

The Library of Maps, #5
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Drawings by Slobodan Dan Paich

THE MAP OF THE HEART
for Rose Hacker

I
The Chief Librarian,
When first appointed,
Had been greatly challenged
As to whether to accept the Map of the Heart or not.

It was so fragile.



The maker was a hermit,
Who for years had lived in the desert outside Tucson.

Rumors would sometimes circulate in town
That he was working on a huge Map of the Heart.

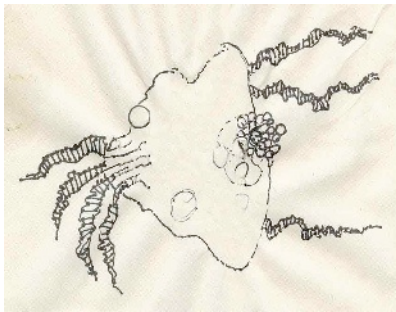
Certainly people knew
He was collecting vast quantities of rose bushes
—crimson, purple, and white—
And that he had built a lake on his land.

There was talk of a floating island in this lake,
Made out of bones and branches.

One day
A letter in faltering handwriting arrived,
Asking the Chief Librarian to visit the Hermit
As he wanted to donate his Map of the Heart to her library.

He wrote that he was getting old
And wanted to ensure
That his Map would be taken care of after his death.

She went to his home in the desert,
And was dazzled by the Map
As it floated on its bed of bones and branches in the lake.



From the shore,
She saw the Heart, made out of living rose bushes,
Moving gently back and forth in the water.
She could hear the sound of its beating.



The Hermit looked at her hopefully.
“Will you take it?” he asked.

ii

For several years,
The Chief Librarian and the Library Architect
Worked together feverishly
Trying to figure out
How to install the Map of the Heart.

Slowly,
They began to understand

That it would need a more solitary place,
Some distance away from the building.

Finally,
They decided to have the Lake of the Heart built,
And a gardener was found
Whose sole duty was to tend to the Heart.

And so the Hermit's Map of the Heart was installed.

III

On summer days, when the windows are open,
The scent of the Map's roses enters the library.

Enticed,
Readers leave their desks to walk to the Lake,
Where they sit,
Silent by the shore,
Listening to the Heart,
And smelling its fragrance.

It is said
That after this,
Some of the Readers
Never return to the Library,
But instead
Go to live in the Heart itself.



*Written March 23, 2001
Drawings by Slobodan Dan Paich added in Winter 2008-2009*