

Deeper into the Night

Dul Johnson

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Part One

The Cry of Power



The sharp cry of a baby jolted Old Gwangtim from his sleep-wake state in which he had been for hours. He rose slowly to a sitting position and listened. A second cry came. It was sharper than the first, and then a third; sharper still. He staggered out of his sleeping hut and met Nimfa who was returning from the backyard, where Mamyá had just delivered herself of the baby.

'What did she bring out?' he asked.

'A boy,' Nimfa said excitedly. Mamyá had been in prolonged labour that gave all some concern.

'It couldn't have been otherwise,' Old Gwangtim said proudly. 'On his back rests the salvation and survival of Gwangtim.'

'How, Father?'

'Did it sound like an ordinary cry to you?'

'It was very loud, but—'

'It contains power.'

'Power . . .'

'He's my first grandson, and therefore my father-come-back. My ancestors have endowed him with power.'

'Why didn't they endow me or any of my brothers?'

'Because I was still strong, maybe. But you could ask them, you know. Go to the shrine, you know what they require.' He knew his son well; he didn't like to sacrifice anything to their ancestors.

'Thank you, Father. But let your ancestors go with their powers. We are in modern times now.'

'You will need it someday, Nimfa.'

'Oh certainly! I need their blessings and their protection. But their powers will be too much for me now.' They laughed over it and Old Gwangtim said he was going to have a physical look at his grandson.