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Shortly after Quisling had resumed his work at the General Staff, the Russian news agency *Rosta* reported that the PomGol intended to dismantle all foreign relief work because of the good grain harvest. The organization now thanked the Russian farmers for their contribution to the improved situation, and the ARA and Nansen's organization for their excellent work. A couple of days before that happened, Fridtjof Nansen had reported in Geneva on his organization's work with Russian refugees, but he had apparently made no public statement about his personal opinion regarding the "end" to famine. That is not surprising, however, because on August 22, he had asked his representatives in Riga to telegraph Quisling that it would be good if he could spend another few months in Russia after a vacation at home, as his work in the Ukraine was extremely important.¹

The international relief organization in Geneva was dissolved on September 25, but with the stipulation that the organization's responsibilities were to continue under Nansen's personal leadership. Only five days later, John Gorvin (the Moscow head of Nansen's organization) confirmed that the grain harvest had been

1. *Morgenbladet*, September 17 and 19, 1922; NB, Nansen Archive, Ms. fol. 1988, RUO₁ (telegram from Nansen to Repomer, August 22, 1922).

worse than expected in both the Ukraine and the rest of Russia. A representative of the Ukrainian Red Cross was presently in Moscow to make the authorities there aware that more than four million people in four Ukrainian provinces were starving. Immediate aid was needed. The Russian authorities asked Nansen to continue his relief program in Russia, and his secretaries then wrote to Quisling in Oslo on October 5 and 8 to ask if Captain Quisling's health now was good enough for him to consider resuming his relief work in the Ukraine; he was requested to telephone A. G. Jayne (Nansen's private secretary in Oslo) as soon as possible. He clearly did so, because on October 18, the message reached Frick in Geneva that although Quisling was not well at this time, he would be willing to go back if the relief work were more carefully planned.²

A likely reason for this comment is that the Russians had recently thrown a new spanner into the administrative works. In a letter from L. Kameneff dated October 4, 1922, John Gorvin learned that "the Central Committee for Relief of the Famine" had been reorganized as "the Central Committee for Fighting the Consequences of the Famine."³ Although this was merely PomGol with new buttons on its coat, it still meant that Nansen's organization had to start from scratch in negotiating with the Soviet authorities.

Quisling, in truth, had much to think about less than a month after his return home. Fortunately, his health evidently was not so bad that it prevented him from being active practically around the clock. As Alexandra's further story will show, he worked tirelessly and brooded increasingly as the autumn of 1922 wore on.

2. *Morgenbladet*, September 26 and 30, October, 1922; NB, Nansen Archive, Ms. fol. 1988, RUO₁ (letters of October 5 from Frick in Geneva and October 9 from Jayne in Oslo, letter of October 18 from Jayne to Frick).

3. H, ARA Russian Section, box 80, folder "Nansen."

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While the weather was still mild, we had many lovely picnic outings with family and friends. Sometimes we went to a place with ancient wooden buildings that looked a lot like those in Northern Russia, and sometimes to places that were renowned for their breathtaking views. On these occasions, a great number of photographs were taken of the Quisling clan, with Jørgen being the principal photographer, and I was very happy to be included in those family pictures.

Vidkun also promised to take me to Telemark to show me his home and introduce me to his parents, whom he had not seen for a long time. They were delighted that he had married at last, and they wanted to meet me as soon as possible. However, it took him a while to obtain leave of absence, and when he finally managed, Jørgen, who was still treating me for my jaundice, said that it was too soon for me to undertake such a tiring journey inland, where there already was snow. Furthermore, I did not have enough warm clothing because full winter had not yet arrived in Oslo. Vidkun would have to go alone.

Vidkun tried to console me in my big disappointment. He said that once the weather warmed up again, there would be many other opportunities to visit Telemark and places even farther north, and he assured me that Telemark was especially beautiful in spring.

“You’ll love my hometown,” he said. “You know, our valley stays dark even on summer nights, and therefore the view of the aurora borealis above the mountain ridges is stunning, the most beautiful sight in the world. I know you’ll love it. I’ll be back in a week or two. Write to me every day, and be careful and of good cheer. Viveke and Conken will stop by often to see you, and others in the family will invite you to their homes. I’ll see you soon.”

With these words, he pecked at my cheek with his lips and was out the door before I could say another word.

I missed him very much. Without him, my days became even longer and lonelier. Having acquired the discipline of silence, I neither sang nor made any other noise to break the stillness around me, although I now was alone also after four o'clock and had no need to tiptoe. My daily walks grew longer, and I tried harder than ever to find enough housework to keep me busy when I was not searching for something to read.

I decided to clean the study and dust Vidkun's books. My heart was beating hard and fast as I collected a broom and dust cloth and entered his sanctum. It was out of the question to move anything in the room or to touch the open books and papers spread all over Vidkun's desk in sacred disorder, so I concentrated on the bookshelves and their books. As far as I could judge from the titles, they were all very serious books on subjects of little interest to me.

Working my way down from the top shelf, I noticed a slim volume in a white paperback binding tossed behind a row of huge, gilt-edged tomes, and I pulled it out to dust it. The title, *Pour Être Belle*, printed in large, black type intrigued me, so I sat down on the floor and began leafing through the book. It was a charming collection of old wives' hints on how to maintain freshness and beauty into old age. The prescriptions were naïve and touching, but at that time I was totally ignorant of modern cosmetic achievements, so I decided to follow those bits of advice for the rest of my life.

When Vidkun returned from Telemark, I asked him where he had found such a book. At first he seemed annoyed that I had gone through his books, but then he laughed and agreed that it was a very amusing book. He told me I could keep it, but he never explained how it came into his possession. Although more than half a century has passed since that time, and my looks have faded, I still have that delightful book—however, I stopped following its advice when I left Norway. Along with that slim vol-

ume, I also have Vidkun's last gift to me, a leather-trimmed travel case he bought in Warsaw. It still sits on my dressing table, with its box for needles and thread and its leather-trimmed hand mirror. I like to think that the mirror still remembers the soft-skinned teenager with no urgent need of the concoctions detailed in *Pour Être Belle*.

My new Oslo relatives treated me very well in Vidkun's absence. Practically every day I was invited to the home of one or another of them for a mid-afternoon dinner. The first time I was a guest without Vidkun was at the home of Uncle Nils and Aunt Hildur, whose daughters played with me as with a silly kitten and asked me a great many questions in French.

As soon as we were seated at the dinner table, the maid brought in a large, steaming dish and placed it before Aunt Hildur, who filled our plates with the very tasty food. When we had eaten it, she offered us second helpings, which everyone declined. The maid cleared the table, put clean dessert plates in front of each of us, and then left. I was puzzled that she did not return with the dessert, but pretending not to notice, I continued to chat with Vidkun's cousins. Some fifteen minutes later, I realized that everyone was looking at me, evidently expecting something from me. Finally, Viveke leaned toward me.

"The dessert is on the table in front of you. Please help yourself."

I had no idea that according to local custom, family dinners usually consisted of only one main dish and a dessert, placed on the table before everyone was seated. Because I was a guest, everybody had been waiting for me to help myself first. I decided right then and there to learn all the finer points of Norwegian etiquette as soon as Vidkun returned.

After dinner, Aunt Hildur and Uncle Nils retired to take a nap, while Signe and Conken stayed for a little while and then

also vanished, apologizing politely about important appointments. Viveke suggested going window-shopping downtown.

Some of the stores were still open, and I thought they were really splendid. Having read *Pour Être Belle*, I paid special attention to the varied and fascinating cosmetics displays, whose heavy blend of many fragrances was so overpowering that I felt giddy. I discovered, among other things, that face powder came not only in different scents, but also in various tints. My Russian friends and I had had no such luxuries to explore. Nina's elder sister had used chalk for powder, or she would rub her handkerchief against a whitewashed wall and then dab the handkerchief against her nose, causing it to lead an independent and somewhat clownish existence on her otherwise freshly glowing face.

I was sorely tempted to buy some powder for myself. I had some housekeeping money left, but I thought it would be a crime to spend it so frivolously without Vidkun's approval, although Viveke assured me that almost everyone used powder now. As soon as I returned home, I wrote to Vidkun and asked what he thought of my wish to buy face powder. He replied by return mail:

"Certainly you may buy powder, but I consider it altogether unnecessary because you are a beauty just as you are. Yes, you are beautiful, and I love you. Nobody really loves women who powder their faces or, God forbid, use rouge. Here in Norway, decent women don't do that, and a woman wearing make-up risks being importuned on the street by total strangers."

Jørgen and Ingerid invited me to tea in their beautiful modern home, which Ingerid had decorated in defiance of time-honored Norwegian traditions. Her artistic talents were reflected not only in her surroundings, but also in all her activities. Because she had studied in Paris, she spoke quite good French, and I enjoyed being with her. On the day I came there to tea, she was painting china plates and tea sets with beautiful floral designs of her own mak-

ing, and while I watched in open-mouthed admiration, she explained that in Norway, people appreciated most the gifts that one had made with one's own hands with care and attention, so it was customary to begin working on gifts months before Christmas.

I realized that with only a couple of months left until Christmas, I was already sadly behind. Besides, what could I make for such a large number of new relatives? I thought of the tea napkins I was embroidering with flowers of my own design, but I could not make enough even of those modest gifts. When Vidkun at long last returned from Telemark, I summoned the courage to place my problem before him. He solved it in no time:

"We'll send them flowers and chocolates, that's enough. They understand that you don't know our customs and haven't been in the country long enough to occupy yourself with such things."

I ought to have felt relieved, but in some odd way I felt merely excluded.

Vidkun brought many gifts back from his parents. His father sent me a gold wristwatch, fastened by means of a narrow, black velvet wristband and engraved with a design that sparkled like tiny diamonds. I was very happy to receive that gift. Vidkun often reminded me that it represented the best of incomparable Swiss watch-making, and that made me even more proud.

My mother-in-law sent me a variety of useful gifts, such as tablecloths, towels, and blankets, and she also gave me two very personal and touching articles that at first baffled me. One was a knitted wool scarf, so long that when I wrapped it around my neck, both ends reached the floor. It was black, with multi-colored stripes every five inches or so. I did not know how to use such a scarf, but Vidkun explained that I was to wear it when we went skiing, and that the colors were traditional Norwegian ones. The second gift was even more incomprehensible: a pair of small, red ladies' gloves of silk, very soft and beautiful. Vidkun said that

his mother had worn those gloves as a very young girl at a costume ball, for which a special outfit matching the gloves had been ordered from Paris. At that ball, she had first met the man who became his father. She had decided to give me her precious gloves because Vidkun had told her that I was young and lively, and I found this naïve and simple gift infinitely charming and touching. When I was alone in our bedroom, I would sometimes put on those gloves; they gave my hands a wonderful Mephistophelian look.

Vidkun said that although his parents had grown quite frail with age, his mother had decided to come to Oslo soon in order to become acquainted with me. His father could not or would not make the journey, but he had invited me to come and stay with them the following summer instead. I was already looking forward to both events.

After his trip to Telemark, Vidkun's manner became even more serious than before, and he spent more time than ever in his study with his papers and maps. I think he wanted to prove to his colleagues and superiors at the General Staff that his long leave of absence had not made him less indispensable.

Luckily, at that time, formal receptions and visits with Vidkun's colleagues at the General Staff and with various diplomats meant that we had to go out a lot, which was a welcome change for me, now that I was beginning to recover from my jaundice. As the weather grew colder, there were also other exciting activities, such as skating and skiing. I especially loved being towed on skis behind a running horse. There was not much time to feel bored or to suffer from homesickness. Naturally, it added to my good mood that Vidkun's earlier critical attitude had gradually yielded to pride, and that he conscientiously passed on compliments he had received on my behalf.

During this period, we seldom spent an evening at home,

until our pace had to slow down for a while because of the visit from Vidkun's mother. We had no other guest room than the drab maid's room, so we decided to place a bed in the parlor for my mother-in-law. I wanted to put some flowers in a vase to show her how welcome she was, but I could not find a vase in the apartment, and I had no idea where to buy flowers. Nor did we know when to expect Mor, so I cleaned the room meticulously every day just to be on the safe side. Fortunately, we were both at home when Mor arrived one day.

She was in no way the decrepit old lady Vidkun had described to me. Her face was pink and cheerful with youthful dimples, and she did not appear to be much above fifty. The moment she saw me, she was all smiles, and with shining eyes she walked toward me with open arms and pressed me to her bosom. Finding her so warm and tender, I took to her instantly. When I hugged and kissed her in return, I noticed that her cheeks were cold and firm and smelled fresh and nice of the outdoor air.

Mor was a wonderful, remarkable woman, one of the nicest persons I knew in Norway. She had met very few foreigners in her life and knew scarcely any foreign languages, while I knew very little Norwegian, so Vidkun had to be our interpreter most of the time. He did not mind at all. While I had the impression that he felt daunted by his father, he seized any excuse to be with his mother, whom he adored. In her presence, he became like a small boy.

At times, when Mor forgot that I did not understand Norwegian, she would address me directly with a long story or an explanation in rapid Norwegian. My face must have betrayed intense concentration and complete incomprehension because she would talk more and more loudly until she was practically shouting into my ear, much to Vidkun's amusement. He would then say something to his mother in Norwegian before translating her words and then add something like:

“You see, Mor keeps forgetting that you don’t know Norwegian and thinks that you’re probably just hard of hearing and will understand her if only she speaks loudly enough.”

When Mor realized her mistake and had collected herself, she would be greatly amused and kiss me apologetically.

I think she stayed with us for close to a month, and the three of us had a very enjoyable time. Mor and I soon learned to understand each other by means of signs and gestures. She instructed me in Norwegian housekeeping and did her utmost to make me feel like a useful and wanted member of her family. For example, she always asked me to help her arrange her hair for the night. She had magnificent hair that reached below her knees when she let it down, and she claimed it was hard to sleep comfortably with such long hair. In the evenings, therefore, Mor would lie down on the bed with her tresses hanging over the headboard, and I would comb and braid her hair for the night. All the while we talked, each in our own language, and when Vidkun was not on hand to interpret, we would sometimes reach an impasse and find out that we had been talking about completely different things. Each time I would just laugh and kiss her to show my affection, just as I would have done with my own mother, and she responded warmly.

Most evenings, however, Vidkun sat on his chair in the middle of the room, diligently interpreting all our talk. When I retired for the night, he usually went back to work in his study rather than go to bed himself. He was so prudish that even before his own mother he shied away from any indication of intimacy with his own wife. Sometimes I heard him come out of his study and have a long conversation alone with Mor, but I did not mind at all. I was just so happy that there was life and movement in our apartment and that I had acquired a real family. Besides, Mor was every bit as affectionate toward me as toward her son—more so,

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in fact, for in no way did she treat Vidkun with the worshipful attention he continually bestowed on her.

We were snug and warm enough inside, but outside it was cold and wintry. One day, while Mor and I were out shopping, she stopped outside a furrier's and said:

"I'd like to look at some fur coats."

"For yourself?" I asked, proud and pleased that I understood what she meant.

"No, for a neighbor's daughter in Telemark."

In the store, she said: "That girl is about your size. Please try on some of those coats so I can see how they look."

She made me try on a great variety of overcoats and fur coats, which was a lot of fun for me. At long last, Mor asked me:

"And you, what would you choose for her?"

Without hesitation, I told her that my choice would be the coat made of seal fur which I was just then trying on for the second time in order to admire myself in the mirror. The coat was beautiful—warm, light, and soft as silk. Mor agreed that her friends would probably be satisfied with that choice, and she asked to have the coat delivered to our apartment.

The coat arrived that same evening. I placed the box together with Mor's suitcases, but she opened it and said, "No, I bought it for you."

I was delighted with this magnificent gift, and she was equally happy to have given it. It amused her that she had been able to fool me, which she had done only so that I could choose without embarrassment. All evening long, I kept putting on that lovely fur coat and parading in front of Mor and Vidkun. Before going to bed, I replaced it carefully in its box, but in the middle of the night I could not resist tiptoeing over to the box in order to caress that luxurious fur.

Despite my entreaties that she stay longer, the day came when

Mor had to leave. She said she had to return to her husband, who was in poor health and needed constant attention. I had to promise to spend the next summer with them in Telemark instead.

Vidkun and I had a happy memento of Mor's lovely visit because all three of us had been to Finne's photographic studio on Karl Johansgate to have our pictures taken, separately and together.⁴ I remember it as if it were yesterday: Mor took me to a hairdresser, who, despite my protests, forced my hair into what she considered a stylish hairdo, but which made me feel as if a stranger's head had been screwed onto my neck. Then the two women dressed me as if I were a doll, in my new evening dress with the embroidered flowers.

Ever since our arrival in Oslo, Vidkun had tried very hard to find us a maid. I soon learned that in Norway, there were very few professional servants, just sturdy, decent farm girls who wanted to save up money for their dowry. Therefore, they tended to be available only after the harvest, but at long last we did find a nice young woman to come and help out for several hours four or five days a week. She set the breakfast table and made dinner if we were eating at home; if we were going out, she would leave a plate of sandwiches or a light dish for our supper. Together, she and I would clean the apartment, and she soon was like a member of the family. She smoothed our path and took care of all the little daily worries. I have often wondered what happened to her later; perhaps she went to America like so many others.

After Mor's visit, we resumed our strict routine. Vidkun went faithfully to the office, and if we were not going somewhere at night, he would spend most of the evening in his study. He had

4. Only one of these portraits has survived. Arve Juritzen found it in 1987 in the Photography Collection at the National Library in Oslo. In reply to his inquiries, he was told that all the negatives had suffered water damage. Juritzen, *Privatmennesket*, p. 58.

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begun to spend some time talking with me after our evening meal, however, and I could see that he had something on his mind, but that he did not know how to begin. Although words never failed him on the subject of propriety, he found it as difficult to express his personal feelings as to acknowledge other people's needs and emotions.

He confided his secret at last. "As you know, Acia, I am very busy with social and political questions. However, for mental relaxation I'm also working on a play—it's almost done. I'd like to read it to somebody who is not prejudiced by literary ambitions of their own, somebody with good taste who's not spoiled by reading popular fiction. What I want to say, *lille venn*, is that I'd like to read my play to you. I'm very interested in your opinion."

Any variation in our daily routine was welcome, and, though I was glad for the opportunity to spend more time with my ambitious husband, I got somewhat more than I had bargained for. Night after night, Vidkun pulled out a bundle of copy-books filled with his handwriting, sat down in an armchair, drew me onto his lap and read aloud to me from his long play, translating it into Russian as he went along.

Reading his play to me was clearly a very emotional experience for him, and I found that baffling. The play was as complicated as it was gloomy, with social and philosophical tendencies reminiscent of some of those found in Ibsen's plays—but there the similarity ended.⁵ How could such a tedious and colorless play mean so much to an educated and serious man like Vidkun? How could he fail to see its mediocrity?

My lack of enthusiasm did not bother Vidkun. "This passage turned out to be especially successful; did you really not notice? Of course, it's not really polished yet and not impressive enough

5. This unfinished play is now at the NB (Ms. fol. 3920: III: 4). It is precisely as Alexandra described it.

for you in its raw state, but if you only knew enough Norwegian, you'd immediately feel its subtlety. Much of that is getting lost in the translation."

At other times, he would reassure me: "It's only a draft. Of course, this play is a serious story about life, involving serious people, but we'll liven it up and sprinkle it with comical relief, as well."

In the manner of reigning monarchs, Vidkun often used "we" instead of "I." It used to puzzle me, but now I am inclined to think that he just wanted to include his listener, whether me or someone else. I never teased him about this habit at the time.

Christmas was approaching. My joy and excitement about the holidays grew even greater as I gradually became certain that I was expecting a baby. As soon as I was certain, I wanted to share my joy with Vidkun, and I told him timidly but proudly about this great gift that nature was preparing for us. Rather than showing pleasure at the news and solicitude for me, however, Vidkun looked displeased and said he hoped I was mistaken. Bewildered and hurt, I asked him what he meant by that.

I was still too young and inexperienced to take responsibility for a child, he replied. Furthermore, his work was so demanding and the future so unpredictable that it did not suit him to shoulder the burden of a larger family now. However, I had probably just let my vivid imagination run away with me, so I should not talk to anybody about it, at least for the time being. If my "misgivings" should prove true, he would see what could be done about the situation.

As my physician, Vidkun's brother Jørgen was sworn to keep confidential whatever I told him. I am fairly certain that I confided my doubts and worries to him when his practiced eye discovered that I was pregnant, and I confirmed it. But aside from Jørgen, I had to carry the burden of my new secret all alone.

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Little did we know what a fateful year lay ahead of Vidkun and me when we welcomed 1923 at the New Year's party given by Uncle Rasmus and his wife. I felt completely happy when I walked into the warm, bright room where heaps of Christmas presents still lay under the Christmas tree. It was good to be with all these friendly, contented people in surroundings that exuded peace and prosperity.

A long and lavishly decorated table was laden with good things, and by every place-setting there was a small New Year's present hidden under the napkin. Mine was a baby's bottle complete with milk and a rubber nipple. Everybody thought this joke about my extreme youth terribly funny, and I laughed along with them, but I cannot recall whether Vidkun joined in the laughter. I only remember wishing that I could tell everyone around the table that the bottle would come in handy for the child Vidkun and I were expecting.

There were fish and game dishes in great profusion and variety. Vidkun urged me to try one new dish after another and praised the unique quality of Norwegian food. One could not find such food anywhere else in the world, he assured me. Indeed, it all tasted wonderful, and I have since haunted delicatessens around the world trying to find cloudberries and other Norwegian specialties. As for the fish, I much preferred impersonal encounters at the table to being obliged to go fishing with Vidkun. That was an activity I was determined to put off for as long as possible, especially after seeing a photo of Vidkun holding a huge fish suspended from a cruel hook in its lip.

Champagne was served from the moment we sat down at the table, and for the first time I became fully aware of the Norwegian ritual of toasting. Starting with the oldest person present, we all, in our turn, raised our wine glasses and fixed a steady gaze on the person we wanted to toast. On noticing this, the person singled out would stiffen, grab his or her own glass, raise it, and look

with wide open, unblinking eyes into the eyes of the first person. In one breath they would both say "Skål!" and drain the glass while continuing to look into each other's eyes.

Vidkun looked stranger than anyone during the toasting ceremony. With a grave face beneath his unruly silvery hair, he gave a long, unblinking stare from his protuberant, almost transparent eyes, just to have a sip of wine with a friend of his. However, as Vidkun later explained to me, this manner of toasting was an old and venerable custom with a history and purpose. I soon got used to it.

I had not reached that stage on this New Year's Eve, however. I lowered my eyes every time a toast was offered because I did not want to offend my considerate hosts by revealing my amusement at this bizarre and unfamiliar ceremony. Vidkun, nevertheless, noticed my reaction and silently called me to order with his eyes every time a toast was proposed.

Vidkun was very sparing in his own use of alcohol. Both at official receptions and on family occasions, he would dutifully drink the required toasts, but at home he did not taste alcohol, and I never saw him even slightly inebriated. When we were dining alone at a restaurant, he never ordered wine or anything else alcoholic, and at home we never kept so much as a bottle of wine for guests.

Vidkun's abstemiousness suited me very well. I had not had much exposure to alcohol, and after my jaundice, it was clear to me that I could not tolerate alcohol at all, as I had found out the first time we were invited to dinner at Jørgen's house. Liqueur had been served with the coffee, and I had narrowly escaped being sick in front of everybody. Since that time, I only pretended to drink at parties, and I had a hard time holding up my end at Uncle Rasmus's New Year's Eve party. Despite all the champagne, however, that occasion remained a staid and proper family gathering.

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Just before midnight, we all went out on the verandah. The night was cold, clear and breathlessly silent. Then, at the stroke of twelve, the silence was shattered by noise. Powerful, low-pitched hoots from steamers in the harbor, impatient tooting of automobile horns, menacing howls from sirens, and exciting screams and whistles accompanied dazzling, multicolored bursts of distant fireworks. This moment was so pure, so charged with simple hope for mankind that a sharp pain in my heart made me gasp for breath before I burst into tears. Fortunately, it was dark outside, so nobody noticed my crying—crying for myself and for the new little life inside me.

While the others moved about and congratulated each other in Norwegian, I felt lost and left out. I am sure that when we returned inside, everybody treated me very well, kind and well-mannered that they all were. And no doubt Vidkun also congratulated me later. But all I remember is that piercing loneliness and the agony of not having been able to share such an exquisite moment with anyone. Since that night, I have never been able to hold back my tears when greeting a new year.