

Eva Colombo, *A day in exile*, third chapter: *The twilight orchid* (Inspired by Ludwig von Hofmann' s painting *Daydream*, 1898)

You didn't want me into your town. You told me that my eyes are like the shadow into a reticule of too narrow streets where at each bend you hope to meet the daylight and it never happens. You told me that my name is like the echo into a dark labyrinth, an echo which you don't have the bravery to follow since you don't know if it will lead you to salvation or to desperation. I replied that there may be beauty and salvation in the shadow but you have to know that shadow, you have to understand her. Now that it is late afternoon and the shadows are growing longer I may help you to understand the language of the shadow and in so doing I will reward you for your hospitality. But you didn't believe me and you've left me outside the walls of your town, all alone on a stony ground in front of the sea. Now I look at the sea and I feel that the tide is raising together with my tears, now I look at the crescent moon and I notice that a compassionate woman white – clad like the moon is going into a tunnel to whisper my name to the roots of a maritime pine tree which waves its top over the walls of your town. I don't cry, I know what I have to do. At twilight, when the sky will be as beautiful as the violet orchid which I wear in my hair and the high tide will have flooded the stony ground, I will chant a spell so that the sky will bind itself to the sea. So at nightfall the high tide on the stony ground will be like the sky of a May twilight, the high tide on the stony ground will be as beautiful as the violet orchids which flower upon the stones, in the shadow. And through the branches of the maritime pine the crescent moon's beams will be harp's strings, and the pine's needles wavy in the sea breeze will be fingers which with those strings will make my name resound. Then you will wake up and you will lean out of the walls of your town and you will realize that the flooded stony ground will have changed into the sky of an enchanting May twilight and the cropped – out stones will be clouds imbued with precious violet afterglow. And you will see me, seated upon one of those

clouds. My shadowy eyes will sparkle in the moonlight and the orchid in my hair will be the smile of those who flower in the shadow.