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Ejemplar Gratuito

Seattle Escribe

nueva revista literaria



**NUEVOS EFECTOS
SECUNDARIOS**

Seattle Escribe, nueva revista literaria

Nuevos efectos secundarios

Número 1, Otoño 2020

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EDITORIAL

¿POR QUÉ UNA NUEVA REVISTA LITERARIA?

BIENVENIDOS A *SEATTLE ESCRIBE*, una nueva revista literaria. Desde el inicio de nuestro grupo, hemos tenido la preocupación de difundir las obras de nuestros miembros a través de diversos esfuerzos en línea, primero a través de Facebook y luego en nuestra página de internet www.seattleescribe.org. A estos proyectos los hemos denominado «revistas» y a través de ellos hemos publicado con éxito casi dos centenares de textos en los últimos seis años. En estas «revistas» han figurado cuentos, poemas, ensayos, entrevistas, artículos y reseñas no solo de autores locales sino de colaboradores de toda Hispanoamérica que han compartido su talento con nosotros.

Dado nuestro historial de publicaciones tan fructífero, una pregunta muy válida sería ¿por qué lanzar una nueva «revista» —la tercera versión, para ser precisos— si los esfuerzos anteriores han funcionado hasta ahora? Como todo en la vida, la respuesta es sencilla, aunque parezca un poco complicada.

A pesar de que esta es la tercera ocasión en que ponemos en marcha este proyecto, se podría decir que realmente es la primera vez que echamos a andar una revista en forma. Una revista es una publicación periódica, generalmente impresa —aunque en estos tiempos existen muchas versiones digitales—, que contiene textos e imágenes sobre uno o varios temas en particular. Saltan a la vista los conceptos de *periodicidad* y *temática*. Si bien nuestras dos primeras «revistas» hacían un buen trabajo de ilustrar textos para difundirlos en línea, estrictamente hablando no se seguía un proceso de publicación de una forma periódica predecible y, al no haber ejemplares en sí —pues se publicaba solo un texto a la vez—, tampoco existía una temática en particular que uniera a los distintos textos que salían a la luz en un cierto período de tiempo. En realidad, más que seguir las reglas de una revista, nuestros primeros dos esfuerzos siguieron las reglas de lo que técnicamente se consideraría un blog: una página de internet con contenidos de interés —en este caso literarios— que a menudo son comentados por los lectores.

Aunque en el fondo comparte el mismo objetivo de siempre, *Seattle Escribe, una nueva revista literaria* busca hacerlo de una forma distinta, más fiel a la definición de revista de la que hablamos con anterioridad. Primero que nada, se tiene como objetivo lograr una periodicidad de publicación trimestral con una temática distinta en cada ejemplar. Además, a diferencia de esfuerzos anteriores, esta nueva revista hará hincapié en un diseño de formato «estático», de tal forma que la distribución y representación del texto no cambiará dependiendo del tamaño de la pantalla ni del tipo de dispositivo en el que se lea, sino que se maquetará como si fuese una publicación en papel, a pesar de que su distribución seguirá siendo primordialmente a través de medios digitales. En resumen, esta nueva revista literaria tiene un parentesco mucho más cercano al de una revista en papel que a un blog literario, con ejemplares descargables de manera

gratuita en formato PDF o impresos en papel para quienes prefieran leer por este medio.

En cuanto a la temática, queremos que cada ejemplar esté relacionado con algún evento importante de Seattle Escribe, como alguna clase especial o un proyecto significativo, de tal forma que se logre una sinergia entre nuestros eventos y el material que se publique.

Este primer número de otoño titulado *Nuevos efectos secundarios* está dedicado a nuestro cuarto concurso literario, cuyo tema central fue el término «efectos secundarios». En estas páginas encontrarán las traducciones al inglés que fueron parte del premio a los cinco textos ganadores del concurso (gentilmente llevadas a cabo por Stephanie Lawyer de per-e-gren.org) y algunos textos que los jueces decidieron publicar por este medio en vez de la antología. Entre estos textos se encuentran una memoria de vida sobre el proceso de alfabetización en Honduras y tres poemas, uno que habla sobre la naturaleza dual de nuestra existencia y dos que expresan las emociones resultantes de vivir (o más bien sobrevivir) durante la pandemia. Completa este ejemplar un ensayo que reflexiona sobre el proceso del concurso literario como una mezcla de altruismo y arte que tiene la capacidad de ser un paliativo en estos tiempos de pérdida.

Los siguientes dos ejemplares de esta nueva revista literaria estarán relacionados a otros dos proyectos significativos en la historia de Seattle Escribe: *Poemas para la cuarentena*, un espacio de acercamiento virtual a la poesía que surgió a partir de la iniciativa *Poems to Lean On* de la poeta laureada del estado de Washington, Claudia Castro Luna, y *Contando las historias profundas*, nuestra primera clase de escritura en español realizada en mancuerna con Hugo House.

Esperamos que *Seattle Escribe*, una nueva revista literaria sea el parteaguas para una nueva era en la escritura en español en el estado

de Washington. Durante los últimos seis meses, el comité editorial ha estado trabajando arduamente en este nuevo proyecto y por fin podemos sacar a la luz los resultados. Esperemos que este esfuerzo sea de su agrado.

Comité Editorial

ENSAYO



EL ALTRUISMO Y EL ARTE COMO PARTE DE LA CURA

ELENA CAMARILLO

EN LOS PRIMEROS días de marzo, Italia recurría al confinamiento. El coronavirus se expandía, saturando sus hospitales y cobrando vidas. Me perturbó ver escenas del personal de salud extenuado y alarmado ante hileras de camas con enfermos y morgues repletas de cuerpos. Y me conmovió ver las imágenes de artistas cantando y tocando música a sus vecinos desde los balcones. En los Estados Unidos todavía no asimilábamos el inminente peligro. Sin embargo, en los meses venideros, hemos sido muchos en el mundo quienes hemos compartido la incertidumbre de la pandemia encerrados en nuestros hogares. Muchos hemos perdido trabajo, salud o seres queridos. Mientras los médicos, enfermeros y científicos han continuado su labor contra el virus, los gobernantes han depreciado la salud pública: de compromiso a disputa política. El COVID-19 ha afectado mucho más a los que menos tienen, constatando las enfermedades preexistentes en nuestra sociedad: desigualdades, injusticia, racismo y polarización.

La tarde del domingo 15 de noviembre, asistí a la ceremonia de premiación del cuarto certamen literario de Seattle Escribe. Mi

familia y yo llevábamos exactamente ocho meses y un día de trabajar y estudiar desde nuestra casa. Me sabía afortunada de encontrarme en mi sala, protegiéndome de la cada vez más creciente ola de contagios, pero estaba lejos de mis familiares, mis amigos y mi comunidad de escritores. Al mismo tiempo, palpaba también mi cada vez más creciente aflicción. Sentía algo de alivio por la reciente noticia de la efectividad de la vacuna de Pfizer, pero estaba aturdida por las acusaciones de fraude electoral sin evidencia por un presidente que no respeta la diversidad y que de manera constante ofende a los latinos. Así que celebrar la palabra escrita en español en el estado de Washington fue como tomar una cucharada de jarabe para el alma.

Junto con los galardonados, sus invitados, la comunidad hispana, el jurado y la maestra de ceremonias, fui testigo de la determinación de la mesa directiva: crearon un canal de expresión literaria en español al migrar de forma exitosa a una plataforma virtual. La convocatoria al certamen, las clases de apoyo, la recepción de las obras y la colaboración del comité editorial con el jurado tuvieron lugar a través de plataformas tecnológicas. La ceremonia de premiación también se llevaba a cabo de forma virtual y ahí conocimos el producto de su determinación: una antología que también incluye el trabajo de artistas gráficos locales y que asimismo podemos adquirir a través de la tecnología.

Yo me sumé casi al final del proyecto para moderar durante la ceremonia una mesa redonda conformada por el comité editorial de Seattle Escribe y cuatro de las seis personas que conformaron el jurado, residentes de México, Canadá y los Estados Unidos. Los jueces nos recordaron cuán importante es seguir escribiendo todos los días a pesar de los obstáculos y plasmar las ideas que nos surgen a lo largo del día, porque las buenas ideas no solo aparecen cuando

nos sentamos a escribir. También nos recordaron la importancia de preservar nuestra originalidad y nuestras historias en español en este país anglófono. Nos exhortaron a manifestar nuestro poder al preservar nuestras historias en papel y enviarlas a concursos, revistas, editoriales o blogs; a tomar los rechazos y los *no* como combustible para seguir escribiendo y enviando nuestros textos; a aprender la técnica de la poesía métrica y también explorar el verso libre. Nos recordaron que aún *Cien años de soledad*, una de las mejores novelas del siglo XX, fue rechazada muchas veces. Nos compartieron que al evaluar los textos consideraron las comas y los acentos, la gramática y la ortografía y, por supuesto, la técnica narrativa, pero personalmente, y como jurado, eligieron las obras con las que sintieron una conexión emocional. Reflexioné que cuando nos encontramos aislados físicamente, la conexión emocional es como un analgésico para el corazón.

Me conmovió la dadivosidad de los jueces. Al igual que los miembros de la mesa directiva y el comité editorial, fueron voluntarios y regalaron su tiempo y conocimiento para valorar las obras. Y esa tarde sus palabras de aliento fueron, en sí, una dosis de oxígeno para vigorizar nuestra creación artística.

En general, creo que el cuarto certamen literario de Seattle Escribe fue un gran acto de generosidad. Y creo que la generosidad es un paliativo en tiempos de pérdida. Estoy agradecida por haber sido una parte microscópica de este esfuerzo comunitario, este testimonio de resiliencia humana que inyecta esperanza.

Unas semanas después de la ceremonia, contamos con algunos tratamientos y varias posibles vacunas contra el coronavirus. Pienso en los muchos artistas que se han sumado a los tenores y músicos italianos, incluyendo los escritores, poetas e ilustradores que contribuyeron en la antología de Seattle Escribe. A lo largo de la

pandemia ellos nos han obsequiado, de manera desinteresada, sus letras, imágenes, danza, conciertos, comedia y otras obras artísticas. Gracias a ellos, hemos experimentado belleza, perspectiva, validación, alegría, vínculo, sosiego, promesa. Estoy convencida de que tanto el altruismo como el arte son parte de la cura.

MEMORIA



DESTELLOS DE LUZ EN LA OSCURIDAD

AMPARO TORRES BLANDÓN

ERA EL MES DE MARZO. Los quemantes rayos solares semejaban hilos de oro que hacían reverberar la tierra. Cuando esos recuerdos vienen a mi alma, fácilmente puedo evocar, como si fuera hoy mismo, ese preciso momento. Mi vista había experimentado la resequedad ambiental y en el horizonte observé nubes de humo que anunciaban la llegada del tiempo de preparar las tierras para las nuevas siembras.

En ese instante se detuvo el tiempo. Estaba sucediendo un hecho notable. Estudiantes progresistas caminaban entonando consignas: «muerte al oscurantismo e incultura». Transcurría el año 1980. Ocurrió un gran estruendo que estremeció al mundo. Eran los destellos de sabiduría que, en su recorrido, con un lápiz, una cartilla y una lámpara, esos jóvenes empezaban a dejar plasmados.

Desde que esos jovencitos altruistas decidieron enterrar la ignorancia y el dolor, han pasado cuarenta años. El mundo percibió ese esplendor emanado del centro de las Américas. Mi aventura se

realizaría en una comunidad del norte de Nicaragua de nombre El Regadío, situada a unos 20 kilómetros de la ciudad de Estelí.

Ahí abundaban lagartijas e iguanas que salían de sus escondites haciendo su desfile de gala. Por ser de sangre fría, posando sobre piedras para disfrutar la naturaleza y la calidez del sol. Al oír cualquier ruido, estos animalitos bicolores verde-café permanecían inmóviles en los troncos de los árboles, donde parecían estar inertes, o ser remanentes de las infernales quemas que hacían los campesinos y terratenientes lugareños.

Esa realidad cambió cuando se manifestó un vendaval de alegría, conocimiento y gratitud que trastocó todo. Hubo una pausa del año escolar. Emocionalmente, para aquellos jóvenes fue difícil tan decisiva transición. La nación entera se unió a ese gran evento. Esos benévolos entes ahora imbuidos de un sentimiento de compromiso hacia los más desamparados se detuvieron, agradecieron, hicieron reverencia y juraron erradicar la más triste de las penumbras: el no saber leer, ni escribir.

Me disponía a terminar los últimos detalles de mi equipaje cuando mi hermana, quien no quería perderse pormenor alguno, sonriente, pero con ojos húmedos, me dijo:

—¿Ya estás lista? Acuérdate que se está haciendo tarde, hermanita.

Por unos segundos la miré con una mezcla de emoción e incertidumbre, y le contesté:

—Sí, hermana, estoy lista.

Con mi nuevo uniforme gris-azul y mis botas, tomé mi mochila y mi sombrero, y rápidamente emprendimos la salida.

En algunas de las entradas de mi diario quedaron plasmados los retos que serían parte de nuestra agenda en la alfabetización.

Orgullosamente, privilegiada, me ufano de expresar que fui parte de este proyecto, el cual hoy constituye una porción ilustre de la historia de nuestro país. Se habían seleccionado e integrado en grupos los participantes, asignándolos a lugares determinados.

Llegó el momento de la partida. Nos reunimos en el parque, de luminosidad tan radiante que la mañana parecía más limpia de lo ordinario. Con sus rayos, el astro Sol anunciaba la claridad del evento, como si, simbólicamente, quisiera decir que había llegado la hora para salir a evaporar la terrible neblina y lograr un venturoso amanecer.

Después de innumerables abrazos, decirnos hasta luego y con la esperanza de volver a vernos, empezamos a desfilas a la escuadra del punto de partida. Durante aquel ansioso viaje, en el camino, uno a uno, desfilaban los populares árboles carbonales. Parecían saludarnos y dar la bienvenida a aquellos entusiastas adolescentes que morarían ahí un tiempo perentorio. Atrás quedaban los años de tranquilidad y bienestar que habíamos disfrutado en casa.

No sabíamos qué nos deparaba el futuro inmediato. Me parece recordar con precisión las luces intermitentes de la ciudad que se quedaba atrás, efluvios lumínicos que a la distancia se veían con tanta intensidad que parecían resplandecer en cada rostro del lugar donde nos dieron la bienvenida. Al arribar a mi destino, un reflejo de luz iluminó mi ser. Rodaron lágrimas, una antagónica mezcla de tristeza y felicidad. Solo sabíamos que llegábamos a enseñar. Por supuesto, también aprenderíamos, y en abundancia.

Hoy, que me detengo en esta etapa de mi vida, y por el confinamiento causado por la acechante pandemia actual que me ha propiciado más tiempo para meditar, recuerdo con mayor intensidad ese momento, como si se estuviera repitiendo la misma historia, y mi mente efectuó una retrospección de bellos recuerdos.

En aquel ya lejano tiempo no era un coronavirus o COVID-19, sino una fuerte desventura que corroía y mantenía ciegas y calladas a muchas vidas. En cierto modo, el no saber leer y escribir inactiva a los seres humanos.

Fue el inicio que empezó a escribir cinco meses de historia, en los cuales no se sabía si se iba a regresar con vida y poder contar y saborear el triunfo de ese gran final. Solo se sabía que regresaríamos cuando hubiéramos desterrado el analfabetismo.

Fiel compañera nuestra sería una mochila llena de sueños, lápices, lámpara y cartilla, secundada por los brazos abiertos para transmitir sabiduría y ternura. Ese día comenzaríamos a apreciar más cómo a nuestras mesas llega el pan. Tantas lágrimas fueron derramadas por nuestros anfitriones al considerar que nosotros gozábamos de comodidades que algunos ni sabían que existían.

No fue sino hasta que mediante los alfabetizadores en todo el territorio nicaragüense se les transmitieron variados conocimientos: qué es un periódico, o un radio, o un carro, etcétera. Queríamos dar por derrotada tanta ceguera y extremo dolor con solo seguir el legado de Carlos Fonseca Amador: «Y también enséñales a leer y escribir».

Hoy disfruto al evocar esos momentos porque cambiaron mi visión acerca del mundo. Por siempre llevaré en mi alma tatuadas esas memorias. Cada vez que sea necesario vendrán a mi ser.

Fue un 23 de marzo de 1980, año de la alfabetización, cuando salimos de nuestro confort y nos convertimos en esos «destellos de luz en la oscuridad» que se quedaron grabados no solo en las ventanas del alma, sino también en el subconsciente de los alfabetizados. Un día que, aspirando a ser luces, fuimos sorprendidos por nuestra gente con una dosis de paciencia y esperanza. Aprendimos que nosotros teníamos los libros, pero ellos poseían la experiencia.

Después de pasar una larga guerra, de repente, en vez de estar listos para la universidad, estábamos frente al inhóspito enemigo: el analfabetismo. En esos momentos jurábamos vencerlo en unos pocos meses. Todo era confuso, pero debíamos acatar una condición: no dar marcha atrás.

El impulso solo sería para avanzar y, un glorioso día, devenir en ese resplandor en la oscuridad. Lloramos como locos, desterrados, o como soldados que no saben si van a volver. Nos abrazamos con todo ser amado y conocido, y nos despedimos jurando ser destellos de luz en la oscuridad que en el día señalado volveríamos a celebrar y levantar nuestro puño en alto pronunciando nuestra consigna: «Territorio libre de analfabetismo».

En uno de mis diarios con fecha del 20 de agosto de 1980 se puede leer: «En algún lugar de Nicaragua hay un grupo de cuatro alfabetizando». He aquí unas de las lecciones que me hicieron sentir tan orgullosa de haber iniciado esta gran labor.

En la primera lección nos presentamos. Antes de comenzar mi primera clase declararé ser una brigadista de alfabetización y les presenté la cartilla, de la cual les gustó mucho el título *El amanecer del pueblo*. Entonces, alguno de ellos dijo: «Para nosotros, ustedes son eso, destellos de luz en la oscuridad para El Regadío».

Cómo no recordar el día que estábamos enseñando la letra «S». Estaban tan contentos de aprender el sonido que uno de ellos dijo: Mi nombre es Sssssamuel Sssssandino y ssssoy originario de El Regadío. En realidad, no era su nombre, solo quería bromear para decirme que sí había aprendido el sonido. Creo que esos días pasaron muy rápido, a diferencia de nuestro arribo, cuando parecían jornadas interminables.

Fueron 23 lecciones en total. Al finalizar la última, nos desbordamos en alegría por haber conseguido el triunfo. No queríamos decir adiós,

sino hasta luego, porque deseábamos dar seguimiento a su educación. Esta lección parecía la más fácil, porque ellos se sentían capaces de que nadie los podía engañar. Ya estaban en condiciones de leer un periódico, un libro, una dirección, escribir a sus seres queridos, ie incluso firmar!

De acuerdo con los datos estadísticos, después de cinco meses de ardua lucha en campos, montañas y ciudades, logramos enseñar a leer y escribir a 406,056 nicaragüenses, reduciendo la tasa de analfabetismo de un 50.35% a un 12.96% de la población mayor de 10 años. Además, estaban próximos a terminar su proceso de alfabetización 42,639 compañeros. ¡Esto me ha hecho sentir que cuando se hace uso de la hermandad sí se pueden lograr las metas y que la sabiduría conducirá siempre a ser destellos de luz en la oscuridad!

POESÍA



ANHELADO ENCuentRO
JULIETA ALTAMIRANO-CROSBY

En largas noches de insomnio
me sumerjo en el fondo de azul infinito
cantos de sirenas mi embeleso
me pierdo en el frío que cala los huesos

Con cuerpo frágil y olor a sal
observo mi infancia a través del cristal
escapa huyendo en el horizonte
emprende vuelo como cenizante

Acompaña el viaje mi amigo el presente
mantiene silencio el pasado ausente
con intriga a cuestas mantengo mi paso
en busca de ese añorado abrazo

Doliéndome el alma prosigo camino
maldigo la hora cuando el COVID vino

mastico mi rabia en trago amargo
que hunde mis ganas en gran letargo...





DOBLE FILO
CARMELO GONZÁLEZ VELES

Las pequeñas semillitas marrón
invitan a sembrar alegrías en el corazón.
Un cielo azul, un céfiro, unos altocúmulos, y un sol poderoso
son de la parcela su gozo.

¡Oh, manos generosas que siembran
sueños y refugios! ¡Oh, pies que avanzan
por los surcos de férrea jornada,
donde la existencia puede ser asaltada!

¡Oh, parcela de algodón
eres luz o sombra, bendición o maldición!
El viento y el tiempo cargan un sollozo,
por un Caín que tiñó de sangre a su hermano generoso.

¡Hay lamentos de hombres que llegan
de Alabama, de Luisiana, y que sueñan
con la libertad ansiada

de una garantía universal que les ha sido arrebatada!

Esfera nívea de algodón
manchada de sangre y de aflicción,
traes desnudez o porte poderoso
a la doncella o al mozo.

Nubes de mayo que navegan
en mares cristalinos que encaminan
por aquella vereda deseada
por un niño siempre soñada.

¡Pequeñas semillitas marrón,
plenilunios ocultos en terrón!
¡Estandartes de sábanas blancas de lecho glamuroso
o aquellas de féretro no suntuoso!



ACOMPañADA SOLEDAD

EDUARDO RAMÍREZ

Cual neblina gris
la pandemia se posó
devorando la humanidad.
Cuánto drama, cuánto dolor.
Cada día por enfrentar
sin saber qué esperar.

Anoche tomé una dosis de soledad
tratando de olvidar, al recordar
me propuse los ojos cerrar.
Disfruté la puesta del sol,
el despertar de la luna,
el pestañear de las estrellas.

Lentamente la penumbra me cubrió
en sus brazos fríos me tomó,
y el miedo de mí se apoderó.
La dosis tal vez fue menor

y fantasmas de la noche encontré
por no hacerle caso al doctor.

El reloj me taladró con su tic-tac,
las sabanas adornaron mi ser
mientras inerte el día esperé.
Muy de mañana, antes de salir el sol,
cuando la penumbra ve la luz,
me di cuenta que los ojos no cerré.

La noche se desvanece frágil y sutil,
yo envuelto en ansiedad.
El día vuelve a comenzar.
Tendré por orden qué distanciar.
Aunque alejado de ti esté,
estoy acompañado en soledad.

CUENTO



CROSS STITCH
ADRIANA BATAILLE

MUCH TO HER REGRET, Eugenia set out to the village of San Ignacio to buy supplies, and as soon as her coarse sandals left the dusty ground and stepped onto the cobblestone streets, she got goosebumps. Although she rushed from shop to shop, she could not shake Carlotita and her entourage of busybodies, who flocked to her like birds of prey. “Such pests!” Eugenia grumbled to herself as she clenched her fists.

“Looking for some new dresses, Doña Eugenia? I'm sure you're going to need them! We heard Silvestre's back,” Carlotita said while the other women's laughter bounced from wall to wall along the alley.

Eugenia walked fast, ignoring them. She couldn't tell whether the sweat covering her forehead was due to repressed fury or whether to blame it on another one of her hot flashes. She quickened her step, leaving the arches of the square behind. A whisper caught on her lips and accompanied her on her way.

“Blessed Virgin of Calvary, do not allow this venom to reach Casiano's ears. Do not allow another misfortune to happen,” she repeated in distress.

Eugenia could not get home quickly enough. With every breath, she felt squeezed by an anguish that turned her body into a sigh and three sobs. When she opened the door, she found her husband in the hammock on the terrace, with muddy compresses of rue applied to his temples and lost in sleep; not even the flies buzzing around his chubby head bothered him. She ran straight to the tap. There, next to the stream of water, a couple of tears rolled down her cheeks, which she hid while moistening her face to wash away her fear. She needed to dispel all the uneasiness she held inside, and so she went straight to her garden.

"I'm not going to cause him any more humiliation!" she murmured, breathing in the smell of freshly cut grass. "Hopefully, he won't even find out!"

She talked to herself as she wiped the muddy traces of tears from her cheek and shook off the leaves that stuck to the calluses on her fingers. Fed up with stumbling into alleys full of scorpions, her husband had not visited the village for months. After thirty years of marriage, Eugenia knew that even another forty would not be enough time for her man's scars to harden. For years, the unhappy woman had only vented her sorrow at her herbs and vegetables. Once alone among the greenery, she would allow herself to remember the last time she saw her Silvestre. When nostalgia flat out crushed her chest, she would furtively take out a picture she had hidden in her handkerchief and spend a few minutes brushing the photo with her fingertips. A thousand suns had lit up the sky since Silvestre left. A thousand starry nights had kept her tears company since the boy had given up his grueling battle.

Twenty-five years ago, Silvestre had made her a mother for the first time. The little one's arrival lit up her coppery, scorched soul. His birth was the only thing that kept her husband from working long days. He would smile like a child again when he played on the wet ground next to his son. Soon, Eugenia and Casiano had two more daughters, but Silvestre was in the very beating of his father's heart; she took care of the girls. Years later, Casiano woke up with a furrowed brow, becoming a reclusive old man and obsessively resuming his hard-working ways. Silvestre must have only been eleven years old when, without understanding why, his father broke a bond that once seemed unbreakable. His mother didn't understand shit. She didn't put the bitter pieces together until several mornings later. One afternoon, Eugenia surprised Silvestre as he was trying on her T-strap heels; on another occasion, she found him absorbed in mixing and matching his sisters' doll clothes.

"What else is the kid going to play with since he lives with two girls?" she stubbornly said to herself again and again.

Her mind connected and spun the memories that would become a life sentence for her. Silvestre grew up with his family looking the other way, other people taunting him, and the kids at school beating him up. None of that mattered to the boy—what hurt him, what he could not understand, was what was wrong with him or what the hell he had done to earn his father's displeasure. One day, Eugenia found her son trying on her red flowered dress. Without thinking, she slapped him in the face.

"Never touch my things or your sisters' again! Do you hear me? Never!" she shouted, throwing all her confusion into a second slap.

From that night on, the grieving mother shared her secret with Our Lady. Eugenia prayed night and day that Casiano would suspect nothing, pleading for his negative thoughts to fade away like sweet

dreams do. The day came when Casiano understood that, like it or not, blood ties cannot be broken just by looking away, and that the weight of judgment can leave a heavy footprint. In a town as small as San Ignacio, rejection and criticism are not forgiving, no sir! Contempt wells up and resonates like a cloud of tiny mosquitoes hovering about the ear. Every time Casiano delivered vegetables to the market, he could hear the whispering up and down the aisles and feel the brutal sting of other people's looks. The robust, coppery body of Silvestre's father, his steady and strong-willed character, were transformed into a shadow of helplessness and frustration. When Casiano took up drinking, his wife never dared utter a word of reproach. Despite the gallons of liquor and racking hangovers, the man failed to silence the echo of animosity. At night, Eugenia and Casiano huddled at opposite sides of the bed, without exchanging a single word about the murmuring around the village. They each pulled a piece of cowardice to their side, covering up their judgments, fears and mistakes, digging themselves a ditch in which to bury their misery.

"Fag! Poof! Butterfly!" they shouted at Silvestre at school or in the street. What weapons can you use to defend a son in a place where manliness sweats and machetes slash at the earth?

Casiano built a fence with spikes of disapproval, separating himself from his son, so that the boy left the village burdened with humiliation. After his departure, Casiano forbade the rest of the family to utter a single word about his unwholesome son. He already considered him dead and buried. As the years went by, Eugenia learned to dodge gossip and hardship, never forgetting to pray for her Silvestre to come back. When Casiano promised Our Lady he would give up drinking, tranquility lightened the Gomez's life, and now and again they would take in the breath of hope. The devout vows turned him back into an irrepressible man, and the lushness of

his garden sustained him. Wooden crates full of fresh vegetables came and went, supplying the villagers.

Along with the pollen, the spring air brought a plague of insects that began to make the field workers sick. Casiano caught the virus from the undergrowth. Fever, hallucinations and vomiting made him as weak as a kitten; not even all the alcohol circulating in his blood could finish off the bug.

"God willing, it eats away at the armor shielding his bitterness!" his wife babbled when she saw him.

Eugenia turned to the healer, but the old woman could not get the remedy right, nor did they find a cure at the pharmacy in the arcade. Eugenia's daughters could find no way to save their father, and so they had no choice but to write to their brother asking for help. The tragedy in the village and his father's illness brought the young man back. It took a thousand moons for him to return covered in pride, wearing his white coat and part of the medical team that cared for those who were infected. Forgetting the years of abuse, Silvestre returned to save his father. He came back to help the sick, overlooking the poisonous aspersions of people accustomed to covering up ignorance with cotton embroidery thread and sealing their repudiation with a cross stitch. While he was away, he had learned that discomfort and ailments can be treated, but social stigma, that's another matter! It's a messy, mean little beast and extremely hard to eradicate.

Translated by Stephanie Lawyer



OUTSTANDING DEBT

JORGE CHÁVEZ

GOD HEARD my plea even though I did not believe in him. Maybe that's why he granted my request: to prove that whoever seeks shall find and whoever asks shall receive. Soon I will be thanking him, in person if things go well for me, or paying off the advance at loan-shark interest at the opposite end of eternity. Chemo and radiation have not worked. The tumor is pressing on the cerebellum, and because it is deep, it is inoperable.

The cancer was not the product of a genetic defect or contact with a toxic substance. Looking back over my life, I wish I had taken more risks and misbehaved a little more. I missed opportunities to ask for forgiveness and, even worse, the reasons for doing so. Instead I asked to become ill, that the glioma be transferred to me, and I offered up my life in exchange for saving someone else's. Anguish and despair are not wise counselors, but at the most painful moment in my life I listened to them and knelt weeping, begging God to take me and not him.

My morning headaches began the year we visited the children's cancer hospital for the last time. Anyone who has not had reason to go to a place where little ones, even babies, fight for their lives, where there are children who may never know their first kiss, or understand how sweet and bitter life can be, do not know how lucky they are. I didn't think the headaches were important because as I was getting dressed they went away. Despite having become an expert on brain tumors and their symptoms, I was unable to recognize in myself the first reminders of an outstanding debt. It's odd that I, who was always at pains not to borrow, did not remember that I had applied for credit and the bank of life always ask for a repayment.

My most vivid memory of the hospital was a large quilt of colorful squares that took over the wall of one of the hallways. Each square contained a printed photograph of a boy or girl who had been cared for there. Beneath each smiling face, a name and two dates were embroidered in long hand: the date of their initial diagnosis and then either the date they were discharged or their suffering came to an end. Before every appointment, as we waited for the specialists to see us, I would go over each face trying to imagine what they could see as they looked at the camera: surely their parents begging them to smile. I would calculate the ages of the children who survived and those who did not. I thought I understood the feeling that had inspired the artist who created the blanket—to leave a trace of the lights struggling not to be extinguished—but it was always sad and morbid too. Most of all, I thought of the mothers and father who accompanied their children, every family on its own Via Dolorosa. I saw them throwing themselves at their children in a fruitless attempt to free them from their cross and take it on themselves. They say that God does not play craps, but I had no doubt that if God exists he considers places like a children's cancer hospital no more than casino tables,

where a combination of numbers randomly decides whether a child lives or dies.

The headaches improved, but continuous weight loss and an increase in looser clothing took their place. The debt collector continued to do his rounds and yet I still did not acknowledge him. Around that time I was training for a race, and the kilos and sizes diminished as I clocked more time and distance. My degree of preparation and attention to detail were almost identical to the control I had exercised over all my son's movements the previous year. A father who cares for a son who possibly has a tumor in his head becomes obsessively vigilant. Every stumble, however natural, becomes a source of anguish. Every feeble kick of the ball lets loose waves of concern. Placing him in a sterile bubble that keeps him safe is not an option given that the poison ivy is inside him. Fortunately, the nightmare we had been living through was already behind us, and as far as I was concerned, the most important thing in front of me was the goal thirty-nine miles away. I did not imagine that the seedling growing inside me, which I had demanded and watered with my tears, began to feed and make its way into the hardest and most impenetrable space in the human body.

The spot in the X-ray was unmistakable. A small amorphous circle was visible on the lower left of my brain. My mouth tasted bitter, and fear and anxiety took hold of me. The doctors could not definitively say it was a tumor, but they could not rule it out either. Its location made it impossible to biopsy so there was nothing to do but wait, watch, and go back in a few months. On the night of the diagnosis, back home, I called someone I wasn't going to pretend with. He answered the phone and just listened to the silence coming from the phone, the embrace of a dad suffering with his son, the phone line twinning two parents, each crying for their child. I hung up and went up to his bedroom, where he slept in absolute peace and calm. My

sweetest memories of my children are of them sleeping. I never missed an opportunity to lie down next to them or kneel by their beds and gaze at them, unable to contain the love I felt at those moments. That night I knelt again and, with my eyes glued to my son, spoke to my heavenly father, who for years I had searched for without receiving an answer. This time surely he would. A father who is willing to sacrifice his son on a cross is capable of anything, and I was sure he would smell blood and not waste this opportunity.

The third reminder came while I was playing with my son. It was cruel: I walked into the wall in front of him. I attributed the dizziness to the hours we had spent playing and suggested we take a break and go out for ice cream. When I stood up, I was forced to hold onto the door and sit on the floor. After several futile attempts at getting up, and beginning to lose the feeling in my right hand, instead of taking my son to the ice cream parlor, I was rushed to the hospital. The initial diagnosis, a possible embolism, was discarded once we got the X-rays. A sizable spot could be seen on the lower left side of my brain and, unlike a year ago, a network of capillary vessels that fed the tumor was evident. The cancer was quite advanced and a course of chemotherapy and radiation the only option. Attempting to remove it could cause irreversible damage and the likelihood of success was low.

We went back three, six and twelve months later. The spot that had caused so much anguish dissipated stealthily until it was an almost invisible, and the star actor-of tragedy slipped through the back door of the theater that was our life for a year. With an affectionate smile, the head of the children's cancer unit gave us his last piece of advice: Be happy and enjoy life. We got back in the car and I couldn't stop crying. All the pent-up tears, the sleepless nights, the remorse for neglecting our daughter while watching over her brother, burst like an uncontrollable spring. My whole body shook, and I had to grab

the steering wheel because of the spasms that followed my sobs. Surely God was present and yet I decided to ignore him. Perhaps the debt had been paid off with the love, dedication, and patience my wife and I had shown each other over the course of twelve full moons, but I did not have the humility to say thank you, and we both lacked the strength to turn twelve moons into a multicolored quilt that would cover the corridors of our life.

For days now I've been in death's waiting room, ready to pay my debt, cash already in hand, but the collector has not arrived. The cocktail I've been prescribed to relieve the pain keeps me from discerning whether I am still alive or not. It's surely what caused this last hallucination. At the foot of my bed kneels my son, a child just beginning to lose his baby teeth, hands clasped and glued tightly to his forehead. A tear rolls down his left arm and he mouths the words, which I can barely hear and certainly did not teach him, "My Father who are in heaven..."

Translated by Stephanie Lawyer



TACUBAYA
DALIA MAXUM

SOME PEOPLE ARE MADE of wind...

I feel the air hitting me in the face. For as long as I can remember, I've liked to lean my face completely out the window of whatever vehicle I'm traveling in. I like to introduce myself to the wind. Sometimes it presents itself as a lover, sometimes as an enemy.

Between the moon and the speed of the bus, the atmosphere is perfect for kissing the wind. In a couple of hours, when I'm tired and giving into the pleasures of sleep, that same wind will be challenging and sometimes cruel. However, that will pass and I'll enter a kind of coma; six hours later I will have arrived in the big city, Mexico City. Today is my last trip. I have been making this journey for months, and now as I lean back in my seat and look at the dark mountains, I begin to remember how this adventure began.

I see myself on a ranch in the southern mountains from which you leave on foot. You have to load your backpack with what you need for the weekend, especially prayers. You take out your prayers a little at a time, as it begins to get dark, as you cross the river, as you wait

for the first van and climb in the back. Then another prayer in the second van, the one that crosses over the mountain, so that it does not fall into the ravine, and another so you find a seat on the bus. Despite that, I have to keep most of my prayers for when I arrive at TAPO, the eastern bus terminal.

Mexico City cannot be understood without its metro subway system. Each station is a microworld inside a monster that settled by Lake Texcoco.

When I arrive at the bus station, uncertainty envelopes me. I have no idea how to make my way to the right subway that will take me to the university. I am almost out of prayers, but at last I reach the turnstiles. Yes, I'm headed in the right direction: Pantitlán-Observatory. I breathe, relieved. I go down the stairs and my eyes widen, so much so that they no longer look like two eyes molded by a Zapotecan past in the city of the clouds. I cannot take in all the people, the whole picture. I want to cry. Can I make it to Lomas de Santa Fe on time?

The lines are long. People push a lot and do everything they can to get into the car. I go to the end and wait my turn. Each time a new car comes, more people pile up and some crush me. I feel squeezed like a May pineapple mango, a mango that is more juice than pulp and eaten through a hole in its tip. When rush hour is over, I can finally get on. I know where I have to get off. My dad took charge of instructing me as much as possible. He spent years living in the monster.

I am in Tacubaya now. Maybe it's because I was in a hurry, but taking the last bus feels easy. I ask the driver to please let me off at CIDE university. As always, I look at everything outside, through the glass window, taking in all the color and bustle. I am starting to feel happy. I hear a loud cry: CIDEEEE. I get off quickly, still being

pushed, but after the experience on the subway it feels like I am being caressed. I find myself at the bottom of a long flight of stairs. There's a bridge to cross. I have arrived.

Of course, I am late. Someone from the school administration office takes me to the classroom. I think everyone is watching me, the only one of her kind in class. I can't say how, but it turns out I am very different. I feel naked to the core: I am being discovered, observed. I wait to be caught out because of my words, my achievements. My insecurity stems from the academic side of things. If I don't take advantage of this introductory course, I am never going to pass the admissions exam. Everyone seems so advanced. And I admit wholeheartedly that while my classmates were preparing for the national Olympics in chemistry or mathematics, I did everything but take part in academic competitions or studying hard. I would spend my time at some basketball tournament, or dancing to a Mixe band on a feast day, or working, selling at the market, reading. And most recently teaching my students in the mountains. School grades weren't a priority until now. And here I am thinking: I walked in the dark, I took vans, buses, the subway, and for what? Can I make it? I finish that first day of the course, but the deepest questions are just beginning.

At the end of the day, I cry the whole way back to the subway. I no longer turn my face toward the window. There is no wind to comfort me. I can't feel it on my face like I have since I was a girl. Even when I hid myself from my mom in the truck so she would take me to exotic and faraway places: the markets in Oaxaca.

When I get to Tacubaya, the bus drops me off in a weird place. There are a lot of people, all passing by quickly, pushing me. I realize I am lost.

I feel sad, alone, defeated. The only thing that gets me out of my head is a rotten fish-like smell. I move. Suddenly I can't remember where I'm going. At that moment, the name TAPO almost sounds like a secret code. I ask someone, "Where do the buses to Oaxaca leave from?" He looks at me, his long silence followed by an I-don't-know. How did it get to this? Will I have enough money to buy a card and call my dad? I ask God for a sign: help me and I promise I'll never come back. I just need to get to the subway. I stop walking. I notice I am sweating a lot. Someone touches me gently on the shoulder. A man with strands of hair so white they shine. He looks at me closely. I am not scared. On the contrary, I feel at peace. He asks me if I am heading for the subway. I answer yes, and he says, "I'll take you there." I follow him like someone following their grandfather, without any question or doubt. When we get to the subway, I recognize the place right away.

The man turns around and tells me how to get to TAPO. He touches my shoulder again: "God bless you, daughter." His eyes are amber yellow, but his face has many furrows, like those they till at home to sow garlic: brown, deep, and thick.

I follow his instructions and arrive at TAPO. I sit down, take a deep breath, and then I remember I have eaten almost nothing since the day before. When I realize this, I also grasp I never told the man where I was going. Not once. I have to hold onto the seat's handrail. I don't understand anything. I start praying, even though the prayers are borrowed. I cry silently. I think of my grandmother: "There are always angels looking after you. They're your people," she used to say. "Don't promise God things you can't live up to. Don't make excuses for what's happening to you. That's what you have your angels for."

I understand that God did not send me one of my angels to take me to the subway and never come back. No, sir! He sent him to remind

me that I have to reach my goal. I have to finish that course, even if it means coming to this unknown monster with a thousand heads for the next seven weekends. That man and his gesture changed my life. What are a thousand heads before an army that formed on the tip of the nose of the huajes?¹

Many years have gone by since that afternoon. I've graduated from the university. Was that milestone in my life the result of my strength of character? Or did one of my angels guide my footsteps?

I still remember the old man with white hair and amber eyes. Sometimes I wonder if that man really existed. Maybe I was only tired. Maybe I just imagined him. But why am I questioning it now? For many years this was an irrefutable fact for me.

Sometimes I think my angels have grown tired and abandoned me. Or maybe I'm the one who abandoned them. Far from the sea of clouds, transported to the green silence. Maybe, the day I moved countries, I broke my promise and muddied all my grandmother's teachings. Maybe I need to pay for the prayers that were answered. Maybe it's necessary to ask the wind. Maybe...

Translated by Stephanie Lawyer

1. The name Oaxaca comes from the Nahuatl word *Huaxyácac*, meaning "in the nose of the huajes."



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

GONZALO TOVAR

LIKE EVERY SUNDAY, the courtyard was full of children, brothers, wives, fathers, and mothers. It was visiting day, and those who could waited until the third Sunday of the month to embrace their people, a reminder of their hopes of coming home intact. At 9:15 a.m. an explosion shook the Llanos Barracks, the largest in the area. First, silence. Followed immediately by the guard on the east tower radioing that a soldier had taken the north tower.

“Attention, east tower here. An unidentified soldier has occupied the north tower. One of our men is injured.”

The panicked voice burst over the barrack’s communications system, immediately raising the alarm. The visitors did not know what to do when—after the blast from the rebel soldier’s rifle—an appeal for calm and clear-headedness came over the intercom.

The rebel soldier requested the presence of the commander of the base, who was at home enjoying Sunday with his family.

“I want to talk face to face with the major. That’s all I ask.”

The major was having breakfast with his wife when the phone rang.

“Good morning, Major. Chief of security of the base here. We have a situation.”

“Aha ... and what is the situation?” the major asked.

“Sir, we have a rebel soldier occupying the north tower with a wounded man and he’s demanding your presence.”

The major hung up the phone and said to his wife, “Sweetheart, I have to go the base. There’s a hostage situation.”

“Good God, how terrible! And on a Sunday when everyone’s visiting.”

Meanwhile the rebel soldier in the north tower was becoming nervous because time was passing by and the major still had not appeared. The other servicemen began looking into who the rebel soldier was.

It took a few minutes for the major to arrive. In the meantime, at the rebel soldier’s request, the visitors remained in the central courtyard. They too had become the soldier’s hostages.

Once inside the barracks, the major approached the north tower, attempting to initiate a dialogue with the rebel soldier. He thought he could convince him to lay down his weapon and release his hostage.

“Soldier, it's useless for you to hold your position. Sooner than later, you'll be cornered and forced to hand over your weapon. I'm ordering you to surrender your rifle and allow your wounded comrade to get help.”

“I'll hand it over only if you stand in front of me, man to man, not officer to soldier.”

The major agreed and continued towards the north tower, with the aim of negotiating and disarming the rebel soldier. He thought ending the chaos would only be a matter of minutes. He walked up to the spiral staircase that gave access to the north tower, stood on the first step and called out to the rebel soldier. The soldier responded with a burst of bullets, wounding the major in the left arm. The major immediately realized there was not much chance of dialogue. He retreated as best he could, hiding behind one of the armored cars near the staircase.

“Attention, Sergeant!” the major shouted at the group of officers who were watching the exchange between the rebel soldier and the Major unfold. “Find the best shooter and choose the most advantageous position for eliminating the rebel soldier. Enough is enough. The man's insane.”

When he heard his sentence, the soldier shouted in a voice caught somewhere between weeping and rage. “Man up, Major... just like I did when I had to endure twenty-four hours of standing in place and three days in jail just because you thought I did not salute you. It was New Year’s weekend and I couldn’t see my family.”

A few months earlier, the rebel soldier was having lunch in the canteen and did not see the Major pass by. And so, he did not salute him properly as a superior officer deserves. The incident had been reason enough for the major to punish the rebel soldier on New Year’s Eve, denying him the chance to be embraced and enfolded by family.

First, the Sergeant ordered his best shooter to the east tower to judge the exact moment for pulling the trigger.

“Corporal, you know the rebel soldier because you belong to the same platoon. Take your time, but take a single shot. Remember it’s visiting Sunday and we want to avoid things going seriously wrong.”

Both men had started their mandatory military service at the same, so they were close friends. So much so that the weekend the rebel soldier was quarantined, he had asked his future executioner not to say anything to his mother, not to tell her he was being punished and that's why he couldn't give her a long-awaited year-end embrace. In a voice that revealed all his sorrow and pain, the corporal shouted, "Soldier, enough! Put down your rifle and surrender. Your attitude is making things worse."

The rebel soldier realized they were targeting him and that it might be his last Sunday unless he handed over his rifle.

"Corporal, you know me. You know I mean no harm. But the Major stopped me from visiting my family and this morning they sent me a message... Ma died early this morning. I couldn't say goodbye to her or hug her at New Year's because of the whim of a petty man."

At that moment, the corporal understood that the rebel soldier was unhinged and it would be difficult to convince him to change his mind. Meanwhile the Major was screaming, "Corporal, I gave you an order! Carry it out—or are you on the rebel soldier's side?"

The soldier showed a little humanity by coming to the defense of his executioner. "Major, this is between you and me. It's got nothing to do with this."

The rebel soldier had not even finished speaking when a bullet struck him in the head. The corporal had made the most of his position and accurate aim. In a voice that was somewhere between rage and pain, he shouted, "Mission accomplished, Major, mission accomplished."

Translated by Stephanie Lawryer





NINETY DAYS REPLAYING HIS
DEPARTURE

ESTEFANÍA ZAPATA GONZÁLEZ

AS I WATCH A FLOWER FALL, I'm excited that an incredible summer is about to begin—and at the same time, I sense it's a sign that love is about to end. I can see the blossoms on the ground and the thistledown falling on our faces. Suddenly a silence settles between us and I can hear my lover say that he is about to end our affair. Just like spring, I watch the flowers of love falling in front of me, announcing its end.

And then I think, Why doesn't spring last more than ninety days in this beautiful city? Why can't these flowers, which are so lovely and bring us joy, last for more than three months?

It's as if even spring, like me when it comes to love, cannot make it past a ninety-day trial period and prove itself capable of bringing beauty into another's life.

Another breakup. Another relationship that did not last more three months. Here I am again, unable to go beyond the famous ninety-day trial period while working to keep a man hopelessly in love with me,

trying to sell him on the idea that I am the love of his life and convince him that with me he will be happy.

So here I am again. Several times in my life I've attracted men who fall madly in love with me at first, and then something happens during the first three months that changes everything. They start to keep their distance and somehow disconnect emotionally until they decide not to stay with me any longer. Today, again, history is repeating itself. A man ends the relationship, and I stop to think, Why the hell does love only last ninety days?

I realize I need to evaluate what happens during this time. Analyze what it is I'm doing to drive them out of my life. And that's when I recognize something that happens in all my relationships: thinking they will leave at any moment makes me very anxious. It's a thought that constantly crosses my mind. I don't trust them to stay by my side, and somehow they pick up on my anxiety and decide to pull back.

After going through analysis for years, I decided to relocate and start a life alone and away from home. I realized back then that I needed the space to heal on my own and outside the environment I grew up in. Fortunately, I can say that it was the best decision I ever made, and at the same time a painful experience. A lot of things began to click for me because of everything I worked through in analysis. Now it's time to put into action what Freud would call "recrafting." If the goal of analysis was to make the unconscious conscious, then the point of venturing to a new city to start a new life was to stop pushing replay. To break with patterns that were so embedded in my daily life—especially as part of a couple—I suffered and became unhappy. Patterns I repeated just to confirm for myself that I was cursed and something was wrong with me. And while this chapter of my life provided the radical change I needed, the ghosts of the past always follow us until we face them, and above all, forgive them.

The ghost that looms largest in my life is my father's. Life snatched him away in a minute, when I was very young. He moved to another city, and months later my family and I joined him.

Suddenly, one day he was murdered. I was only two years old and didn't understand what was going on. At that age we don't understand what death is, but we do feel the absence of a loved one. I lived through his death as though I had been abandoned. It left me with the feeling that something was wrong with me, that perhaps he left because of me.

These kinds of losses leave us with open wounds. They do not stop hurting but we learn to live with them. But nor do they heal or scar over. That's how I brought these wounds into all my relationships with men. Without really knowing why, I always feel they are going to leave me.

I grew up without a clear idea of how my father died. I was only told he had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nothing more. And this led to the enormous uncertainty and mistrust I feel towards men. Constantly questioning whether they're hiding something, doubting they're being sincere with me, deeply disbelieving their words.

I've grown up with tremendous ambiguity over whether I want to spend the rest of my life on my own or with a partner. Clearly, the consequence of a wound that has not healed. Seeing the two as opposites is problematic, for underlying them both is the same thing: not knowing how to be at peace with myself or with someone else, for what is always in doubt is love.

Today, one more man is leaving me, and ironically this time I don't fall apart. I can clearly see a scene is being repeated. Suddenly I realize my relationships last about ninety days. Instead of feeling shattered, I manage to grasp that this relationship is ending just like

the previous ones. It's as though I'm experiencing déjà-vu. I hear him say the same words of regret and see clearly that it's a scene that replays itself over and over. And now I stop and wonder: am I the one who's making these departures repeat themselves after ninety days? Does something in me prepares me for being deserted every three months? Do I work things so I can anticipate being left? Am I plotting the end? Am I killing off the relationships? Why does it take three months?

And then a light turns on. I have to revisit the scene of my father's departure from this world. Pay attention to the details in the context of that time. And then suddenly a question springs to mind: How much time was there between being reunited with my father, when I moved to where he was, and his death?

I decide to ask my mother, and guess what? That's right, I only lived with my father for about three months. Life only gave me three months to enjoy his company and love him, and then I never saw him again.

This is how we start to heal, by solving the mysteries of our own lives. My father's death is a great enigma full of many secrets, which I subconsciously tried to solve through my relationships. My incessant questions were actually for my father. Separation anxiety is a side effect of his sudden death. My distrust is the result of feeling that my father left this world having hidden things from our family.

I realize this, and all of a sudden I am calm. I feel like I'm getting closer and closer to breaking the curse that I imposed on myself. I repeat to myself that I want to love and be loved without fear of abandonment. I want to create memories full of love and joy by someone's side. To heal, grow and mature together. I want to beat the ninety-day trial period. I want to stop testing them. What do I

have to do? Do I have to forgive and become reconciled with my father?

Forgive him for not doing things right. For hiding secrets from my mother. For putting himself in a situation that resulted in his losing his life and therefore for abandoning us. For having wounded us in a way that required us decades of healing. For not having been part of my life ninety days after I found him again. Forgive him for the mystery surrounding his death. I have to reconcile with his memory, accept and believe that he loved me more than anything and that his departure had nothing to do with me. To believe that his love for me was real.

Heal, forgive, reconcile and let go. Honor his memory and embrace his story as part of my identity.

Today I decide to stop testing myself. Today I decide to trust. Today I decide to forgive you, dad. Wherever you are, I hope what I'm writing now redeems my failure at love, that it's the beginning of healing my wounds and my final release from the curse of not finding love.

Translated by Stephanie Lawyer



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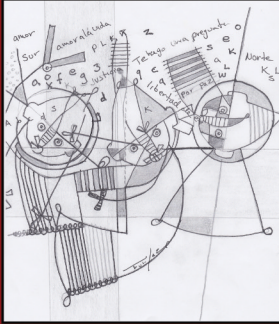


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