



In Spite of
the Dark Silence

Jorge Volpi

TRANSLATED AND WITH AN AFTERWORD BY OLIVIA MACIEL

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Jorge Volpi Escalante is one of the founders of the “Crack Movement” (Generación del crack) in Mexico and author of several well-known novels, including *In Search of Klingsor* and *Season of Ash*. Volpi has been awarded the Spanish literary prize, Premio Biblioteca Breve, and the French Deux-Océans-Grinzane-Cavour prize. *A pesar del oscuro silencio* (*In Spite of the Dark Silence*) is his first novel.

Olivia Maciel is professor of Spanish and Latin American literature at Loyola University-Chicago and is also on the faculty of the Honors College at the University of Illinois–Chicago. Her works include *Surrealismo en la poesía de Xavier Villaurrutia, Octavio Paz, y Luis Cernuda. Mexico (1926-1963)* and *Shadow in Silver / Sombra en plata* (Swan Isle Press).

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To my parents
To Eloy Urroz and Luis García Vallarta

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In Spite of
the Dark Silence



FIRST OEUVRE
The Sign of a Hand

*I awaken in me what I've been
to become silence and nothing.*

C U E S T A

1

His name was Jorge, like mine, and for that his life hurts me twice. I didn't know him yet, had never seen his picture or barely glanced at any of his poems, but upon learning how he'd died—a trivial anecdote in the debris of a distant conversation—I had a precise image of his face, his hands, his torments. While I listened to the remnants of the talk and my pupils perambulated the smoke of cigarettes, I saw him clearly—better yet: I saw through him, in his room, two men in white waiting impatiently for him. Two beings made of wax, of gestures as opaque as their wills, sitting on a frayed sofa; in front of them against the light, the thin body of the poet, sober and light as a prayer. I'd observe his fingers dancing slowly and hear his voice—no, the echo of his voice—asking them, may the paradox be worth it, for a bit more time; he needs to get ready and finish a task that still worries him.

The nurses tell him it's all right, he has ten minutes, and not to try anything (as if he had any strength to escape); then they