

**The Marmot with the Collar  
Diary of a Philosopher**

**by**

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**Translated from the French**

**by**

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**Part III**

**M.03.01.03.03 / M.164 – M.03.03.04.01 / M.220**

**Third Summer**

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### M.03.01.03.03 / M.164

**Moon of Avalanches**, *Third Day of the Full Moon*. – Let us record for centuries to come the most astonishing of adventures.

I set out at the very moment when the first beam of the Moon shone over my Burrow. I was all enthusiasm, and I don't think my spirit had ever been more alert. Except for the rear quarters, which happened to drag a little, I felt brisk and cheerful.

The night, as I said, was magnificent. No clouds in the sky, no mists on the ground. I could count the Pines on the crags of the lower mountains, so clear was the air. The Snow lay, glistening in the Moonlight. It seemed composed of an infinity of little crystals, each of which was surrounded by an aureole, rich in all the colours of the rainbow. My path was simply one of constant enchantment; it was sown with flashes, beams, sparkles, coloured lights, iridescent spangles, stars that scintillated magically, golden or azure. Despite the zeal which carried me forward, I stopped more than once to consider these marvels. Everything was silent in this night full of lights, and it seemed that the noise of the Snow which creaked under my paws must resound as high as the starry vaults. I could hear myself breathe; I not only felt, I could hear my blood pulsing in my veins. I recalled what the White Hare had said to me, and I understood that Winter could be the season of great thoughts. Unhappily, Winter is cold; the more I clomb, the more the air stung my face.

I do not know how long this fantastic journey lasted. There is no way to count the hours in the universal stillness. This dreamer of a White Hare – did he not say that time in those nights stops and reflects?

I think even so that it took more than an hour, contrary to what I had hoped on my departure. I felt toward the end the touches of fatigue; I began to breathe laboriously, and I had shivers that boded ill. At last, I arrived at the foot of the granite pyramid. It was visible from afar. I was still very much awake, and I had no thought of falling asleep. I set myself to work forthwith, scraping the Snow with all four paws. The frozen crust was soon passed. But in my haste I made a mistake. I drove the gallery too close to the rock, which obliged me to descend at first almost perpendicularly. Even though I pushed the Snow behind me, it would keep on falling back and hindering my course. I had to proceed in a spiral, which is far from comfortable. At the third turn of the spiral, the upper stages fell in. I began to think that I would never make an end of it. The wind had piled up the Snow in this place. At last I reached the ground, just at the point where the Burrow opened. I had at this moment ideas that were still distinct, so at least it seemed to me; but the rear quarters were horribly heavy. I paid no attention; I was about to reach my goal, I had achieved victory. There remained only one last difficulty – hardly worth mentioning. Near to the opening, at one half-Marmot length, the gallery of the Burrow was walled up, as always. I set myself forthwith to the task of opening a passage. That took me still more time. I was employing all the strength and courage that remained to me, and I was advancing only slowly. It was hopeless. Never did Marmot construct such masonry. At last, I reached the other side. My paw plunged into the void. Alas! This is my last memory. I feel it still, who remember nothing more. I think that I uttered, without intending it, a little cry of triumph. All is lost in a profound night. My memory has

retained nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing. But what I do know is that I awoke yesterday morning, in this Burrow, with eighteen Marmots – fathers, mothers and children – a tribe.

#### **M.03.01.03.04 / M.165**

*Fourth Day.* – My eighteen Marmots cut a singular figure when they opened their eyes, when they saw their Burrow violated and ascertained the presence of an intruder. Happily, they needed time for reflection to take account of what they were seeing. They rubbed their eyes several times, before they understood. During this time, I too was beginning to awake. My memory returning little by little, I arose with a start, just like last year. All eyes were open and fixed on me, and the looks that they threw at me spoke nothing good. Fast on surprise followed anger. Indistinct grumblings made themselves heard. There is no crime less pardonable than the violation of a Burrow. It was up with me, if I had delayed. They would have been even less merciful, as they would have accused me, without any doubt, of recidivism. Am I not this eternal Marmot with the collar, who for two years now have been troubling the sleep of honest folk, whose phantom haunts unhealthy imaginations? In short, I decamped as briskly as possible. The day before yesterday, at an early hour, I recovered possession of my residence, in the forest.

#### **M.03.01.03.05 / M.166**

*Fifth Day.* – A curious thing, I feel much less discouraged by this second check than the first. It is almost a success. I was so close to the goal this time that I can be assured of reaching it – under favourable circumstance. This Snow undid me. The Snow is the cause of everything that went wrong. If I had not had this gallery to excavate, I would have had time enough to enter, to touch the eighteen frozen Marmots, and to carry off at least one to my great hall with the Holly leaves.

What has not succeeded for me this year will succeed in another. Perseverance is the watchword of the wise.

#### **M.03.01.03.06 / M.167**

*Sixth Day.* – There is only one black mark in all this, that is, the years which roll away. I have scarcely two still to live, three at most. Rare are the Marmots who undergo eleven times the sleep of the Long Night. Two opportunities are hardly sufficient.

This world is out of joint. Of two alternatives one must be true: either life is too short, or the path of Wisdom is too long.

#### **M.03.01.03.07 / M.168**

*Seventh Day.* – I would bear my part in these disappointments easily, if I were sure that my experiences would be of service to others. The work of Science should be collective; generations should pass on their inheritance. Who will read these Tablets? Who will profit from my toils? All is decadence today. Perhaps I am the last philosophical Marmot.

#### **M.03.01.04.01 / M.169**

*First Day of the Last Quarter.* – The mountain remained white last year until the middle of the Moon of Love; this year, it is green before the end of the Moon of Avalanches. I have never seen so precocious a Spring. Most of the avalanches fell during our sleep. Flowers abound in the meadow, at the margin of the forest, and I imagine that shoots are beginning to push up before my old Burrow; at least there has been no more Snow on the edge of the precipice for several days now. – I will return there shortly. The flowers up above have more aroma than those here.

#### **M.03.01.04.02 / M.170**

*Second Day.* – I made only one observation on my awakening, but it is singular.

Our sight does not return to us at the same instant that we open our eyes. There is a moment, very short, but appreciable, during which we cannot see, even though we may have open eyes. Then, for a time that is also very short, but equally appreciable, we see objects all at the same distance, one stuck alongside the other. The sense of distance is the last to return to us.

#### **M.03.01.04.03 / M.171**

*Third Day.* – I think continually of my adventure of this year without being able to explain to myself how it could happen that I was not jolted awake by force of will. To fall asleep when one is reaching the goal! For I was about to reach it. I lay down and curled up, according to our custom, against the back of a fat mama, a good old she-Marmot, whom the zeal for Science has never consumed. I felt her, I touched her, this frozen Marmot, object of all my desires, and I fell asleep next to her!

By dint of seeking to recall what happened, the imagination is stirred and I fabricate memories for myself. I think at certain moments to recall that I embraced her with my two paws and that her skin seemed cold. Illusion. The fact is that I recall nothing at all.

Even so, I draw from this adventure an argument more in favour of the idea that the Long Night is not one long night. There is every reason to believe that the sleep of my eighteen Marmots began on the day when the weather changed and it fell suddenly so very cold, at latest the following day. From this instant they were plunged into what we call the Long Night. But, from that moment to the one when I fell asleep myself, I saw with my own eyes the Sun set and rise three times.

#### **M.03.01.04.04 / M.172**

*Fourth Day.* – The weather is finer and finer. Today I began my removal. It will take two journeys, perhaps three. These Tablets are heavy.

#### **M.03.01.04.05 / M.173**

*Fifth Day.* – I did well not to delay longer. A young couple was in course of taking possession of my Burrow, to spare the trouble of digging one. They appeared not a little astonished to see the Philosopher, forever solitary, return; but they did not put up any resistance; they took the very wise decision to go elsewhere to establish themselves. I heard clearly the old mother muttering, down below. I think the husband was of her family of last year. Let her mutter as much as she wants!

**M.03.01.04.07 / M.174**

*Seventh Day.* – My remove is complete; now I am completely settled in. What a beautiful Spring!

One thing alone disturbs me. Our terrace is becoming crowded. Apart from my neighbour's children, there are two more couples who have just established themselves. It is not that there are more Marmots than the previous year. On the contrary. Never have Vulture, Dog and Man decimated an innocent population with less pity. That is exactly why our tribes continue their movement of retreat. They flee before Man's invasion of the mountain. So many neighbours will hardly help my meditations. One's liberty must be defended toward and against all.

I have thought to remark that I was the object of conversation and deliberation between the newcomers and the existing inhabitants. It would appear that decision has been reached to leave me in peace.

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**M.03.02.01.01a / M.175**

*Moon of Love, First Day of the New Moon.* – The Moon of Love is off to an ill start. My neighbour's husband has died suddenly. They were frolicking together when he collapsed.

She has no luck, all her husbands die.

**M.03.02.01.01b / M.176**

*On the Same Day.* – I fled, so as not to be distracted by the lamentations that fill the Burrows of the neighbourhood. My flight brought me the most beautiful of strolls.

For a long time now, I have felt myself drawn toward a certain cave, which opens in the cliff wall, above my place, access to which seemed possible. I don't know why I delayed so long before making the ascent. Perhaps I feared, without daring to admit it, lest there should be some hidden mystery in this natural lair. Half by chance, half by premeditated design, it is in this direction that I turned my flight. My heart was beginning to beat a little when I put in my head at the entrance; but I saw nothing except what was perfectly beautiful, and I promised myself to return.

The opening is narrow; but the cave itself is spacious, in the form of a vault. The walls are tapestried with crystals of violet, some very big, others fine like needles. A spring gushes from the rock; it creates at the bottom of the cave a little lake, whose clear waters lie over mosses. Some grasses bend over this mirror their stems, charged with colourful spikelets, and in a cleft of the rock, at the entrance, a clump of little Golden Violets bathes its leaves in a small murmuring stream.

It appears that no animal has ever made its abode in this enchanted cavern. If anyone dwells here, it can only be one of the spirits of the mountain. This water is more limpid than pearls of dew ever were, and it has a taste of crystal which other waters do not possess. I only wet the margin of my lips. I was afraid to sully it. The falling droplets produced a musical sound.

I awaited the evening, sitting at the entrance to the cave and watching the world at my feet. Great was the stir among the Marmots of the valley. On my terrace there was great mourning; elsewhere there was play, combat on the flowering meadows. The Moon of Loves is beginning. As for me, I thought of the unknown hand that cut those crystals. There will be mysteries in Nature still when I have penetrated that of Marmots and the Long Night.

#### **M.03.02.01.02 / M.177**

*Second Day.* – News of my neighbour's mourning has spread in the valley. The visits flow in. All the Marmots of the country are arriving to offer their expressions of condolence. This is a formality from which I cannot dispense myself. I will be the last to go.

What will I do during this long Summer? I am contriving travel plans. I would like to wander the world, but not alone. It is not that solitude weighs me down. Far from it. But it is so pleasant, on a journey, to shorten the dullness of the road with an honest talk. My too brief acquaintance with the White Hare has given me a taste for friendship. I will find some other creature to speak to me further of the beauties of Winter. The one I saw last Autumn, his brother, I think, cannot be very far.

My first journey will be to the Dent-Noire. The undertaking is serious; but I have noted the approaches; together we will make it. It must be possible to see from the Dent-Noire still further than from the Becca de l'Oura. When we are up there, we will fix the destination of a second journey. The world allures me.

#### **M.03.02.01.03 / M.178**

*Third Day.* – This morning, after having taken a frugal breakfast of the finest little mountain flowers, I set off to go in search of the White Hare. I passed so close to my neighbour's Burrow, – it was my path, – that I did not think it possible to dispense myself from offering her the Consolation of Philosophy. She appeared surprised; evidently, she did not expect my visit. I found her shedding tears. She had wept the whole night. That in no way prevented her from hearing my discourse, nor from replying with a great deal of Wisdom. I repent that I have spoken ill of her on more than one occasion. I had seen her with prejudiced eyes. I was wrong. The first duty of a Philosopher is to be just. So then, I solemnly withdraw and retract everything that I might have said that is disobliging on her account. She is no longer young,

that is true; but she carries her age lightly. She has an agreeable appearance, a majestic carriage. She is grand in the manner of her mourning. And then, she adores Philosophy. It is she who told me.

I did not find this White Hare.

#### **M.03.02.01.04 / M.179**

*Fourth Day.* – I do not know what has become of this White Hare. Once again I have searched for him to no avail. It is true that I was not in best fettle. This great mourning has troubled me.

#### **M.03.02.01.05 / M.180**

*Fifth Day.* – I have beaten the country the whole day. I do not know what has taken hold of me; but I am out of sorts whether at home or away from home. An idea has crossed my mind and I am still trembling before it...

Moon of ill fortune!

#### **M.03.02.01.06 / M.181**

*Sixth Day.* – I must, whatever shame I feel, make this confession without beating around the bush. This morning I found myself at my neighbour's door, and I entered. I had no intention to go in; I don't know what compelled me. Once I had entered, I didn't know what to say to her. She was good enough to come to the help of my awkwardness, and all turned out well. She shed tears again and I shed them with her. She told me that this was good for her. I asked her also if she had no fear of my collar. She told me that she did not. She likes the extraordinary.

My visit made, I clomb back to the cave and I passed there most of the day in profound meditations.

Is it more difficult to philosophize as two than as one, married than celibate?

This is the question that I posed to myself. It deserves to be examined very closely.

As two, the housekeeping is complicated, especially when one has young children. The time that one loses is not the essential matter; there will always be some left over. What must be feared are intrusive preoccupations. Instead of thinking of Wisdom, one thinks of one's wife. The majority of Marmots do not possess a soul that is large enough; they have place only for a single affection.

On the other hand, perpetual solitude is not good, even for the Philosopher. In the long term it weighs down thought. This is probably why I have felt, last year already and this year anew, the awakening of a taste for friendship within me. To think, one must speak; one must be able to speak clearly. It is possible, of course, when alone, to speak to oneself; but it happens too

often that one thinks to understand before one has really understood. So, thought turns to fancy. This is not possible when one thinks in the presence of a friend. Four eyes, moreover, see better than two, and two heads do more work than one. And then, there is encouragement, there is mutual support; often the task is shared. There is research for which one must work together.

But the real question is to know whether it is better to philosophize with a friend or with a wife.

In friendship there is a tranquillity that is very propitious for the search after Wisdom. Friendship knows neither the storms of passion nor the disorders of the senses. It is a tie that unites only souls. These arguments are very powerful; but it may be objected, not without good reason, that there is no perfect intimacy outside marriage.

In the matter of friends, the best would be, perhaps, to have a Marmot for a friend. But that is extremely difficult. All the Marmots whom I have known were absorbed by their domestic life. If any one of them cultivates Wisdom, it is in secret. The majority glides through life. They love and they play. I would not know, in truth, where to find a Marmot for a friend.

My experience of the previous year demonstrated that a bond of friendship with a White Hare was not absolutely impossible. Even so, more than one difficulty reminded each of us that he was Hare and I Marmot. The instincts of the two races are very different. The distaste that Burrows inspire in them is strange, and they understand nothing of the wholly natural fear that the very thought of a “form” causes the more delicate races to feel. Would we ever be in perfect agreement? It is possible to doubt it. How could we have made arrangement to pass together the vigil of the Long Night? What would have become of me in his form? What is a form? Still, I accept his nests in the grass. But could I have counted on him to help me in my fight against sleep? Would he never have been distracted by my weaknesses?

A faithful wife, if she were able to love Wisdom as much as or more than her husband, would be the surest of helpmeets for the vigil of the Long Night. One could discuss with her everything, prepare everything in advance; one would be sure of being understood. When I think of this, I am seized by vertigo. We would offer each other mutual encouragement. If she weakened, I would support her, and if my head fell, she would raise it up with a caress of her dear paw. Perhaps also we could arrange to keep the watch in turn. When she felt tired, she would awake me. That would be better than Holly.

Nothing must be done in haste. Let us reflect; let us weigh the arguments for and against. Whatever my decision may be, I wish to take it as a Philosopher.

### **M.03.02.01.07a / M.182**

*Seventh Day.* – Who is this jumped up little Marmot, whose ears are hardly dry, whom I have seen prowling in the neighbourhood? Would he dare to poach on the preserves of my Philosophy?

### **M.03.02.01.07b / M.183**



*On the Same Day.* – I have reflected on everything.

The ideal is to have a wife and a friend, and to cultivate Philosophy as three.

I will go then, as soon as the days of mourning are passed, I will go to the beautiful widow's house and I will say to her:

“After Philosophy, you are the one whom I love best in the world. If you were to love me a little, we could seek Wisdom together, but on condition that you too love Wisdom, that you love Wisdom more ardently than you will ever love your husband.”

The most important of all the principles of Wisdom is to observe the hierarchy of affections.

If she loves me a little and if she loves Philosophy much, we will marry and we will endeavour to have a White Hare as our friend.

#### **M.03.02.01.07c / M.184**

*On the Same Day.* – I am overtaken by dark passions at the thought of this Snapdragon whom I have just seen again, at the fall of day. There is no longer any doubt, it is her for whom he has intentions. He awaits only the end of the mourning period to declare himself. Well, we will see who will gain her hand.

#### **M.03.02.02.01a / M.185**

*First Day of the First Quarter.* – The more I reflect, the more I am assured that it is as a Philosopher that I have taken my decision. It is true that this young widow has touched my heart. I saw her shedding such true tears for him. Why should I deny a natural affection? Philosophy does not censure these, it refines them. Moreover, I decided to marry her only if, like myself, she loves Wisdom more than the whole world. I am making, then, a marriage of reason. I am not violating my vow, I am fulfilling it. It is with this sentiment that I walk with head high and conscience at rest. I feel more a Philosopher than ever.

#### **M.03.02.02.01b / M.186**

*On the Same Day.* – And to think that she will perhaps prefer him! She told me clearly that she adored Philosophy. But you are putting your trust in women!... He has delicate skin. He has not yet rubbed and torn against all life's brambles. He too has a curled moustache, a lively eye and dark fur... Enough. There is no point of comparison at all between this pup and myself. If she is a Philosopher, she will not hesitate at all. If she is not... In any case, she will be judged by her choice.

#### **M.03.02.02.02 / M.187**

*Second Day.* – A spouse's mourning is for eight whole days, after that of the death. Hers finishes, then, this evening. Tomorrow, the first glimmering of dawn will see me at her door.

This night will last centuries for me. It will be another sort of Long Night. If only I could close my eyes! This time, I would like to sleep. I will feel every minute, every second, elapse.

If she were to prefer him!

### **M.03.02.02.03 / M.188**

*Third Day.* – I presented myself at her house at the break of day and held the following conversation with her:

“Madam, after Philosophy, you are what I love most in the world.”

She lowered her eyes. I kept quiet an instant so that she could prepare herself for what would follow. I continued in these terms:

“If you were able to cast on your servant a favourable regard, we would seek after Wisdom together. But it is necessary that Wisdom should be your principal passion and that you should marry me for her, since it is also for her that I desire to marry you.”

I spoke thus in a resolute voice, bowing humbly. She continued to lower her eyes. When she opened her lips, it was to utter words that will remain eternally graven on my heart.

“I have shed tears for my husband for eight days, as befits a faithful wife. Without you, I would be shedding tears for him still. You alone, you are able to console me.”

“And Philosophy, madam? And Philosophy?”

She raised her eyes, smiling a smile that was wholly divine. She alone has this smile.

“I allow no distinction between you and Philosophy,” she said. “I love you not more than her and I love her not more than you. You are my Philosophy, and my Philosophy, it is you.”

This reply seemed profound. As I reflected on it, we found ourselves in each other’s arms.

When I left, I met the young whippersnapper. Was he curled, dressed, oiled! My neighbour... what am I saying? my fiancée, my young and beautiful fiancée, cast on him a glance of compassion. She is so generous! He understood and withdrew.

Poor young whippersnapper, I too pitied him.

### **M.03.02.02.04 / M.189**

*Fourth Day.* – My fiancée asks that the marriage take place on the vigil of the Full Moon. This is a day that brings good luck, she says. And then, she has her mother, who is elderly. She wishes to go to see her and to spend these three days with her.

How will I pass the time?

**M.03.02.02.05 / M.190**

*Fifth Day.* – She has left and I await her, alone with my collar. I am suffering all the torments of anxiety and jealousy. If any harm were to befall her! Men!... Dogs!... Vulture!... If she did not return! If another!... O Gods, watch over her and have pity on me.

I thought myself capable of no greater love at this point. My patience is undergoing a terrible test.

**M.03.02.03.01 / M.191**

*First Day of the Full Moon.* – She has returned. The most beautiful day of my life has passed; others are coming which will be no less beautiful.

**M.03.02.03.02 / M.192**

*Second Day.* – I have made a bitter discovery. My wife does indeed adore Philosophy. But her Philosophy is different from mine.

I love my wife no less; she is no less perfect for it. But there remains a wound in my heart, which I am hiding from her so that it should not distress her.

**M.03.02.03.03 / M.193**

*Third Day.* – According to my wife, reason has been granted us, not to cultivate vain knowledge, but to govern ourselves. Now the first principle of self-government is not to torment oneself with unproductive thoughts.

There are two things, she says: thought and life. They may appear to have been determined for one another. In reality, they possess nothing in common. It is necessary to chuse. She has made her choice, I have made mine, and we have not chosen in the same way.

I will be alone once again on the vigil of the Long Night.

**M.03.02.03.05 / M.194**

*Fifth Day.* – I made yesterday an attempt to win over my wife. I despair of success.

My wife makes fun of the Long Night, of Winter and of the mysteries of our sleep. She calls my studies chimeras and my arguments misplaced curiosities.

“You wish to observe our sleep,” she said. “The idea is not new; but it leads to nothing. To do it well, one would have to observe it in oneself, because, in others, one could observe only the externality and appearance of sleep. One would have to be conscious of sleeping, that is to say, one would have to sleep and not sleep at the same time.”

I confess that I remained tight lipped while I listened to this discourse. My wife has arguments which she casts in your face and throw you suddenly. I don't know from where she gets these. She has not reflected on anything; she makes profession of not reflecting at all, and yet there is no subject on which she touches without sowing ideas that are apposite and new. My wife has a certain genius. Her eloquence is contagious. I have been married for only five days, and already I am asking myself if Philosophy be not simply a deception.

I returned to the attack even so, and I tried to demonstrate that the observation of the appearance of sleep is not so futile an activity after all, and that it matters to us a great deal, theoretically and practically, to distinguish between the two types of sleep, to know what are the causes and effects of the sleep of the Long Night and to what degree of insensibility it can reduce us.

My wife agreed with this, but only to deny immediately the possibility of all useful observation of the sleep of the Long Night.

"One could," she said, "observe ordinary sleep in another, because it is an individual sleep, and because it does not come over us all at the same time. The cause that produces it varies in intensity according to a multitude of circumstances, and we can defer it or delay it almost at will. The sleep of the Long Night does not resemble this at all. It is a sleep of a particular kind. It overtakes us all equally, at a moment and with an intensity that are determined by causes that are independent of us. The most steadfast will can hardly delay it for a few instants, and it could not, in those few instants, allow the clarity of intellect that is necessary for all serious observation. What to think of Marmots who sleep when they are three quarters occupied in observing other Marmots who are completely asleep? A fine Philosophy that requires Holly leaves to keep it awake! And who tells you that Holly leaves are sufficient? The White Hare was right, my friend. Nature is ineluctable. If it is written that, at such a temperature, sleep must overcome us, we would try in vain to remain awake. It is like water, which has a moment when it freezes. If you remained awake later than others, last Autumn, it is because it was warmer in your Burrow, located lower down; but from the time when you found yourself under the same conditions as others, you were seized like them by sleep, and all your science will not serve even to recall to mind how you fell asleep beside the lawful hosts of the residence that you violated – as a Philosopher vagabond."

When my wife had finished speaking, I asked her where she found the time to think of all these matters, she who took pride in employing all her reason to think as little as possible. She replied that I was presumptuous, if I thought that I was the only member of our race to have some facility in ideas and to meditate without profit on the problems of existence. She argued that Marmots possess naturally a spirit that is inclined to contemplation, that they used to philosophize much in other times, that they philosophize still in their youth, and that it is the experience of life and the deceptions of Science that have restored in them a positive spirit. I have remained naïve, she said; my stay with Men has disrupted my ordinary course through life, and if I continue to philosophize at my age, it can only be as a vestige of childhood.

The word "childhood" seemed excessive. I wished to protest; but she did not allow herself to be interrupted. The words rolled from her lips more abundantly, more impetuously than the stream of the torrent that roars at the base of the valley.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "as a vestige of childhood! What is this fear of the sleep of the Long Night, if not a vestige of childhood? Nature has willed this sleep. I trust in Nature. All that she does is done well. And if it were true that she erred, still we could not correct her. There is the nihilism of your Philosophy. It ends always in wishing to correct Nature, never in having the power to do so. What does it matter to us if anything happens while we sleep? Are we better protected when we are awake? Was my late last husband not at my side, frolicking with me on the new grass, the first day of the Moon of Love, when death struck him? Men, you say, took possession of you while you were asleep. Have they never taken a Marmot during the heat of Summer? You wish to know what Winter is. Unwholesome curiosity! Winter is winter. What use to me are a few scintillations of Snowflakes and the majesty of a silence that the least wind can disturb? The beauty of Winter consists for me in lying fast asleep beside my husband and my children. Happy the races that sleep! Do you not see that these Hares, who never sleep, are the most melancholic of all the animals of the mountain? They are unhappy because they live from Philosophy. The instinct of Nature, who wills not that a race should perish, makes them to seek each other out in the Springtime; beside that, what do they know of each other? Do they know only themselves? They know Philosophy. Dismal Philosophy, which makes of a living animal an egotistical dreamer. Sleep is the source of the joy of life. There is more joy in one single Marmot who sleeps than in ten Hares who do not sleep. You desire mysteries! What good is it to seek them so far away! Is not everything a mystery, within us and around us? Will you be any further advanced when you know how many Moons the Long Night lasts? Suppose that it lasts six months, so be it. Six Moons of rest seem not too many to compensate six Moons of restlessness. The great mystery is Nature, who contains all other in herself. We do not know what Nature is; but whoever closes not his ears, hears her voice. I hear her myself, I hear her clearly, and I follow her. She commands me to love you, and I love you: this is my Philosophy."

Thus spoke my wife, and it seemed that her discourse must not reach any conclusion. As she was uttering these last words, she threw herself into my arms, which were open, and embraced me with a strength so extraordinary that I nearly suffocated. I could not say if this long disquisition gave me pain or pleasure. The one and the other. My wife is adorable. She is infinitely superior to me. Perhaps she has chosen the right lot. Would that we had chosen in the same way!

### **M.03.02.03.06 / M.195**

*Sixth Day.* – I guided my wife to the cave. I was in holiday spirit; but she has absolutely no love for travel and she found that fatigue surpassed enjoyment. She had nothing more urgent to do, on arrival, than to browse on the Violets and to drink with great gulps.

These crystals mean nothing to her. A good Burrow, well furnished with hay, with a ne'er do well husband to love and to scold: this is her pleasure rather than caves.

### **M.03.02.03.07 / M.196**

*Seventh Day.* – I used to speak fairly irreverently of Master Badger and of his opinion of the sleep of the Long Night, that we sleep from fat. My wife has seized on the idea at a leap and has interpreted it according to her fashion.

She believes that life is comprised of regular alternations and, so to say, cadences between wakefulness and sleep. It is like the beating of the heart or like the waves on the surface of the sea. While we are awake, we expend our forces and we enrich ourselves with their product; while we are asleep, we expend the riches of when we are awake; we grow lean, but we are healthier when we awake. Lost riches are transformed into new forces. It is why he who is awake more must also sleep more. Rest is equal to activity. Ardent races are also races that sleep. There is, moreover, a whole hierarchy of sleeps: the sleep of ordinary nights, which is for the individual; the sleep of the Long Night, deeper, which is for certain privileged species; the sleep of death, deeper still, which is for all living species, except the Gods. Perhaps there is yet one more sleep, the longest and the deepest of all, to which the Gods themselves are subject.

My wife became spirited as she spoke of the obscure pleasure of these reposes that are more and more complete, which precede a life that is more and more intense. She seemed, to hear her, to have tasted in turn each one of these sleeps.

#### **M.03.02.04.01 / M.197**

*First Day of the Last Quarter.* – My wife is deceived when she prides herself on Philosophy; she is not a Philosopher at all, she is a poet. She produces ideas, just as a plant produces flowers, yet more quickly and more abundantly. She believes them not, she doubts them not, any longer; she produces them, and that is sufficient.

This has the consequence that she always beats me in discussion. She has four ideas in the time it takes me to have only one. This has the additional consequence that not one of her ideas matures in Wisdom. They are sparks that leap out and are quenched. There is more Philosophy in two ideas, deeply investigated, weighed up, confronted with reality, than in a hundred ideas, dreamed up and thrown to the wind by these games of fantasy. Philosophy is discipline. The genius of my wife has never known discipline.

This reminds me of what I began to write on these Tablets, that the ideal would be to seek after Wisdom as three, with a wife and a friend. The Gods have not granted that this good fortune should be accorded to me completely. But if they have refused me a part, this is no reason that I should refuse myself the whole.

I feel more and more the need of a friend.

#### **M.03.02.04.02 / M.198**

*Second Day.* – We had just taken a leisurely breakfast, we had browsed on Windflowers and Snowbells, we were lying in the Sun, on a slab of rock that was good and warm, and I was *murmelling* softly, eyes half closed, while my wife toyed with my collar.

“What is it with these husbands who don’t believe in anything!” she said, caressing me with her paw.

I closed my eyes and answered as if in a dream.

“What is it with these wives who always believe that they believe in something!”

She continued to caress me with her paw.

“Would my dear Philosopher be able to tell me, perhaps, how many children he has had up to now?”

The Philosopher, still *murmelling*, counted on his claws and found, what he already knew full well, that he had been five times father of a family and that he had sired twenty-three children.

“Twenty-three!” said the beauty, “I could spare you some, because, five times mother of a family, I have raised thirty-two children.”

At this unheard of number, the Philosopher ceased to *murmel*; he felt a shudder, which made him jump.

“Yes,” she replied, “and this is your proof that your Philosophy leads to nothing. To believe is to live, and to live is to have lots of children.”

At these words, the Philosopher, who was letting himself once again be caressed, eyes closed, received a sharp tap on the nose. He leapt up.

The beauty was playing on the greensward, a hundred paces off.

#### **M.03.02.04.03 / M.199**

*Third Day.* – I repent that I wished to win over my wife; it is she who, at present, wishes to convert me.

#### **M.03.02.04.04 / M.200**

*Fourth Day.* – All this scratching makes her impatient, it is time which is stolen from her, she says. I shewed her that it was her discourses that I had transcribed on my Tablets, and I told her that I had done it so as to preserve their memory and to admire forever their grace and eloquence. She replied that it was still at my service, as much as I wished, and that this eloquence fixed in stone was not worth eloquence that was alive. When the spring is running, what good does it serve to store the water?

I wished to read to her some parts of this diary. To no avail. She scorns all that is written.

**M.03.02.04.05a / M.201**

*Fifth Day.* – Impatience begins to overcome her. Where will that lead us? O Gods, preserve me from having to chuse between her and Wisdom.

**M.03.02.04.05b / M.202**

*On the Same Day.* – I have resolved to secure my Tablets. She has conceived a hatred of them, and it is impossible to know what design her passion might inspire in her.

I will carry them one by one to the cave with the crystals and I will place them under the protection of the divinity that resides there.

**M.03.02.04.06 / M.203**

*Sixth Day.* – I have begun the removal of my Tablets. It is a serious undertaking. My wife makes great fun of me.

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**M.03.03.01.05 / M.204**

**Withered Moon.** *Fifth Day of the New Moon.* – My wife is beginning to find that this removal is lasting too long. I will dedicate a few days to it without interruption, so as to have liberty to complete it.

**M.03.03.01.07 / M.205**

*Seventh Day.* – For a Marmot of a certain age, five times father of a family, I have committed an unforgivable folly, a folly worthy of a child or a Philosopher. I carry the pain of it.

Chance brought it about that we met the other day the White Hare, who seemed neither surprised nor alarmed by my collar. I believe him the brother of the one who died, my friend. Perhaps I am not completely unknown to him. I offered him a gracious greeting, which he returned at once. My wife inclined her head slightly.

When he had passed, I turned the conversation to his late brother. Although my wife considers my studies and my reflections to be vanity, she does not dislike it when I speak to her of him. She is of her sex, that is, curious. I did not hide from her the regret that the death of a friend had caused me, a friend who would have been a companion in my search after Wisdom. We spoke of Wisdom, in this regard, and as she seemed in one of her better frames of mind and heart, I chanced a few pleasantries on the foolishness of philosophers who marry to seek Wisdom together. She had a reply for everything, always graceful and charming.

“By the way,” she said simpering, “who is stopping you from seeking Wisdom together?”

I plunged headlong into the trap.



“What,” I replied, “you could...?”

I could not finish anything. Words failed me.

She encouraged me to open my whole heart to her. In my naïvety I did this, I opened my whole heart to her, I begged her to allow me a friend. She listened to me with an air of tender indulgence, without letting me suspect for an instant the storm that was about to break.

When I had finished, her manner changed all at once.

“My dear Philosopher,” she addressed me coldly, “I thank you for having opened your heart to me; now, I know you. In your turn, know me. I am not one of those Marmots who, when married, keep girlfriends, societies, gossip. I give all that I am and I demand that you give all that you are. It is up to you to take a decision. You have all my thoughts; will you finally allow me all yours?”

I saw that I was deceived and I was beside myself with anger.

“Madam,” I replied, “when, like myself, one is married for the second time, and, like yourself, for the sixth, it is rather difficult only ever to think of a single person.”

It was then that all the thunders of heaven broke over my head.

“Yes,” she cried, “I have had five husbands, and you are the sixth. Do not think that I am hiding it nor that I am ashamed to have loved them, each one in their turn. Because I loved them all – you ungrateful wretch! – all as much as you. Do you think that, for the love of the sixth, I would wish to repudiate from my memory the first five? They have all their equally sacred place. If the first had survived, I would have loved him alone all my life, and so for each of the others that followed. I wept for all of them sincerely, just as I will weep for you, if you were to die, from which may heaven protect us! But I confess it, there is Spring in my heart, and widowhood is absolutely not for me. It is necessary that I love, that I love always. Is it my fault if Nature has given me a soul whose youth is always renewed? I do not blush to obey Nature. It is Nature whom I have worshipped in each of those who have shared my bed. Love is consoled by love. There exists no other consolation. What is your Philosophy? It must be that generations should succeed one another and that the breaches of death should be eternally repaired. There is only one crime, which is barrenness. That is why, several times a widow, I have given myself several times in marriage, and it is also why I have always given myself completely. I belong to you not only in part; I do not reserve some other part of myself for a White Hare or for a so-called Wisdom. But I see what it really is. You do not have the strength to love. You have a weak heart and pale blood. You live from distractions. You have a wife, and you must have a friend to seek Wisdom with him!... What will you have left to seek with your wife?... Here is my heart. I do not know how to divide it in twain. Give me also the whole of yours – or let us go each our own way.”

I must confess it, my wife was magnificent in her wrath. She has a divine anger, just like her smile. I felt no less keenly the injury that she had done me. At this moment, I adored her and I hated her.

I replied that this manner of forcing the choice surprised me somewhat, that I had never heard it said that an innocent friendship or honest studies were incompatible with the holy state of matrimony, and that I asked to reflect before making a decision.

She shrugged her shoulders.

I left her with the assurance that I would let her have a reply in three days.

The first of these three days has passed.

#### **M.03.03.02.01a / M.206**

*First Day of the First Quarter.* – I found shelter for the night in the chamber where my Tablets were.

I am the unhappiest of husbands. I have a wife who loves me too much.

#### **M.03.03.02.01b / M.207**

*On the Same Day.* – I passed the afternoon carrying what remained of my treasure to the cave. All is up there now, protected for generations to come. If the Gods wish that my tribulations should be known to them, they will reveal the way to the Cave of the Crystals of Violet.

#### **M.03.03.02.02a / M.208**

*Second Day.* – My wife is relentless. She will not take a step to meet me.

#### **M.03.03.02.02b / M.209**

*On the Same Day.* – I have arrived at my decision. She is stronger than I am. I could neither stand up to her nor live without her.

#### **M.03.03.02.03 / M.210**

*Third Day.* – I have spoken to my wife, calmly and with dignity. I begged her to have some consideration for my weaknesses, to think of my age and of the sway of inveterate habits. I beseeched her to be willing to grant me a quarter hour each day for what she calls my chimeras.

My soul was dying. Perhaps she saw that I was suffering; perhaps also she was touched by my humble demeanour; I found her more tractable than I expected.

A quarter hour! O Philosophy, this, then, is what I have left to give you!

**M.03.03.02.04 / M.211**

*Fourth Day.* – What will I do with these quarter hours? I passed the first in dreaming.

**M.03.03.02.05 / M.212**

*Fifth Day.* – I have tried to renew the thread of my ideas. I did not succeed.

Whatever I do, my life is shattered. I dare not think of it.

**M.03.03.02.06 / M.213**

*Sixth Day.* – It is usually at the fall of day that I take my quarter hour. I see the last rays of the Sun reach out and I listen to the noise of the stream.

**M.03.03.02.07 / M.214**

*Seventh Day.* – It is one Moon ago today that I married an adored wife; I adore her still, she loves me, and we are not happy.

**M.03.03.03.01 / M.215**

*First Day of the Full Moon.* – It is one Moon ago today that I wrote on my Tablets:

“The most beautiful day of my life has passed; others are coming which will be no less beautiful.”

**M.03.03.03.02 / M.216**

*Second Day.* – I cannot think, I cannot write, I weep. I weep in liberty for a quarter hour each day. This is the only pleasure that remains to me. All other joy is poisoned.

**M.03.03.03.04 / M.217**

*Fourth Day.* – The quarter hour is measured by my wife. When it has passed, she whistles or comes to me. Is this passion? is this distraction? I do not know. But the quarter hours of my wife do not possess their full measure.

**M.03.03.03.06 / M.218**

*Sixth Day.* – My wife is definitely losing the measure of time.

**M.03.03.03.07 / M.219**

*Seventh Day.* – Each day I give to my wife twenty-three hours and three quarters, and I reserve for myself a quarter hour. This quarter hour is nothing, and willingly, she says, she would allow me more; but what is hard for her is that it is reserved, that it constitutes an acquired right. This quarter hour is everything, and the twenty-three hours and three quarters are nothing. She would give them all up in return for this quarter hour.

Poor quarter hour!

**M.03.03.04.01 / M.220**

*First Day of the Last Quarter.* – I am determined to make an end of it. There is no dignity in this contest.

I pray that the Gods will pardon me. I made a reckless vow.

I love Wisdom still, I love her as much as ever. The most ardent of my desires would be to keep with my wife the vigil of the Long Night.

It is a great sacrifice. I undertake it for her. I love her no less. I endeavour to persuade myself that she has chosen the right lot.

Strange divorce between life and thought!... Well then, let us live, since we must... But I feel that I will die from it.

1875

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