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The
Legend
of
Ameyhale



The
Leyenda
of
Ameyhale

The Princess Who Stole
Writing from the God of Wind

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Illustrated by Mariana Zúñiga Torres


DEM MAC



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La Leyenda de Ameyhale.
La Princesa que le robó La Escritura
al Dios del Viento.
by Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía.

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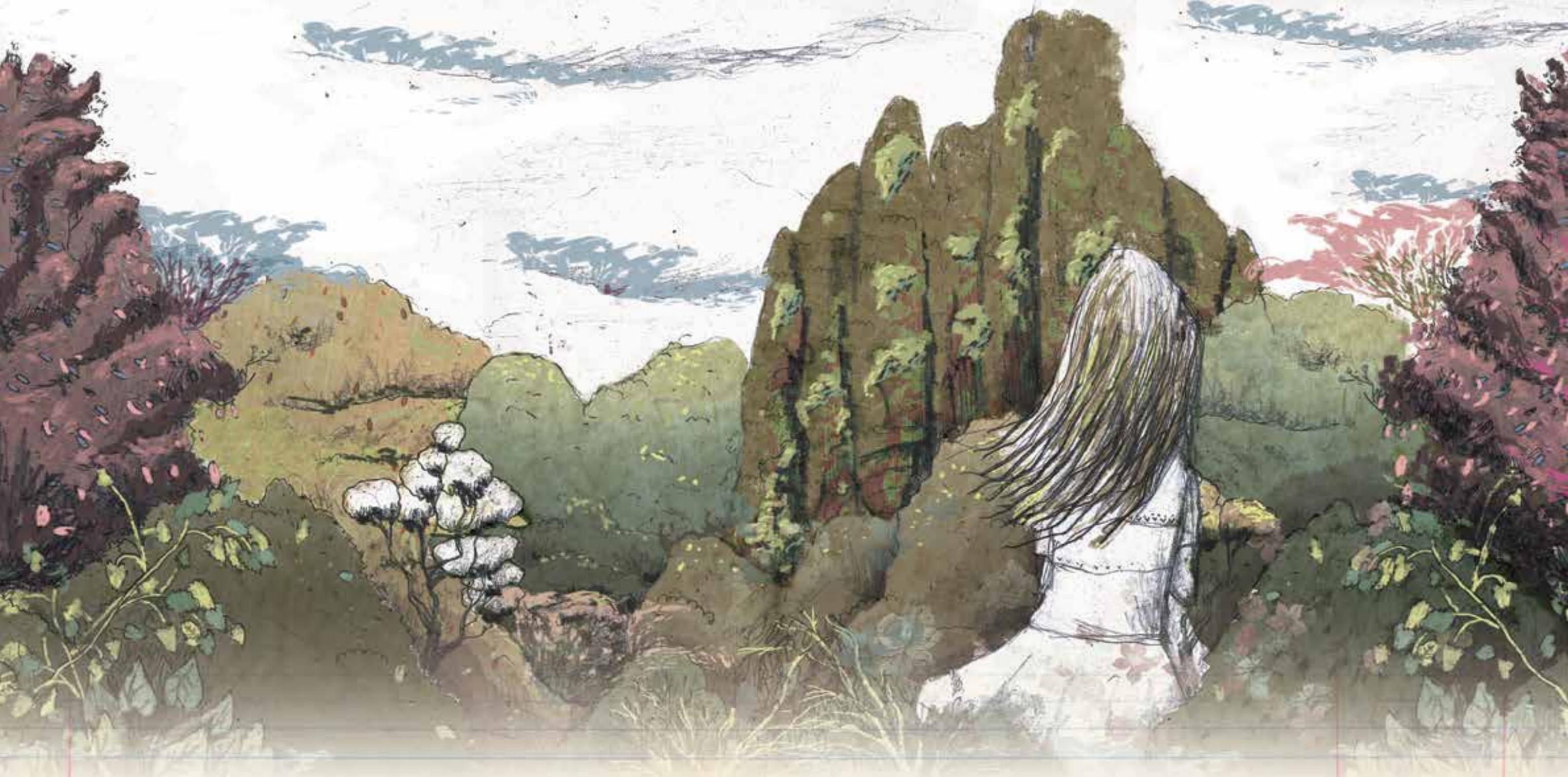
The Legend of Ameyhale,
inspired in a Tepozteco legend,
appeared for the first time
in the novel *Talladoras de*
Montaña, Mujeres Encinta de
Amor (Mountain Carvers,
Love-Pregnant Women)

by Amparo Espinosa Rugarcía,
published in 1997
by Editorial Diana.





For my granddaughter
Amparo **A**lexia, **C**amila and
Juciana
and for my goddaughter **R**egina,
all future **W**ord **C**ravers



Many years ago, in Tepoztlan, was born a princess named Ameyhale. She was a courageous princess determined to change the world.

Ameyhale usually strolls alone through the mountains of her kingdom. Whenever she looks at her people from the heights, she always whispers the same words.

My realms are nothing if I lack Writing. Men have Writing and thus they know the before and the after.

That's why their eye see what is not visible and their ears hear what is not audible.

They keep their secrets in Writing. Their verses reach other places.

But Writing is forbidden to us, women and no woman dares to search for it.

My realms are nothing if I lack Writing



In her desperation, one day The Princess Ameyhale forgets the time. Nightfall catches her; she has to stay on The Mountain, and wait for dawn to come. It is impossible to return to her palace due to such darkness. She must find a place where to take shelter and she, who fears nothing, begins to feel fear of silence and shadows.

Then, The Mountain talks to her for the first time:

*Ameyhale, go the Atongo River at dawn.
The time has come!
You must confront the God of Wind,
holder of Writing.
You won't destroy the world!
You will transmute it!*



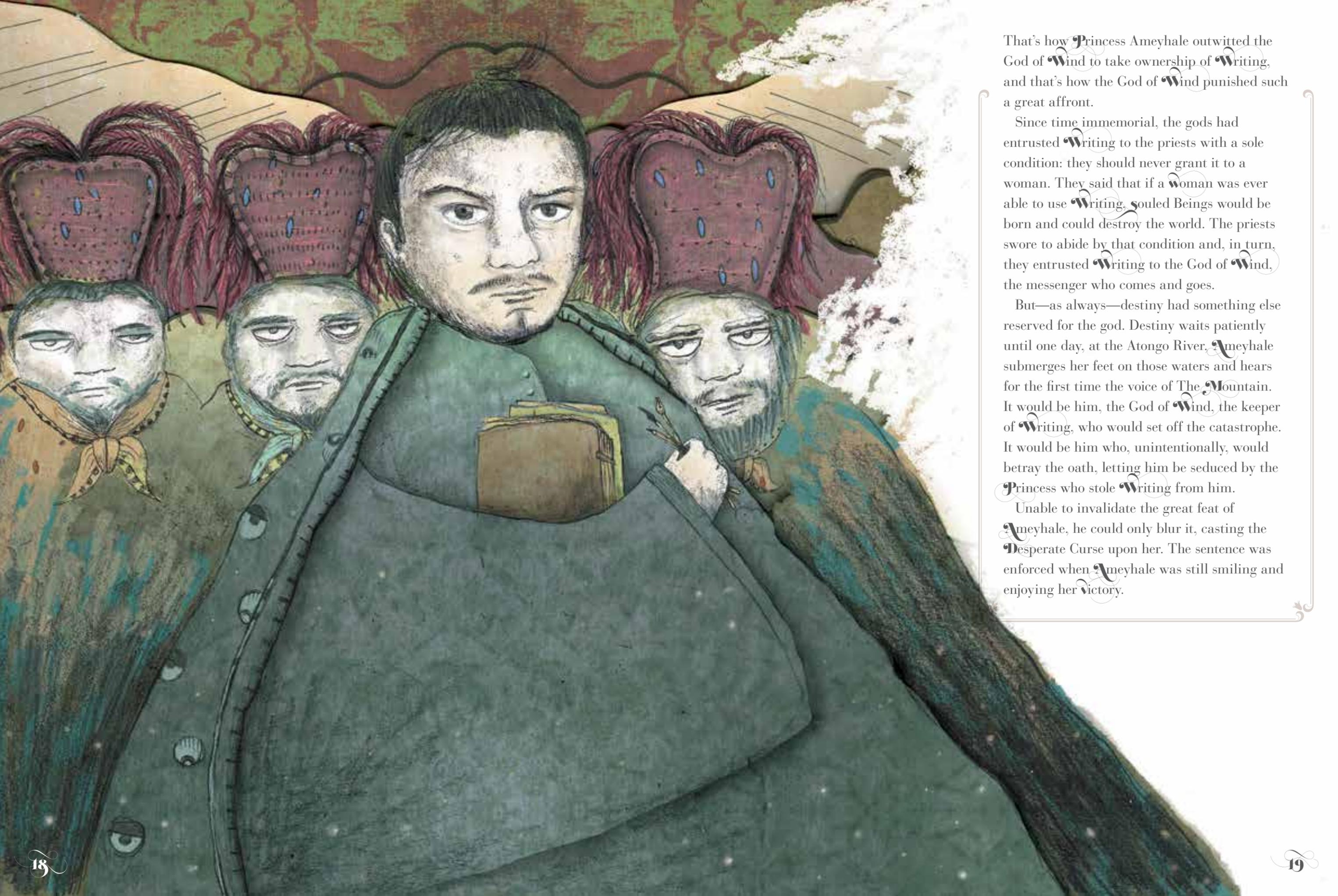
Those words startled the Princess and she spends the whole night repeating them. *Confront the God of Wind, confront the God of Wind.* Suddenly, with the first sunray something extraordinary occurs: Ameyhale sees a mantle of Diurnal Fireflies floating over her head. The Princess latches on to it. She floats down to the river and she enters naked into those waters. There a strong waft is caused by her enemy, the God of Wind, who was mentioned to her by The Mountain.

Ameyhale knows that she has to confront him. When he recognizes the beauty and the courage of the Princess, he trembles. His eye sparkle and a sigh comes out through his lips. Ameyhale has captivated him, has him at her mercy, it is time. She knows it, but he doesn't. It's the opportunity expected by many generations of women, for many, many years. Time has come, eventually, to get what was forbidden.



Hiding her thoughts, her pupils glowing, Ameyhale doesn't wait any longer and exits the river covered with foam, wrapped in Chompantle flowers, her red-copper and lengthy hair dragging over the moss. Walking with a wobble, she approaches the God of Wind and offers him one of the flowers. He extends his hand until he touches the captivating fingers of the Princess. At that moment, Ameyhale looks at it. There it is, so close to her, the forbidden Writing. It is now or never, she thinks...

She stretches her other arm and senses that precious gift with her fingertips. After a moment, she smiles exultant and he, infuriated, releases a heart-rending scream. The Princess has just snatched Writing from him. Receding frenziedly, as if he had been hit by lightning, the God of Wind stands up with his arms aloft and before disappearing he casts the Desperate Curse upon Ameyhale: *You shall write with the pain of unrequited love.*



That's how Princess Ameyhale outwitted the God of Wind to take ownership of Writing, and that's how the God of Wind punished such a great affront.

Since time immemorial, the gods had entrusted Writing to the priests with a sole condition: they should never grant it to a woman. They said that if a woman was ever able to use Writing, souled Beings would be born and could destroy the world. The priests swore to abide by that condition and, in turn, they entrusted Writing to the God of Wind, the messenger who comes and goes.

But—as always—destiny had something else reserved for the god. Destiny waits patiently until one day, at the Atongo River, Ameyhale submerges her feet on those waters and hears for the first time the voice of The Mountain. It would be him, the God of Wind, the keeper of Writing, who would set off the catastrophe. It would be him who, unintentionally, would betray the oath, letting him be seduced by the Princess who stole Writing from him.

Unable to invalidate the great feat of Ameyhale, he could only blur it, casting the Desperate Curse upon her. The sentence was enforced when Ameyhale was still smiling and enjoying her victory.



Amevhale can't start to use Writing because a feverish anxiety seizes her, inducing her to follow the God of Wind.

She is stricken by an unexplainable and unattainable love: it's the Desperate Curse of the God of Wind. Behind the words, *you shall write with pain*, are hidden the evils of crazy loves. It's the price she must pay for the stolen object.

The God of Wind moves without any clearly defined course and can slip through the thinnest slits. She has to catch up with him. The craving to be with him overwhelms her. She's unable to control herself.

During many sunny days and as many rainy days, through canyons and plains, the Princess chases him. When she thinks she finally has him in her arms, he's already somewhere else. Where the God of Wind goes by, roots crop up to the surface, brooks kiss the skies, stars plunge into the seas and hearts leave their chests. The Princess convulses.



She suffers as if she was stripped off pieces of her body, shreds of her skin.
No one knows for how long she remained in such a state. It is said that one day, after many moons, by then too weak to keep going, Ameyhale disappears, draped in a Mantle of Diurnal Fireflies.
Many seasons later, Ameyhale reappears on The Mountain, still heartbroken.

The Mountain greets her with tenderness; she talks to her ear, to her skin, very gentle, very slowly, as a mother.
Ameyhale barely hears. Her soul is very sore.
The Mountain doesn't give up. She showers her with presents.

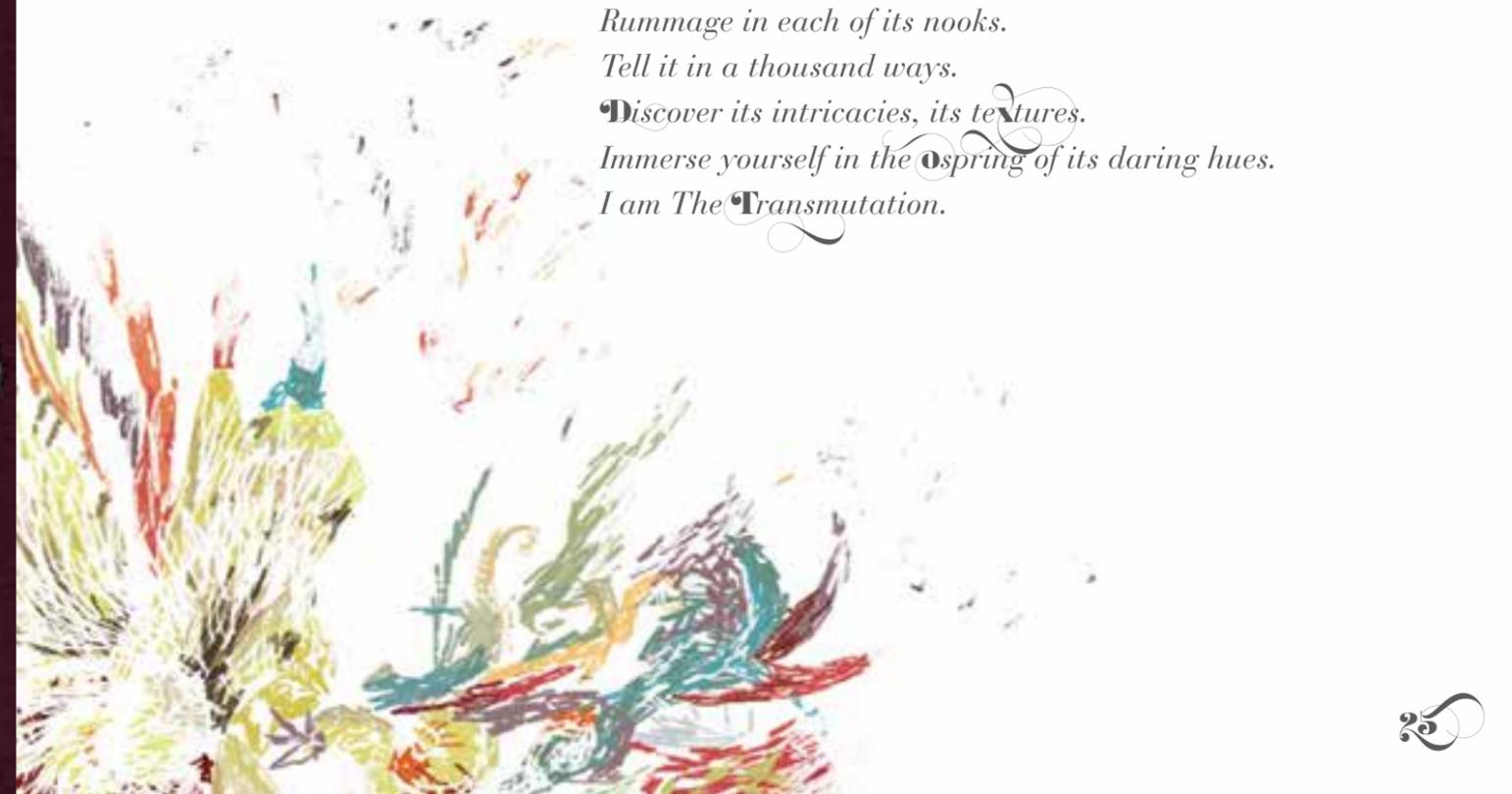
With her immense wisdom, The Mountain reveals her the intimacies of the ahuehetes and the rosewoods; of the brooks and the seasonal changes; of the orchids and the tulips; of the stars; of the hummingbirds and the ocozontles; of the ants and the bumblebees; of the jaguars and the opossums and the lizards. The goldfinchs offer her their bird call and the ohompantles their fruits; the stars shred eternity before her startled eyes which dare to observe them without haste. Generous, The Mountain and her inhabitants offer her all that she needs to walk through life in fullness. Comforted with such gifts, the Princess is able to articulate these words:

I stole Writing from the God of Wind.



Then The Mountain answers:
*That's why you are here, Nmeyhale. Carve your story in my caverns.
Carve it once, twice, many times.
Drill it.
Pierce it.
Repeat it.*

*Rummage in each of its nooks.
Tell it in a thousand ways.
Discover its intricacies, its textures.
Immerse yourself in the ospring of its daring hues.
I am The Transmutation.*





Guided by Writing, the hands of The Princess start carving in The Caverns of The Mountain the story of her encounter with the God of Wind. Unstoppable tears flow from her eyes. The mysteries of her body, the enigmas of her mind, the secrets of her heart get unveiled in front of her on the carved rocks, through the magic signs of Writing. Each stroke she achieves is a discovery that transforms her face, molds her hips, her breasts, her hair. The captured figures are strands of a hitherto unknown thread with which she will knit the weave of her life.

With the wisdom transmitted to her by The Mountain, Ameyhale colors the story that she carves in The Caverns. But the Desperate Curse still weighs on her. The Princess can't stop crying. She cries so much that her tears form a fountainhead in the core of The Mountain. Since then, that fountainhead is sacred. The Fountainhead of Whispers, that's its name now.

One day, nine seasons later, Ameyhale discovers that her pain has been ultimately purified.

Taking a break in her carvings, she seeks a moment of freshness: she sits on a rock at the edge of her fountainhead and she starts to ply the waters with her fingers; suddenly, an assortment of images emerges from the astonished waves. She looks at her face in the water reflection. But her face is not alone. It also reflects the faces of many other women whose mouths emit hushed voices:

We are stories eager to be narrated, to be carved, to be written, they whisper at Ameyhale's ears.



At that moment, The Princess realizes that she has to find those women. She must share her course with them; invite them to use Writing, to carve as she does. Their stories must be together inside The Caverns of The Mountain so that other women may find them. That's her real mission.

Ameyhale hastens to make a vehement and clandestine call in her town, because she is aware of the danger of openly express her intentions.

Women of Tepoztlán begin to meet, at night, when everybody else is sleeping. It won't be long before the Word Carvers Sisterhood is born.



Ameyhale welcomes every woman who wishes to be a Word Carver with a bowl of Cerulean Water taken from the waters of the Atongo river. She asks her to drink it slowly, looking at the stars, feeling every muscle, every cell of her body, and recognizing each feeling assailing her at that moment. It is the first step of The Torch Ceremony, the ritual indicative of the initiation led by The Serene.

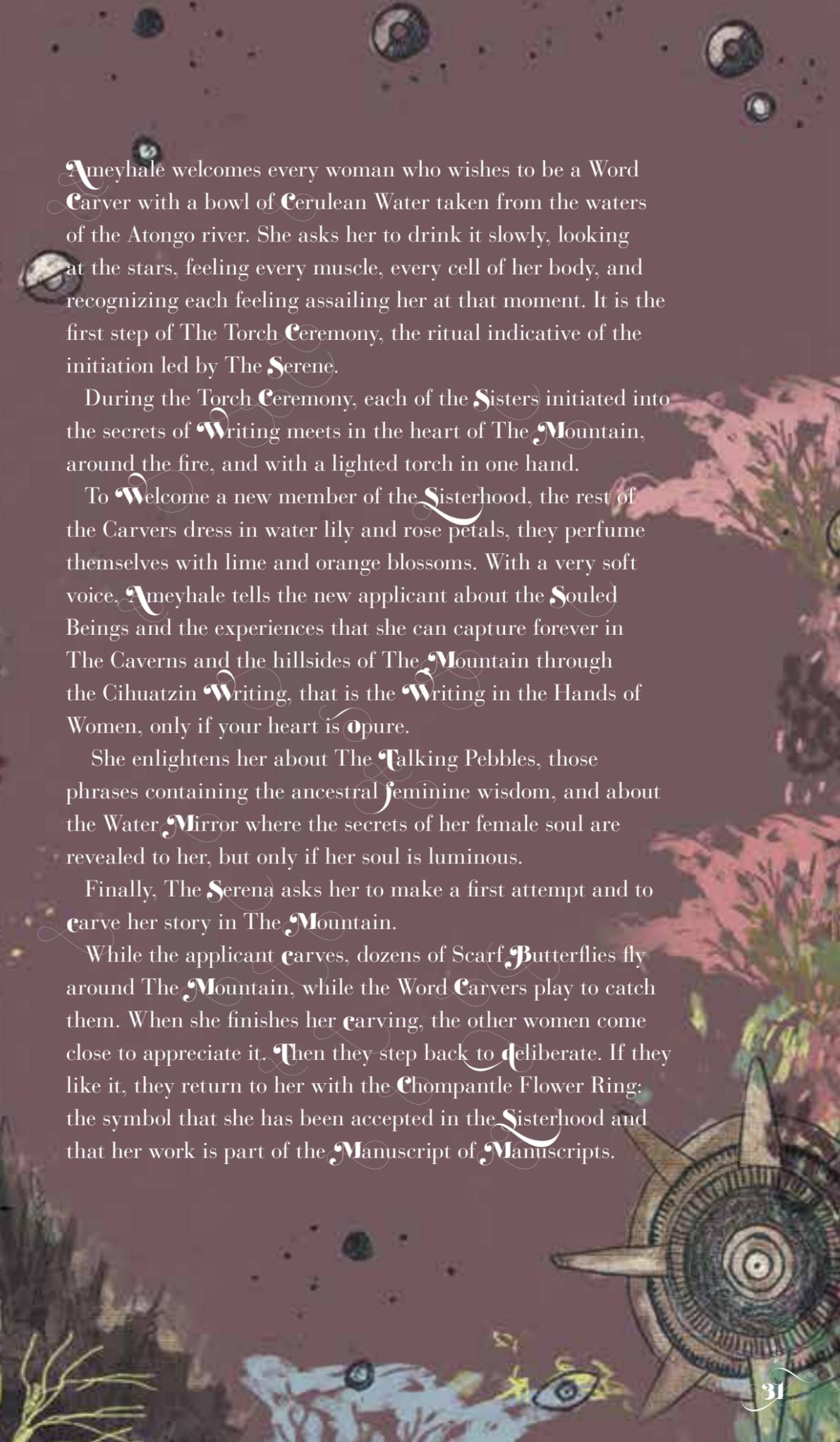
During the Torch Ceremony, each of the Sisters initiated into the secrets of Writing meets in the heart of The Mountain, around the fire, and with a lighted torch in one hand.

To Welcome a new member of the Sisterhood, the rest of the Carvers dress in water lily and rose petals, they perfume themselves with lime and orange blossoms. With a very soft voice, Ameyhale tells the new applicant about the Souled Beings and the experiences that she can capture forever in The Caverns and the hillsides of The Mountain through the Cihuatzin Writing, that is the Writing in the Hands of Women, only if your heart is Opure.

She enlightens her about The Talking Pebbles, those phrases containing the ancestral feminine wisdom, and about the Water Mirror where the secrets of her female soul are revealed to her, but only if her soul is luminous.

Finally, The Serena asks her to make a first attempt and to carve her story in The Mountain.

While the applicant carves, dozens of Scarf Butterflies fly around The Mountain, while the Word Carvers play to catch them. When she finishes her carving, the other women come close to appreciate it. Then they step back to Deliberate. If they like it, they return to her with the Chompantle Flower Ring: the symbol that she has been accepted in the Sisterhood and that her work is part of the Manuscript of Manuscripts.





After some seasons, the stories of women who carve to the rhythm of their sobs are so numerous that they start transmuting the aura of The Mountain, the lights and the shadows showing there.

Bafflingly, more and more Mantles of Diurnal Fireflies appear, lighting up the path of the initiated, and similarly, new flocks of Scarf Butterflies that gather their secrets and whispers.

Every day there are more women with a strange brightness in their fingers. Men, intoxicated with fear, slander Ameyhale.

From her love affair with the God of Wind she gave birth to a son and she threw him into the river before anybody could see him, say some of them.

She left him on an anthill; we must punish her, state others.



Some others say that the child didn't die because lilies rescued him and insects fed him. Since then, that child was attributed all the extraordinary feats occurring in Tepoztlan. (Although no one ever saw him, eventually they called him Tepoztecátl.)

But Ameyhale disregards those nasty remarks. Fully committed in understanding the full mysteries of Writing, she keeps out of those trivialities.



The Word Carvers Sisterhood keeps expanding before the astonishment of men, who begin to fear her when they realize that even the traditional rituals have started to change. The pace of customs has been altered. Women stay away from their homes at night. No one knows where they go or what they do. The town aura changes its color. Ameyhale and her Sisters persist, despite the hatred. They will never stop.

Hearsays of Ameyhale's teachings and The Sisters' courage reach the mountains of Stonehenge in England and the rocks of Fontainebleau in France; the Carpathians in Romania and the Andean Maracahuasi. Her teachings bring together, under the light of torches, all those women eager to tell their story. Their voices surge with strength, always, from the Fountainhead of Whispers. And since then, many women keep meeting to tell a new story of women in The Caverns of The Mountain. Thus, they change the world. Thus they achieve Transmutation.

Glossary

A

Ameyhale:

princess of the ancient kingdom of Tepoztlan

C

Carve:

to relate in writing, time and time again, our experiences, both the most painful as the most enjoyable ones.

Caverns:

passageways inside The Mountain on which walls Ameyhale carved her story.

Cerulean Water:

inspirational infusion prepared with water and aromatic herbs.

Chompante Flower Ring:

insignia of the Sisterhood of the Word Carvers

Chompante Flowers:

flowers from the tree known as *colorín*.

Cihuatzin Writing:

writing in the hands of women

D

Desperate Curse:

it is the punishment inflicted by the God of Wind on Ameyhale for stealing Writing from him and consisting in that when she would write she will do so with pain. This curse weighs on all women who dare to take ownership of Writing.

Diurnal Fireflies:

fireflies showing the way to the Word Carvers.

F

Fountainhead of Whispers:

fountainhead formed by the tears shed throughout history by women when they undergo their life experiences. Princess Ameyhale used to ask her followers to lean over that fountainhead and chose a story to relate it. Nowadays, the Word Carvers lean over the Fountainhead of Whispers to pick a story and tell it in writing.

G

God of Wind:

god keeper of Writing

M

Manuscript:

texts written by women from their own soul.

Manuscript of Manuscripts:

text compiling stories put in writing by women so that they remain and get disseminated to transmute the world.

Mountain:

according to Ameyhale's legend, The Mountain is the place where she looked for shelter and where she carved her story. Hence, The Mountain is the metaphor used by Word Carvers to designate their own life.

S

Scarf Butterflies:

butterflies with large white wings, native from the kingdom of *Tepoztlán*, that collect the secrets and whispers of The Serenes.

Serene:

Word Carver who inducts other women into the path of the Writing appropriation.

Souled Beings:

all those revolutionary experiences, actions, thoughts and works that women capture forever through Writing. Thanks to the testimony that Writing makes possible, those experiences, actions, thoughts and works acquire the ability to transform other people's conscience and inspire them to transform the world, making it more and more human.

T

Talking Pebbles:

phrases containing the wisdom of women.

Tepozteco:

craggy mountain range surrounding the magic town of Tepoztlán in the State of Morelos, México.

Torch Ceremony:

ritual followed by candidates to become members of The Word Carvers Sisterhood.

Transmutation:

change occurring from the bottom up; outright change.

W

Water Mirror:

water mirror revealing, to us women, how much we have searched inside our soul.

Carver:

a woman who dares to tell her story in writing.

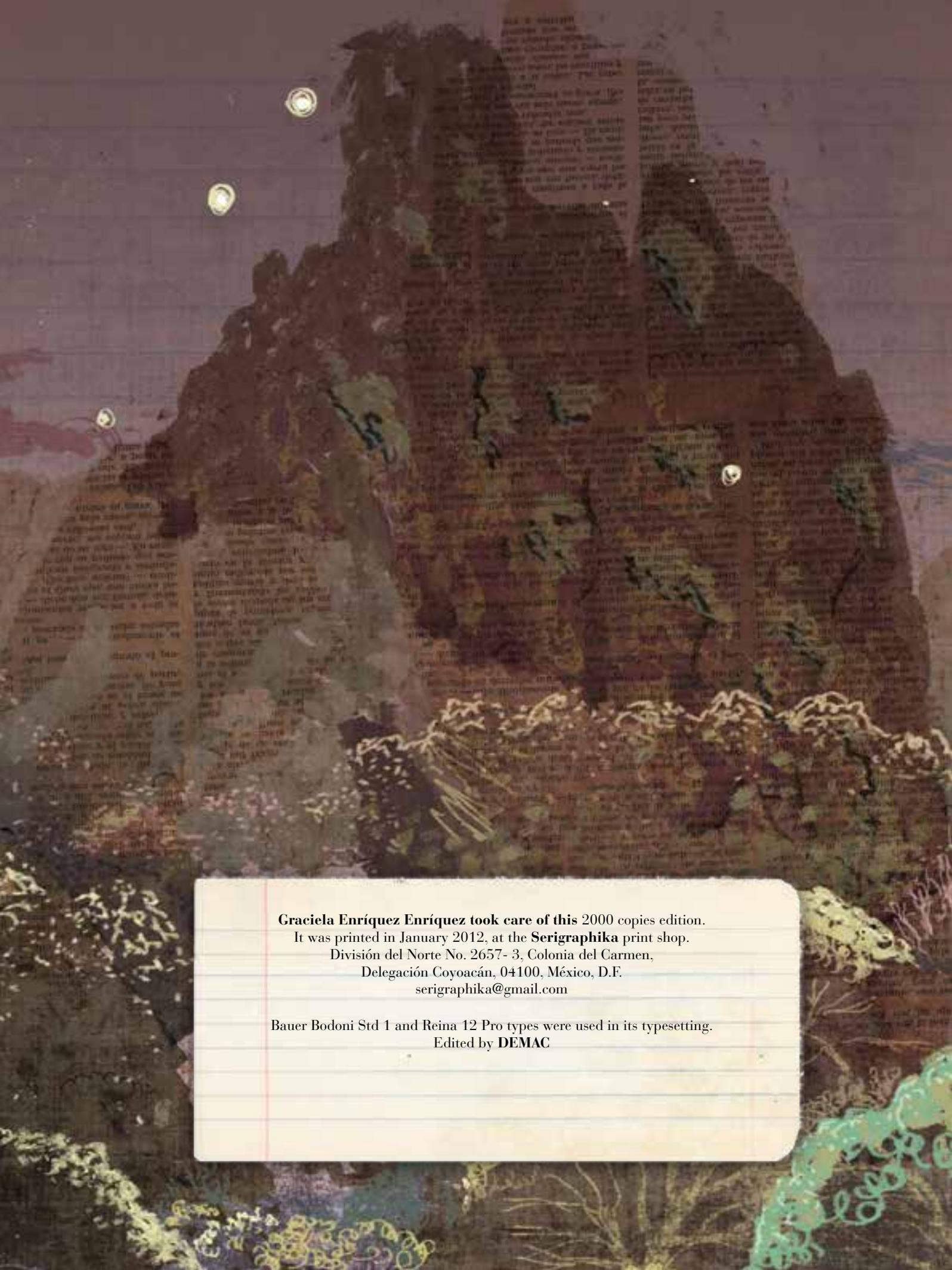
Word Carvers Sisterhood:

Sisterhood of women who have take ownership of Writing.

It is your turn.

Just dare!

Start writing your story in these pages so that Transmutation occurs within you and hence you become a member of The Word Carvers Sisterhood.



Graciela Enríquez Enríquez took care of this 2000 copies edition.

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