

Spore Life

Dearest son, I dreamt to you how a woman can dwell in two places simultaneously: when we were together on the moshav, behind the blue door, I was with you, yet also elsewhere. I try to teach you about woman loving. Hear how a woman can live in two universes, unknown even to the few who love her. (And how a Chanan to united my universes.)

Spore life I had, some time after your birth. I entered a soul spore gradually, not suddenly. Just as the oyster creates the glistening pearl from an irritant of sand, does so gradually, layer by layer, its pearl-child admired, especially after the oyster is, shelled, disemboweled (attacked from the behind, bisecting the strong muscle),discarded. So too, I entered spore life.

Not at your birth. (Although, now I look back and see that I began the shell to protect my soul when I was carrying you. Woman beatings, especially on the pregnant belly, encourage sporulation.) I began to feel a divide in my soul after your birth, then recognized it when Wolfgang began to hurt you (Yes, I knew about this.). And finally, I decided not to resist the spore world when we came for refuge to Aretz: ironic, to come to a land that was to protect us, yet I felt more impinged upon, more needing to buildup the spore walls when we were here. At first, you did not recognize it. Later, when I would retreat to my cave to rest my soul, tired by the active living I had to perform, you noticed. You would come, try to talk, entertain; would do the dances; would wave your hands before my unseeing eyes to

waken me. I am sorry, my son, I was hibernating, trying to regain energies to do the living stuff ... with you.

But, to teach you about spore life, I will tell you about light in the spore (that you could not see). I could usually do the living outside, the playing, the taking to school, the Shabbat hikes with your friends, the piano lessons for you, the, the doing-things with you -- that most people thought I was alive.

Inside the spore is not complete darkness; inside dwell the grays of crepuscule; the grays of the Scandinavian winters that I once saw. The winter's day-time color in Finland is not simple night. It is affected by the steel-blue-gray of the waters around Helsinki. The snows are lit as if from below with a bluish cast; but the light cannot pierce the snow, cannot light the air, as if the blue is captured within the snow. Look out upon the sea, and waves appear, but the color melds into the air. The Finnish air in winter of the eternal night, is gray, grays. You walk about in shifting grays, as if fogs have descended to envelope. Then the air may stir and the snow that crystallizes at the tips of branches into downy stalagmites, disappear, are blown into the gray air: you see swirls of sparkling, glistening, like the aurora borealis, but only white crystals in the gray light. I rubbed my eyes the first time I saw the silent whorls of snow crystals surrounding my head; I rubbed and they still were there.

I was taken, twice, to cross-country ski in Finland, once was by my professor, in the eve, on a lit trail. Old, gooseneck lamps stand along the hilly trail, the lamp's shade capturing a weak bulb's glimmering light, gathering what light it can, casting downwards to your skis. This ski trail

was where my professor had trained as a young soldier, wearing white, bearing a rifle, attacking imaginary Russians (then, when it came time to switch sides, not-so imaginary Krauts). But the second trip, by a fellow soprano and her fiancé, was during the brief glimpse of daylight (from 11 to 2), in the wilderness, on unlit trails. One must return home before dusk-fall, or the snowy hills and ski become one, the landmarks are enshrouded by gray fog, one is lost in a purgatory of iciness. Irma and Yari had brought for me my own wooden cup, a leather loop on the handle to hang from my belt; wooden this cup must be, for a metal cup would freeze your lips to its rim. On its bottom, primitively engraved, my name. They brought skis for me, waxed them for the snow; quickly rewaxed en route when the brief light began to change the snow's texture. They said we would stop for hot chocolate and I looked for a hut en route; the hut was a bush and the hot chocolate in a thermos Yari tucked beneath his jacket. Yari said that he could smell spring. I, I smelled nothing, saw only crystals of snow softening the landscape. When I saw my first uphill, I asked about a tow rope; they leaped ahead, teaching me to herringbone up. There are many different grays in the Finnish winter air.

As there were in my spore shell. Know this: it is not complete darkness, not black within my spore shell. I saw shades of gray: when you smiled, light entered through the shell; when I took you and Nissim, and the other children on tiyul, discovered the series of shallow lakes, each waterfalling into another, when we crossed the lakes, finding barely-submerged flat rocks to walk on water; then, different flashes of light penetrated the spore.

And there are colors in grays. I tried to teach you, tried to show you that gray has within it other colors, hides beauty, or uses the beauty of other colors to enhance itself. Remember, when I washed the Armani shawl in the bathroom sink, washed gently by hand, I called you to look. Look! From the shawl's gray, bled colors into the sink water: a purple, a red, browns, which became taupe as they melded. I withdrew the shawl, cradling it gently, even as it dripped on the tiles, so that you could see the colors emerge, changing with time. And at the same time, the same time as I was showing you the genius of Armani to hide such elegance within cloth, I thought to myself that its beauty was being bled, that I was bleeding some of this beauty from the shawl. Was its beauty being diminished (or only changed) with this washing, as I felt I was being bled of the grace of life?

Two worlds in which I dwelled; moving firmly into my spore world, even as I did the formal dance of living in the outside world. Aretz, this "land that consumes its inhabitants," sent me further within. I could not find my culture; the Jew cowboys laughed at my Frenchied Hebrew, talk of opera, allusions to classics. To the old Russian Jew women at the swimming pool, I talked excitedly in Russian about Pushkin, Lermontov; they asked, "Pushkin? Does he live in town? Is he related to the butcher?" Each time, another layer of spore wall I excreted to protect my soul.

This was the gray of my soul-spore. You cast light; but, I needed also the warm soil of a man, of Chanan.

