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Peeling the Grief Until the Onion is None

by L.C. Atencio

Legend has it that two mythic creatures,
which forged the earth themselves,
pay one a visit when one peels an onion.

They are two: the three-winged eagle
comes from the northeastern hemisphere
and brings half of a spirit clutched in its claws;
the other, the four-legged serpent, springs
without slithering from the southwestern hemisphere,
bringing over thus the other half of the spirit
in its venomous fangs.

Myth has it that when one peels an onion,
the serpent and the eagle, for only this occasion,
come together and join the spirit into one.

They come from opposites to make the spirit disconcerted;
and therefore soon surprised upon the visit they are paying.
Once gathered together, the enemies of lore
beguile, screech, and hiss at each other with maniac hunger
as the spirit, once full, slips into the house
through the opening of a window sash
and comes to the relative or friend,
and remains at his or her side.



The cycle repeats itself with that same one spirit
as many times as an onion has layers,
and the cutter cries time and time again
for what he knows,
and for what he doesn't.

At the last visit, the spirit kisses
the hand of the cutter as gently as the tears tumble
upon it in fragments like snowflakes, melted.
The spirit waves goodbye from the window
as it parts from the relative or friend,
but also as it parts from itself into two.

Half of the grief ascends with the
eagle. And half descends with the serpent.
By now, one has healed
and accepts the utter and absolute passing of someone.
Healed, not by the onion or its physical effect,

Cured instead one is by that last kiss
the soul laid upon one's hand,
for such a hand cut the onion slowly and committedly.
For one worked to weep and to eat and to live.