

THE EAGLE by Eva Novak

This is the beginning of a story that has no end...

it is a vast plain we find ourselves in. Endless...

From horizon to horizon we are surrounded by dry grass, thorny shrubs,
strangely shaped rocks on sandy ground.

Scattered bushes carrying bitter berries,

few trees that give little shade,

hardly taller than the few people who live here, tending their sheep and goats.

When the grass has been eaten, the people pack up their tents and move on.

In the midst of this barren land rises a great hill with a road leading there.

The farther we walk the path to the hill, the more people we meet.

At the foot of the hill, just where the road begins climbing upward,
a large crowd has gathered.

It feels like being at a big fair or a market,

with booths selling food and souvenirs,

makeshift tents and places to stay for the night.

From here it is quite a walk to reach the top of the hill.

And all the way up there, at the top, on a throne - sits – the great Eagle.

Ever since people have been telling stories – he is there –

unmoving, and yet very much alive.

His eyes gaze into the infinite distance.

Wise, knowing and quiet is the Eagle.

An endless stream of people moves up the hill.

They come with all their small and big worries and fears
hoping for his assistance.

No one's ears have ever heard a word or sound from him
and yet - whoever comes receives an answer.

Reassured and satisfied by what they have learned
the people make their way back down the hill.

Their offerings – fruits, nuts, stones, feathers, incense and more –
bear witness of the many visitors.

Only when the weather appears at its worst
the visitors stay safely in the dwellings at the foot of the hill.

Once again a thunderstorm looms in the distance.

Dark menacing clouds build up on the horizon,
lightning flashes across the sky, thunder rolling from afar.

The path is quiet and deserted. Completely deserted? No!

Two figures are struggling up the hill leaning into the strengthening wind:
An old man with a young woman, his granddaughter, walking beside him.

All his life he has waited to walk this road.

Now, having almost reached the end of his days, he finally takes courage
to lay his most fundamental questions before the Eagle
heretofore familiar to him only in legend.

Having reached the top of the hill he spreads his small rug on the ground
and sits before the great being,

himself barely the size of one of the Eagle's talons...

while the old man asks his questions in quiet contemplation

his grandchild is seated beside him gazing at the Eagles claws

marveling at his huge body, the huge feathers -

everything about him is huge! And he is sitting so still...

The storm is drawing closer too – the atmosphere is sending shivers down her spine.

How she longs to be back at the foot of the hill with the others.

And while she is hoping that her grandfather receives his answers soon

so they can leave, she is still curious,

wondering, how anyone could receive an answer that nobody else could hear?

Finally a smile crosses the old man's face.

Gratefully he rises, bows with great care and seems happy,

younger somehow, almost like a child.

He turns to his granddaughter ready to return to the path

that leads them back down the hill.

The wind is howling in his ears and tearing at his clothes.

He notices his grandchild standing a little aside,

her gaze turned up towards the Eagle's head.

and She is standing there in the storm without fear.

And all of a sudden a question arises within her

a question that has been waiting to be heard for a long time:

"Great Eagle," she cries out, "tell me: What is Love?"

For a moment even the storm seems to quiet down and listen.

A barely visible movement runs through the Eagle's body.

A tremble of his feathers, a twitching of his talons.

Something about this young woman – be it her voice, or the question itself – makes him shiver.

A feeling wells up within him – as yet unknown.

And for the first time ever – he speaks out loud:

"Love is all and all is love", he answers – and his voice is echoing so loudly it even drowns out the roaring of the storm.

"But if one of my beloved brothers leaves me to go out into the world I feel sorrow and pain", the young woman calls.

"That, too, is love – love rejoices when someone follows his or her own path."

"But what if I want him to never go away and always stay with me?"

"Then what you feel is fear and fear is never love.

Recognize Love in everything,

feel it and share it, and love shall set you free."

While the old man stands awestruck,

his granddaughter gives her thanks to the Eagle.

Then together they set off down the path.

The Eagle is left confused – something stirring within him, he has never felt before.

He utters a cry towards the heavens,

"Great Spirit, for a long time I have been serving, as was your request.

To every question the humans bestow upon me, I know the answer.

I see everything, I know everything –

but never, never have I experienced what it is like to FEEL.

Please, let me become human."

And while the storm rages The Eagle spreads his mighty wings, rises from his throne and soars away. People who have gathered down below the hill become witnesses to an unprecedented event. long long after the happening they still would be telling their grandchildren about it.

The eagle however, enjoys flying freely For the first time ever and landing far far away from his hill.

As he touches the ground he transforms into a human being.

But he is a being with a penis and breasts,
his body a blending of both male and a female aspects.

Three birds with differently colored feathers bear him company.

For a long time he simply gazes at his new body,
then learns to walk and move around on the ground,
feels hunger and thirst, cold and heat.

He digs for food in the ground with his bare hands
gathers berries, feels the pain of his sore skin,
tastes the sweetness of some fruit, the bitterness of others.

And he sings and dances with his birds.

After some time loneliness descends upon him,
a longing to be with his own kind, with other human beings.

So he sets forth, and on his journey passes villages
and walks through settlements of tents.

Everywhere he goes the people run from him, screaming with fear.

Of course – his sight is terrible to behold –
his hair matted and grimy, his body full of dirt,
naked and wild, neither woman nor man.

All those, who believe in the devil are certain to be facing Satan himself,
or at least some kind of demon.

Little good does it do that he is smiling and stretching out his arms invitingly.

Sadness fills his soul,

pain lines his face and bends his formerly upright body,

but still he continues his search for people who are willing to see him,
and recognize his true essence.

On the side of a road: farmers tending to their fields.

At first sight, they run away, as people always do.

But these men, having been out in the world and seen so much, soon realize,
that this being holds no danger to them.

Carefully the most courageous of them approach the creature
to make sure they were not mistaken:

that this really was a harmless, crazy disfigured being.

They begin to taunt him,

to mock his appearance and his crazed way of speaking that nobody understands,

his nakedness and the birds that are with him.

The Eagleman feels anger sparking within him.

He does not intend to accept their insults any longer,
so he approaches the farmers, to try and explain himself.

But one of the men picks up a rock and hurls it at the Eagleman
who is struck down, with blood streaming from the wound on his head.

As he rises from the ground to defend himself,
they advance on him and beat him, until he loses consciousness.

Then they bind his hands and feet and drag him to their village.

But however hard they try, they are not able to get rid of the three birds:

They throw rocks at them, but the birds simply swerve aside,
and carry on circling over the Eagleman unharmed.

near the village there is a meadow with a pit in the middle, deep and wide.

These people have a cruel tradition of throwing animals or humans into this pit
to gloat over their victims' fear.

And thus it happens to the Eagleman.

For food he is thrown some leftovers,
and occasionally they lower a pitcher with water.

Over time he picks up bits of their language
and tries to make them understand that he is the Eagle,
the one they have heard about in the old legends,

Upon hearing his words they laugh and say,

"If you are an Eagle why don't you just fly away?"

There is only one person who is not enjoying the barbarous happenings:

A young woman living by herself on the edge of the village.

After some time she decides to visit the creature,
carrying fresh bread and milk from her goats.

She wants to see for herself
that being – neither man nor woman -
and maybe she could even find a way to help him.

While standing at the edge of the pit and looking at the creature down below
she is overwhelmed with compassion for this being.

She views the birds that are circling above
and then she hears the Eagleman talk to the birds.

She has heard this voice before!

And even though back then it was a lot louder, the sound is unmistakably the same

"I cannot believe it – is it really you? The Eagle?

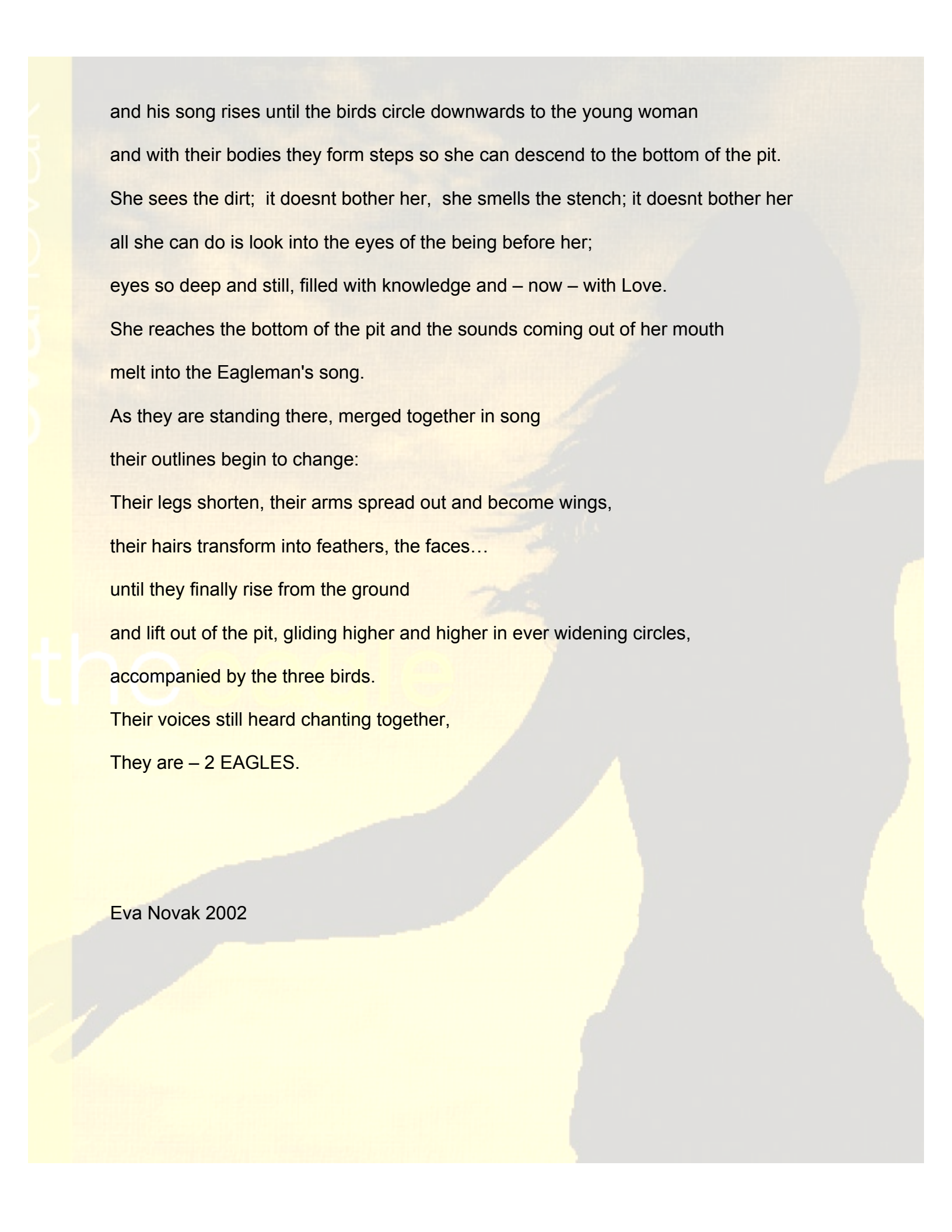
I remember you telling me about love.

How could this happen to you?"

The Eagleman lifts his gaze up to the woman – their eyes meet
and he recognizes a kindred spirit.

All hopelessness, despair, anger and hate leave him.

He lets out a scream, and the scream becomes a tone, long and drawn,



and his song rises until the birds circle downwards to the young woman
and with their bodies they form steps so she can descend to the bottom of the pit.
She sees the dirt; it doesn't bother her, she smells the stench; it doesn't bother her
all she can do is look into the eyes of the being before her;
eyes so deep and still, filled with knowledge and – now – with Love.
She reaches the bottom of the pit and the sounds coming out of her mouth
melt into the Eagleman's song.
As they are standing there, merged together in song
their outlines begin to change:
Their legs shorten, their arms spread out and become wings,
their hairs transform into feathers, the faces...
until they finally rise from the ground
and lift out of the pit, gliding higher and higher in ever widening circles,
accompanied by the three birds.
Their voices still heard chanting together,
They are – 2 EAGLES.

Eva Novak 2002