



Afterword

BY MARK RUDMAN

Where the Story Leaves Off

We had set out, the four of us, like pilgrims.
It's a quick jaunt to Guanajuato from San Miguel,
over long stretches of restless earth,
not desert, not valley,
patchy green on tawny ground,
head to head in the passing lane
with a pick-up sprouting children
and a blunderbuss fifties' Chevy
with no hood over its engine, with its insides exposed.
A quick jaunt to the underworld, the gauzy mummies.
But we lingered in the marketplace:
the two women—my cousin's wife, my lover—
poring over shawls and serapes;
my cousin clicking away with his Nikon and zoom
at the gargoyles' leering and capricious faces,

while I lost myself among the hawkers' masks—
swinging like lanterns on the standards—
blessed and damned with edgy, angular,
yet impassive facades.
And made of no special wood.
I wanted one anyway and forked out eight pesos.
It's hard crawling through the crypt.
You have to get down on your hands and knees
and the openings were meant
for smaller people, unless the getting down
was part of a solemn ritual.
It was a relief to be in the cool of the underworld,
away from the tension of the light.
The dead were well preserved.
They stood upright. They stayed together.

I couldn't have known it then, but soon
my cousin, his wife, my lover—soon
we would all be lost to each other forever—
not taken by death,

just gone into another kind of dust.

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