

The Manual of the Warrior of Light

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**Translated from the Portuguese
by Margaret Jull Costa**

For S.I.L., Carlos Eduardo Rangel and Anne Carrière, masters of rigour and compassion.

The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

Luke 6: 40

Prologue

'Just off the beach to the west of the village lies an island, and on it is a vast temple with many bells,' said the woman.

The boy noticed that she was dressed strangely and had a veil covering her head. He had never seen her before.

'Have you ever visited that temple?' she asked. 'Go there and tell me what you think of it?'

Seduced by the woman's beauty, the boy went to the place she had indicated. He sat down on the beach and stared out at the horizon, but he saw only what he always saw: blue sky and ocean.

Disappointed, he walked to a nearby fishing village and asked if anyone there knew about an island and a temple.

'Oh, that was many years ago, when my great-grandparents were alive,' said an old fisherman. 'There was an earthquake, and the island was swallowed up by the sea. But although we can no longer see the island, we can still hear the temple bells when the ocean sets them swinging down below.'

The boy went back to the beach and tried to hear the bells. He spent the whole afternoon there, but all he heard was the noise of the waves and the cries of the seagulls.

When night fell, his parents came looking for him. The following morning, he went back to the beach; he could not believe that such a beautiful woman would have lied to him. If she ever returned, he could tell her that, although he had not seen the island, he had heard the temple bells set ringing by the motion of the waves.

Many months passed; the woman did not return and the boy forgot all about her; now he was convinced that he needed to discover the riches and treasures in the submerged temple. If he could hear the bells, he would be able to locate it and salvage the treasure hidden below.

He lost interest in school and even in his friends. He became the butt of all the other children's jokes. They used to say: 'He's not like us. He prefers to sit looking at the sea because he's afraid of being beaten in our games.'

And they all laughed to see the boy sitting on the shore.

Although he still could not hear the old temple bells ringing, the boy nevertheless learned about other things. He began to realise that he had grown so used to the sound of the waves that he was no longer distracted by them. Soon after that, he became used to the cries of the seagulls, the buzzing of the bees and the wind blowing amongst the palm trees.

Six months after his first conversation with the woman, the boy could sit there oblivious to all other noises, but he still could not hear the bells from the drowned temple.

Fishermen came and talked to him, insisting that they had heard the bells.

But the boy never did.

Some time later, however, the fishermen changed their tune: 'You spend far too much time thinking about the bells beneath the sea. Forget about them and go back to playing with your friends. Perhaps it's only fishermen who can hear them.'

After almost a year, the boy thought: 'Perhaps they're right. I would do better to grow up and become a fisherman and come down to this beach every morning,

because I've come to love it here.' And he thought too: 'Perhaps it's just another legend and the bells were all shattered during the earthquake and have never rung out since.'

That afternoon, he decided to go back home.

He walked down to the ocean to say goodbye. He looked once more at the natural world around him and because he was no longer concerned about the bells, he could again smile at the beauty of the seagulls' cries, the roar of the sea and the wind blowing in the palm trees. Far off, he heard the sound of his friends playing and he felt glad to think that he would soon resume his childhood games.

The boy was happy and - as only a child can - he felt grateful for being alive. He was sure that he had not wasted his time, for he had learned to contemplate Nature and to respect it.

Then, because he was listening to the sea, the seagulls, the wind in the palm trees and the voices of his friends playing, he also heard the first bell.

And then another.

And another, until, to his great joy, all the bells in the drowned temple were ringing.

Years later, when he was a grown man, he returned to the village and to the beach of his childhood. He no longer dreamed of finding treasure at the bottom of the sea; perhaps that had all been a mere product of his imagination, and he had never in fact heard the submerged bells ring out on one lost childhood afternoon. Even so, he decided to walk for a while along the beach, to listen to the noise of the wind and to the cries of the seagulls.

Imagine his surprise when, there on the beach, he saw the woman who had first spoken to him about the island and its temple.

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

'I was waiting for you,' she replied.

He noticed that, despite the passing years, the woman looked exactly the same; the veil hiding her hair had not faded with time.

She handed him a blue notebook full of blank pages.

'Write: a warrior of light values a child's eyes because they are able to look at the world without bitterness. When he wants to find out if the person beside him is worthy of his trust, he tries to see him as a child would.'

'What is a warrior of light?'

'You already know that,' she replied with a smile. 'He is someone capable of understanding the miracle of life, of fighting to the last for something he believes in - and of hearing the bells that the waves sets ringing on the seabed.'

He had never thought of himself as a warrior of light. The woman seemed to read his thoughts. 'Everyone is capable of these things. And though no one thinks of themselves as a warrior of light, we all are.'

He looked at the blank pages in the notebook. The woman smiled again.

'Write about that warrior,' she said.

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A warrior of light knows that he has much to be grateful for.

He was helped in his struggle by the angels; celestial forces placed each thing in its place, thus allowing him to give of his best.

His companions say: 'He's so lucky!' And the warrior does sometimes achieve things far beyond his capabilities.

That is why, at sunset, he kneels and gives thanks for the Protective Cloak surrounding him.

His gratitude, however, is not limited to the spiritual world; he never forgets his friends, for their blood mingled with his on the battlefield.

A warrior does not need to be reminded of the help given him by others; he is the first to remember and makes sure to share with them any rewards he receives.

All the world's roads lead to the heart of the warrior; he plunges unhesitatingly into the river of passions always flowing through his life.

The warrior knows that he is free to choose his desires, and he makes these decisions with courage, detachment and - sometimes - with just a touch of madness.

He embraces his passions and enjoys them intensely. He knows that there is no need to renounce the pleasures of conquest; they are part of life and bring joy to all those who participate in them.

But he never loses sight of those things that last or of the strong bonds that are forged over time.

A warrior can distinguish between the transient and the enduring.