



WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE NEWSLETTER

New Series
Vol. 2, No. 3
Fall 1983

The Sleep of the Seeds Charlotte Dukich
The Painter of the Last Supper Carl Ludwig Schleich
Die Künstlerische Unterricht Jünemann & Weitmann

Waldorf Clearing House
17100 Superior Street
Northridge, Ca 91325

THE SLEEP OF THE SEEDS

Once upon a time an angel came to earth with a lantern alight with a spark from father Sun. With the angel came many seeds for now they had to hide from JACK FROST. Each one took a little flaming spark to lighten winter's dark and warm in winter's snow. Mother Earth called out a welcome to all her children, "I am glad you have come to stay with me. The fruits of summer sun that you bring for they house a little light within, a little light that glows and warms in winter night." The seeds all came tumbling in on the wind to stay with Mother Earth.

Deep in the earth the gnomes were going along their track: trip, trip, trap; trip, trip, trap, heaving heavy sacks upon their backs, with gold and silver in their sacks. Through caverns dark and drear they made their way to their king so dear bringing their treasures to his throne.

The King of the gnomes said, "You have more work to do, for up on the earth summer is fading and the winds do blow. Your task is with the seeds so small, to see them safely in this hall. Away from Jack Frost who would do them harm. My Queen and I await them".

The gnomes called out "Little seeds look out. Jack Frost is about. Mother Earth will keep you warm and guard you from harm till the spring sun gives you new birth."

The seeds were afraid to lose their way for the path was dark and took many twists and turns. But the gnomes said, "Look how our lanterns shine, come follow their bright golden way. Our King and Queen await you, for they will now protect you and guard you from all harm. So sleep little seeds the long Winter through, sink quickly and quietly to rest."

Now seeds and flowers have gone to sleep
You and I the watch will keep
The sunlight fast is dwindling
Our little lamps need kindling
The beam shines far in darkest night
Dear lantern, guard us with your light.

English Version by
Erna McArthur

THE PAINTER OF THE LAST SUPPER

Carl Ludwig Schleich

Once upon a time a great painter lived in a flowering Southern city, whose market-square bears a cathedral outlined against the blue sky in such wise as if angels, in their airy abode, had fashioned tiny windows through which to peek at the earth.

This painter had come from the mountains of his homeland to become a prophet and messenger of great things. For nature had gifted him with a glance penetrating the innermost connection of all that existed, and a hand capable of expressing his most profound thoughts: be it by wielding the chisel, by painting, by writing, or by whittling out strange implements. He was lonely and reticent, such as all men who are on the verge of building something new and giving birth to thoughts conceived in the haze of dark presentiments.

This silent, aloof artist was held in highest esteem by the great lords of his time. He was surrounded by disciples awaiting the sacred moment when the master's rigid nature would melt and pour forth such a stream of indescribably vivid inner life that one could but marvel at this abundance. Some considered him to be half divine; others again could explain his extraordinary gifts only by assuming that he stood in league with the devil. Did he not work behind closed doors, handling queer tools, stones and powders, models of cannons and missiles? Did he not fashion huge wings out of silken stuff and curious clasps out of wood? Did he not dissect bodies of deal animals? It was even rumored that he dragged into his witches' kitchen corpses of men who had been hung on the gallows or killed by the plague.

Nobody knew why he did all these things. Yet an atmosphere of mystery was created around him. Had he not occasionally sent out from his workshop paintings and sculptures of the most miraculous beauty and the most astounding perfection, he might have fared ill in those days when men feared the devil. But despite all the accusations hurled against him by ever watching zealots and denouncers, the master was shielded by the favor of his princely patron. This great lord could not endure the thought that the many-sided genius employed by him should disappear from his Court.

Today we cannot conceive of the homage paid to works of art by the rulers of that past age. Perhaps the Princes were stirred by vanity and emulation to claim the great artists as their servants perhaps they were induced by their wild, depraved life to bring sacrifices for the cause of beauty and thus atone for the monstrous excesses of their pleasures and cruelties. At that time, art was considered to be a refined fashion. Never before had garments been so resplendent; never before had the utensils of daily life been so tasteful; never before had the works of great masters been saturated with so much beauty. Life's insecurity was so prodigious that it forced creative souls to work with utmost speed. Every day, every minute could be the last.

Thus our master worked as if pressed down by doubt and unrest. Would he be able to finish his life-work? There was so much that he wanted to accomplish! He had in mind to dig out irrigation canals which would deflect

rivers from their natural course; to design missiles that would reduce, at the distance of half a mile, fortresses to dust and ashes. Machines steered by the hands of the drivers were to whirl along the highways like fiery chariots. Air-borne vehicles were to mount upward, so that men might soar like birds. Moreover, the master was on the point of discovering a secret, hitherto unrevealed law that would transform the art of painting. He would invent new colors able to produce the most overwhelming effects. Everywhere this great man defied proven tradition. And yet he tamed the steeds racing through his creative soul with the iron force of his relentless will.

One day the master resolved to create a fresco that would live on as the greatest work of all time. The most powerful subject he could visualize was the sacred theme of the Last Supper: The hour when Jesus Christ tells Judas Iscarioth to his face: "Thou shalt betray me!"

At a favorable moment, when the torrents of his eloquence and the whole force of his personality inscribed themselves indelibly in the souls of those around him, the artist explained his idea to the Prince. The scene to be depicted was the greatest drama ever enacted within human hearts: the impact of violent forces encompassing all things terrestrial and divine. He would represent, for all eternity, the victory of good over evil. The battle between the divine and the diabolic was to be shown with a hitherto unknown clarity. Everyone viewing the work would be forced to decide whether he and his deeds belonged to the realm of good or evil. Christ would be revealed in all His overpowering beauty, Judas Iscarioth as a fiend inspiring such terror as had never before been felt by human hearts. One protagonist of this gigantic soul drama was to express all the kindness, mildness, kingly graciousness to be found on earth; the other all the wickedness, depravity, and treachery. Here was the Victor hailing His own death, the Victor sensing His own doom! Around the two, the disciples were to be grouped, breathless and stirred to their innermost depth. Would the fateful dice to be cast by the two opponents spell bliss or anguish?

The Prince promised to furnish all that was needed for the work. And so the master began his preparations. He selected a chapel with a broad altar wall, from which the fresco was to send forth its radiance. In the master's belief, this spot would be a hallowed shrine attracting pilgrims from all over Christendom. Day in day out, year in year out, the master toiled at his work. Concealed from all eyes, he stood on a scaffolding draped by thick curtains, behind which light fell in from a cupola. Triumphantly, the artist announced that these colors would not fade until the world itself crumbled to pieces.

Finally, after seven long years, the fresco was finished. Only one thing was missing: the head of the Christ. The Master had outlined it seven times and erased it seven times. The King of Souls still failed to reflect all the radiance dwelling within His heart. At last, the artist succeeded in capturing this glory. He finished the work at one stroke.

The Prince, who had become very impatient, was invited to view the painting. He came alone, without his retinue. The fresco was still veiled. As the master explained, it still lacked the special, slow-drying varnish that was to protect the surface. But the Prince should be granted the privilege of beholding, as the first among all men, the head of the Savior. A poor artist would offer an exalted gift to His Highness: to behold the Divine Eye, before it would be shown to millions of human eyes.

A pull at the curtain — and, through a slit of purple velvet, Divine Grace

shone forth in such indescribable purity that the Prince became pale. Shaken to the very depth of his being, he covered his blinded eye with his hands. Then, coming closer, he stared at the painting for a long time. At last, he began to recite the Lord's Prayer. The master's eyes sparkled with pride.

On the same day, he covered the painting with a varnish that made the light appear still brighter, the shadows still darker. He drew a deep breath as he stood before his work. Then the curtain was lowered once more. Soon the fresco would belong to the whole world.

The glad tidings was announced to the people. On the morrow, they would be allowed to see the lonely master's supreme work. The prince, who spoke feverishly of the impression made on him by the Savior's head, inflamed the general eagerness to yet greater heights. Feasts were arranged, carousals and orgies took place. Many decided to stay awake all night long, so that they might be the first to enter the chapel. Now morning had come. The Court was assembled. A wave of stifled, breathless suspense swept through the throng. When the master appeared, he heard surging against him the people's thunderous acclaim. The Prince doffed his hat, took off a chain of heavy gold hanging round his neck and, with his own hands, adorned the master's simple smock.

The multitude was asked to wait one more moment. The painter would go in to remove the scaffolding and the drapes.

A long time elapsed. Finally the master rushed out of the chapel, his face pale and distorted, the golden chain torn, his hair dishevelled. "Go home", he shouted with trembling lips. "A crime! A crime! The fresco has been destroyed!"

Speechless, the Prince hastened into the chapel. The multitude welling on behind was stopped by the master who threw himself against the people shouting like a madman: "Away! away! I beseech you!"

The mass fell back. Now the Prince returned and cried: "A dastardly deed has been done! Go home, all of you! The Lord's head has been scratched out by a fiendish hand!"

The shout of indignation coming forth from the multitude seemed to be uttered by one mouth. After it had died down all walked off in silence. The painter was left alone with his work.

He broke into sobs. Then he rose, shook off his grief, pushed ladder and scaffolding back, and took up his brush. Smiling blissfully, he began to paint anew the Savior's head.

The task was finished when the last rays of the setting sun had sunk down. The Savior's head was even more beautiful, more radiant than before. The master felt arising in his heart gratitude towards the malefactor whose villainy had imparted added splendor to the painting. During the night, the master's pupils kept watch around the chapel.

When the painter arrived in the morning, he discovered that the Savior's head had been scratched out a second time. It was utterly baffling. The master, giving a violent jolt to his indomitable soul, went to work for the third time. At the day's end, the Christ illuminated the painting not a whit less gloriously than before.

As night began to fall, the artist was overcome by agonizing fear.

Arming himself with a crucifix, a dagger, and a torch, he decided to keep watch himself and thwart any further outrage.

Weird silence pervaded the chapel. The master stood and waited. Even the rustling of his garment was greedily swallowed by the vast, empty space that seemed to hunger for sounds.

At midnight, when the thunderous peals of the church bells were ebbing away into the jaws of darkness, there was a crackling behind the curtain. Now it came again: a shuffling, sliding, low moaning. The master leaped forward like a tiger. He pulled the drapes aside, the crucifix held aloft in one hand, the lighted torch in the other.

Before him stood Judas Iscariot, his face twisted into a frightful grimace, his claws raised against the Savior. He had left his place at the table and stepped out of the painting.

As the fearless master swung his crucifix against the traitor, Judas Iscariot let his arms sink down. Then he lifted his head and hurled these terrifying words at the man who confronted him:

"Oh, thou accursed one! Thou thrice damned and loathed one! It is I; it was I; it will be I!"

"Lucifer himself has inspired thee with the thought of displaying a man's most awesome hour to millions of ape-like creatures - beings without comprehension, without feeling."

"Thou cruel one hast captured, from the sea of eternity, the darkest moment that devours my blood drop by drop."

"Thou hast dragged forth, from the grave of things past, my torment and my very entrails: this deed of horror that makes earth itself tremble."

"Thou thrice cruel one hast crucified me for the delectation of a howling mob, just as I crucified the Guileless One. Thou hast depicted my destiny as truly as if thou hadst sat at the same table when all this came to pass."

"Thou man of evil has forced my doomed shadow back into my earthly shape. Thou hast thrust me back into that time of anguish!"

"Be accursed!!!"

"Be accursed by me who bears all the curses of the world. I alone know the damnation meted out by a God who laments the fate of His Son."

"Verily, I wanted to scratch out the Savior's face. I could not endure the thought to look again, for centuries, into His eyes. To have Him look into my eyes with the gentle sadness of a Lamb gazing at his slayer I jumped up from my chair, scratched out His head with my nails, tore it to pieces, struck it with both fists -- this head that weighs down on my all too tormented heart as if it were the world's whole sorrow. But now thy hallowed crucifix binds my hands. My deed has failed."

"And so I fling my curse at thee. This painting before us -- one of the greatest works ever fashioned by a human being -- I deliver it to perdition! The colors shall fade, the varnish shall crumble. Badly chosen, thou forward one, badly mixed! I shall make it to nought. And this is not all, thou immortal artist! Most of thy works shall vanish and fade away. And untold suffering shall befall mankind through the discoveries conceived by thy gifts."

"Thou has built canals and sunk shafts into the depth. Hundreds and hundreds shall perish in these mole pits while hoisting up, in thy name, black fiery stones to the light of day. Thou has mixed sulphur and nitrate seeking a third ingredient to produce a substance that would explode amidst a rain of fire, fling missiles into the far distance, and thus batter down the mightiest walls. Thou didst not find the third ingredient. A monk shall seek and find it in thy name. In thy name, it shall tear up the bodies of countless men, as though they were scraps of parchment."

"Thou hast aped the flight of Icarus and constructed air-borne vehicles. Thou shall seduce thousands and thousands to soar up and be hurled down to earth to meet their doom."

"Thus destruction shall hound thy steps, thou madman! Around thy victorious, sun-lit path the shadows shall writhe like poison-fanged snakes. The story of thy fame shall be vitiated by numberless victims dragged, in thy name, to a martyr's death. And my curse, great master, shall destroy this marvellous work before us, until it becomes as dim and distorted as my own name. Be accursed!!!"

Still foaming with rage, Judas Iscarioth stopped and crept back to his place in the painting.

Dumbfounded and terrified, the master clutched the crucifix with both hands and look helplessly at the Son of God.

"Son of the Holy Mother" he cried "is it true?"

The image of Jesus Christ began to glow. Whilst the eyes seemed to be saddened by still deeper shadows, the Divine Head, inclining Itself slowly and mournfully, affirmed the master's question. Then all the supersensible movement in the painting faded away.

The master of Milan walked out of the chapel: erect, a bitter smile on his lips, his features congealed to ice.