *Cristiana*."

"*Adiós, Ta*," was all I said.

The fire was started up again and the candles were lit. The *chimán* then came out, beaming all over, and repeated what the Spirit had said. Basilia and I got up to go, and I was annoyed but at the same time very much amused that he did not have the decency to offer us coffee or a drink from the bottle I had brought.

The old goat! I might have known that all he wanted was to get rid of me!

Early the next morning I was wakened by the skyrockets sent off from the different houses of the *chimanes* to greet the *Alcalde* of the New Year, *K'mané*. I remembered that I had promised Tata Julián that I would go early to his house to burn my candles in front of the *Caja Real*. But after the performance of the night before I was so fed up with *costumbre* and all it entailed that I had to push myself into going in order to see what might prove to be an unusual ceremony. "Matilda Robles, you go! This is what you came here for," I told myself. When I was all dressed I still felt the same way and thought: "Why not send Basilia with the gifts?"

However, at 6:30 A.M., bearing a quart of *aguardiente*, a few packages of cigarettes, ten packages of copal, four medium candles for the four *Alcaldes*, and one large candle for *Tata Soch*, the

Spirit of the *Caja Real*, I entered Tata Julián's house. It was full of people. Tata Julián at once came forward to greet me and to tell me how delighted he was that I had come. Then each of the *rezadores* and their wives welcomed me.

Women may use any one of four different gestures for greeting: a mere nod, a pat on the shoulder, a handshake, or a step forward with the right hand raised as if to be kissed but held higher up. This last greeting is used toward a superior like a *chimán*. Some treated me like a superior, while others just shook my hand.

I presented the gifts to Tata Julián, and he thanked me and told me to sit on the bench at one side of the *Caja Real*. The *Caja* stood on a table opposite the door, in a corner. It was decorated with pine branches, and in front of it, on the floor, stood a huge clay pot with clouds of incense rising from it. The floor was covered with pine needles and corn leaves in which the copal had been wrapped. On these lay several dead turkeys that had been sacrificed before dawn that very morning. On the table in front of the *Caja* stood a lighted candle.

Tata Julián and the First Prayermaker opened five packages of my copal and put them in the clay pot. The two men prayed for me, addressing the Spirit of the *Caja Real*, and told him that I had come from a country north of Mexico, that I had come by plane to Guatemala, by bus to Huehuetenango, and by horse to Todos Santos. Tata Julián asked the *Caja Real* to give me and my family health, wealth, and happiness and to protect me from robbers or harm on any of my trips.

The atmosphere was clearly one of reverence and faith. The whole room was saturated with it.

The four candles were then laid next to the *Caja*, the one large candle being held by the First Prayermaker. The wife of Tata Julián now came forward, took the candle, prayed for me, and then lit it before the *Caja Real*. She gave me a cup of coffee, and

I passed cigarettes to everyone. Then Tata Julián spoke to me, repeating what I had heard in part from someone else: "Señorita Matilda, the *Caja* is so old we do not know its age. In ancient times there was a special house for this *Caja*. When the first Ladino who ever became *Alcalde* took office, he did not treat the coffer with respect. He tried to break it open, and sent soldiers against us. That was long ago. The *Caja* is all that remains to us from our ancestors. The Spirit of the *Caja* is stronger than any spirit that a *chimán* can summon. Nowadays most *chimanés* work for material gain for themselves. But I and all of us here work for the *Caja Real*, and its Spirit works for the pueblo. A grave responsibility is ours, for if we do not take proper care of the *Caja*, harm will come to the pueblo, to our crops, our animals, and all the people of the pueblo. Now the priest from Chiantla says: '*Chimanés* are all *brujos*.' But what do you say, Señorita?"

"Some *chimanés* are *brujos*," I answered, "others are not, just as in the world there are some good and some bad people." Then I added: "Tata Julián, the *Caja Real* gives off great force, a good force, and my heart feels good since I have come here."

"That is why I asked you to come, Señorita Matilda. Thank you for coming," responded Tata Julián.

Thereupon I rose and made a silent prayer in front of this coffer, thick with the soot of countless candles and copal. I folded my hands and crossed myself four times, just as the Indians did. Finally I turned to all who were watching me and said: "Thank you for letting me come, your *Caja Real* has given me a great deal. Thank you."

They all said: "Thank you, Señorita, for coming."

Then Tata Julián spoke: "Don't you want a drink before you go?"

I thanked him and said my thanks for all of them. I left with a good feeling inside. The *Caja Real* had really given me something.

Late that afternoon a *rezador* came bearing a gift from Tata Julián, a bowlful of turkey cooked with freshly ground corn. It was part of one of the ceremonial turkeys, and I knew it was a great honor. I gave Basilia some, and she told the neighbors, and soon the whole village knew about it.

Incidentally it was a succulent dish, and Basilia and I were sopping up the juice with pieces of *tortillas* when Patrona came rushing in in great alarm to say her baby was dying. I ran over and, sure enough, he was in convulsions. I sent her quickly for Basilia to bring boiling water and a pail. Into the pail I put water as hot as I thought the baby could stand, and then the baby. In three minutes the convulsions stopped, so I knew it was worms. I asked if the baby had passed worms or blood, and Patrona told me yes, both.

"Patrona," I said, "I am afraid to give your baby worm medicine, for it might kill him in the condition he is in. We will have to wait. If he has another convulsion put him immediately in hot water. Patrona, your baby has been sick off and on for three months, and I told you long ago to give him worm medicine. You had better go to the church with your candle and pray. And remember this," I added, "your *costumbre* is much more important than my treatments and the medicine." Since my return from Guatemala City I had emphasized this much more. For I knew that soon I would be leaving these people for good. They had to have something of their own to fall back upon, something that was much more important than the treatments and medicine I had been giving them. This something was what they had always had, and what they had handed on to me. It was faith—faith in their gods and an innate belief that they belonged. This force they belonged to would take care of them as long as they did their part; the infinitesimal part they played in the whole rhythm of nature.

The next morning the baby died, and immediately after his

death Patrona and the children began to wail. Domingo was away working in his corn fields near San Martín, so I had the *Alcalde Municipal* send a *mayor* for him.

Basilía helped Patrona by grinding corn and making *tortillas*, and an old neighbor woman helped with other things.

The body of the baby was washed and dressed in its best and laid on a *petate* on a table. Two candles were kept burning all day and night, one at each side of the child's head.

The wailing went on all afternoon. It sounded like the wind in the trees, a lonely, sad sound; not human, but more like a great universal lament of nature.

At eight o'clock in the evening Basilía and I went over to Domingo's house. We carried candles, two bottles of *aguardiente*, and plenty of cigarettes. Outside on the porch were two little pigs boarded up behind the bench so that the coyotes would not get them. Inside, grouped in a semicircle, were Tata Julián, the Chief Prayermaker, Patrona's sister, another old woman with her grandchild, a neighbor with his guitar, and finally Domingo, who had just returned, and his family.

The dead child was lying to the right of the door on a table. On his head was one half of a red bandana, and tied loosely over his mouth was the other half. His hands were crossed and flowers were enclosed in them. Flowers had also been placed about his body. A stick covered with colored paper, like a banner, had been placed at his side and left shoulder. Next to his right hand was a cup of coffee, and on each side of his head stood a lighted candle.

Poor Patrona was wailing, as was little Victoria. Domingo thanked me for sending a man for him and told me how the man found him, and how he had broken the news. He went into the most minute details of the matter with his usual gusto. Finally he said: "The night before last I dreamed that the brother of a neighbor who had died five years ago came to me and began quarrelling

with me and trying to hit me. I told him: 'I have no quarrel with you. Why do you talk and act in this way?' I called out to some men and said: 'This man is crazy. He wants to fight with me, but I have no desire to fight with him, so take him away.' Then the man said to me: 'Domingo, I do not want to fight with you. I just want the new lasso in your hand.'

"Señorita, I looked down and saw that in one hand I had a small new lasso, a new one like the one you bought at the *fiesta* at Chiantla. In the other hand I had an old one. The man grabbed the new lasso out of my hand and then I awoke."

Tata Julián thereupon interpreted the dream.

"The new lasso was the baby. The man had come to take the spirit of the baby."

We all agreed. After a while Domingo said:

"Last night I could not sleep. An owl hooted all night, so I knew something bad had happened to my family."

"Yes," I said, "it is the same in my country; owls are bad luck."

"Yes, truly, owls and vultures," volunteered Tata Julián.

Patrona carried on then, saying: "Señorita, your dog and mine barked all night."

"That is true," broke in Basilia, "and the cat kept jumping in and out of the window."

Finally Domingo said: "If there is a chameleon in this room it is bad luck, for the spirit of the dead will go into the chameleon."

We all drank coffee then and smoked. Tata Julián, who was sitting on one side of the dead child, began to pray out loud. He leaned forward from the stool on which he sat, his crippled hands crossed on the top of a cane which rested on the earth between his long legs in their red-and-white striped pants. He muttered his prayers in a low voice, in a language that was a mixture of Mam and Spanish; he was taking the place of his brother Abelino, who usually officiated at funerals but was too sick this day to come. On the top of the

red bandana covering his head perched a straw hat, from underneath which peered his long, kind face, a face both gentle and strong in its earnestness and dignity. He chanted on and on. The others paid no attention to him.

Patrona continued to wail. Domingo talked to those present. I watched him, even though my eyes smarted from the smoke that filled the room. His eyes were glistening and his face glowed as he talked. From him there seemed to emanate a kind, good force. Patrona's features stood out strong and pure. Her nose was aquiline and aristocratic, like Domingo's. Both seemed of pure Mayan blood, both were handsome.

The guitarist was kind-looking but stupid, and I must say his music was monotonous. A little old woman, with wide-awake bright eyes like those of a bird, was bustling about tending the fire and stirring the various-sized pots. The children all sat near the fire and their wide, inquisitive eyes missed nothing.

Next to the fire a pole was stuck in the ground, and on top of this was a lump of clay on which were laid sticks of *ocote*. These, with the two candles, lighted the room. Under some boards that served as a bed were a number of newly born kittens, mewling. In another corner sat a hen with little chicks under her. From the beams, down the sides of the room, hung rows and rows of gleaming yellow corn.

It was Patrona who now spoke: "Señorita, this is a doubly sad time for me because my brother died just a few days ago near Concepción." The guitarist stopped playing.

"That is indeed sad, Patrona," I said. "Was he young?"

"Yes. He was about thirty-five years old. He died because of an animal that was inside him, jumping about in his stomach. That is what he died of. No one could cure him."

Domingo interposed here, saying: "The people of Concepción are bad people; the *brujos* there can cast spells."

Now it was Tata Julián who spoke. "Yes, they can put an animal inside you; wicked indeed are the people of Concepción."

They asked me if I knew how to cure it and I said: "Yes, it is an animal called *tenia* [tapeworm], and it can be cured by the sick one swallowing the contents of a small bottle of white medicine. The animal does not like this and leaves the body like *chor*. When the animal comes out one must watch to be sure it comes out with its head, for if the head is not there, it is inside and more animals will grow from it."

Then Domingo opened a bottle of *aguardiente* and passed the first glass to me. I held it toward my host and toward the others, saying: "*T'on dios ta,*" as I sprinkled three drops on the earth and one outward. This is customary among *chimanes* and old wise men. Then I drained the rest in one gulp, which is also customary. Tata Julián was given the next glass, and he did the same as I did. The others, one by one, drained their glasses. It was all done with great formality and feeling.

The guitar was now played again, and we talked of death. Domingo noticed that the child's eyes were open a bit and he said: "Señorita, he is looking at us. That means bad luck, Señorita."

But I said: "No, the spirits of children go to the Sky God. The spirit of your son will soon be with the rest of your family who have died."

"Señorita, five have died; this makes six. Yes, Señorita, they are now with the great mother who has many breasts, and enough milk in them all for every child."

"Yes, Matilda," said Tata Julián, "she has enough milk for every child." Fascinated by this new legend, I tried to question him further, but he wouldn't reply.

Patrona now began to sob and wail. "Señorita," she exclaimed, "I hope this is not the commencement of more bad luck."

I reassured her: "Certainly not."

We had another round of drinks. Tata Julián then sang the *salve* which his brother usually sang at funerals. It was a mixture of Mam and Spanish-Catholic phrases, the names of saints intermingled with those of the holy mountains and the *Alcaldes del Mundo*. He sang off key for about ten minutes. It was all I could do to keep a straight face. The others paid no attention to him and went right on talking, but I listened, and when he finished he gave me a grateful smile.

He asked me what I felt about life after death. I told him that I believed in another life.

"What does God look like?" asked Tata Julián. "Does He look like the pictures the fathers distribute, or does He look like the idols in the church?"

"We do not know what He looks like," I said, "for no one has ever seen Him. People paint His picture and make figures of Him, but it is just what they see in their heads that they paint. God is God, and it is not important what He looks like."

As I said this a moth flickered about the room and Tata Julián said: "That is the spirit of the child." Everyone looked and said: "Yes, that is the spirit of the baby."

Then they discussed what the baby should be wrapped in when it was put in the coffin. "The woolen cloth he is now wrapped in is new and could be used by my other child," said Patrona.

I interrupted and said: "I have a piece of material that is blue and red, and you can have it if you want it."

Then they decided to put a second shirt on the baby. He had possessed two. This I felt was grotesque and horrible. Nevertheless they went on with it and pulled all the flowers and paper objects off the baby and removed the candles. Then they took the *bandanas* from his head and mouth and unwrapped them and tried to pull the stiff little arms through the second shirt. It was a truly spooky scene, for throughout all this Patrona and Victoria

kept up their wailing. Basilia dressed the baby with deft fingers and laid him on the table again. The old woman for some reason or other pulled each toe and each finger hard, and pinched his nostrils to tie the bandana back over his mouth. She then closed his eyes and tied the other half of the bandana over his head. A necklace of nasturtiums and pansies, made by Basilia and me, was put around his neck, and all the other flowers and cut paper were put back again.

Tata Julián then asked me: "Señorita Matilda, in your country, how long does the spirit stay on earth before it goes to the sky world?"

"Three days," I told him. "And how many days does it stay here?"

"Nine days the spirit hovers about, sometimes as a moth or a fly, and on the ninth day, at night, another ceremony has to be given, like this one, but just for the family, and then the spirit goes."

Bowls of hot stewed beans cooked with herbs were now served, as well as coffee and *tortillas*. If this had been a rich family, boiled meat and potatoes would have been added.

By this time it was after midnight, and so I said good night and took my departure. As I went to sleep I could hear the guitar and Patrona's wailing, and when I woke in the morning the same thing was still going on.

All that next morning they drank coffee and *aguardiente* and smoked. Domingo came to borrow money from me to buy more *aguardiente*. Patrona continued her lovely, lonely wail. At about eleven the coffin arrived. The child was wrapped in my blue and red cloth and then laid on top of the *petate*, which had been put in the bottom of the coffin. The coffin was painted blue. Domingo had bought a new straw hat for the child, and this was placed on top of the coffin. I could see that it would never fit

inside. They left for the cemetery about half past one. It was pouring. I did not go but sent Basilia in my place. She told me that when the coffin was put in the earth, Tata Julián said prayers over it and sprinkled *aguardiente* on it. When Patrona returned she continued wailing and I noticed that the youngest child had the new hat on his head.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

A week later Basilia came rushing in, her eyes wide with excitement.

"Señorita, you remember that day Simona asked you to see Juan's sister, and you went with her?"

"Yes, I remember. She had a cold and I gave her aspirin. What about it?"

"Simona says she is very ill, and if she dies, Juan's mother will tell everybody that you and I are the cause of the woman's death."

"Basilia, isn't Juan's mother the nice old woman with the bird-like eyes who was at the wake?"

"Yes, she is the one, Señorita."

"Go and get Simona and bring her here immediately."

In a few minutes Basilia returned with Simona, whose face, I noticed, had taken on an alcoholic look.

"Simona," I said, "Basilia has told me a tale about Juan's sister and mother. Is there truth in it?"

She looked at the ground and twisted her skirt, and repeated, rather incoherently, somewhat the same tale.

Somehow I felt it was not true, so I told Simona to stay where she was and sent Basilia for Patrona. When Patrona came I repeated the story and asked her to go and see her friend the old woman and check on the story. Simona then became so agitated and her eyes shifted so that I was sure something was wrong. In about ten minutes Patrona returned in triumph with the old woman, who said the whole thing was a lie. Her daughter was sick, it was true, but only with a cold, and it was Simona trying to make trouble for all of us.

"Señorita," the old woman said, "since Simona took Juan away from his wife we have had nothing but trouble. They both drink

so much that they do not work, and I have to do everything, even to looking after the children and taking care of the animals. To think that my son would bring such trouble on me in my old age!"

"Simona," I said, "you are really a sick woman; you are sick inside, so much so that you smell. I feel sorry for this poor woman and all the trouble you have brought to her house. You should be ashamed of yourself, but you are not. If you keep on like this the *Dueño de Cerro* will certainly punish you, and badly."

Simona began to cry, and then the old woman. Margarita, who must have heard the raised voices, could not contain herself, even though she was not speaking to Patrona. She came sweeping down, and the old woman and Simona told her what was going on, both talking at the same time. I broke into the din and told Simona to leave, and that I did not want her in my house ever again. She left snuffling and crying, with a dirty look at everyone in the room except me, for whom she still had respect, I suppose.

"Señorita," said Margarita, "I told you when Simona first came to you that she was no good."

"Shut up, Margarita," I said, and Basilia looked pleased.

As Patrona, excited by what had gone on, went out the door, she must have suddenly remembered her grief, for she let out a little wail, and then, when her children had joined her, a louder one.

When Tata Julián made his evening call and Domingo joined us, I told them both, and also Basilia, that I had received a letter recently saying my mother was not well. Because she was old I felt I must go home to see her.

"Will you come back again, Señorita?" asked Domingo.

"When will you be leaving us, Señorita Matilda?" asked Tata Julián.

"I will stay several weeks more and then go," I said.

"Señorita, what shall I do when you leave me?" said Basilia with large eyes. "What will you do with this house, and all the

things in it? Oh, Señorita, I shall miss you so. The house will be sad without you."

"The house is not mine, it belongs to Natalia. I only rented it. When I leave I shall give the things away to those who are my friends. To you, Basilia, I shall give most, for you have been a very faithful friend and more like my daughter."

"Señorita Matilda," said Tata Julián, "the pueblo will be sad when you go, so will this poor *natural* and his family. Señorita, if it is because Natalia wants her house back that you have to leave, I will find land for you—the pueblo will gladly sell you land."

This touched me greatly, for I well knew that the Indians hated to part with any of their land. It is all they have left of any value. "Tata Julián, it is on account of my mother that I must return to my country. It touches me deeply, Tata Julián, that you make such an offer. If I were coming back to live I would gladly buy land. But when I return it will be only to visit and to see how my friends like you, Basilia, Domingo, and Patrona are. I shall be very sad to leave all of you, and yet I shall also be happy at the thought of seeing my family and friends again."

"I can understand, Señorita," said Tata Julián.

"Señorita, what will you do with Pichón?" asked the materialistic Domingo.

"Domingo, I have given very little thought to what I'll do with Pichón, the animals, and my things, but I shall later."

"It is sad, Señorita, that you haven't a husband and children," said Tata Julián.

"It is not sad to me, Tata Julián. God did not choose for me to marry. If He had I would be married, with children."

"Yes, that is right," said Tata Julián. "If God had willed it, you would be married, with a family."

"Yes, she would have a family and a husband, and if this were true, she would not be here but with her family," said Basilia.

"Now my friends, you had better all go to bed. I am tired."

Word that I was leaving spread quickly. I was besieged by Indians and Ladinos asking for last-minute treatments and medicine, or looking over my belongings with anticipation. The Indians told me how sad they would be when I left. The brother of Chimán Calmo came to have his foot dressed and told me that the *gente* really liked me, and if I would live here always they would see that I had land to build on. This again touched me very much.

Now Tata Julián came to see me morning and evening and, in fact, was really a great nuisance, but I enjoyed it.

Each morning, early, long before the Indians were up, I went over all the material collected by Don Pancho and myself. I was really surprised and pleased at what I had and made a list of headings under which I could classify the material.

One thing I still lacked was a look inside the *Caja Real*. This really bothered me. I knew that if I asked Tata Julián to allow me to look, he probably would, even though it was against what he believed. Each time I saw him now I was torn between the idea of asking permission and the thought of how unfair it would be to use our friendship for this purpose. I realized he might be blamed in consequence for anything that happened after I left, especially as he had always willingly answered all my questions. Finally I asked him outright what was inside, and he told me just papers, the original Spanish deeds to their pueblo, an old hoe, and a pair of handcuffs. It seemed that the handcuffs had belonged to one of their heroes who had caused an uprising and had been put in prison by the Spaniards and had died there.

I thanked him for telling me this and then told him that his

ten-dollar debt to me was cancelled. I knew he had many extra expenses as *Alcalde Rezador* and I explained that because he was my friend he could forget it. He thanked me over and over, and his gratitude was touching. It made me realize how difficult it was going to be for me to tear myself away from these people. I decided definitely not to ask for a look into the box.

That evening I told Basilia that I had arranged with Señor López of the *tienda* that he was to give her two dollars a month for twelve months.

"Basilia, Cheppi tells me that he has a house for you, and that he will look after you. Do not tell him of this other money you will get, as it is for extras in case he does not give you what you need."

She began to cry and said: "Señorita, you have been so good to me, I don't know what I shall do without you."

Tears came to my eyes and I gave her a big hug, saying: "Basilia, you are like my daughter. I shall miss you very much and think of you often." It would be hard for me to forget her; the way she slept at night on her *petate*, with the blankets well over her head and her feet sticking out; her pride and her wonderful sense of humor; the way she picked her nose all the time; her burps and her spitting. All these things, good and bad, were part of Basilia, and I had grown fond of them.

I signed over the water rights to Natalia, the owner of the house, on condition that her near neighbors be allowed to use the *pila*. Then from the *Juzgado*, where we had signed the papers, we came back to the house.

"Natalia," I said, "you were kind enough to lend me your desk, so I shall give you the large table and the two chairs that match it in color." She didn't answer me, so I said: "Do you want them or not?" She said: "Yes." When she went out the door with never a word of thanks, I felt quite annoyed, especially as I had already paid her

four months more rent on the house than was due her when she had told me she was in need of money. I thought: "How like a Ladino!" When Alonzo, her brother, came over later, however, I did give him the cupboard that he was so fond of, and lots of tools. Alonzo had always been very honest and helpful to me.

To Domingo I gave a paper in which I stated that Pichón's stable was his. I had already given it to him as a present. I allowed Basilia to choose whatever she needed for her new house. What was left, I either gave to my other Indian friends or sold to the Ladinos. What little money I got from my sales I put into *aguardiente* for a farewell party.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The day before I was to leave, Manuel of the burned leg arrived at seven in the morning, bearing on his face his usual shy smile, and in his arms a white rooster.

"Señorita, people tell me that you are returning to your country, so I have come to pay you the ten dollars and to give you a present of this rooster."

"Manuel, thank you for your thought of me. I shall accept the ten dollars, but I want you to keep the rooster." I went on with my packing.

"Señorita, the rooster is for you, a gift from my wife and myself. We have been talking about you; how sad this house will be without you. Do you remember when I repacked your mule and you gave me a present of your hat? When you came to cure my leg and I saw that you were the same Señorita that had given me the hat, I knew you would cure my leg. As a favor to us, Señorita, please accept this rooster."

By his face I could see that I must accept, and I knew it would be the easiest way to get rid of him, so I thanked him and said: "Now, Manuel, I shall wish you and your family good luck and I shall say good-by, for I have much to do today."

"Señorita, as this is your last day, I shall spend the day with you. I have told my wife that I shall stay and help you." With that he sat on a box with such decision that I could do nothing about it.

The room was quite bare now, except for a few necessary household articles. The wife of Chimán Calmo came to pay back the ten dollars I had lent her. It impressed me greatly that every Indian had paid back what he had borrowed. They paid in cash or corn. The corn I gave to those who needed it, and the cash to

Basilia and Domingo, to whom I also gave my photograph, as well as excellent letters of recommendation. Don Pancho dropped by a minute to tell me of his experience of the night before. We stepped out into the garden where Manuel couldn't hear us, and he told me how he had become a full-fledged *chimán* and how he had successfully summoned the Spirit. He handed me several sheets of paper on which he had recorded the events of the night.

He had asked me to come to this ceremony, but my instinct had told me not to.

"I was surprised, Señorita, when Chimán Juan, who had been invited by Pascual Pablo, walked out of the ceremony just as I was about to receive my table. I guess he doesn't approve of a Ladino becoming a *chimán*!"

"Probably not," I said. "Don Pancho, I am giving your faithful Pichón back to you as a gift because I like you and because you've helped me so much. Also, I will leave you my medicine and medical equipment if you promise not to charge the Indians too much."

After he left, Basilia told me she wanted to keep Tequila, Micho the cat, and the Aristocratic Hen. The chickens and roosters I divided among my neighbors, and to Tata Julián I decided to give Manuel's white rooster for a sacrifice. Things that were not useful to the Indians, like my camp cot, some tinned food, and other supplies, I planned to take with me to Huehuetenango to give to the Maryknoll Fathers, who certainly were improving in many ways the living conditions of the Indians in Jacaltenango and other villages.

"Basilia," I said, "make some coffee for Manuel, and for your mother before she leaves. In fact, make coffee for all of us."

Basilia went out to make the coffee but came running back in great excitement. "Señorita, someone has robbed you in the night. They have taken all of your pansies."

I went out to look. Basilia's mother and Manuel came too. Sure

enough, someone had dug up the whole row of pansies and taken some of the onions. "I am happy that they took them, for they must care a lot about them to dig them up in the night," I said.

"They knew that when Natalia is here they won't have a chance," said Basilia.

We went back and had our coffee and a smoke, and then Basilia's mother got up to leave. She took my hand in hers and with tears in her eyes said: "Señorita, we will all be sad when you go. I don't know what will happen to Basilia when it is time for her baby. I guess she had better come to us."

"Yes, that is good. Basilia will be comfortable in her new house, for she has many of my things, and Cheppi says he will look after her."

Juan helped his mother lift the woven sack of potatoes I had given her onto her back, and this she carried hung from her leather forehead band. On top of this she set her hat, and off she trotted, wishing me a happy journey and that God would protect me. She wore no sandals on her feet, though the trail to San Martín was a rocky one.

From then on it was a steady stream of callers looking about to see what was left that could be used, and also wishing me a happy journey.

Basilia trotted back and forth to her new place with her new possessions, proud to be, of all the Indians, the one with the most comfortably furnished house. Manuel, on his box, watched it all.

I had asked Tata Julián to bring a *chimán* to do the *mixes*, as I wished to ask if my path was clear and no trouble ahead. He came in the afternoon, and whom did he have with him but Chimán Juan, the one who had walked out on Don Pancho at his coming-out party!

Chimán Juan spread his coat on the end of my table and cast the beans. There were altogether thirteen pairs, which, they both

told me, was good luck. He said my path was straight and clear, and all would be well.

We had coffee and cake and smoked, and Tata Julián said: "Señorita Matilda, tonight at my house will be a big *fiesta*—all the *rezadores*, *mayores*, and visiting *chimanes* will come and eat the turkeys sacrificed this morning. Today is *K'mané* and there has been much *costumbre*." And then he suddenly changed the subject. "Did you go to Don Pancho's house, Señorita, to see him receive his table?"

"No, Tata Julián, I did not go."

"I am glad. It is not good that Don Pancho become a *chimán*." I wondered if Chimán Juan had told him how he had walked out of the house.

After I had paid the *chimán* what I owed him, they both took their leave.

I made a list of the things I would have to do before my departure. More neighbors called. Tequila kept running around the room. Pichón neighed to draw my attention, and Micho sat in my lap every time I sat down. Manuel finally stood up and stretched and said good-by and left. I went back to my packing.

"Señorita Matilda, I want you to come with me to my house." It was Tata Julián, back again.

"But Tata Julián, I am packing."

"Just for a few minutes," he said, with an air of mystery.

So I went. As we approached his house I could hear the *marimba* playing in his patio, and I could see many people, but not their faces, for it was rapidly becoming dark. Tata Julián motioned me to enter, saying: "Pass within, Señorita."

I found the large room full of people, all busy. The women at the far end were cooking by the light of the fire. The First Prayer-maker, my friend, came forward and welcomed me, and so did all the others, including the women. I instinctively felt that Tata

Julián had told them that he had invited me and wanted them to welcome me. Many of them were my friends, and I knew that these would receive me with pleasure; but there were some there who did not like me, and I knew it took great courage for Tata Julián to entertain me. I was sure it was against all the rules, for none except Indians were invited to these dinners, and only Indians who held some office.

Opposite the door, in the corner, stood the *Caja Real* on a table. As usual it was decorated with pine branches. The floor was covered with pine needles. On one side of the room was the table of the *rezadores*, a very long, narrow table, hand-carved and of extremely heavy wood. I could see that it was very old and probably made of oak. It was covered with a white cloth, and on one side was a bench. In front of the *Caja Real* burned one good-sized candle, and on the floor in front was a clay pot with smoke of copal rising from it.

Tata Julián asked if I would like to say a prayer in front of it. I said: "Yes," and he said: "Señorita, if you would rather do it in your own language, you may."

I said my prayer, and then the First Prayermaker said a prayer for me in Mam. Tata Julián then explained that he was asking *Tata Soch* to guard me on my journey and to grant good health to me and to my family. I thanked him and sat on a bench to the left of the *Caja Real*. On one side of me sat a *mayor* and on the other my new friend, Chimán Juan. I passed them and the others cigarettes. There must have been at least twenty-five men in the room, and numerous women.

Two men held handfuls of pine sticks that served as torches. One man stood at the other end of the room where the women were bending over two huge pots. I had never seen such big pots before. One was at least three feet high, and in this the tamales were steaming. The second pot was low and squat, and in this

the turkey was cooking. The other man who held the torch stood near the table, to which Tata Julián soon moved. He sat down at one end, the others following him. Including Tata Julián and Macedonio Pablo, the *Alcalde Municipal*, there were eleven people, all sitting on one long bench. Two baskets full of bowls were put on the table and two men did the serving. They took several bowls and carried them to the women, who filled them with turkey and *masa* and then passed them around. They served me first, then Tata Julián, the *Alcalde Municipal*, the *rezadores*, and after that the others. Baskets of tamales were continually being passed around. I unrolled mine from its leaf covering and dipped it in the gravy of the turkey and ate the turkey with my fingers. It was delicious.

The setting of this feast was unforgettable: the young men holding the flaming torches that cast a glow on all who were near, the white tablecloth, the faces of the men at the table. Here were wisdom and character and great dignity. Beneath the table one could see the red-and-white striped trousers. Rows of gleaming golden corn hung above and down both sides of the room. Everyone sat busily eating. From time to time Tata Julián would call out to me, saying: "Eat well, Señorita," or "Little by little, eat well, Señorita Matilda." I was really touched that he had invited me, and sad that I was leaving Todos Santos.

Bowls were replenished, more tamales passed. The men had apparently cracked some joke, for they all howled with laughter, and I felt I was the butt, since, when they laughed, they looked at me. But I laughed with them. I felt sorry for the women and the men who were serving and holding the torches, for they were watching everyone eat and had nothing themselves. Coffee was served, and after that gourd cups of *batido*. They passed me a small one, just my size, and I said: "*Muy bonito*," which means

"how pretty." For some reason this amused them; my remark was repeated and everyone laughed.

The ceremony that accompanies the passing of the gourd cups of *batido* is most impressive. They are passed by one man who holds the cup high in his right hand and says to the receiver the equivalent of "God bless you." The receiver accepts it, holds it high, and says to all: "Greetings to the ancient ones," sometimes repeating it for each person, and they answer with the same phrase. It was a wonderful sight to see them all drinking the *batido* out of the large-sized carved gourd cups.

Finally the men who had held the torches and passed the food were relieved of their duties and sat down to eat. I passed cigarettes to everyone, and then the bowls were collected. This was the time, I felt, to leave, so I stood up and said:

"Tata Julián, Señores, my stomach is full and satisfied by the delicious meal I have had. But my heart is sad, for tomorrow I leave Todos Santos. I am very fond of Todos Santos, and of all of you, and that is the reason my heart is sad. It was friendly and kind of you to ask me here tonight, Tata Julián, and I want to thank you and the others for giving me this pleasure."

"Thank you, Señorita," they all responded.

"I shall often think of this evening," I continued, "when I am far away in my country. Good luck to all of you, and may the pueblo of Todos Santos have a good year in every way. Thank you again."

I left, and they gave me a stick of *ocote* to light my way. As I approached the house I put out the torch and stood still, breathing in the pure air. I had been deeply moved by what I had just been through. I took a long last look at the stars above and at the dark walls of mountains on both sides of the pueblo. In my heart I said a prayer to the gods of the mountains for their help and their protection, and thanks to my Indian friends for all they had given

me—how much, I probably would not fully realize until I had returned to my material world.

The rest of the evening was something of a let-down, although I was kept busy handing out drinks of *aguardiente* to my neighbors. At last I went to bed with the sound of the marimba from Tata Julián's in my ears.

In the morning I was up at four and finished my packing alone, which was just as well. At five, Tata Julián came to the door with his son, who was going to drive their mule that I had hired.

"Señorita, I am going to Paquix with you," said Tata Julián.

"Isn't that a long way for you to go, Tata Julián, after all the *costumbre* that you did yesterday?"

"No, Señorita Matilda, it is not too long a distance. I am an old man, but there is still strength left in my legs."

"It would make me very happy to have you come. But before we pack the mules, have a cup of coffee with us." So we drank and smoked as Basilia and Juan took the last of her things up to her house. She was coming with us also, I had invited both her and Domingo to come and see me off at the airport of Huehuetenango.

When the time came to leave, Patrona and I gave each other a big hug without words. I patted Margarita on the shoulder, saying: "Don't you sell Marcelina to an old man. You let her choose her own husband. Also I want to hear that you have given Satero a son. I am sure your next will be a boy."

She beamed all over and told me how much she would miss me, and how she hated the pigs of Ladinos who were moving back into my house.

Then came good-bys to the children, to Tequila and Micho.

We were quite a troop as we started along the trail. Two mules led by Tata Julián's son, Pichón and I, Basilia, Domingo, Andrés, and Juan, all carrying bundles of different sizes, and Tata Julián

bringing up the rear with a bundle under one arm and his staff of office in his hand. Satero joined us on his horse, and I asked if he was going to town too.

"I am going with you, Señorita," he said.

As we reached the outskirts of the village, where Don Pancho's house was, he came out to say good-by and wish me good luck on my journey. He thanked me again for giving him Pichón and said he would care for him. We rode on up to the main trail.

A short distance ahead, I saw a young man running down toward us. He was all out of breath and sobbing. He hung on to the edge of my saddle in a beseeching way, calling on me for something I could not understand.

Tata Julián translated. "Señorita, he needs you. He says he and his wife went out in their corn field last evening, quite a distance from their house, and on their return they found their house destroyed by fire and their two children badly burned. He wants your help."

"Poor man!" I thought. "Shall I go and help him? If I do, I shall miss my plane, and how can I help him now, anyway?"

I turned to Tata Julián. "Please tell the man that I feel very sorry to hear his sad news; that, much as I want to help, I can't. Don Pancho has all my medicines. I shall write a note to Don Pancho which this man must take to him immediately. Don Pancho will cure his children, and it will cost him nothing."

Tata Julián told the man what I said, and I wrote a note and gave it to him. The last view I had of the pueblo was the poor man running down the road toward Don Pancho's house.

Satero rode with me as far as El Rancho and then he dismounted and shook my hand warmly.

"Good-by, Señorita, may God bless you. Thank you for being so kind to my children."

I was amazed, for I realized that he had come all the way with

me as an act of courtesy. "Good-by, Satero. May you have good luck in your work and home, and may your next baby be a boy. Say good-by again to Marcelina for me, and may her life be full of happiness."

Tata Julián had rested his heavy bundle on a rock and was mopping his forehead.

"Señorita Matilda, what is in this heavy cargo I am carrying?"

"In my country it is called a portfolio, and it contains a book I have been working on. Guard it safely, Tata Julián."

I couldn't help smiling to myself as I rode along. I could catch snatches of Basilia's and Domingo's conversation. Childlike, all they could think about was seeing me off on a plane, a real airplane!

Turning to them, I said: "I shall ride on and meet you all just beyond La Ventosa, under the trees. We shall have coffee there, and sweet bread that I have brought for our last breakfast."

As Pichón and I crossed The Windy Place, I looked at the trail that lay ahead, the trail that would take me back to the world from which I had come two years before. An old man was walking slowly toward me. As I returned his greeting I thought of "The Sage" I had been looking for. It seemed strange that I had never seen him again, or found anyone who knew him. Yet I had seen this same wisdom and beauty in many places and on many faces during my years in Todos Santos, and for the first time in my life I had myself experienced peace, a real inner peace. I understood now that my mysterious old "Sage" and all that he symbolized rode unseen beside me. He would remain with me.

I spoke to Pichón and turned off the trail in the direction of the trees where I would meet my friends. I felt lighthearted and deeply happy.

IN GENERAL, terms are defined only in the senses applying in this book. References are given to passages in the text that give fuller explanation. The Mam words are followed by M in parentheses; words not so marked are Spanish or, in a few cases, Mayan.

ab ij (M), year.

adiós, good-by.

aguardiente, very strong local spirituous liquor made from sugar cane.

Ajmak (M), fifth day of the Mam calendar.

alcalde, an official; chief—*A. Municipal*, leading civil official of the pueblo; mayor.—*A. del Mundo*, chief of the world; (often simply *alcalde*) title of each of four days in the Mam calendar and of four gods identified with them.—*A. Rezador*, Chief Prayermaker.

aldea, hamlet, subdivision of a township.

alote (M), young ear of corn.

ánima, soul.

batido, ceremonial drink made of ground corn, sugar, and boiling water.

bebida, ceremonial drink made of ground cacao, ground corn, sugar, and boiling water.

bravo, bullying.

bruja, -o, witch, sorcerer.

caca, droppings.

Caja Real, Royal Coffin; religious object of the Todos Santos Indians.

Calvario, *El*, small chapel on outskirts of pueblo.

canícula(s), dog day(s), hot, dry days in late July and August.

capixaij (M?), man's coat.

caporal, handyman, attendant.
cera, beeswax (candles).
cerro, mountaintop.
chimán (M), medicine-priest; grandfather, ancestor.—C. *Nam*,
medicine-priest of the pueblo.
chimancita, female healer.
chirimía, kind of flute.
chor (M?), dysentery.
Chucia Chuán (M), title of a *chimán's* wife.
cielo, heaven(s).
convento, church building used as lodging for visiting priest.
corral, *chimán's* house, boothlike cubicle used for communing with
Spirit.
costumbre, prayer, ritual, ceremony.
dios, God.
dueña, -o, guardian, mistress, master; supernatural being supposed
to dwell in a mountain or other natural formation.—D. *de Cerro*,
mountaintop master.
espíritu, spirit.
finca, farm, plantation, where Indians often hire out as workers.
fiscal, official who looks after the church, the needs of the visiting
priests, etc.
frijoles, beans.
gemela, -o, twin.
gente, people.
guacalito, gourd cup.
huipil, woman's blouse.
Ik (M), eleventh day (and an *alcalde*) of the Mam calendar.
Imix (M), tenth day in the Mam calendar.
intendente, mayor of the pueblo, civil chief (used formerly when a
Ladino only could hold the office).
jefe, chief, head.

jícara, jicarita, gourd cup.

juzgado, administrative building of the pueblo.

K'mané (Ee) (M), first and most important day (and an *alcalde*) of the Mam calendar.

ladrón, robber.

letra, handwriting, learning, wisdom.

mam (M), grandfather, ancestor.

masa, dish of ground corn boiled with chicken or turkey.

mayor, chief, minor official of the pueblo; minor religious functionary; one of the sixteen days in the Mam calendar other than the four *alcaldes*.

mix(es) (M), seeds, beans, bits of quartz, etc., used by *chimanes* for divination.

mozo, male servant.

mundo, world.

municipio, township.

na, nana (M), mother (a term of respect).

natural, Indian's name for himself, in speaking Spanish.

Noj (M), sixth day of the Mam calendar.

ocote, splinters of resinous pine, burned for light.

panela, unrefined brown sugar.

patrón, patron.

petate, straw mat.

pichacha (M?), clay censer.

pila, fountain, communal well.

principal, a religious official.

pueblo, village.

pulsera, healer who diagnoses by feeling the pulse.

rey, king, kingly man.—*El. R.*, senior and most revered *chimán* of village.

rezador, prayermaker.

sacate, grass, hay.

salve, a part of the mass.

san, santa, santo, holy; preceding a name, saint.

secretario, secretary of the pueblo civil government.

Señor, (the) Lord; title of respect with religious names.

Soch (M), Spirit of the *Caja Real*; altar(s) on the *cerro* of T'ui Bach.

ta, tata (M), father (a term of respect).

tambor, drum.

T'ce (M), sixteenth day (and an *alcalde*) of the Mam calendar.

temprano, early.

tenia, tapeworm.

tienda, store.

tierra caliente, hot country.

Todos Santos, All Souls.

Todosantera, -o, resident of Todos Santos.

tortilla, flat cake of ground corn.

trago, a swallow.

t'ui (M), respectful prefix, used with holy place-names, etc.

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