

Romulus

*Past Life Recollections of
Marie Fox O'Brien*

A List of Books

Marie's Story - An Extraordinary Odyssey

Channeled Books

Martin's Original Writings
Revelations
The Divine Nature of Man
Lessons
A new Endeavor
Concepts
Prayers

Past Lives

Moses
Zorah
Rose
Joseph II
Edam the Elder and Saleh
and Inga - Pala - Bana
Peter and Ann
Romulus
Remembrances-The Holy Family
Martin's Life Remembered

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Introduction

Monday, 11/15/93 3:31 AM

[Martin awakened me and told me to take my pen in hand. He said that he knew my feeling that what I was remembering was lacking in specifics, and that he would begin a story rich in detail.]

Let us begin.

This is a story of love triumphant, a marriage of two minds and two lives whose very existence was threatened by the world into which they were born --- he a man of vision and ability, the product of the love two slaves bore for each other, she a woman of vision and beauty, the cherished child of wealth and privilege. From the very beginning their lives took on a coloration that was to affect them for all of their earthly experience.

His name was Romulus, a name that his mother, ignorant as she was of what was to become of her first born son, felt suited him. His father disapproved in every way of her absolute conviction that this child, born into slavery, would know any fate other than that of his parents. He grew, as did all children of his station, in the steady assurance of his class, and although at no point did he exhibit rebellious behavior, in his heart there grew a steady conviction, nurtured by his mother's love and faith, that he did indeed differ from his fellow slave children, that he was

destined for something greater than a life of willing servitude.

As he grew, there were mutterings that this child was destined to be troublesome, that although he did willingly and well all that was demanded of him, it was impossible not to see in his words and in his demeanor his special nature. His intelligence was exceptional, and his every word betrayed this quality. He was acutely aware of the relationships between and among all those in the household, and his mother, when she was allowed to do so, instructed him in all she knew that she felt would aid in his advancement. It was beyond her dreams that he would ever know status beyond that of a slave, but she knew the comforts and privileges that advanced status could mean to a man of promise, and it was her dream that her son would achieve preeminence among his peers.

It was notable that Romulus at no point showed impatience with his lot, but at each point in his development it pleased him to be pleasing, and he took advantage of every opportunity to endear himself to those around him and to learn whatever there was to learn in his limited envi-

ronment. It was natural then, that he should come to the attention of the master of the household as a youth of great promise, of exceptional ability and admirable industry, and be chosen to be slave to the oldest son of the household. This privileged young man was a peevish child, indulged in every way, and consumed with dissatisfaction. It pleased him to have a slave that was his to command without limitation and upon whom to vent his angry dissatisfaction whenever it pleased him to do so.

Romulus was not easily rattled. He had grown to young manhood in the easy atmosphere of admiration and acceptance, and he felt keenly his gifts of tolerance and intelligence. Both these gifts were sorely tried by his relationship with his young master. There were incidents where it was clear that he was expected to behave in a manner designed to elicit laughter from those who called themselves his superiors, and to feel the abasement generally assumed to be the lot of the child of slavery. (3:53AM) (561 words)

Tuesday, 11/16/93 3:37 AM

In the course of time, Romulus endured much at the hands of his tormentors. He was asked on occasion, indeed frequently, to pretend to be various animals, ranging from an enraged dog to a strutting cock, and on each of these occasions he determined that he would endeavor to turn the tables, so to speak, and so enjoy his performance that the howls of his audience would seem like approbation rather than ridicule, and indeed these young oafs soon lost interest in the game once it became apparent that the target of their ridicule was not in the least discomforted but rather amused and entertained by the entire episode. In this, Romulus learned the valuable lesson of turning to his advantage the least fortunate of circumstances.

There were other occasions when Romulus would be set upon by the pack of young knaves and told to defend himself, and although he did not always emerge unscathed from these physical challenges, he grew adept at physical defense and found it possible to cleverly outwit those who would have enjoyed his humiliation. At no point

in these trials did Romulus feel victimized, although he was indeed exactly that, and each experience in servitude abused by these young cowards left him richer in experience and understanding. Grudgingly each time, they gave up the effort to prove their superiority and spent much time in devising new situations in which Romulus would be the quarry and they the hunters.

On a rarely beautiful day the spring that Romulus reached his fifteenth year, his mother died. Never had he conceived of grief like that he experienced at her death. His very world seemed to end, and he found masking his grief the greatest challenge he had encountered in his young life, for there was to be no mourning at the passing of any slave, nor was there to be any ceremony marking the passage from one world to the next. In his heart Romulus knew that his mother's goodness insured her swift passage to a life of eternal ease, but for the first time in his life he felt a surge of anger that nothing was accorded the person he revered above all others for the life she had led and the service she had so willingly offered.

Not a word of comfort or consolation reached

his ears, and Romulus grieved alone and wounded. Even his father, who had truly loved this woman, seemed untouched by her death, and it was not until much later that Romulus realized that each of them had been lost in grief in his own way, that his father's loss was as great as his own, but that having lived as a slave so many years longer than Romulus, he accepted without question or objection the limitations placed on the value of his life and the leaving of it. He could expect no more from any other. Romulus, however, was to look back on that purely beautiful spring day as the first turning point in his life. (3:57 AM) (505 words)

Thursday, 11/18/93 3:50 AM

Romulus was among those slaves who recognized that the inequity in social station had no relationship to the inequity in ability that marked the lot of man. There were occasions where he wondered aloud at the vagaries of fate, and his wondering did not go unnoticed by those of the slave household who shared his abilities. Slowly

there came to be a group of young men and women who gathered surreptitiously when the opportunity presented itself to exchange views among themselves and to share willingly whatever skills each had acquired. There was no question from the very beginning of these meetings that Romulus was the unanointed leader, that his charm and his intelligence marked him as the one to whom all others deferred.

In the meantime, Romulus continued to progress in his official status. The young master of the household, tiring of Romulus' refusal to consider himself humiliated under any circumstances and reluctantly aware that his slave outwitted him on every occasion while maintaining a totally respectful attitude in all things, demanded of his father that he be given another slave to replace Romulus. It was in Romulus' best interests to be apparently disappointed at not succeeding in pleasing his young master, and this feigned disappointment, while not persuading the master of the household of its sincerity, did indeed persuade him of Romulus' persistent cleverness, and he embraced the opportunity to take Romulus into his personal retinue.

This was a great accomplishment by any standards, but when it is considered how low in the slave hierarchy Romulus' parents were for all of their adult lives, the accomplishment becomes ever more notable. The master chose to have Romulus trained as his personal body servant, and to attend to his needs on all social occasions. This afforded Romulus the opportunity to learn much. He stood silent in the background, invisible to most eyes, and listened. What he heard of the conversations of these wealthy free men was at times and at first totally incomprehensible to him. Gradually his perception grew, along with his knowledge of the details of Roman life and government of which they spoke. Gradually he came to recognize by sight the names which he knew were significant in fashioning the society into which he had been born and which he was beginning to realize was grossly deficient in many respects.

As his knowledge grew, so did his awareness of the power it gave him. Never in the slightest way did he betray any dissatisfaction with his lot. On the contrary, he grew fond of his master, and grateful for the opportunity offered to him in all

he was asked to do, for each day he awakened with the sure knowledge that the day that lay ahead would hold opportunities for learning, and for Romulus learning was life itself. His hunger for knowledge knew no bounds, and it was slowly and steadily satisfied. (4:10)

Saturday, 11/20/93 5:23 AM

In the fullness of time, Romulus learned that the world of the wealthy free man had its advantages over the world of the slave in self indulgence and creature comforts, but that these advantages, so coveted by those who lacked them, did not bring happiness or self satisfaction with them.

Although there were individuals, rare individuals like his master, who never seemed to lose his awareness that all men, free and slave, were brothers in the most basic of ways, most of those who were privileged with wealth and status seemed to be discontented and unthinking, constantly striving for satisfactions just out of reach. Their pleasures failed to please, and so they sought constantly to invent new delights which

too failed to please, and there was a futile cycle of pleasure seeking dominating their lives. They indulged themselves physically in every way they could imagine and sought constantly to improve upon nature. Rarely did they find themselves satisfied with the results of these endeavors. In all of their conversations there was pettiness and back biting, and an underlying current of a desire to cause their fellow men discomfort and therefore bring into their own lives a feeling of superiority.

As Romulus observed these unfortunate aspects of the character of those who flocked to his master's household for food and entertainment, he reflected that these adults were not in any way different in their attitudes and characters than his young master and his friends he had come to regard as spoiled children incapable of feeling. These mature men simply had matured physically. Their minds were sadly lacking in maturity. At no point, of course, did Romulus betray his impatience with the idle chatter and destructive behavior which he observed, but he forgot nothing and grew to know the individual foibles and weaknesses of his master's guests so well that

rarely was he surprised at what he saw and heard.

He wondered at his master's patience with all that transpired within the walls of his home, and although he was not able ever to express his curiosity, he found himself listening closely to all his master said once his guests were gone from the house. He hungered to speak frankly to this man who was so different from his peers in behavior and attitude, but it was unthinkable to initiate such a conversation. So Romulus waited patiently in the hope that as time went by his master would find his trust in his slave so complete that it would find expression in words.

(5:40AM) (421 words)

Sunday 11/21/93 4:42 AM

It was a single incident that so changed Romulus' life that he wondered afterward what he would have done had it not occurred.

It was the custom for each family to celebrate the high holidays together, man, woman and child, come together to thank the gods for the

gifts of love and prosperity which had been afforded them. There was much visiting between families, and the exchange of gifts was expected of those who called themselves friends. There was a festive attitude during these celebrations which caught each member of the household up in its joy. Even those citizens not known for their joyous natures seemed transformed by the air of celebration that gripped the city. There was music and laughter everywhere.

In each household, the slaves were given new sets of clothing with which to acknowledge the start of the new year, and among themselves they exchanged gifts lovingly fashioned and hoarded over the previous months. It fell to Romulus to preside over the distribution of gifts from the master to the slaves. Being a man of generous heart, the master had gone beyond simple tradition and given each slave a gift of money in addition to the gift of clothing. The amounts of this monetary gift varied, and there was much good-natured curiosity among the slaves about who had been the most generously rewarded for the service of the previous year. It was generally acknowledged that length of serv-

ice was a primary consideration. Beyond that, the master chose those whom he rewarded more generously than others. The slaves attending the ladies of the household knew that they could assume generous acknowledgment. Those who labored long and hard each day in the kitchens knew that their toil would be fairly acknowledged. Beyond that, there was an assumption that all would be treated fairly equally.

The first two holiday celebrations after Romulus became the master's body servant, this was indeed the case, and Romulus considered himself well rewarded by his master though not distinguished in any way by the value of his holiday gift. The third year changed his life. When Romulus distributed the gifts to the rest of the slaves, he found no remembrance for him. His immediate assumption was that it was a simple oversight, and yet he knew that it was unlike his master to forget him, or any other slave for that matter.

That day Romulus went about his duties in the cheerful atmosphere of the holiday, betraying in no way his disappointment, his puzzlement. He was aware of his master's eye upon him at sev-

eral points in the day's activities, and there were times when his master seemed to be more than ordinarily demanding. Eventually Romulus became so involved in the events of the day that he stopped thinking of his having been omitted from the gift list, and when the day was ended he slept dreamlessly, tired as he was by the exertions of the day. (5:05 AM) (493 words)

Wednesday, 12/8/93 6:38 AM

The slave Romulus at no point betrayed his disappointment at his omission from the gift list. He knew it was a matter of speculation among all those in the household. He knew too that he was held in such respect and affection that the sympathy of those who looked at him questioningly at times was a source of great comfort. Never had this kind of omission occurred before in the memories of those longest in the household. The master was above all fair and even handed in his dispensation of gifts, as had his father been before him.

The months passed, and for Romulus they were

happy months. His responsibilities grew and his pleasure in life grew with them. More and more he became involved with the management of the household, and more and more the master relied on his judgment and responsibility. There was never any feeling between them but the cordiality of two who trusted each other absolutely and the respect and deference owed by any slave to his master. In truth, Romulus would have felt this respect and deference to the wise man he called his master regardless of his station, regardless of the formality of their relationship.

There was little time for Romulus to pursue any personal interests, but what time he did have was spent in study. The master was a generous man, and at no point had he ever objected to the desire Romulus felt most keenly to become educated in whatever ways were open to him. He thought of his dead mother often as he read from the master's library and imagined the pleasure she must know in his new found learning. His master shared with him more than with anyone else in the household the correspondence he had with great men in public life and lesser men with whom he was involved in public endeavors.

In time he used Romulus as his scribe, and he found great satisfaction in the achievements of this young man he had known since birth and had singled out from a young age as a slave of promise.

Romulus was intensely aware of his good fortune, and although he was not exposed widely to the inner workings of other households, he knew his position if not unique was rare, that rarely did any slave achieve the degree of respect and responsibility that he knew and that he had been given much at an earlier age than he could normally expect. (6:55 AM) (413 words)

Saturday, 12/18/93 5:15 AM

Before long, Romulus knew the pleasure of giving to his master the ultimate loyalty. There was each year at the equinox a contest among the slaves of the great households in which each house chose its contestants to vie with each other in events requiring both physical prowess and courage. There was much excitement about these contests for weeks in advance, both among

the gentry and among the slaves. Wagers were made, some of serious proportions among the patricians and less extravagant among the merchants and artisans. The slaves themselves, although it was forbidden, secretly gambled their meager moneys on their favorites.

In the household of Gaius Fabius there were few slaves who did not hunger to compete. Even those too old to take part in the contests were avid in their interest and anxious to participate indirectly as coaches and advisors. It fell to Romulus to supervise the selection of candidates from those anxious to compete and to assure that in the management of the household they were given adequate time to prepare. It was not necessary for each household to be represented in each event, but it was ideal to do so.

Romulus consulted regularly with his master on the preparation for this great day and was pleased to report to him the excellent progress that the slaves were making. Some had competed before and had the advantage of experience. Others were competing for the first time and had the advantages of freshness and youthful strength. There was little disagreement among

those who vied to be contestants about who should represent the household. Indeed there was rare objectivity at all times, remarkable considering the prestige involved for the individual slave. But loyalty to the honor of the household prevailed, and when the day of final selection came, Romulus was well pleased. The master himself was pleased as well. In his memory there had never been so capable and so promising a group of athletes. He expressed his pleasure to Romulus before leaving and entrusted him with some gold coins to be given to those who brought glory and pride to the house of Gaius Fabius the day of the contests.

Romulus secreted these coins on his person, intending to put them in a safe place, but in the stir of activities that morning and afternoon neglected to do this, and when, in the evening, he went to put the coins in a secure place, he could not find them. Romulus' distraction was complete. There was no opportunity to search that evening, but as soon as it was light, he retraced his steps of the previous day, and as the household began to stir, he closely questioned all who might have seen the lost treasure, for treas-

ure it was to Romulus and to all other slaves.

All Romulus' searching was to no avail, though he did not give up hope. He prayed to the gods that they look upon him, a simple slave, with mercy and come to his aid. And indeed it did seem as though the gods chose to smile upon Romulus when one of the young women who worked with the children came shyly to Romulus and proffered them to him in her outstretched hand. She said that in the early morning she had stepped outside the house and as she walked had seen a glitter among the dusty earth and that when she bent to see more closely she found the coins buried in the surface of the pathway. Romulus felt certain that he had not dropped the coins in that spot, but his gratitude at retrieving them sent any suspicion of treachery clear from his head. Little did he suspect the truth. (5:42 AM) (618 words)

Saturday, 1/9/94 6:30 AM

Romulus was aware of the tremendous responsibility that was his the day of the games. He awakened early in the morning to find the day cloudy and threatening. This unexpected change in the weather was, to him, cause for only minor concern. There was little chance, he felt, of a major storm. He was, in a sense, persuading himself of what he chose to believe, but he had a strange sense of the rightness of things. Never had it happened that the games had been interrupted by or canceled because of foul weather, and Romulus prayed that the unmentionable would not occur.

As if in direct response to his request, the skies seemed to lighten, and Romulus began his preparations for the contests with a thankful heart. The first responsibility that was his was to meet with all of the competing athletes to assure himself that each was fit and ready to represent his master's house. There was little doubt in his mind that his team was far superior to all others, partly because of their native ability, partly because of the faithfulness with which they had

trained, and partly because their devotion to their master was a source of inspiration to them. Each wanted intensely to win, partly for himself, even more for Gaius Fabius. The love they felt was soundly based.

Gaius Fabius took great pride in the relationships that existed within his household. He was insistent at all times that his slaves be treated with consistency and consideration, and never did he tolerate the slightest display of cruelty on the part of any member of his household towards others. Consequently there was a spirit of loyalty and camaraderie among both slaves and family rare in that society.

His awareness of his son's youthful and prideful treatment of Romulus had caused him distress when he discovered it through his son's boasting, and he had felt himself a failure as a father upon making this discovery. There had been a beneficial result. Gaius Fabius had spent enough time with his son in earnest discussion subsequently to persuade the young man of the emptiness of his efforts to feel superior and amusing at the expense of another human being regardless of his station in life, and a new and

deeper relationship between father and son began to flower. Gaius Fabius realized that in the press of affairs he had neglected his child and proceeded to give to him the time that he needed to feel fully a son, fully part of an important household, He gave his son opportunity to share the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood and was gratified by his son's response. The young man, on the other hand, while not forsaking his peers, entered upon a more mature relationship with them, and they envied his new found world.

So by the day of the games, the household was totally united and totally devoted each to the other. This was in sharp contrast to most other houses and was to be a decisive factor. (6:50 AM) (506 words)

Saturday, 4/23/94 9:37 AM

[I spoke to Martin before beginning to write.]

9:45 AM

Romulus spoke briefly that day to many people, both in his household and in others, and there

was not a single individual who was not impressed by the force of his personality. In each case, Romulus inspired interest and curiosity, and his name passed many lips as questions were posed and answered about the identity of this extraordinary young man.

In the normal course of a slave's life, there would be no opportunity for interchange between the owned and the owners, but the games once a year created the air of festivity in which all men were deemed equal, and so inspired a feeling of fellowship that indeed rank and position were momentarily forgotten.

As he had expected, the house of Gaius Fabius prevailed in the games, triumphing in most of the contests. This had not happened before -- a single noble house so dominating the contests -- and there was much speculation as to what led to such a series of successes. Gaius Fabius modestly and honestly acknowledged the primary part Romulus had played, both in his selection of slave athletes and in the constant preparation he had both supervised and inspired. The spirit of cooperation had, said Gaius Fabius, led his house to this glorious culmination of all their

hopes and efforts. In all of this, Romulus modestly reflected back the credit, both to his master for his tolerant encouragement and to his fellow slaves for the loving devotion to their master and his household that inspired their efforts and led directly to their triumphs.

The celebration lasted well into the evening with food in abundance and wine freely flowing.

There was an air of community among all. Old differences were forgotten. New promises were made. All ages met as one. Romulus marveled that this fellowship emerged so freely and was forgotten so quickly. After the euphoria of the games and their celebration, Romulus realized, everything and everybody would revert to their previous positions and attitudes, and only the memory of triumphant equality and joyful fellowship would remain to sustain those less fortunate for another year. Increasingly, as he pondered, Romulus came to hunger for a world in which the loving fellowship of men and women, and children as well, was constant rather than an interruption in the way of life all knew.

(10:00AM) (383 words)

Saturday, 4/30/94 8:15 AM

At first Romulus was unaware of the yearning he felt to be a man free from servitude in any form. He was aware of his good fortune in having a master generous in word and deed, anxious at all times for the well being of each member of his household regardless of the relationship or the status. As a result Gaius Fabius knew a contentment rare among his countrymen and enjoyed affection from all his household that was equally rare.

In the course of time, Romulus also became aware of stirrings within him whenever he looked upon the face of the daughter of Gaius Fabius, his youngest and most cherished child. There had been little opportunity for Romulus to see this young beauty until his responsibilities increased and he became manager of all household activities that required services beyond the ordinary. On the occasion of the fifteenth birthday of Estrella, for that was what she was called by her familiars, Gaius Fabius proclaimed that the following year there would be such a celebration for his daughter's reaching the age of matu-

urity that the city had never seen.

At Gaius Fabius' words, Romulus knew in his heart that he would be chosen, as he had been for the games, to be responsible for all the various aspects of such a magnificent occasion. He was well experienced in planning. The thought of the coming months filled him with pleasure as he looked upon the serene face of the young woman who was to fill his life in ways he dared not dream of. (8:25 AM) (261 words)

Monday, 5/2/94 5:02 AM

Before all else, Romulus knew the importance of loyalty. His mother had for him been the personification of all worthy attributes, and she had spoken often to him in his early years about the absolute need for faithful service. She had stressed the joy in life which came from the self awareness of loyalty and fidelity to all those to whom it was owed by the very nature of the life to which each person was born. Often she would point out to Romulus that an unhappy individual fighting against fate suffered first from a

realization of what he owed life in loyalty.

In those days following the celebration of Estrella's fifteenth birthday, Romulus thought often of his mother and her teachings. He knew that he had been born into a life which demanded total loyalty and total submission to his master, and never before had he found cause to question this primary duty. Now, in the dark of the night, he found himself questioning the fate that was his by birth. He knew that he had been given a mind superior to many. He knew that his character was finely formed, that he did not lack the virtues deemed admirable in a free man. He had, to this point in his life, simply lacked the capacity to question. He had submitted totally. (5:12 AM)
(223 words)

Monday, 11/20/95 5:15AM

There was little that could be done, Romulus felt. He had been born a slave. He would die a slave. But he had achieved much more than his mother's dreams had envisioned. His status in the household was secure. His mind was finely tuned to the world he lived in. He was respected without question by all those it was his responsibility to oversee, and he felt a warmth of affection that was rare among those he directed in all ways.

Gaius Fabius at all times indicated his approval of Romulus and it was a source of quiet amusement to him that his slave succeeded in all ways in being superior in word, thought, and action to many of the noble free men it was his duty to serve. At all times Romulus was aware of the depth of his master's respect and devotion, and this awareness did much to assuage Romulus' budding discontent with the world that held him captive while others less worthy knew the pleasures of independence and freedom.

At such times as Romulus pondered the inequities of the society into which he had been

born, he felt most keenly the deprivation of love shared. There were many fine women among the household slaves who would have considered it a privilege to be the wife of Romulus, but in none of them did Romulus find the irresistible attraction that he craved. He was a romantic in every way when he pondered the nature of the love between a man and a woman, and he refused to consider the possibility that he would never know this wonder.

Increasingly when his thoughts turned to love, Romulus saw in his mind's eye the face of his beautiful mistress Estrella, and he indulged himself in the fancy that someday, somehow, she would look at him with eyes of love and he would be free to respond. In his sober moments Romulus fully realized the folly of his dream, but the dream stubbornly returned time after time, and Romulus began to be the prisoner of his imagination. (5:30) (345 words)

Tuesday, 11/21/95 5:07AM

Increasingly Romulus found himself inventing

excuses to seek out the lovely Estrella. It was natural for him to do so in a sense. As he had anticipated, the overall responsibility for the celebration of the young girl's coming of age rested with him, and Gaius Fabius, always the indulgent father, saw to it that his daughter's wishes were respected in every way.

At first, it seemed to Romulus, Estrella, always secure in her position, did not pay attention to him beyond brief answers. Although she was aware of the role Romulus played in the affairs of her family, her bearing indicated to him that she regarded him not as a man but as a functionary. This was not in any way surprising to Romulus. She had been surrounded since birth by slaves. She was aware at all times of the distance that lay between free and slave, and although she was at all times fair and kind in her relationships with those who served her, there was no hint of intimacy in her relationships with the members of the household staff, even with those who served her most closely. In this she reflected the society in which she lived, and, in a sense, the father she loved. Gaius Fabius, by example, had trained his daughter well. It was be-

yond possibility that Estrella would ever forget her position.

Romulus, while acknowledging the futility and the foolishness of the love he felt growing in him for this beautiful young woman, in no way betrayed his feelings. At the same time he knew himself to be a captive of his feelings as surely as he was a captive in his class. Never, of course, did he speak with Estrella that she was not surrounded by those serving her in other ways.

Gaius Fabius defied tradition by educating his daughter in every way he considered important, and although Romulus had no first hand knowledge of the mind inside the beautiful body that so attracted him, he was confident that the beauty he saw in her was interior as well as exterior. There were times when he went out of his way to be near her quarters in the hope of overhearing her conversation with her tutors or her voice as she sang, for music filled the house of Gaius Fabius at his express wish, and it delighted him that his daughter shared his passion for this art. (5:24) (405 words)

Wednesday, 11/22/95 6:00AM

It was Romulus' prideful nature that led indirectly to the meeting he craved. In the course of the preparations for the joyous celebration of Estrella's coming of age, Romulus maintained a high degree of objectivity. He separated completely his professional duties from his growing feeling of love for the young beauty he knew he could not ever hope to have as his wife.

There came a time when he was called upon to report directly to Estrella and the slave who had been her nurse since birth. The meeting was arranged for an early morning in May, and in preparation for it Romulus arranged to present to her each day's calendar as he had planned it, for the feast was to last five days and to encompass a series of entertainments. Guests from afar would be housed luxuriously and provided transportation. Those who lived nearby would be scheduled for some of the celebratory events and omitted from others depending upon their rank and their closeness to the family. Then there were preparations to be made for the youthful group, those of Estrella's age, some of

whom she would know as friends, others she would be meeting for the first time. Romulus was confident of Estrella's approval. He had taken great pains, he felt, to attend to the slightest detail.

At the meeting, Estrella's nurse sat to one side as Romulus spoke to his young mistress. She was fond of Romulus and knew that she had no cause for concern in any way. Estrella looked carefully at all the lists and drawings Romulus had prepared as he spoke of the extensive preparations already made. She was at first serious of expression, her eyes lowered modestly, but as Romulus spoke her expression softened and a slight smile played about her lips. She looked at her nurse at one point and the nurse, Selena, smiled back and nodded her head approvingly.

Finally when Romulus had completed his presentation and stood awaiting her questions and comments, she looked up at him and without a word searched his features for what seemed a long time. Then she averted her eyes and lowered her head and said simply, "That will do." Romulus waited an instant for further words, for

an expression of gratitude and pleasure. None came. He bowed stiffly and motioned to the slave who stood in the background to gather together the papers that were scattered about --- lists and drawings. Then, without a word himself, he left the room, nodding to Selena as he passed her. He failed to see Estrella lifting her head and looking after him, her eyes full of the wonder he had longed to see, the beginnings of all he had so fervently hoped for. (6:17) (455 words)

Friday, 11/24/95 7:08AM

In all of his life, Romulus had never known such conflict within himself. He knew full well the rigidity of the slave system. He was at all times aware of the limitations it imposed upon him. He knew that he depended entirely upon the good graces of his master and that at any point in time Gaius Fabius had the power to strip him of all responsibility and privilege and to assign him to the basest of duties. At the same time, Romulus' hunger for the lovely Estrella grew. When he thought of her, his anguish tormented him. He longed to speak directly to her of his

feelings, to dare to believe that his words would be welcome and that she would respond with warmth and acceptance. He knew the folly in this kind of thinking, the absurdity of trying to express himself when all he wanted to say most surely would result in ruin, in the loss of all he had spent so many years achieving.

And so Romulus was a man torn apart by a passion he had not sought and could not control. Each waking moment his mind was full of recrimination --- for himself, for the world he lived in, and for the fate that had brought him to the point of despair. It took all the discipline of which Romulus was so proud to keep him from deteriorating in the performance of his duties. No one could have guessed the turmoil that lay beneath the surface, no one, that is, except for Gaius Fabius. This man, so kind always to Romulus and to all the other members of his extensive household but particularly to Romulus, seemed always to know more than outward behavior portrayed, and he sensed in Romulus the unhappiness that he had never sensed in him before.

Gaius Fabius did not at first speak to his slave of

his misgivings. Romulus had always seemed to him more a son than slave, but he hesitated to speak to him lest he encourage Romulus to say things that were potentially harmful to his position, potentially unacceptable for a slave to express, but he determined to watch closely and try to determine for himself what was troubling this young man who had always been a source of strength in the household and whose merits were beyond question. (7:27) (390 words)

Monday, 11/27/95 6:17AM

In the course of time Romulus discovered the complexity of the situation in which he found himself. He could not, he felt, strain in any way the relationship of trust, affection, and duty that he had enjoyed for so many years with his master. At the same time he felt it impossible to quench the fires that raged in his heart. He had been told by his attending slave that as he picked up the materials left by Romulus after his meeting with Estrella that the girl had thrown herself into the arms of her nurse and spoke brokenly to her of an impossible love.

Romulus was torn. He dared hope that he was the object of Estrella's affection, while at the same time he realized that if it were true it did not take him a single step closer to his dreams. Gaius Fabius, as much as he loved his daughter, would not, Romulus realized, tolerate such a breach of tradition and usage. He would be persuaded that this affection of Estrella's was an adolescent aberration. What Romulus did not know was that among the guests invited to the festivities soon to occur was a young man of impeccable heritage with whose parents Gaius Fabius had tentatively discussed a union.

And so, each day that passed brought Romulus closer to despair while the desire for Estrella's love grew. He had no one to whom he could speak of his conflict. He thought of his mother often and wished for her loving concern and infinite wisdom and tried to imagine what advice she would have given him. He remembered all the aspirations she had had for him, all the faith she had had in Romulus' talents and devotion to duty, and he knew in his heart that her counsel to him would be to overcome this temptation, to resist doing anything or saying anything that

would result in ruination of all he had worked so hard to achieve.

Romulus thought long and hard from the moment of rising each day to the moment of sleep each evening, and he saw his mother's face in his mind's eye and heard over and over the words he was sure she would say. There were times when Romulus was not sure whether he was imagining these words or if this sweet spirit who loved him more than life itself was speaking to him from the peaceful kingdom she had found after death. Romulus found himself more and more aware of the wisdom of his mother's advice from beyond death and summoned all his strength to do as he felt she wanted him to. He would find another love one day, he told himself. (6:35) (450 words)

Tuesday, 11/28/95 5:26AM

It was shortly after Romulus made this firm decision that his life changed dramatically. It was just before the festivities began that Gaius Fabius summoned Romulus and spoke to him of

his pleasure in the service he had known from him for so many years. Romulus felt himself blushing with gratification at the words of his master though he was already fully aware of all that he heard. He stood quietly as Gaius Fabius went on to speak further of Romulus' many talents and the limitations placed on these talents by his status as slave. Romulus was, Gaius Fabius said, an extraordinary young man in many ways and he found it difficult to accept the fact that Romulus had reached the highest status he could hope for and that life offered him little challenge henceforth.

At this point Gaius Fabius rose and walked to the window, turning his back on Romulus, and Romulus thought he sensed a quaver in his master's voice. He heard Gaius Fabius say that in view of Romulus' native intelligence and quick mastery of all that challenged him and in view of all that Romulus had contributed to the household, particularly in planning this momentous celebration of Estrella's coming of age, it was the intention of Gaius Fabius to grant Romulus his freedom and release him completely from slavery.

Romulus was stunned. In all of his thinking nothing had prepared him for this momentous announcement. He was, perhaps for the first time in his life, speechless. The silence in the room grew heavy as Gaius Fabius stood looking out the window and Romulus stood looking at his back, willing himself not to tremble or in any way betray the emotion which shook him. He was too stunned to think clearly about the implications of freedom. It was a world he had never known. (5:40) (308 words)

Friday, 12/1/95 6:50AM

It took all the self control Gaius Fabius possessed to speak calmly of granting Romulus his freedom, and Romulus sensed the intensity of his master's feelings. Indeed Romulus' emotions matched his master's in their power.

First and foremost Romulus felt a sense of disbelief. He was being given the gift he had longed for and he was not sure that he was glad of it. He knew the security of his place in the noble house of Gaius Fabius and the material and

emotional security it offered. He had knowledge of the outside world primarily through those he served as visitors to the house of Gaius Fabius. He knew nothing of the existence of a free man without means or family or friends. He knew that all those he looked upon fondly in his present position would be cut off from him henceforth. Slaves did not mingle with free men except to serve them.

All this flashed through Romulus' mind in the silence that followed Gaius Fabius' announcement. Romulus knew that it was his responsibility to respond. He willed his tongue to speak. It failed to obey. He rubbed his hands over his face as if to assure himself that he was not in a dream, that the totally unexpected was happening. Finally Romulus managed a broken "Master..." At this word Gaius Fabius turned from the window and approached Romulus' trembling form. Romulus knelt before his master. Gaius Fabius gently lifted Romulus to his feet and told him that he had no cause for fear, that Romulus' abilities would serve him equally well as a free man and that he must at all costs believe in himself as his master believed in him.

Romulus nodded his head, still incapable of speech, and as if from a great distance heard his master say that he had given great thought to the decision to grant Romulus his freedom and that he would speak further of the plans he had made to ensure the transition from slave to free man for Romulus. He bade Romulus not to speak of all that had occurred in this room until given permission at a later time, and he assured Romulus that his uncertainty would dissipate when he heard all that his master planned for him. He would, he said, speak further to Romulus when he had recovered from the surprise of Gaius Fabius' words.

Romulus searched the face of his master as he spoke and saw there the kindly concern that he had grown to expect. Suddenly he was filled with a sense of exhilaration and his fears vanished. Words of gratitude rushed to his lips, but he controlled himself and expressed his thanks in the simplest of words. Gaius Fabius knew his slave well and sensed the restraint that lay behind Romulus' words and demeanor, and he smiled to himself in satisfaction. He dismissed Romulus with a gentle touch on his sleeve and promised

that it would not be long before they spoke again of what lay ahead for Romulus. (7:10) (505 words)

Sunday, 12/3/95 1:10AM

It was not long before Romulus determined to refuse his master's offer of freedom. Day and night since the offer was made, he had been wracked with fear of the unknown. He was terrified lest his talents be useless to him in the world of the free man. He saw himself friendless and penniless, unable to cope.

Again, Romulus took care to hide his concern from all who observed him closely. He went through the motions in every way expected of him in his duties, but his eyes were dull and unseeing, his expression vacant. He longed for the moment he would speak to his master of his decision and at the same time feared it. He rehearsed the words he would say over and over again and never did they seem quite right. He knew he must wait until his master summoned him before he could speak. A slave was not

granted the privilege of the initiative.

Once or twice during these tormented few days Romulus had occasion to speak to Estrella to ask her wishes about details of the celebration. He was gratified that she chose not to look at him directly as she spoke. He could not have borne looking into the clear beauty of those eyes. On other occasions the sound of her laughter nearby set him trembling, and he wondered if ever he would know surcease from this hopeless infatuation. He feared not. (1:20) (239 words)

Saturday, 12/9/95 1:24AM

It was not a simple task, Romulus realized, that he faced. All of his life he had respected and relied upon the judgment of his master. Now at the most momentous opportunity of his life he intended to reject his master's judgment and refuse his generosity. Romulus knew that he needed to be totally honest with Gaius Fabius about his reasons for this departure from loyal acceptance, and he struggled to find the words that would tell the truth of his fears without

making him seem little more than cowardly.

Finally Romulus felt secure in all he intended to say when the time came for him to confront his master with his decision. Romulus hoped that his master would not be too disappointed at his slave's lack of courage at the same time that he felt in his heart that such a response was inevitable. He knew that this disappointment would be tinged with sorrow as well, but that his master's understanding would remain unshaken. There was little that Gaius Fabius did not understand and accept about the behavior of all those in his household.

And so when the time came for Romulus to reveal to his master his startling decision, he felt confident of his persuasive powers. To his surprise when he entered the chambers of Gaius Fabius for the meeting he found his master in the presence of another man, one he had never seen nor served. Romulus stopped and hesitated just inside the entrance fearing that he had interrupted his master, that something had altered the time of the planned meeting. Romulus stood quietly until his master became conscious of his presence. Gaius Fabius rose and gestured for

Romulus to approach. The stranger remained seated, a sure sign of his equality with Gaius Fabius. (1:36) (299 words)

Sunday, 12/10/95 3:42AM

As Romulus approached his master he saw a gentle smile playing about his lips and his heart sank. Once again he was assailed by fears that he would hurt this man who was more like a father to him than his own father had been.

"Come, Romulus," he heard his master say. "I want you to meet a friend you have not known until now." He motioned for Romulus to follow him as he turned and returned to the dais where the stranger sat comfortably. Romulus was surprised to see the same small smile playing about the stranger's lips. In a leisurely way the stranger rose to his feet and Romulus felt his probing eyes examining him from head to toe.

Finally he spoke as Gaius Fabius looked on. "Well, Romulus," he said in a quietly authoritative tone, "your master has told me much about you. He feels, as you are perhaps aware, that you

are extraordinarily gifted in many ways." Romulus felt himself coloring with pleasure despite his determination to show no emotion. He nodded to the stranger and permitted himself to look at Gaius Fabius with what he hoped conveyed his grateful affection.

Then the stranger engaged Romulus in conversation, a series of questions designed to weigh his knowledge and cleverness. Romulus was more comfortable when this exchange began. There was no hesitation in his answers, no doubt about his sureness in all he said in response.

All this time Gaius Fabius remained silent, barely moving as his gaze switched from one to the other, from questioner to respondent. His face in no way reflected concern or uncertainty, but his expression grew softer as Romulus in every way confirmed all he had said of him to his friend. Finally it was over and the stranger looked at Gaius Fabius and smiled broadly.
(3:53) (306 words)

[To this point, Martin has written 8579 words in twenty-one sections. The total writing time involved has been six hours and six minutes. Not one word has been changed from the original inscription.]

Wednesday, 12/20/95 8:38AM

It was not long before Romulus discovered the reason for the stranger's broad smile. He thought often during the course of his later life of the wonder of those hours when he was told of his master's plan to aid him in succeeding as a free man in a society so stratified as to make such a transition virtually impossible.

Gaius Fabius had excused Romulus at the close of the stranger's questioning, and told him to wait in an anteroom for the summons to return. Romulus' mind was in turmoil. He knew that for some reason he had been tested. He knew in his mind that he had not been found wanting. He could not, however, comprehend the part that the friend of his master's was playing in this drama. His determination to refuse the gift of

freedom was now in doubt. He was assailed by a wild hope that this stranger offered hope, offered an alternative solution. In this he was not disappointed.

After a brief interval during which Romulus resisted the impulse to pace back and forth in the anteroom but instead stood quietly his arms folded and tried to imagine what was being said. He could barely hear the quiet murmur of voices from the room he had just left and he hoped desperately that this conversation would be a source of new hope for him. Once or twice other slaves walked by and after acknowledging Romulus with a nod looked curiously at him. It was rare to see Romulus not in action of some sort.

Then finally Romulus saw Gaius Fabius in the doorway and heard him speak his name. "Come, my son," he said, and when Romulus heard these words he was filled with wonder. Although he knew the close bond of affection that existed between him and his master it was as unthinkable for Gaius Fabius to call him "son" as it was for him to call his master "father." There was no time for Romulus to think through the implica-

tions of this show of intimacy, for in a moment he was standing before the stranger who still smiled broadly.

"Well, Romulus," he heard the stranger say, "My friend Gaius has given me a challenge that it is a pleasure to anticipate. We shall know each other well and soon, and if I am any judge of humankind, and I believe that I am, this challenge will be both satisfying and profitable. Both of us will profit. It is hard to say which more."

At this Romulus was thoroughly puzzled. He grasped the import of the words but could not fathom further. (8:58) (438 words)

Monday, 1/2/96 4:10AM

The details were quickly settled. Romulus felt that he must be dreaming as he heard his master say that the stranger was a distant kinsman who lived at some distance away and who was, in his own community, a man of substance and influence. Gaius Fabius explained to Romulus that to live in this distant place would be to insure a new beginning. He would assume a new identity, though retaining his given name, as the kinsman of the stranger come to visit. Then, Gaius Fabius said, after a while, assuming that Romulus adjusted as he certainly would to his new status and new environment, he would choose to make his home in this new place.

To start with, Gaius Fabius was prepared to provide Romulus with funds enough to assume the identity of a young man of noble birth. Then, he continued, he would be expected to participate in the stranger's various businesses. Romulus would be able to establish himself as a successful man of means. No doors would be closed to him, no activity impossible.

At hearing these words Romulus felt reborn.

Gone were his fears of failure. Left was an overwhelming gratitude for this kind man who had served as such a model for Romulus. He began to protest taking money from his master to begin his new life, and then in a flash of awareness knew suddenly that he would be able to repay this indebtedness many times over.

Gaius Fabius paused in his recital, and Romulus stood mutely before him, tongue tied for perhaps the first time in his life, his face reflecting the wonder of all he was hearing. (4:20) (277 words)

Sunday, 1/7/96 2:35PM

In the space of a few years, Romulus would look back upon his days in slavery as if they had been a part of another life. He never ceased to wonder at the tender caring of his master and rejoiced that the gods had sent him to a life with this good man. He thought often of his mother and spoke to her often of his thankfulness for all she had given to him in love and striving, and although he heard no words in direct response,

he was at these times filled with the sense of her warm presence, enveloped in love.

It was not without sorrow that Romulus took leave of the house of Gaius Fabius. Indeed there was general mourning at his departure. Those slaves who had worked directly under him felt the sense of loss most keenly and knew that it would be their good fortune to find another man as capable and fair in his dealings as Romulus had always been. They faced the future without Romulus with trepidation.

All the household had been told simply that Romulus would spend some time in the service of Gaius Fabius' kinsman, and that though he would be sorely missed it was the hope of Gaius Fabius that Romulus would at some future time be in their midst. No explanation was given and none sought about why Gaius Fabius would relinquish Romulus' services to a distant kinsman, but all were aware of the generosity that marked each act of Gaius Fabius' life and attributed this great gift to his generous heart.

As for Romulus, each day that he spent in the household of Gaius Fabius was a day to be cherished. He knew that his departure would take

place in a matter of days, and although he knew full well the foolishness of his feelings he endeavored to spend as much time as practicable within the sight and sound of Estrella. She had thanked him profusely at the close of her birthday celebrations, in sharp contrast to her lack of responsiveness during the preparations, and Romulus felt once again the warm rush of emotion that he craved. He wondered if he would ever see this lost love again, but he refused the luxury of wild hope. He knew that his new life would demand every bit of energy and devotion of which he was capable and that his dreams should in no way interfere with his performance. (2:49)
(411 words)

Sunday, 1/14/96 4:54AM

It was some time before Romulus knew the full nature of his new benefactor. From the start he recognized the quick intelligence of the man who was to mold his life as a free citizen. In a way their minds were very similar, though it was clear that Romulus had far to go to achieve the sophistication and self confidence that marked

the mind of Lapidus Petrus, but from the start Lapidus Petrus inspired in his protegee the kind of self assurance that was to mark his personality for the rest of Romulus' life.

There was little consultation between the two men as they prepared to depart from the house that Romulus had always known as home. Indeed Romulus was only aware that this departure was imminent, and each day he awakened to the uncertainty of what the day held. He continued to function as slave to his master, Gaius Fabius, and in no way did he betray to his peers or to those he served the monumental change that was about to occur in his life. Indeed, Lapidus seemed to find quiet amusement in the total equanimity with which Romulus conducted himself, betraying in no way the relationship that existed between them, and Gaius Fabius as well conducted himself as he had always as kind and beneficent head of household, the only change in his manner being a sadness that Romulus saw in his eyes.

In truth, Gaius Fabius was dreading the departure of the young man who had for so many years been a source of pride and satisfaction to

him. He knew that although others could and would assume the duties of Romulus, it would not be the same. He felt, indeed, that he was losing a part of himself, and he was surprised at the depth of his feelings. He knew that no one must suspect either the emotional nature of his relationship to his slave nor the bold plan that he and Lapidus had arranged for the transformation from slave to free man for Romulus.

And so the days passed uneventfully until the morning that Gaius Fabius summoned him into his presence and spoke quietly to Romulus. The time had come, he said sadly, for Romulus to put together whatever personal items he chose to take with him and to prepare to travel that very day. Despite the fact that Romulus had been expecting the pronouncement, he was taken aback and began to tremble. Gaius Fabius smiled as he put his hand on Romulus's sleeve. "Go in peace," he said, his voice choked with emotion, "and trust that the gods will bring us together once again." Romulus dropped to his knees and clung to the hand of his master. He spoke no word. Gently Gaius Fabius disengaged his hand, and when Romulus finally raised his head and

got to his feet, his master was nowhere in sight, nor did he see him again until the time of final farewell. (5:15) (496 words)

Saturday, 1/20/96 7:20AM

It was with deep regret that Romulus spoke his last words of farewell and gratitude to his master. Gaius Fabius himself was deeply moved, and Lapidus Petrus watched closely as these two parted company. He was aware of the depth of feeling that existed between Romulus and his friend, and he wondered idly if over a period of time he too would grow to love and respect this young man whose life was about to change so radically.

Lapidus was a man whose life had been marked by privilege, but who matured knowing that privilege was not enough to satisfy him. Born to wealth, he had determined to make his mark on the world independent of all that he had come to have by birth. And so even as a very young man he had striven to excel in all things. He had become by sheer force of will an outstanding

athlete and delighted in competition that forced him to further effort. He had taken a great interest in the growth of the society into which he had been born in economic terms, and even as a very young man had engaged in business ventures which tested his ingenuity. Rarely did he experience failure, and when he did he felt that the lessons learned had been well worth the effort. Over the years his industry had resulted in a tripling of his worth, but the riches amassed meant little to Lapidus Petrus. He enjoyed success, but the profits involved meant little to him. He had little time for personal pleasures, but he assumed that one day he would know the pleasures of marriage and parenthood, but he had not felt obliged to make hasty changes in his lifestyle, and so he existed independently and happily as a single gentleman much admired by the community in which he lived. He lived lavishly but not extravagantly, and had little patience with the frivolous pleasure-seeking of those he was expected to know socially. He tried to conform when called upon to do so in society, but there was a restless need for him to evade these intrusions in his life.

His enjoyment was in accomplishment and in scholarly research, and he was content with the solitary life he led, though he had welcomed the summons of his kinsman Gaius Fabius and gladly accepted the challenge that Gaius Fabius had given to him. He was determined that Romulus would not only make the transition from slave to free with ease and grace, but that he would go further under Lapidus' tutelage in many fields and knew that he would find pleasure in this process. He recognized in Romulus the qualities that had earned the love and respect of Gaius Fabius, and he was eager to explore this fine mind and spirit further.

Lapidus Petrus smiled to himself often on the homeward journey as he anticipated all that lay ahead for him in this unusual venture. Romulus, for his part, felt more at ease each hour he spent with his benefactor and hope sang loudly in his soul. (7:39) (514 words)

Monday, 1/22/96 5:55AM

There was little doubt in the mind of Lapidus

Petrus during the ensuing weeks that Romulus would succeed and that he would know general acceptance by those who had once regarded those of his class as little more than animals. He was amused at the extent of the deception which he had masterminded.

Once they reached the town of Sparticus, they were greeted, as expected by Lapidus Petrus, by visits from all the important citizens of the area, and to each one Lapidus Petrus introduced Romulus as the son of a dear kinsman come to visit his uncle for an extended period, perhaps even to become a permanent part of the community. He was a young man of spirit, Lapidus confided to those eager to know more, who craved the challenges that a new environment offered. Romulus, he confided, was bored and restless unless challenged in many ways, and, he added conspiratorially, these fine citizens should expect Romulus to become part of their lives.

Lapidus Petrus had carefully coached Romulus in the demeanor and mannerisms that would win him quick acceptance, and Romulus was an apt student. Even Lapidus was impressed with the poise and self confidence Romulus seemed to

make part of his nature. He went so far as to affect a certain disdain for those he was meeting for the first time, thereby forcing his new acquaintances into an effort to be likable and liked by this young man who assumed an importance in the society by the bond of family with Lapidus Petrus.

There was speculation among many of these men that Romulus must indeed have motivation other than restlessness to become such a traveler and to be considering a total change in his existence. Lapidus encouraged this speculation by hints and sideways glances, amused at the air of mystery that was being woven around his protege. He was pleased from the very first instant by the persuasiveness of Romulus' bearing. Had he been born of noble blood, had he been raised knowing satisfaction of his every whim, he could not have portrayed more effectively the character Lapidus Petrus had sought to create.

When they were alone together Romulus was able once again to shed the mannerisms and affectations he had adopted to establish himself as not only a free man but a man of noble lineage and bearing. At those times Romulus listened en-

chanted as Lapidus Petrus began his education in the ways of acquiring wealth. (6:10) (408 words)

Monday, 2/5/96 5:30AM

In the best of times Romulus knew no regret in his new life. His uncertainties vanished with each new success he knew as a free man. In the beginning, Lapidus Petrus went with him on each mission and introduced him to his business colleagues and those who worked under him. Gradually, Lapidus Petrus withdrew from direct participation and entrusted Romulus with the primary responsibility for management of enterprises well and successfully established.

Romulus found great pleasure in being treated not only as an equal but as a superior by those who a few short months ago would have found him invisible. He thought often of Gaius Fabius and longed to speak to him of all he had learned of human nature in the world of the free man. He longed to look once again on the face of the lovely Estrella and to see her surprise at the suc-

cess he had come to take for granted in his new life. It was his earnest wish that one day he would know this dream come true.

In the meantime, Romulus spent almost every waking moment learning all that Lapidus Petrus felt necessary, and each day brought new pleasure in achievement. Romulus wondered at the intricacies of the world of money that he had never before considered, and as his sophistication increased he began to wonder about the miracle of great wealth. It seemed in time to him that the acquisition of great wealth as an end in itself posed problems that had no easy answers. His benefactor was a good man, a source of knowledge and inspiration in matters of business, but he was in a sense lacking in all other ways, himself oblivious to these failings. He had never married, though he knew many attachments, each one seemingly briefer than the one before. His household was presided over by his mother, a woman of great dignity and self assurance who had been prematurely widowed, and graced by a younger sister who had been the last product of the union and who was several years younger than Lapidus Petrus. He adored her and

indulged her every wish. He had the warmest respect for his mother, and never failed in any way to express this respect and to tell her in countless ways of his gratitude for all she meant to him. So Lapidus was, in a sense, a family man and seemed to need no further attachments other than for temporary pleasure. He was much sought after socially but chose to participate only occasionally in the constant round of entertainments that marked his society.

In all of this, Romulus was a silent observer. Rarely did he speak to Lapidus about matters other than business and rarely did he speak to anyone else except on the most superficial basis. Only Lapidus' mother was aware of Romulus' true origin, and she was scrupulously polite and accepting of this young man new to her household, but there was always a distance between them, one which would have existed no matter what the origin of Romulus had been. (5:53)
(512 words)

[To this point Martin has written 11,635 words in eight hours and eight minutes, an average of 1431 words per hour.]

Tuesday, 6/18/96 6:55AM

Before long Romulus was more than satisfied with the life he led under the tutelage of Lapidus Petrus. Each day brought to him new confidence in his abilities and new achievement in his business endeavors. He continued to be a source of speculation in the community, and although he was often courted socially he maintained a distance between himself and those who sought to know him socially. His heart remained in the house of Gaius Fabius and he was little inclined to seek female companionship.

He often speculated about the beautiful Estrella. Did she think of him ever? In his heart he longed to believe that her thoughts turned often to him, but he sternly reminded himself that each passing day made it less likely. She was of marriageable age, and it was only natural to assume that her hand was much sought after by the most eligible of the young men who could not fail to be impressed with her beauty and character and who could not fail to perceive the advantages of this close alliance with the house of Gaius Fabius.

And so Romulus bent all his energies to the business at hand, though he knew the emptiness of a life solely devoted to pursuit of material success. (7:05) (210 words)

Saturday, 8/3/96 4:47AM

It was a long time before Romulus felt totally secure in his role as a free man, but both time and opportunity conspired to create in him the confidence that made it possible for him to speak freely and to express opinions not always popular in their content to those he met in the course of business dealings. His mentor could not fail to notice this emerging persuasiveness and self assurance and smiled quietly at Romulus' progress. It was amusing to him that this former slave found within himself the assurance to speak freely at the risk of offending those who considered him their equal, having no concept of his history.

In time Lapidus Petrus determined that it was safe for Romulus to return to the house of Gaius Fabius for a brief visit. He knew from the

correspondence he had conducted with his friend that Romulus was sorely missed and that Gaius Fabius took great pleasure in the reports he had received of the successful transformation of the slave he had come to regard as his son.

When the occasion presented itself, Lapidus Petrus broached the subject of a visit to Romulus. He suggested that they plan to spend a few days in the house of Gaius Fabius before the annual celebration and permit themselves to stay on for the celebration if that seemed wise. Romulus was completely taken aback by the suggestion of a visit to the only home he had ever known. He had thought often and longingly of such a return and had dismissed the thought immediately each time it forced itself into his mind. He knew that the two men closest to him had corresponded regularly in the months he had been away from the house of Gaius Fabius, but never had Lapidus Petrus spoken of what had passed between him and his friend. He tried to imagine, but failed completely. Nor did Lapidus Petrus speak to him of all that was occurring in the home he had left so abruptly. He longed to speak the name of Estrella to Lapidus Petrus

but he did not dare betray a love so foolish, and he knew that his mentor was a man of such discernment that he would instantly guess at Romulus' secret. (5:04) (377 words)

Monday 8/5/96 4:50AM

Within a few days of their first discussion of a visit to the home of Gaius Fabius, Romulus and Lapidus Petrus separately began to envision the experience. There had been no discussion between them of how Romulus would be reintroduced to his former home and its inhabitants. Briefly Lapidus Petrus entertained the idea of taking his dear friend by surprise and simply letting Romulus meet his former master without warning to Gaius Fabius. Then he realized that this would be the grossest of betrayals, not worthy of a friend. Consequently he decided to write to Gaius Fabius of their plan and to seek his approval before going further. He asked his old friend to confide in him his opinion both of the wisdom of the visit and the circumstances under which he would once again meet with his former slave. He spent much time in pleasurable

contemplation of this encounter, knowing as he did how much Romulus had matured since his departure and how closely the two men, so disparate in origin, felt toward each other.

Romulus, on the other hand, delighted as he was by the prospect of being reunited, however briefly, with the man he loved most in this world was in agony about the extent to which he would prove pleasing to his old master. He was not as aware of how completely he had fulfilled the dreams of his old master in his transformation from slave to free man. He did not realize the extent to which his very demeanor marked him as a man of character and intelligence, and it was only when he studied himself carefully that he began to have some concept of how pleased Gaius Fabius would be. Romulus was not by nature self-centered and had little concept of the effect he had on other people. It took an effort of will for him to so evaluate himself, but when he did he realized the extent of his self possession and persuasiveness.

So it was with a heart full of hope that Romulus envisioned his reunion with Gaius Fabius. He knew he would find the words to speak from his

heart to this man who had given him new life, and he knew that all he said would be pleasing to his dear master, for in his heart Romulus knew that no matter how many years passed he would always regard Gaius Fabius as his master, a master without peer, a man truly loved and loving, and it gave Romulus great joy to know this goodness. (5:07) (428 words)

Saturday, 9/7/96 6:55AM

It was some time before Romulus saw his beloved Estrella in the circumstances that permitted him to speak to her as he had so often dreamed of doing. In the first few days in the household he had known so well as a slave he learned anew the love that had bound him invisibly to the daughter of the man who had given him so much, and for the first time he dared hope that the feelings that possessed him were shared. Although Estrella was in all ways a dutiful daughter, she had appealed to her father that she not be betrothed to the young man whose family had sought an alliance. She had touched Gaius Fabius' heart with her quiet persistence in

refusing this match, so desirable in so many ways, and he had agreed to terminate the discussion of marriage for the time being.

Gaius Fabius had no doubt that his daughter would one day choose to become a wife and mother and insure the continuation of the line that brought her feelings of pride and responsibility, but he was prepared to be patient with this child who was such a source of joy to him. Each day that passed she became more of a replica of her mother, and seeing her brought back memories to Gaius Fabius of the brief marriage that had shaped his life. Never had he considered taking a second wife after the death of Estrella's mother, and all the love he felt in his sorrow at her death was transferred to his helpless child now totally dependent upon him for the sustenance and guidance essential to her development.

Over the years Gaius Fabius had no cause to regret his decision. Never did Estrella disappoint him. Never did he yearn for love of a different nature. He knew in his heart the disappointment he never admitted at not having been given a son who pleased him as much as this child. He found

comfort in the belief that his eldest child, Antonio, had been sent to him as a challenge, and challenge he was, just as Estrella had been sent to him as a comfort. Unlike Estrella, Antonio had left his father's house early to live the life of an adventurer, and the two, though amicable in their relationship, were never closely in touch. Rarely would Gaius Fabius have word of his son, and even more rarely would Antonio return to spend a brief time with his father.

Through the years that both children were approaching adulthood Gaius Fabius comforted himself for his son's inadequacies by taking a special interest in Romulus, the young slave who seemed to have all the admirable qualities that his son lacked, and although this relationship with Romulus was one he spoke of to no one, it was a comfort to Gaius Fabius to oversee and encourage the development of this young slave. Fate had decreed his status, but Gaius Fabius was determined that within the limits permitted Romulus would know achievement.

So it was with a profound sense of awareness of his role as mentor as well as master that Gaius Fabius welcomed Romulus on his return as a

free man, indeed a free man of some social stature and more than modest success in business endeavors. He watched his daughter's face as she first set eyes upon Romulus, and although she looked away quickly and averted her eyes even more quickly, Gaius Fabius saw in her response the answer to his daughter's refusal to be espoused. His first reaction was one of anguish. He knew the problem this presented and he was not sure that it lent itself to solution, but almost immediately he realized that the happiness of this child demanded that a solution be found, and in his heart he rejoiced at the integrity of his daughter. A solution was inevitable.

Meanwhile, Romulus too had seen Estrella's expression, and a surge of joy filled him. He knew that he had not hoped in vain and that Estrella longed for him as he for her. It was all he had dreamed. When they finally spoke, the words flowed freely and Romulus told her all that he had known and done since his departure with Lapidus Petrus, and Estrella listened, her eyes wide with wonder, her questions filled with concern. Across the great salon, Gaius Fabius spoke with his friend, and his glance strayed often to

the two young people dearest to his heart whose heads were bent toward each other. The murmur of their conversation barely reached his ears, but he knew that later Estrella would come to him and he would know her heart. He smiled in anticipation. (7:32) (786 words)

Saturday, 10/12/96 5:17AM

It was with the utmost pleasure that Romulus set about persuading his former master that if he was to insure the happiness of his beloved daughter he would permit her to know the love that Romulus had always felt for her, a love born in silence and nourished by so many years of yearning. There was no doubt in the mind of Romulus that his feelings when expressed to Estrella would find welcome response. He knew that all she had known of the social system she had been born into would be of little import if Gaius Fabius spoke approvingly of the match which Romulus so fervently desired.

And so it was with confidence rather than trepidation that Romulus requested an audience with

his host and clearly indicated that the matter was both private and personal. On his part Gaius Fabius feared that he knew the nature of all Romulus proposed saying to him. He was distraught. On the one hand he could find no fault with his protege, the man he would have been proud to call his son. On the other, Gaius Fabius was born an aristocrat, a free man who never for a moment in his long life questioned the rightness of the system of slavery which he thought served his society well. He deplored the abuses of the system which had always been apparent to him even among those he counted friends, but he did not as a result question the system itself. Only in the case of Romulus was he ever tempted to tamper with the nature of natural selection.

Now, as he contemplated his talk with Romulus, he had full awareness that the first step he had taken in making Romulus reject his slave status had led inexorably to this second. He had been aware from a very early date that his slave nourished feelings of affection for Estrella, feelings which were always held in check and never found expression in the slightest degree. He was

uncertain about his daughter. He had patiently agreed with her each time she rejected a suitor suitable in every way. He had realized that to some extent he took pleasure in having a daughter both proud and honest, and he so delighted in her presence in the house that each time she chose to stay rather than to leave as a married woman his heart was flooded with a mixture of relief and of pleasure.

Now as he sat waiting for Romulus, Gaius Fabius knew that his days of quiet pleasure in both Romulus and Estrella were coming to an end. The decision, he realized, which was his alone, would alter his life and those of the two people he loved most in this world. He searched his soul and found peace. (5:35) (464 words)

Wednesday, 10/23/96 6:35AM

Before long, Romulus and Estrella were formally betrothed. It was with a mixture of reluctance and joy that Gaius Fabius relented in his insistence that his daughter would not be happy, no matter how great the passion, marrying outside

the class into which she has been born.

The conversation between master and former slave during which Romulus succeeded in breaking down all his master's reservations was marked by a reserve new to their relationship, and Romulus was quick to take advantage of this change in attitude on the part of Gaius Fabius. Not once did he grow emotional in his pleading. Not once did he cringe. Not once did he abandon the self pride which was his by nature and which had been reinforced by his years as a free man. Rather he spoke dispassionately about the values inherent in the slave system, the inherent assumption that by birth and by nature men were born either to serve or to rule, that in the nature of things their temperaments and talents designed them for the role into which they were born. He pointed out to Gaius Fabius that in his new life he was living proof of the frailty and inherent unfairness of slavery.

It was an argument that Gaius Fabius found difficult to rebut. All that Romulus said mirrored his feelings -- not about the system in general as much as his awareness that the inborn capacities of Romulus were far superior to those of most

free men of his acquaintance. He knew in his heart that he had no choice. If his heart told him that his former slave was living proof of the unfairness of categorizing and confining a person on the basis of birth, then he could not in good conscience use this as an excuse to prevent Romulus from seeking to wed his daughter.

Gaius Fabius admired the restraint in all of Romulus' words. He knew him well enough to sense the passion underlying all he said. When finally Romulus stopped speaking and turned to Gaius Fabius, his hands held out before him, palms upright, Gaius Fabius rose and took Romulus' hands in his and drew him to him in embrace. No words were needed at that point, and Romulus allowed himself the luxury of a heartfelt sob of relief. Gaius Fabius smiled. (6:50)
(387 words)

Saturday, 10/ 26/96 5:20AM

It was with the sweetest sense of power that Romulus anticipated all that lay ahead in his life. As he had assumed, once the decision was made,

Gaius Fabius was wholly accepting and Estrella was lovingly accepting.

When Romulus entered her chambers and stood in front of her, almost without a gesture she dismissed all those present and rose and stood in front of Romulus. Not touching in any way, the two stood silently and searched each other's faces. Romulus was sure that Estrella knew. She, in turn, felt a sense of exhilaration which she had never before known.

Then without a word spoken they were in each other's arms in tender embrace, at first tentative, then growing more confident, they clung to each other passionately. Romulus felt dizzy with emotion. As often as he had tried to visualize this moment he had never succeeded in anticipating the overwhelming rush of love and protectiveness that now surged through him.

After what seemed an eternity, Estrella gently disengaged herself from Romulus' embrace and they stood, silently still, gravely regarding each other. There was tension between them that Romulus found a miracle, and he knew in that instant that they were one in their love and that never would they be each separate from the

other. As Romulus watched, tears formed in Estrella's eyes and slowly made their way down her cheeks. Awkwardly Romulus wiped them away with his thumbs. Then, suddenly, the tension snapped and their laughter filled the room

Outside, the anxious servants, curious and fearful of the silence, smiled at each other in relief.

(5:35) (265 words)

Friday, 1/10/97 5:59AM

When Romulus first proposed a new life to Estrella, far removed from her father's house, she cried out in protest. Never, she said, could she leave her father and all those she held dear. Her love, she said, was strong and true and there was no room in her heart for any other suitor than Romulus, but, she said, he asked too much.

Romulus was unbelieving. He could not believe that Estrella had assumed that he would return to the society which knew him as a slave. He tried to imagine as Estrella spoke how he would be treated and how Estrella would be treated, and he knew that his new found happiness faced an impossible situation. In his wisdom he soothed Estrella and urged her to be patient with him. He told her that he would speak to Gaius Fabius of all Estrella felt and said and that they would speak further at a later time.

Estrella, reasonable by nature, agreed readily not to force Romulus into a decision that threatened their plans. In her heart she knew that there would be only one great love in her life and she knew that all she did and said at this point would

be critical in determining her future happiness. No, she thought, I must meet the challenge of choice, but a voice within her cried out that her life lay with Romulus no matter what the cost.

Romulus, aware of Estrella's turmoil, was fearful that his assumption had been too rash, and yet knew the impossibility of building a new life with his beloved in the society which surrounded the house of Gaius Fabius. He knew what his former master would say, but he needed to ask of him the great favor of advising his daughter that it was his wish that she leave all that was dear and familiar to Estrella to begin her new life. He needed, Romulus knew, to persuade her that there was no other way to insure the happiness she knew in her love for Romulus.

And so Gaius Fabius, strong in all ways and filled with love for his child, took Estrella into his arms and spoke to her of his love and his expectations. She protested at first, but as her father spoke she saw clearly that Romulus was right and that to insure a new life of opportunity and shared pleasure she needed to make the hardest choice she had ever been called upon to make. She knew how she would miss her father

and the easy familiarity of her household, but she knew even more strongly that her father was right, that never would she and Romulus be accepted by Roman society, never would Romulus be afforded the respect due him as a man of talent and achievement, never would she be happy. (6:20) (477 words)

Monday, 1/27/97 6:40AM

In the best of times it was difficult for Romulus to remember how Estrella had resisted beginning a new life with him in a new place. They had been wed privately and had remained in the house of Gaius Fabius for only a fortnight before taking their leave of him and all those others who held Estrella dear.

It had been a sad farewell for this devoted daughter now a devoted wife, and Romulus had been visibly moved by the anguish his beloved knew, but he encouraged her by sketching out in the dark of the night all the aspects of their new life that would delight her and speaking constantly of the tremendous love he felt for her.

Estrella, full of love and hope herself, responded to Romulus' words, and by the time they reached their new home her heart was filled with joy and anticipation. There was excitement for both of them in embarking upon a life that promised great love and great adventure.

Estrella was impressed and pleased by Romulus' confidence in his role as a man of business. She listened avidly as he explained to her the details of his business dealings. He was, he told her earnestly, a broker essentially. It was his role to bring together those who had need of certain commodities and those who sought to sell these commodities. He had a knack, he said, pleased with himself, for so negotiating as to leave both parties satisfied that each had got the better part of the deal. In all of this negotiating, Romulus said, he found challenge and satisfaction as well as monetary reward. Soon, he promised his beloved, she would enjoy the kind of luxury she had been accustomed to in her father's house.

Estrella, for her part, was more than satisfied with her domestic situation. Their home was adequate, though not stately, and she was attended by a young girl who pleased her totally. Romulus

had attracted much attention in the community and had found himself able to select those to serve him from a large number of willing slaves. It had bothered him to be the owner of slaves, but he comforted himself with the thought that if he emulated his former master in all ways he could offer those in servitude a life pleasing and rewarding.

And so Estrella and Romulus found great happiness in their new life. They sought and found in each other unending pleasure in all ways. It was hard for Estrella to remember how she had been happy without Romulus' love, and Romulus, in turn, never spent a day without being thankful for all that the gods had given him. He thought often of his mother and spoke to her in the dark of the night as a loving son, grateful most of all to her whose love and faith had brought him to this new life. He knew without a doubt that it was his mother's love and faith in all about him that had set him upon the path that led him to this idyllic life.

Now, Romulus thought, all that remains in this life is for Estrella and me to pass on to the generation to come all the love that we have known

from our parents. He spoke of this to Estrella one quiet evening, and she turned to him with eyes glowing with love and told him that she thought that time might be soon to come. (6:58 AM) (578 words)

Tuesday, 2/3/98 2:53PM

In the fullness of time it was clear to Romulus that his life had been a supreme gift from beginning to end. He had been graced by a mother whose love was totally sustaining and whose faith in him gave him strength in all he endeavored to do. By nature he was equipped with abilities beyond those of his peers, and in his master he found both a teacher and a second father, totally devoted to fostering his success and well being. Above all he was blessed with Estrella, a wife who found in him all her heart and spirit demanded and who returned in full measure the love that Romulus had felt for her from the first sight of her beauty. Their lives were unblemished. Romulus was able in all ways to command the respect of those with whom he had business dealings, and he was at all times surrounded by friends of unimpeachable loyalty.

So, Romulus mused one day as he was considering all that had happened to him, what is it I lack? In fact, he could think of nothing. He reached over and took Estrella's hand in his and they sat together in the perfect silence that

speaks of love shared. A few minutes passed. Then Estrella spoke. She spoke first, as she did always, of her love for her husband and for the father she missed each day of her life. She spoke of the pleasant nature of her daily existence, of the gift of music, and the gift of enduring friendships. She spoke of the pride she felt always in Romulus' success and of the high regard he enjoyed from all men. Then, slowly, reluctantly, she spoke of her fears. What would it be like, she asked quietly, if the secret of Romulus' humble beginning were to become known? Would those who considered her husband supreme in every conceivable way be able to tolerate his past as a slave? Would they feel foolishly betrayed by what seemed to them deception? Would their lives be turned upside down?

Romulus gathered Estrella to him and laid her head upon his shoulder. He patted her gently and spoke soothingly of the baselessness of her anxiety. He was confident, he said, that their secret would remain a secret. Should it not, and he reminded her that this was highly unlikely, he would cope. He regarded the social system with

mistrust and felt that many shared this feeling. He felt that most men in their hearts regarded all fellow men as equal souls, that only luck determined who was slave and who was master. They were outwardly prisoners of social mores, Romulus reasoned, but in their innermost beings they deplored this divisiveness in their society. He would not suffer in the event of discovery, he assured Estrella, and neither would she.

Comforted, Estrella snuggled in his embrace and whispered sweet words of agreement with all that her beloved Romulus had said. (3:12)

Thursday, 2/6/98 5:12PM

It was of great concern to Romulus that this fear was marring the happiness of his beloved Estrella, and so he determined upon a daring strategy. He chose from among those he considered his closest friends three men. His choice was somewhat guided by what he knew of Estrella's devotion to their wives. Though he could not claim intimate knowledge of the characters of these women, he knew that Estrella's love for

them indicated their worthiness. Still he had doubts about the wisdom of his daring and prayed that he be given divine aid in what he was about to do.

It took some weeks for him to lay the groundwork. Each time that Romulus encountered each of these men, whether by chance or by plan, he spoke of a slave in his father's household in whom his father took special pride. This was a thinly veiled version of all that had transpired between Romulus and his master. Slowly this young man came to seem real to his friends and he took the further step of manufacturing a crisis situation. His father, he said, was determined to see that this young slave, so dear to his heart, so loyal in his service, so deserving of a new life be given exactly that. And again, Romulus drew upon the story of his own life, and as he spoke of his father he saw in his mind's eye the kindly face of Gaius Fabius, in blood Estrella's father, in spirit his own.

Then, cleverly, he ceased mentioning this young man, the product of his imagination and his experience, and it pleased him that his friends began to inquire about the slave so deserving of

a better life. Then he went one step further. He said that his father was concerned that his young protege was enamored of his daughter and that though he deemed him fully worthy of his daughter's love he feared that society's judgment would be harsh, that they would be ostracized and both lost to him. (5:23)

Friday, 2/7/98 3:56PM

In the end, Romulus achieved exactly what he had hoped for. To each of his friends he entrusted the secret of his origins. Of each he asked confidentiality. Of each he asked that this secret be shared with each wife and sought of her both confidentiality and response. Romulus carefully stressed his beloved Estrella's happiness in her new life and her fervent wish that nothing threaten the bliss she knew.

Romulus was keenly aware of the risk he was taking by asking each of his dear friends to involve their wives in his plan, and he hastened to provide each of them with an escape. He urged each to refuse his petition should it present the

slightest threat to anyone's happiness. Their separate answers were not long in coming, and each had the same response. Each said that he and his wife were in complete agreement that nothing could mar the love they felt for Romulus and Estrella. There was not the slightest hesitation in these avowals.

Heartened, Romulus took his Estrella into his arms that evening and softly related to her all he had said and done. He felt her body stiffen in his embrace at the start of his recital and then relax as he continued to the happy ending. When he looked down at Estrella's face he saw tears falling and a gentle smile.

"You would risk this much for me, Romulus?" she asked in a tone of wonder. She gazed into his eyes as she spoke, and to her surprise Romulus laughed.

"Silly child," he said, "there is nothing I would not risk for you and gladly too."

For a few minutes there was only the silence of love shared. Then Romulus spoke again. He asked Estrella if it was her wish that he include more people in their confidence. He asked her to search her soul and tell him what more he could

do to allay her fears and to bring to her assurance and peace.

"No more, my husband," Estrella said. "I need no more." (4:10)

Sunday, 2/9/98 5:42PM

There was little else needed to complete the happiness of Romulus and Estrella. They both regretted the distance between them and Gaius Fabius, and although they visited as often as was possible, they left him each time with greater reluctance, for the father they both held so dear was increasingly showing the signs of age that await all men. Estrella needed to be assured at the conclusion of their last visit that Gaius Fabius suffered only from these reminders of man's mortality and that he suffered in no other way.

"Dear child," he said to her as he held her in a final farewell embrace, "look elsewhere for someone to worry about. The gods have been good to me always, and I cherish the memories I have of my sweet child in her growing years. I

cherish the realization of the love she shares with me and with her husband and so many others. Each day that passes, my Estrella, I hold blessed for the happiness you have brought to me always. I rejoice in each thought I have of you and Romulus. There is no distance between our hearts. Go now and be happy."

Estrella did not find it easy to dismiss her concerns about the father she loved so well, but in all her messages to him she spoke joyously of all that her life meant to her in love and sharing, and each message begged him to be caring of himself for her sake.

Romulus was not easily deceived by Estrella's cheerful demeanor. He knew how often her thoughts flew to her beloved father and how desperately she wished to be near him, to assure herself that he lacked nothing in loving care. His was a heavy responsibility, he told himself. He had taken his beloved Estrella away from the only home she had ever known and away from the father she adored. She dreaded the inevitable end of his life and tried to imagine what it would be like for her father not to have her at his side in time of need. (5:54)

Tuesday, 2/10/98 12:16AM

Increasingly Romulus felt obliged to consider his options. Could he continue in his present course and know all the joys of material success or could he abandon concern for all he knew in pleasure and recognition and turn aside to concern himself with the total happiness of the woman who was all of life to him? The decision was not a difficult one. Romulus, as soon as his mind was set, set about settling his affairs to afford him a long absence from active participation. He found full acceptance in those he trusted in all he sought to achieve. To a man they were open to the concept of shared responsibility and to the reasonable absence of one of their numbers for reasons unstated. How pleasing this is, Romulus thought to himself long before he had confided his hopes and plans to his beloved Estrella.

It was not more complicated to arrange for his domestic responsibility. His funds were adequate in all ways to sustain an absence of indeterminate length without threat in any way financially. In all, Romulus congratulated himself on the

completeness of his caring. He had not anticipated such need, but in his caution he had accommodated it.

Not until the final arrangement had been confirmed did Romulus approach Estrella. First he spoke to her of her concerns about her father. He knew without any telling the depth of Estrella's love for Gaius Fabius. He knew that never could he fully comprehend this miracle of affection until he bonded with a child of his own. He remembered joyfully the fullness of love he had known for his mother, but still, he realized, it was not of the same nature as Estrella's for Gaius Fabius. Nevertheless Romulus set about establishing a firm foundation for his plans to indulge his Estrella's wishes and incidentally his own. (12:18)

Tuesday, 2/10/98 10:13PM

In the fullness of time, Romulus achieved all of his goals. His business interests secured, he turned to Estrella with words of love and promise. His words were sweetly met, and in a short

time all that they both hoped for had been achieved. With those full of love and trust they set out on their journey. Their retinue included both personal and business relationships and was designed to fill Estrella's heart with confidence and to secure Romulus' concerns with their material welfare.

Romulus had at first considered not appraising Gaius Fabius of their impending arrival, but he had a nagging doubt about the wisdom of this decision and in the end determined that the wise course was to send advance notice of their impending arrival. This he did, and so as they began their journey there was nothing to diminish the joy of anticipation that they both knew in seeing their dear father once more, long before either had thought likely.

As they progressed on their journey Estrella and Romulus spoke often and gratefully of the years that lay behind and those that lay ahead. Both were aware of the extraordinary nature of their relationship, of the miracle of its origin, of the persistence of its nature, and particularly of the generous nature of the man who had made all possible. Never, even in the slightest degree, did

their awareness of the brevity of human life, color their conversations.

Estrella in her heart knew the extraordinary measures her husband had taken to ensure this journey. In her heart she knew a sense of foreboding. She imagined that Romulus knew more than she did about the health and well being of her beloved father. When she asked Romulus about this lurking suspicion he swore upon his honor that he knew nothing, that this journey had its origin in Estrella's unspoken fears that her father needed her at a time when she was not with him.

"So," said Romulus, "let us hope that I am mistaken. Let us hope that our father rejoices in good health and that he will think us foolish for our fears, unfounded as they are. Let us know pleasure, nor anxiety, in this journey. Let us please Gaius Fabius with our love. Let us be one with him in the love we share." Estrella gazed at her husband with awe. His words are so persuasive, she thought, that all her fears were swept away, and she determined to enjoy to the utmost every day of their visit. (10:32)

Wednesday, 2/11/98 10:22PM

It took little to persuade Romulus of the wisdom of his journey. He looked upon the face of Gaius Fabius as he beheld his daughter and he was glad that the separation of so many months was at an end. He rejoiced that he had afforded joy to the man who meant most to him in this world and to the daughter he had adored since her birth.

The days that followed the arrival of Romulus and Estrella could not have been more perfect. In every way they renewed old acquaintance and in every way they found gratification in the renewal. Estrella searched the face of her father and found there reassurance. Romulus spoke of this woman who had given life and love to the man who had so controlled his destiny and found in all the words given and received accord that brought to him infinite joy. He asked of Gaius Fabius honesty. He asked if he had ever regretted the total giving that had taken from him his most cherished child. He asked if he had in the dark of the night wondered about the wisdom of his giving, and each question met, as he

had truly anticipated, with a trusting giving that he knew was the very soul of Gaius Fabius. He spoke further to him of how he would choose to alter history, of how he would want to be remembered by those who came behind, and each question revealed the perfect transparent truth of the beauty of the life of Gaius Fabius. He repented nothing. He asked nothing. He shared all in joy and sorrow. He was content.

All that his former master left unsaid, Romulus was content to conclude. This was a perfect man, his to know in the fullness of love, his to consider always his closest of kin, and above all to know as a soul totally loved and loving, truly a perfect gift of the gods. (10:36)

To here approximately 18,650 words

