

After Such Knowledge

what forgiveness? My son, think now. Chanan spoke these words of T.S. Eliot. These words tumbled from Chanan's lips in the darkness. One night this salve fell onto my ears. The night I spent awake, he listening, I telling. Him I told of when I was twelve, of my non-memory, of the riding instructor, who rode me into a life of greatest darkness, of the chenille bedspread that tattooed my left cheek, of the remembered thrust between my matchstick legs, unsuccessful by him, successful by me. Then of the unremembered choking in my throat, the thing that happened through my mouth-hole that left me breathless a lifetime. The horse man with thick, silken pony tail, who wanted a dark Jewish girl.

After such knowledge.

What forgiveness?

From Chanan these words came, quietly slipping from his lips even as he did not know that in the dark, on this floor-bound mattress we shared, beneath the blinded Cyclops, enucleated electric socket, in this blindness, I touched Chanan's cheeks and felt tears also spilling from his unseeing, but feeling eyes. From this seer, blinded only by the night, I heard. Forgiveness. I heard, but did not understand, I felt. The hoarse, low whispered words I felt and later understood.

What forgiveness? Of myself, Chanan meant. Like the overnight bloom of the patient century plant in the desert, something blossomed inside me. An understanding. Chanan meant my

forgiveness of myself I had never achieved. (Had never realized I needed.)

Righteous. In Hebrew, the phrase, "You are right," also means "You are righteous." A righteous man was Chanan. I did send him off, drove him off, harangued him away. For you my son. Now, in this ether I do not regret; for your life, I sent him packing, scrambled him. But, I kept a depth of love that comes with understanding.

Of love and understanding, my son, I will speak. When Eros went to spy on Psyche, the goddess of the soul, of reason too, Eros was smitten. Mischievous Eros, who let fly arrows of love pangs into the hearts of others, was stricken by love for Psyche. When Eros and Psyche -- passion and understanding -- are united, a deepest love ensues. This transformation you saw in me after Chanan. (You jealous, not knowing that the flavors of love differ among mother-son, wife-husband.) Once, with dearest fortune, once in one's life should come the union of Psyche and Eros. Psyche restrains, deepens, guides Eros into enlightenment; Eros enlivens Psyche into passion.

I bless you with these word-dreams. I bless you that you will one day be united with a woman in love and understanding.

T.S. Eliot, Jew-despiser, also understood that neither youth nor age are we, but a "sleep dreaming of both." Now, in this foyer of forever-sleep, I have youth and age -- passionate love and wisdom -- with which I blanket you.

And Chanan.