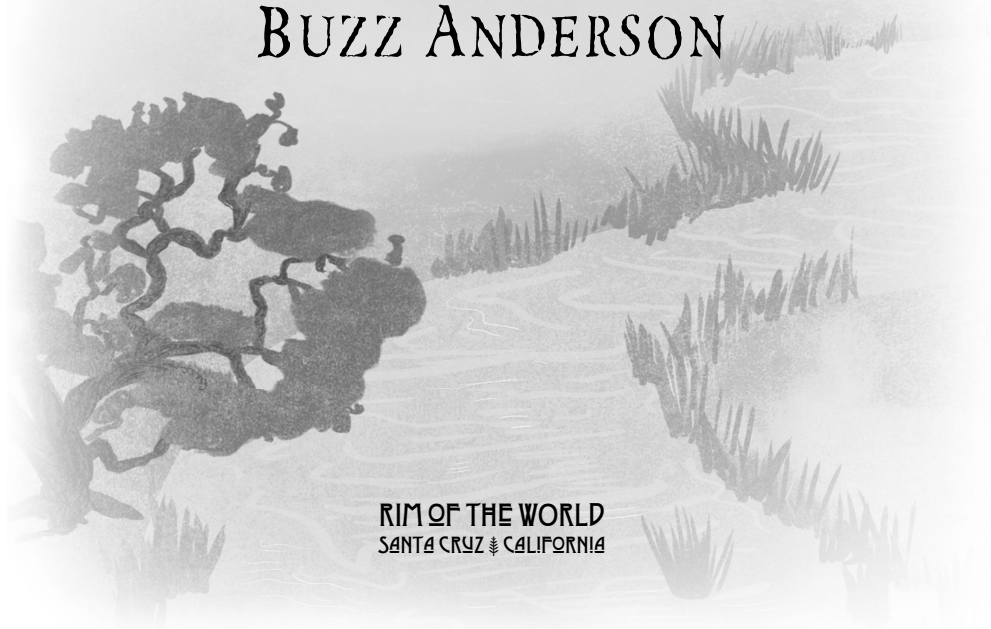


Five Hundred Moons



a novel

BUZZ ANDERSON



RIM OF THE WORLD
SANTA CRUZ & CALIFORNIA

FIVE HUNDRED MOONS is a work of fiction. Although some incidents, dialogue, correspondence, and characters are based on historical records, the work as a whole is the product of the author's imagination.

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To my JENNIE



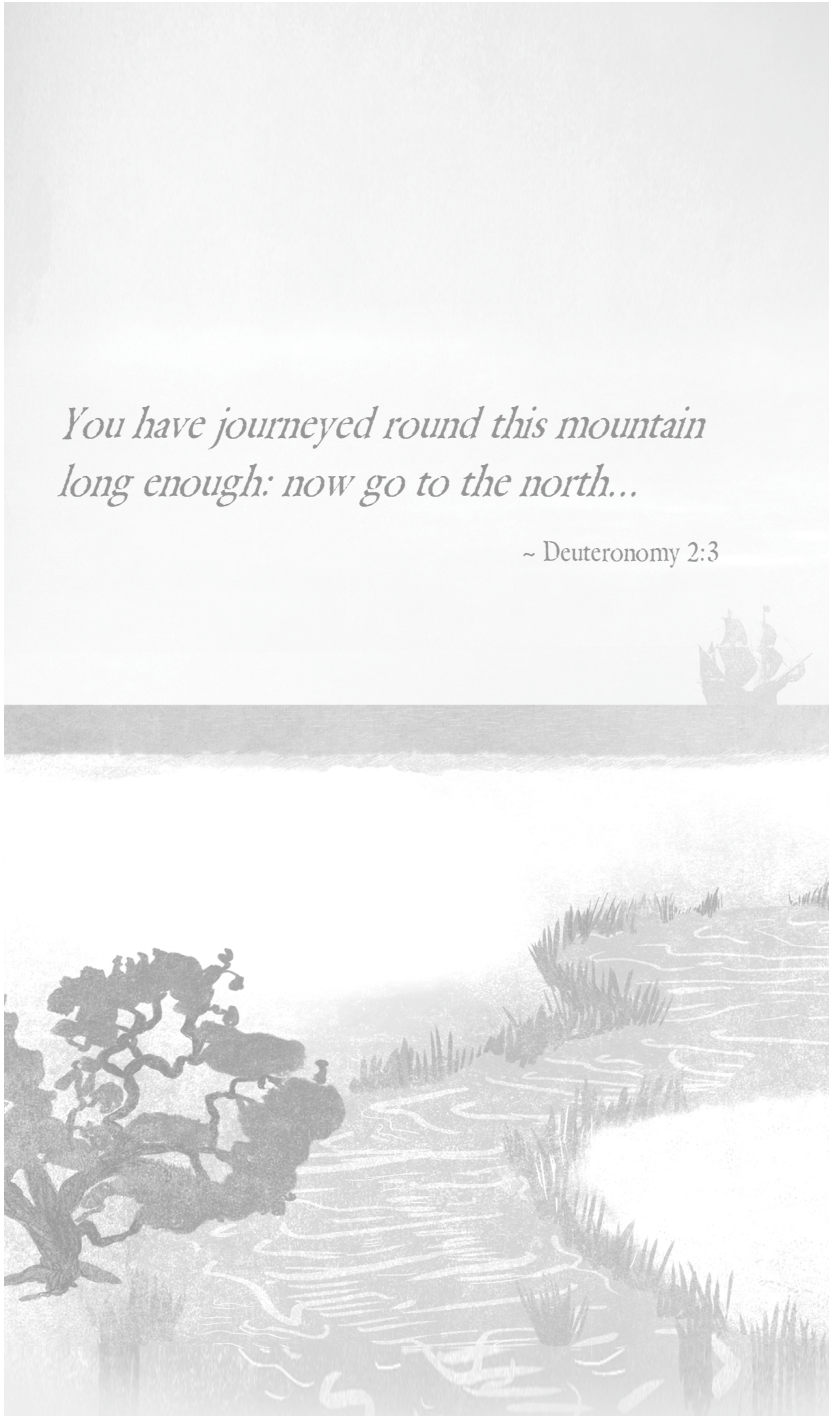
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*You have journeyed round this mountain
long enough: now go to the north...*

~ Deuteronomy 2:3



‡ LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS ‡

* Historical Person



THE NATIVE CALIFORNIANS

* Charquin—Chief of the Quiroste tribe located north of Monterey Bay, sanctuary provider for native peoples. Husband to Besa, father of Chamasi and Nayem.

Besa—Born of the Oljon tribe, sister to Lachi, the Oljon chief. Wife of Charquin, mother of Chamasi and Nayem.

Chamasi—Son of Charquin and Besa, older brother of Nayem.

Nayem—Daughter of Charquin and Besa, younger sister of Chamasi. Woman shaman of the Quiroste tribe, mother of twins Paguin and Ununi (María).

Sipa—Elder shaman of the Quiroste tribe, mentor to Nayem.

* Meve—Charquin's brother, village leader. Wary of the Spanish invaders.

Chosen—Charquin's friend, village leader of the Quiroste tribe.

Ullec—Member of the Quiroste tribe, friend of Charquin. Married to Chupis. Tortured and murdered by Lachi.

Chupis—Member of the Quiroste tribe, married to Ullec. Fell in battle against the Oljon.

Condula—Member of the Quiroste tribe, Nayem's friend. Mother of twins, of which only one was allowed to survive.

Gepesen—Condula's mother. Suspicious of Nayem's place in the world.

Mascan—Young member of the Quiroste tribe, Nayem's part-time lover. Scout for the Portolá expedition.

María (Ununi)—Nayem's daughter, Paguin's twin. Raised at Carmel Mission.

Paguin—Nayem's son, María's twin. Raised in the Quiroste village.

* Lachi—Chief of the Oljon, brother of Besa. Charquin's enemy.

* Chanchay—Respected elder chief of the Echilat, subset of the Rumsen. Encouraged his people to help the Spanish.

* Tiuca (Baltazar)—Chief of the Ichxenten tribe, subset of the Rumsen. Head acolyte to Junípero Serra. First husband of Ayuan.

Ayuan—Suspected of being Esselen. Married first Tiuca, then Graile. María's stepmother.

Tocote—Member of the Ichxenten tribe, Tiuca's friend. Injured at Garrapata Beach while poaching on Esselen land.

Chogot—Member of the Ichxenten tribe, Tiuca's friend. Killed by a grizzly that he, in turn, killed.

Rusuan—Elder shaman of the Oljon tribe.

Zolos—Member of the Sayanta tribe. Aided Charquin in providing sanctuary to escaped Mission Indians.



THE FRANCISCANS

* Father Junípero Serra—Franciscan priest and Catholic missionary, spearheaded establishment of the California mission system. Small in stature but effective leader. Baptized thousands of native Indians. Canonized in 2015.

FIVE HUNDRED MOONS

* Father Juan Crespí—Serra's student and friend. Chronicled the Portolá expeditions into Alta California. Born in Mallorca, died in Monterey. Buried alongside Serra.

* Father Francisco Palóu—Serra's student, friend, and confessor. Served as head of Baja missions, helped Serra establish some Alta California missions, authored a book about Serra's achievements.

* Father Fermín Lasuén—Served under Serra and for a time as head of San Diego Mission. Succeeded Serra as Father President, establishing nine additional missions. Died in Monterey. Buried alongside Serra and Crespí.

* Father Andrés Quintana—Born in the Basque Country of Spain; served as head priest at Mission Santa Cruz. Murdered by Mission Indians for his cruelty.



THE GYPSIES

Ager Carmona—Married Papina at an early age. Arrested in the Great Gypsy Round-up of 1749 and imprisoned in Cádiz. Later served on a Spanish galleon in the Pacific and British man-o'-war in the American Revolution. Returned to Europe after many years.

Papina Carmona—Married Ager at an early age. Arrested in the Great Gypsy Round-up of 1749 and imprisoned in Málaga. Escaped with her children to Bordeaux, France. Befriended by Charles DuPratt and worked in his theatre.

Drina Carmona—Ager and Papina's daughter. Escaped with her mother and brother to Bordeaux. Excelled at acting and dancing. Mistress of François Lapérouse, later traveled on a scientific voyage with him and Martinière.

Graile Carmona—Ager and Papina's son. Born in Málaga prison. Escaped with his mother and sister to Bordeaux. Worked in the theatre but later joined the Catalan Volunteers and was assigned service in the

New World, his primary duty to protect Carmel Mission. Received a land grant and retired north of Santa Cruz.

Malina Bathke—Imprisoned with Papina in Málaga, where the two became friends. Shot and killed helping Papina and her children escape. While dying, encouraged Papina and her family to travel to Bordeaux.



THE FRENCH

Charles DuPratt—Theatre owner. Sheltered and provided work for Papina and her children. Politically active before the French Revolution.

* François Lapérouse (Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse)—French naval officer and war hero. Romantically involved with Drina Carmona. Following American Revolution, commissioned by Louis XVI to command a scientific expedition to the Pacific.

* Joseph Hugues Boissieu (de) La Martinière—Botanist and biologist of the Lapérouse expedition. Became romantically involved with Drina.

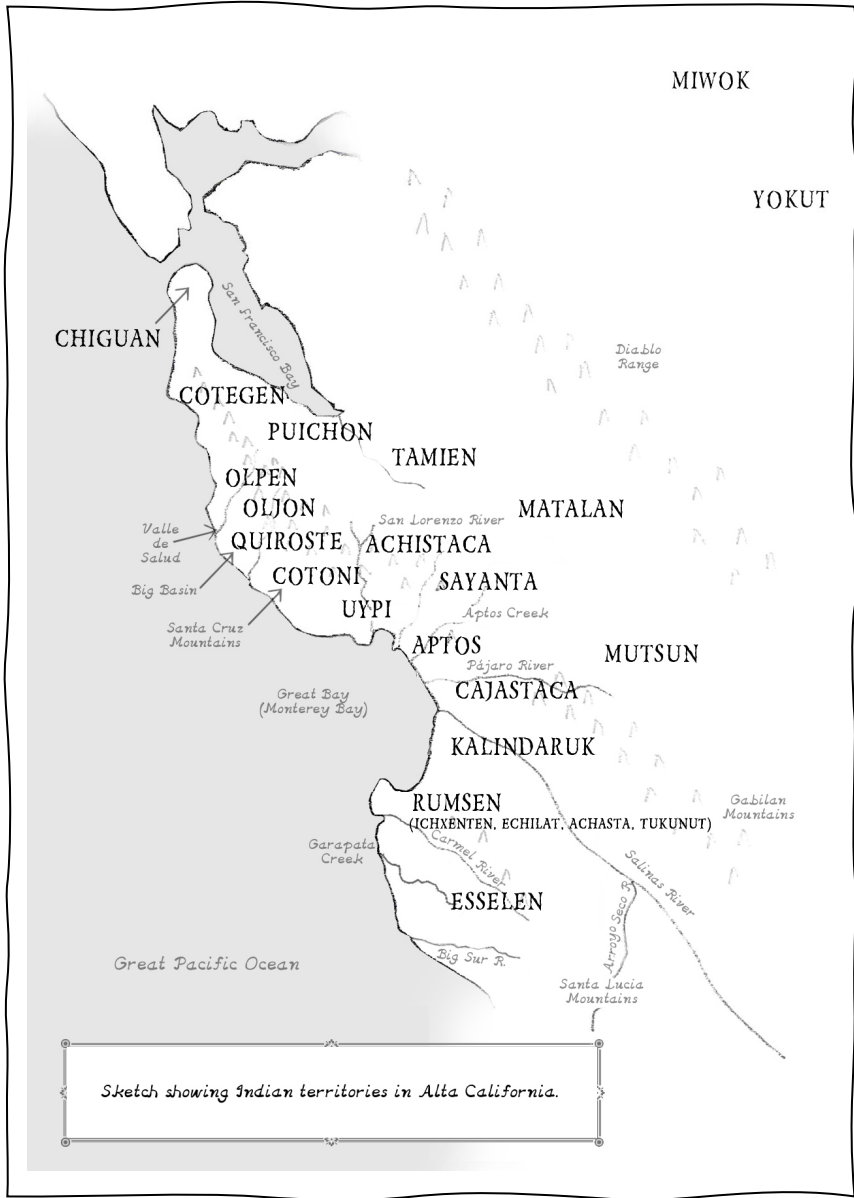


OTHERS

Benito—Spanish clergyman who left the priesthood. Helped Papina and her children during their escape. Eventually made his way to Bordeaux and reunited with Papina, whom he loved. Influenced by DuPratt's politics, implicated in a murder, and forced to flee. Later returned to Papina to face the consequences.

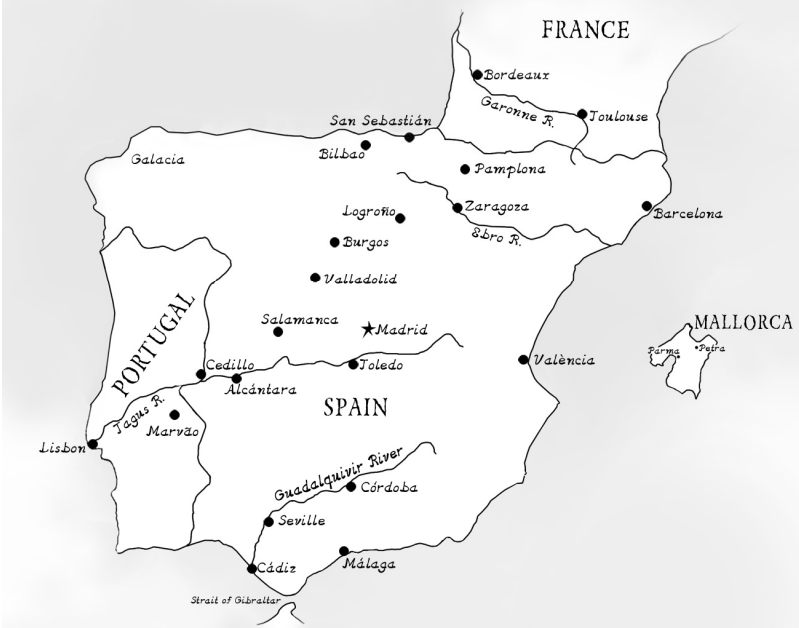
* Pedro Fages—Commander in the Catalan Volunteers. Accompanied Portolá on his expeditions in Alta California. Served two different terms as governor of California. Clashed repeatedly with Father Serra on how best to administer the territory and indigenous people.

MAPS

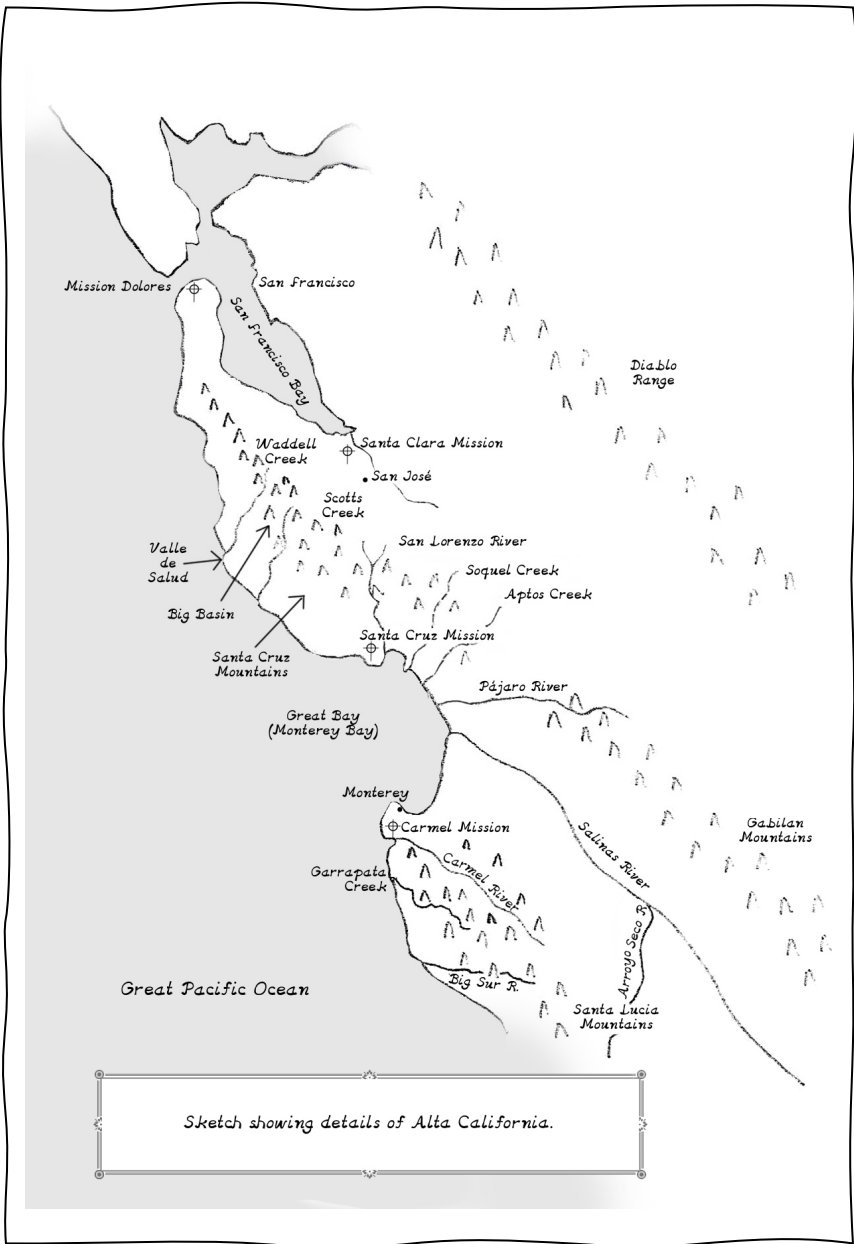


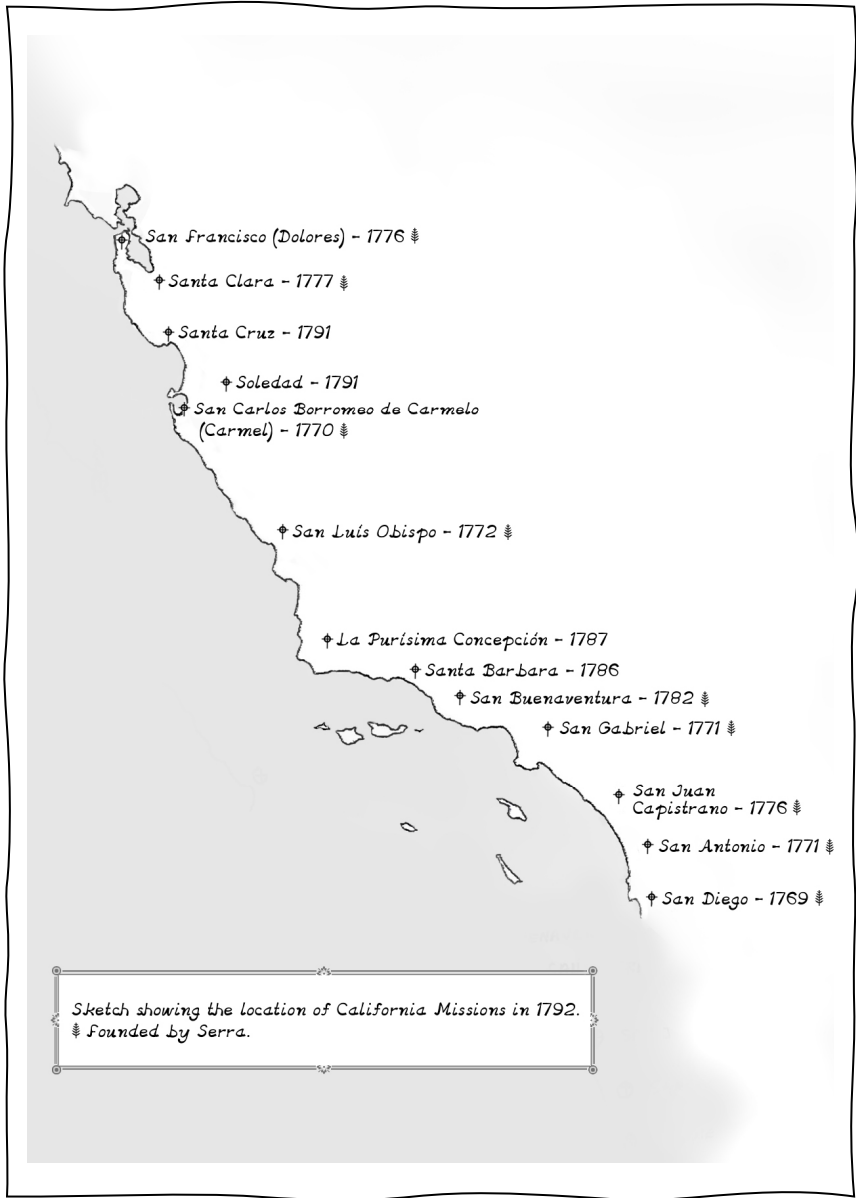


Sketch showing Mexico and Baja California.



Sketch showing Portugal, Spain, part of France, and the Strait of Gibraltar.





✦ San Francisco (Dolores) - 1776 †

✦ Santa Clara - 1777 †

✦ Santa Cruz - 1791

✦ Soledad - 1791

✦ San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo
(Carmel) - 1770 †

✦ San Luis Obispo - 1772 †

✦ La Purísima Concepción - 1787

✦ Santa Barbara - 1786

✦ San Buenaventura - 1782 †

✦ San Gabriel - 1771 †

✦ San Juan
Capistrano - 1776 †

✦ San Antonio - 1771 †

✦ San Diego - 1769 †

Sketch showing the location of California Missions in 1792.
† Founded by Serra.



Five
hundred
MOONS

*We live, we die, and like the grass and trees,
renew ourselves from the soft earth of the grave.*

- Chief Joseph, Nez Perce (1840-1904)

CHAPTER I

ALTA CALIFORNIA † THE BIG BASIN † TERRITORY OF THE QUIROSTE †

1793

The gray-haired chief of the powerful Quiroste tribe cups his hands in the running stream below the falls and brings water to his lips. Gazing up at the cascade latticed against the dark cliff, he recalls the many times he swam in the coolness below. Leaning forward, he returns his gaze to the stream. Coronas of golden light dance on the surface, their rippled effects triggered by a light breeze high in the forest canopy. He knows the soldiers will come. The padre is dead. Suffocated, then castrated and put back in his bed. He was an evil white shaman who brought pain and misery to the Ohlone. Charquin hopes the fire they set burned Mission Santa Cruz to the ground. The governor and Franciscan priests will not like that. There will be more punishment. The whips will again extract flesh from the backs of his people.

Charquin studies the moving water. Buried in the rocky streambed, sunlight flickers, burning his eyes. He squints to see through the running rivulets. He needs a sign.

With only a brushed deerskin robe to warm his old bones, he continues his journey to the mountaintop, searching for safe passage for his people. His legs are tired but still strong enough to climb out of the river valley. He follows the same trail he has taken countless times before. Exposed roots, older than he, provide familiar handholds as he ascends the steep footpath. Crossing the stream above the falls, he passes dogwoods fisted into the banks and towering redwoods, their green tops catching a glimpse of the great blue water to the west. He did not know these colossal

trees as saplings, their trunks contain countless rings, signaling age beyond comprehension, but he knows the forest has grown taller in his lifetime.

Charquin tries not to think, opening himself to the world around him—the world of the Ohlone as it has been from the first human footsteps until now. He would have the bear out of hiding, the wolf from its lair, or the great cat watching if one would give him a sign. He climbs until the sun begins its touchdown at the edge of ocean and sky, stopping to look at the blue-gray expanse before him. He recalls sighting a large wooden vessel as it approached the shoreline when he was a young man many moons ago. The strangers on board had waved and sent out a plume of smoke, followed by a thunderous clap. He realizes that was the beginning. The gods had signaled to his people that change was coming—change that would prove harmful.

What would the gods say now about the future of the Ohlone?

What transformations are about to take place?

The unknown can only be discovered by clearly marking known boundaries, but what he knows is muddled and confusing. He needs a path to a new beginning—a beginning that will restore and keep his people's way of life forever.

He worries.



Charquin sleeps with his eyes open to the cool darkness. As the stars cross the night sky, his dreams wander back to events of the recent past. He, who has seen many of his people baptized in the Spanish religion, does not understand the newcomers' beliefs and behaviors. He will never accept their ways. He knows only the world of the Ohlone. One day, he will enter the place where spirits dwell; until then, he possesses an unyielding faith that he has walked upon this land in the ancestors' footsteps and honored its richness and wonder. The ways of the ancestors will remain in his heart until he takes his journey to join them. But he fears for the younger Ohlone generation and their children, and he longs for them to know the world as he has experienced it.

Although his eyes are open, the Lioness comes to him. In his dream, she appears from behind the painted white sash that crosses the night sky. She does not speak. Instead, she stares down at Charquin, swishing her long tail high above her head, mesmerizing him. Then she leaps toward the horizon, touching the brightest points of starry light before

disappearing over the sky's edge. He grasps no meaning in the Lioness's behavior, and in the ensuing hours, he is unsure he has slept. When he rises, he gives thanks as he does every morning to the coming sun, whose red-orange flares already illuminate the dawn.

As light peeks through the crease of the faraway mountains and leaves begin silhouetting the eastern sky, Charquin sets out on his downward trek. Slowly, the world reveals itself, and he hears it come alive—birds calling to each other, insects murmuring their presence, a breeze rustling through the tree branches after the night's stillness. No decision has come to him. The Lioness is still a mystery, and he is troubled that the Protectors—Coyote, Eagle, and Hummingbird—have slept too soundly and ignored the Quiroste people. *Are the deities afraid to confront the power wielded by the Spanish God?*

Charquin is tired. He has seen too many Ohlone die. The ways of his ancestors have all but disappeared. Spanish laws and the padres have crippled his people and enslaved them. Survival is uncertain.



When he enters the camp, Charquin is surprised by the activity. He sees the forest floor has been swept. His son Chamasi has skinned and butchered two deer, and a cooking pit is being prepared. Everyone is adorning themselves with strings of shells and elaborate charcoal markings. Feathers are being woven into his people's long, straight hair, then knotted into tall headdresses and embellished with antlers. Bird-wing flutes have been brought out, and the sound of split-wood rattles can be heard throughout the impromptu village. Upward of twenty and again twenty have gathered, awaiting both Charquin and the coming feast.

Zolos, one of the few Sayanta tribespeople in the camp, runs up to Charquin and points to the uncooked carcasses. "These two deer spirits came to us soon after you left and offered their nourishment," he excitedly explains. "It is a good omen. When we ingest the meat, we will gain cunning and strength, making it easier to fight the invaders." His enthusiasm wanes when he sees the serious look in Charquin's eyes. "Did you have a vision?" he asks. "Did Coyote or Eagle come to you?"

Before Charquin can answer, his son Chamasi and his brother Meve approach. "Are we leaving, or do we stand and fight?" a wild-eyed Meve demands as he thrusts his bow forward in a gesture of strength. "We can repel the armed men when they come. Our weapons have

been oiled with marrow and treated with respect. Our arrows have been shaped with great care and turned straight in carved channels of granite. They will fly true. We have learned to aim at the necks of the soldiers and not at their thick breastplates! We are ready. We will kill them all!"

"This is our land," declares Chamasi. "We know it well. Our main village is not far downriver from here. We know every tree and rock to hide behind and shoot our arrows. This is a war we can win!"

"Patience is our friend," Charquin advises. "I wish to avoid Ohlone bloodshed. Action will be required, but right action does not always require conflict or killing. We must pursue a proper course. That is why I went to the mountain." He looks at no one, preferring to focus on the moving current of the nearby stream. "This is not the time for decisions. For now, we must sing and dance and accept guidance from the spirits—from Coyote, Hummingbird, and Eagle. When we finish, we will know what we must do."

"Meanwhile, I will sharpen the points of my arrows and prepare for battle," affirms Zolos, his hand gripped tightly around his impressive yew bow, "for I fear the Spanish will come before the sun sets tomorrow."

"What you say may be true, Zolos. We will smoke to the four winds in front of the fire when the last dance is finished," assents the old chief. "Then our council will weigh the choices before us."

Just then, a young warrior emerges from the lower path. Running as fast as he can, he nears Charquin. In a panting voice, he delivers his message, "There are people coming up the trail—Nayem, Paguin, and two others—the old soldier who lives on Cotani land and a young woman. They started at the sea and have been moving up the river canyon. They are bringing two of the Spanish *mule* creatures."

"I am thankful that my daughter and grandson are coming to join us," says the chief. "Nayem is a Quiroste shaman with great power. Her medicine is known by many Ohlone tribes. It is also good that Paguin is here; he, too, may one day be a respected shaman. They will both speak wisely during our smoke. When they arrive, escort them to my hut. Inform the old soldier and the young woman to join us as well." He then turns to Meve. In a level, unhurried voice, he instructs his brother, "Prepare for the feast."



*We are all wanderers on this earth.
Our hearts are full of wonder,
and our souls are deep with dreams.*

- Old Gypsy proverb

*Come live with me, and be my love;
And we will all the pleasures prove...*

- Christopher Marlowe, English dramatist, poet

CHAPTER 2

NEAR THE GUADALQUIVIR RIVER † SEVILLE, SPAIN

1747

Ager Carmona struggled to keep his eyes on his Gypsy bride amid the raucous wedding celebrants. Papina was riding the shoulders of a bare-chested mob parading her through the excited crowd. A musky odor of sweat mingled with the savory aromas of steaming pork and stewed vegetables, providing a distinct “fragrance” to the festivities. The entire party was dancing and singing the traditional “El Yelli” to the fifteen-year-old bride. She had just undergone a ceremonial probing by the *ajuntaora* and a cadre of grandmothers who unanimously declared her “pure.” A bloodstained handkerchief waved to the crowd had set off wild cheers, signaling the stringed instruments to start playing. A mass of silvery tambourines and an ensemble of tautly stretched drums joined in, pounding out a rhythm that persuaded even the oldest Gypsies to dance.

The music, the intoxication of the crowd, and the sight of his beautiful Papina, her long brown hair backlit against the soft pink glow of a Spanish sunset, swelled Ager’s being with a happiness he had never known. She belonged to him. She was his light. He mouthed, “I love you,” as she turned, and he caught her eye.

They had known each other since childhood when they traveled with their parents in a small caravan throughout the northern Basque Country. Ager’s father and two other men operated a portable forge, fabricating

horseshoes and wagon parts. Demand was high, and profits good as iron shoes wore down quickly on the hard compacted roads. The troop made its way through the world, buying and selling horses and mules and small commodities like cookware and hand-sewn clothing. When they entertained town folk with music and dance, the women read palms and told fortunes. It was truly a gypsy life, and they were good Gypsies—honest—assuredly with each other—and generally law-abiding—though not above an occasional smuggling expedition across the French border or the pickpocketing of a well-to-do *payo*.

Happiness was generally their fallback position in life.

Ager was five years old when he started carrying coal and stoking the fires with a ram skin bellows at the family forge. He soon became familiar with the cauldron of red heat that softened the iron stock into a malleable form from which useful objects were fabricated. It was about this time when he also became familiar with a three-year-old girl meandering around the camp. She sometimes followed him, always reaching for his hand and pestering him to look at something she saw like a red-crested woodpecker or a yellow salamander beneath a rock.

Thus, began an attachment between the two.

Papina was fairer in appearance than most Gypsies—like her mother, a product of an east–west migration that began in Northern India and ended in Europe over the course of several centuries. The Gypsies (or Romany—as they were also called) took many routes to the now-center of the western world, and obviously, there had been branches in intimate contact with fair-skinned, blue-eyed Germanic populations to the north. Papina had been given the name Nearea at birth, but with her light hair and blue eyes, she soon came to be known as Papinori—Papina for short—meaning “little white goose.”

Ager, a feisty lad with quick reflexes, and Papina, a more mindful and musical girl, enjoyed growing up together in their tight-knit tribe. They learned to care for the animals, prepare and cook the troop’s large communal meals, fix broken wagon parts, and gather the numerous edible plants found in the woods and meadows. They learned the art of buying and selling, how to handle money, and how to run games of chance.

But what they most enjoyed learning were gypsy songs and dances that accompanied the music performed almost nightly. Shortly after their evening meal, the troop would gather around a big fire for entertainment. The music wasn’t always fast and celebratory, nor was it always for a

paying crowd. Often, it was sweet and soft. A single guitar or violin might pick out some long notes, and one of the girls would sing a beautiful love song. Another would dance slowly by the lingering fire, the embers' orange glow casting an exotic color to her skin as her swaying hips and shoulders captivated the onlookers.

Papina loved being the principal dancer and became particularly good by the young age of six. When she danced, it was as if her movements directed the music. She felt the sounds deep in her ancestral blood; the connection transformed her soul into its own instrument. Every part of her came alive, and she moved in a way that her audience joined her spirit and played the instrument with her. The men would command her to dance to a mournful gypsy lament that always brought tears to their eyes. They loved watching her, especially as she grew older and womanhood blossomed in her slender form. As the fire illuminated Papina and cast a spell with its mystical rising smoke, she moved with such sensuality that older men were transported back to their youth when life was full of unbounded promise.

The night fires brought not only music and dance but talk as well. A common topic was the New World riches that Spain was retrieving: gold and silver from Peru, Mexico, and Uruguay; fine sweet tobacco grown in the Caribbean and rolled into cigars for ministers of the royal court; sugar from Cuba produced by slaves stolen from Africa. There was talk of pirates who fired cannonballs through the planks of Spanish galleons, hijacked cargo, and left crews adrift in the warm equatorial currents. Some spoke of the wars that Spain was engaged in—and losing—causing a decline in Spanish influence throughout the world. But these were topics for fireside conversation, not cause for concern.

More serious talk centered on the Spanish royal government and the Catholic Church. Monarchy and Church represented absolute power. Authority and hierarchy dominated both realms. As supreme moral censor, the Church imposed its standards of conduct on the entire range of society from aristocrat to agricultural laborer. As the supreme law of the land, the monarchy imposed its will on all who lived within its borders. Church and State were inseparable—they needed each other to rule. Unfortunately for the Romany, both institutions treated them with suspicion, if not outright disdain. To be a Gypsy was to always live in fear.

The nomadic wanderers were, in turn, suspicious of authority. They disliked being controlled. Due to their fiercely independent nature,

they had been persecuted in one form or another for centuries. That persecution continued even now. Decrees outlawing many facets of gypsy life resulted in regular arrests. Speaking in *Calo*, their native tongue; wearing traditional clothing; trading animals; possessing firearms; and traveling the roads without authorization could result in a six- to eight-year sentence in the galley—a fate that was often a death sentence. The sole legal occupation designated to the Gypsies was cultivation of the soil. The government wanted them to remain common serfs, even though the practice of feudalism was long gone. These laws, however, were enforced weakly and sporadically since many *payos* enjoyed the profits they earned from doing business with the Gypsies.

Whenever the troop heard of a recent arrest or crackdown by authorities, there was a lot of talk, and that talk always frightened some of the families. Ager's mother had buried three infants before his birth. Papina's mother had suffered a series of miscarriages before and after her daughter was born. Ager and Papina were their only children. Ensuring a safe future for them was their parents' highest priority.

As years passed, Ager and Papina's friendship did not go unnoticed. In spare moments when the two weren't doing chores or learning their respective crafts, they would go off together. They loved to swim, jumping in the Ebro River and its tributaries every chance they got, naked when they were younger, a little more modestly as they got older. Other times, they would sit side by side, never touching, just sitting close enough to share each other's warmth. They chatted some about members of the troop and the day's events and talked about their surroundings. They didn't share their hopes for a future together; that was for others to decide. But they sensed in each other the feeling that a life lived apart would be unimaginable.

Life, as the Gypsies knew it, would soon change.

By the mid-eighteenth century, overreaching Bourbon reforms promulgated by the Spanish Crown had centralized power and control. But there was a backlash. In early 1746, French philosopher Voltaire's writing had gained popularity, and emerging forces sought to erode the "divine" authority of kings.

To counter this movement, the newly crowned Spanish monarch, Ferdinand VI, and his ministers sought to stave off threats to their rule, reverse Spain's decline as a world power, and rebuild the Spanish nation-state to its past glory. To help achieve these goals, they couldn't have a

large group of people wandering about the countryside unaccounted for and holding no allegiance to The Crown. Thus, they determined to reign in the Gypsies, and laws requiring them to register and establish permanent residence began to be enforced.

Attempting to scare the Gypsies into compliance, arrests and harsh sentences followed. Stories were spread about whole troops being taken away and imprisoned. Ager's and Papina's parents and grandparents thought hard about what was best for their families. A decision had to be made. Some in their troop wanted to circulate primarily in the Basque Country, which was more mountainous and had a long tradition of independence. Others were for registering, settling in Logroño, and going to work in the outlying fields. After much discussion, the two families decided to apply for traveling papers and make the long journey south to Seville, where other Gypsy families lived, including some Carmonas who were distant relatives. Ager and his father were accomplished blacksmiths and fabricators. Papina's father was a particularly good carpenter and wheelwright. There should be work there. Also, Seville was close to the port of Cádiz. Someday, the opportunity to seek a better life in the New World might present itself to their children, a dream shared by many Gypsies.

The families obtained the proper papers and left their friends. They had two full wagons, five mules, a dozen chickens, and a pig to butcher and eat along the way. They hoped to do some trading and perhaps sell small culinary items to help finance the trip. Halfway through the journey, in the province of La Mancha, the two fathers announced that Ager and Papina would wed at the start of the new year.



When the music stopped, the men gently returned the bride to the cobblestone courtyard and stepped back. The close quarters of the old two- and three-story buildings ringing the communal area created a natural amphitheater. Every eye watched as Papina, in all her bridal finery, took center stage. She was dressed in a long, layered red skirt with wide ruffled pleats, a low-cut, front-laced white blouse that left one shoulder uncovered, and a black silk sash that wound tightly about her waist. A matching red scarf playfully caressed her neck and uplifted breasts. Silver hoops dangled from her ears, and long blue ribbons the color of her

eyes tied back her flowing hair. The young bride stood barefoot, motionless, and erect as the torches were lit.

Shouts rang out from the crowd, "Dance, Papina, dance!"

She began the traditional *zambra*, its Moorish rhythm starting within her heart, then radiating out to her hands. Slowly, her shoulders lifted, and her hips began swaying. She lightly stroked the still air, unfolding her arms above her head. Her dancing gained momentum with each toe tap and change of direction, the sounds following her body, capturing her people, commanding their senses to bear on her passion. Stepping nimbly across the courtyard and picking up the sides of her skirt, she twirled back and forth to the music, moving gracefully, her flowing sensuality the embodiment of all that was gypsy: gaiety, spirit, and freedom.

Ager watched his bride perform. She excited him, as she did all the men, but he knew she was virtuous and would be true to him their entire life together. He planned on being honest and hardworking to provide for his bride and the future family they desperately wished for. He was proud of his Gypsy blood.

Papina finished her performance amid a crescendo of cheers and whistles. Taking a slight bow, she smiled. It was a broad, happy smile, exposing the slightly crooked canine tooth she usually tried to hide. No one cared. The out-of-place tooth added to her natural beauty.

"Thank you," she said politely, curtsying once more to her audience of family and friends.

Ager's grandfather approached, drawing everyone to the center. He carried a freshly baked round of bread and a packet of salt. Ager came to his side. Grandfather instructed the bride and groom to stand side by side and face him. Then he spoke loudly, "With the salting and splitting of this bread and the exchange of each half between Ager and Papina, they are considered married!"

At that moment, Grandfather opened the salt packet and shook its contents over the bread. He then tore the loaf in two and handed each piece to the bride and groom. Receiving the offering, they immediately exchanged halves. They were now husband and wife. The assemblage clapped. Voices shouted.

"Live a long life and have many children!"

"Stay true to the Roma and be wary of the *payos*!"

"Do not trust the friar or the king!"

"Remember to scratch each other's back!"

“Love and love some more, go now, and complete your marriage!”

With everyone watching, Ager and Papina walked to the doorway of his father’s house. They would live in a single small room on the second floor. With a wave and a little grin, the couple entered the home and closed the door behind them. More cheers erupted from the gathered witnesses. The music began again, and the wine flowed more abundantly. A proper *casamiento* was a three-day affair, and the celebration would continue well into the night and for the next two days. Additional friends and relatives from throughout Andalusia would arrive tomorrow, provided their traveling papers were in order.

Once inside, the excited young couple hugged each other and held on until their breathing calmed to the same rate. They kissed passionately, and then Papina pushed away and started up the stairs. Ager stood for a moment, staring at the lower part of her backside, the sight of her wide hips and buttocks causing his eyes to widen and heartbeat to quicken. Holding his gaze, he followed her up. Papina was lighting a candle when he reached the top of the steps.

They had known this moment was coming for many months. Although they had explored each other’s bare skin, they were both virgins and a little unsure how to proceed. But the long anticipation present during their courtship heightened their natural desires, and now they were finally alone together, facing each other above the padded straw bed, their bodies inches apart. Ager’s hands gently touched Papina’s breasts, and his fingers slowly began unlacing the front of her blouse. A streak of newfound arousal rushed up and down her spine. She reached down and fumbled with the loose knot on his corded belt.

“I’m a little nervous,” she confessed, giggling.

“Me, too.”

The seventeen-year-old groom unfastened the braided leather rope around his loose-fitting trousers. With Papina’s help, he slipped out of his short, beaded blue jacket and linen blouse. Papina gazed into his marbled brown eyes and admired his strong jawline, large lips, and thin nose, his face framed by wavy dark hair. She loved his proud bearing, the power in his hands and forearms developed from his ironworking trade. She loved him entirely.

The rest of their clothing came off quickly, and they landed together with a thud on the thin mattress, Papina on top of Ager’s chest, her full weight pressing down on him. He gasped through a chuckle and half

rolled her over. They locked in a tight embrace and kissed, tasting each other's breath.

Papina cooed, "Your skin is soft. I love being close to you so I can hold you and touch you and breathe in your scent." She lightly pressed her hand on the center of his broad chest and whispered demurely, "Maybe we should wait awhile?"

"That sounds good," agreed Ager, turning onto his side and facing his bride. "We've got our whole lives to make love." He was a little relieved that Papina wanted to slow down. It gave him a chance to caress her and admire the smooth curves outlining her hips, waist, and shoulders; her cascading hair curling about her nipples; the two dimples nestled against her lower back; the kinky hair concealing the threshold to her fertility. Ager explored the length of Papina's back, circling each vertebra with his fingertips and stroking the dip between his bride's hip and waist as he tried to decide which part of his wife's body was his favorite. Seeing and touching her, he felt aroused to a heightened state of pure adoration and desire. He concluded his favorite was all of her.

Papina inhaled deeply, burying her nose in Ager's neck. She had always been aware of his scent, and now that it belonged entirely to her, she found great comfort in it. In an impulse of playfulness, she took a fold of skin in her teeth and gently bit down. "Oh, you taste good, my dear, kind of salty, yet sweet. I think I'll devour you." Her blue eyes, speckled with butterfly dots, danced in the candlelight. She purred a cat's meow into his ear.

"I can't think of a better way to go," Ager whispered back.

They lay quietly for several minutes. Papina placed her head next to Ager's heart and listened, amazed at the sound it produced, a double thump with each beat. She felt his male organ and was surprised at its firmness and heat. Coyishly pinching his side, she let out an innocent little squeak. Ager swung his leg over her and held her tight. She felt a warm wetness between her legs, and a rush of blood came to her cheeks. "I think I'm ready," she cooed tenderly.

They started slowly, both being sensitive to each other's virginity, but once they had coupled, she pulled him in tighter, reaching for his muscular back as their passion grew. They both felt the enormity of each other in their own bodies. Then the welling came from deep inside Ager's core, rushing out, exploding in a wave of delight. Neither could speak as the last juices passed between them.

Papina was numb and happy. Ager felt pleasure and relief. Slowly their senses returned. They could hear their families celebrating, the music blending with voices and echoing off the surrounding buildings outside the window. They imagined the upward looks from the crowd below and felt content in their privacy, knowing their loved ones were nearby. This was their night. It belonged only to them—a night they would never forget. The physical act between them had forged an unbreakable bond. Papina felt more comfort and security than ever before.

They were perfectly content lying next to each other, kissing for a long time before peaceful sleep descended upon them. Their dreams were vivid, colorfully detailed, and alive, their faces appearing before them, their cheeks caressing and blending into a single sphere, floating weightlessly into the heavens.



Ager woke with a start to the early morning wails of a woman in the alley below. Opening the window, he watched as she moved into the communal area, and others rushed to her side. It was his aunt.

“My son, my son is dead,” she sobbed uncontrollably. “They *shot* him, *shot him when he tried to run!*”

“*Who* shot him? Why would anyone shoot him?” the group shouted in anguished cries.

“He and his brother were coming to the *casamiento*. They were stopped and accused of horse stealing by an officer in the king’s guard. They had no papers. He ran. He ran, and they shot him in the back!” Grief-stricken, she dropped to the ground.

Ager buried his face in his hands.



*For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh,
arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.
For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

- Peter 4:1

CHAPTER 3

MALLORCA † CONVENTO DE SAN FRANCISCO, PALMA

1747

Mallorca, the largest island in the Balears chain, sits strategically in the Mediterranean equidistant from Barcelona and Algiers. A man in good health can walk its breadth in two full days, crossing an inland plain and a small mountain range with elevations of no more than fifteen hundred feet. For thousands of years, it has been a center of trade and an attraction for a succession of invaders beginning with the Phoenicians, then Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Muslims, and finally Spanish Christians. On the western coast in a sheltered bay lies the vital port of Palma, the capital and largest city. Within its confines is Convento de San Francisco, a Gothic structure built by the Catholic Church in the thirteenth century. Deep within its walls are the friars' quarters, cells stark and plain, barely big enough for a cot and writing table.

A small man sits cross-legged on the cold stone floor. He has just returned from midnight prayers. He is of swarthy complexion with jet black hair and dark eyes. His haircut mimics Christ's crown of thorns. The thick white rope around his brown robe is loosened; his coarse wool shirt is half removed, exposing his upper body. In his hand is the *disciplina*, a cattail whip of knotted cords, which he methodically uses to strike the scarred skin of his back, bringing threads of blood to its surface.

He prays loudly, crying out for God's forgiveness and guidance, for he has sinned today as he has sinned every day. He needs to see things clearly, obtain focus, and not deviate from the path chosen for him. The mortification purifies his thoughts as he strives to experience

Christ's Passion. After three hours, he quits the lash and collapses on his cot, the searing heat comforting him until morning.

At dawn, there is a knock at the door. Francisco Palóu, the sleeping man's younger colleague, cautiously enters the room. Junípero Serra opens his eyes and weakly motions his guest to sit at the foot of the hard bed.

"Junípero, I heard the whip last night and prayed for your deliverance. It is good to mortify the flesh, but I worry about the severity of the blows you inflict upon yourself. We need you in good health to teach and deliver your remarkable sermons, and I don't wish you to fall ill."

"Francisco, as my former student and one of my best, you know my allegiance to the Franciscan order is second only to my allegiance to God. I intend to maintain a good constitution and continue my work of educating our brethren so that all of us may guide souls into redemption and the graces of everlasting life. But we must suffer to avoid the sin of questioning God's Will, and that involves enduring Christ's pain. I must follow what has been ordained for me. Only then will I find my reward in heaven, where I will be forever joyous and free from want."

Palóu nods but continues anyway, "There are others that have concerns about your health. Your mind seems weighed down with deep thoughts, causing much suffering. I pray that God has revealed to you a pathway to peace, something that will comfort and ease your contemplations."

Junípero pauses and draws several deep breaths, his long exhales slowing and concentrating his speech. "Yesterday, I walked many hours beyond the city walls. I saw a despondent people weakened by decades of drought and crop failures, epidemics, and the forced conscription of young men into the Spanish military. The enactment of more taxes to please the Bourbon rulers is another burden the people endure. These hardships are a reality, but they need to be seen as God's gift to the people. I will go forth and preach how much the Lord loves them, that he is shaping them into better beings by bestowing upon them tribulations that try their souls. I plan to venture out among them in a great procession and remind them that a better world awaits. I need to reawaken them to Christ, for his soft yoke will guide all to heaven."

Palóu nods again. "I wish to accompany you on this revivalist mission. To serve you is to serve my Lord." Bowing subserviently, he continues, "There are others who will also join. Juan Crespí most certainly will come."