

## The Hymn of the Soul

**W**HEN I was a little child  
Living in my kingdom, in my  
father's house,  
Happy with the wealth and rank  
Of those that reared me—  
From the East, our home,  
My parents sent me out.  
The treasures of our store-room  
They tied for me in a bundle;  
Large, yet so light  
That I could carry it in my hands:  
Gold of Beth-Ellaye,  
Silver of Gazzak the Great,  
Rubies of Hind,  
Agates of Beth Kashan;  
And at my belt was tied *adamas*,  
That can crush iron.  
And they took off the glittering robe  
That in their love they had made for me,  
And my purple cloak  
That was measured and woven to my stature,  
And they made a pact with me,  
And lest I should forget  
They wrote it on my heart:  
"If you go down into Egypt  
And bring that only pearl  
That is in the midst of the sea,  
Guarded by the snorting dragon,  
Then you shall put on again your glittering  
robe  
And the cloak that you delight in,  
And with your brother, next in rank,  
Be heir to our kingdom."

**I** LEFT the East, and went down,  
And there were two couriers with me,  
For the way was dangerous and hard to find,  
And I was young to take it.  
I passed the borders of Maishan, the meeting  
place

Of the merchants of the East.  
I came to the land of Babel,  
I entered the walls of Sarbug.  
I went down into Egypt,  
And my companions left me.  
I went to the place of the dragon;  
I lived close to his lair;  
Waiting till he should be asleep,  
So that I might take the pearl from him.  
I was quite alone,  
A stranger to those with whom I lived.  
Then one of my own race, a freeman,  
A man of the East I saw,  
A youth fresh and comely,  
A son of chieftains.  
He came to me and was my friend;  
I made him partner in my quest,  
Warning him against the Egyptians,  
Against consorting with the unclean.  
But I wore a dress like theirs  
Lest they should scorn me as a stranger,  
Lest when I went to take the pearl  
They should rouse up the dragon against me.  
But whether by this means or that  
They saw I was not their countryman.  
They dealt with me cunningly,  
They gave me their food to eat.  
Then I forgot I was a son of kings,  
And served their king.  
I forgot the pearl  
For which my parents had sent me.  
The burden of their food lay heavy on me,  
And I fell into a deep sleep.  
But all that had happened to me  
My parents knew, and were very sad.  
There was made a proclamation in our  
Kingdom  
That all should hasten to our gate,  
Kings and princes of Parthia—  
All the nobles of the East.

They made a plan to save me,  
That I might not be left in Egypt.  
They wrote a letter to me  
And every noble put his name to it:  
"From your father, king of kings,  
And your mother, mistress of the East,  
From your brother, next-in-rank,  
To our son in Egypt, greeting!  
Rise up from your sleep and listen  
To the words of our letter.  
Remember that you are a son of kings;  
See to what slavery you stoop!  
Remember the pearl  
For which you hurried to Egypt,  
Think of the glittering robe,  
Recall your glorious cloak  
That you shall wear again as your finery  
When in the list of the valiant  
Your name is cited,  
With your brother, our next-of-rank,  
You shall be heir in our Kingdom."  
My letter! A letter from the king,  
Sealed with his own right hand  
That it might be safe from the wicked,  
The children of Babel and the cruel demons  
    of Sarbug.  
It flew in the likeness of an eagle,  
King of all birds;  
It flew and lighted beside me  
And became all speech.  
At its voice and the sound of its rustling  
I started and rose from my sleep.  
I took it up and kissed it  
And loosened the seal and read;  
And according to what was traced on my  
    heart  
Were the words of the letter written.  
I remembered I was the son of kings;  
I missed my free estate,  
I remembered the pearl  
For which I had been sent into Egypt,  
And I laid a charm on the terrible one,  
The snorting dragon;  
I hushed him to sleep, lulled him to slumber,  
For my father's name I named over him  
And the name of our next-in-rank,  
And of my mother, queen of the East.  
I snatched away the pearl  
And turned to go back to my father's house.  
Their filthy and unclean dress

I stripped off and left in their country;  
I took my way straight back  
To the light of our home, the East.  
And my letter, my awakener,  
I found before me on the road;  
And as with its voice it had roused me  
So with its light it led me on.  
Dweller in silk,  
It shone before me with its form;  
With its voice and guidance  
It quickened me on my path,  
With its love it drew me on.  
I went forth and passed by Sarbug,  
I left Babel on my left hand  
And reached Maishan the great,  
The harbour of the merchants,  
That sits upon the shore of the sea.  
And my bright robe that I had stripped off  
And the cloak it was wrapped in  
From Ramtha-Reken my parents sent to me  
By the hand of treasurers  
Whose faithfulness they trusted.  
I had forgotten how it was fashioned,  
For I was a child when I left it  
At my father's house.  
And now as I came towards it  
The dress seemed to me  
Like a mirror of myself.  
I saw in it all my whole self;  
I went to myself in going to it.  
We were two in distinction,  
Yet one in likeness.  
And the treasurers, too, who brought it  
I saw in like manner  
That they were two, yet one likeness;  
For one kingly sign was graven on them,  
As on the hands of him that had restored it  
    to me.  
Here was my treasure, my wealth,  
My bright embroidered robe,  
Gay with many colours.  
With gold, beryls, rubies and agates  
And sardonix of every hue,  
Skilfully worked in its high home.  
With stones of *adamas*  
All its seams were fastened,  
And the picture of the king of kings  
Was embroidered all over it.  
And like the sapphire-stone  
Were its many hues.

And again I saw that all over it  
 The motions of knowledge were quivering.  
 And I saw it making ready  
 As though it would speak to me.  
 I heard the sound of its voice  
 As it spoke to those that brought it down:

“**I** AM the active in deeds  
 (Whom they reared for him before my  
 father;)\*

I perceived in myself that my nature  
 Grew according to his labours.”  
 And in its kingly movements  
 It poured itself out over me,  
 And on the hand of the givers  
 It hastened, that I might take it.  
 And love urged me on,  
 That I should run to meet it and receive it.  
 I stretched out my hand and took it

\* Unintelligible both in Greek and the Syriac.

With the beauty of its colours I clothed  
 myself.

My cloak of bright colours  
 I cast round me in its whole breadth.  
 I dressed in it, I went up  
 To the gate of greeting and homage,  
 To the Majesty† of my father who sent it  
 to me;

For I had done his commandment  
 And he too had done what he promised.  
 And at the gate of his princes  
 I mingled with his nobles  
 For he rejoiced in me and welcomed me,  
 And I was back with him in his kingdom;  
 For with the voice of praise all his servants  
 glorify him.

And now they promised that to the door  
 Of the king of kings I should be brought;  
 That bringing my gift and my pearl  
 I should come before the king.

† *Ziwa*, the sign of kingship.

D. H. Lawrence

## Letters to S. S. Kotliansky

[NOTE: These letters are selected from nearly four hundred written by D. H. Lawrence to S. S. Kotliansky, from 1914 until 1930, the year of Lawrence's death.—Ed.]

Greatham,  
Pulborough,  
Sussex

Thursday [Postmark April or May, 1915]

My dear Kot,

B has just gone. I like her, but she gets on my nerves with her eternal: "but *do* you think"—"but, look here, *isn't* it rather that. . . ." I want to say: "For God's sake woman, stop haggling." And she is so deprecating, and so persistent. Oh God! But—*basta!*

I must tell you, *caro mio*, that I liked you very much while you were here. You must continue to be patient with me.

But you positively *must not* be so inert. You are getting simply a monolith. You *must* rouse yourself. You *must* do something—anything. Really it is a disgrace to be as inert as you are. Really, it is unforgivable. Write for the papers, do anything, but don't continue in this negation.

I think I shall send you my philosophy to type again for me. I have begun it again. I will not tell them, the people, this time that they are angels in disguise. Curse them, I will tell them they are dogs and swine, bloodsuckers.

I will send you *The Idiot* to read.

Will you type my philosophy again?—one copy only this time, on common paper? I shall have to get it done somewhere or other. But if the burden on you, monolith, is too great, then refuse.

I have been fighting the powers of darkness lately. Still they prevail with me. But I have

more or less got my head out of the inferno, my body will follow later. How one has to struggle, really, to overcome this cursed blackness. It would do me so much good if I could kill a few people.

Is Katharine\* at home, or have you heard from her? And how is Murry? I will write to him. I feel all right again towards him. My spleen has worked itself off.

I am still in bed with my cold. It is a sort of cold in my inside—like a sore throat in one's stomach. Do you understand? I am going to stay in bed till it is better. Thank God B isn't here to nag me—poor thing.

My dear Kot, now that the spring has come, *do* rouse up, and *don't* be sad and inert. It is so terrible to be such a weight upon the face of the earth. But you were almost all right this time you were here. Next time you must come when nobody else is here.

Frieda sends her love, with mine. I am reading the Dostoevsky letters. What an amazing person he was—a pure introvert, a purely disintegrating will—there was not a grain of the passion of love within him—all the passion of hate, of evil. Yet a great man. It has become, I think, now, a supreme wickedness to set up a Christ worship as Dostoevsky did: it is the outcome of an evil will, disguising itself in terms of love.

But he is a great man and I have the greatest admiration for him. I even feel a sort of subterranean love for him. But he never, never wanted anybody to love him, to come close to him. He exerted repelling influence on everybody.

Write to me soon—Yrs.

---

\* Katherine Mansfield. D. H. L. always called her, and spelt her name as, Katharine.