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Sky on the skin

A scenic rhapsody

de

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traducción de

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(fragmento en inglés)

DIRECTIONS

The rule is very simple: it's a story told in various voices not necessarily indicated by the author in favor of imaginative playmaking which requires an intelligent staging, that is to say, an efficient reading exercise: a daring to show and to know.

IN THE BEGINNING...

You have to tell the truth. To speak. To tell it. You cannot. It takes work.

Breathe & save your breath because you'll run out, because it'll escape through that stupid wound that is your open mouth. Bang. Bang. Bang. Of the drive.

Slow and lifeless.

More precisely bang-bang, bang-bang, bang-bang, a stubborn counterpoint.

Wait until they notice you. Till you're chosen. It's not your turn. Breathe and crick goes your chest.

Pain. Exhale and Phew!

You like to imagine.

Eyes glued to the high ceiling, soft-white, like an operating room illuminated by those burning eyes that don't look at you, but bathe you or splash you. They lick you with their sharp tongues, cracked by the wetness of your half-open eyes. A buzzing silence throbs in your left ear. The other doesn't respond.

You leave it alone. A screeching warmth opens up your flat chest, spreads out and stains your wounded, dirty shirt. Warns you that—you, your skin and your flesh are leaving you colder each time...

And the fluctuating drive that endures in fits and starts doesn't let you go into the blackness of the dream that claims you. Breathe. You like to imagine. Crick. Breathe. Deep pain. Deep pain. Deep pain...

Breathe and Woosh! You slip, close your eyes, a distant and piercing piiiiii that stays behind with one foot planted in the living room like a useless anchor that neither holds you back nor makes you return. The long-haired silkiness of the night, or something that seems to engulf you: The Space of Nothingness which silhouettes brilliantly, clearly, the objects invented by the oscillating delirium of your broken memory.

You like to imagine.

Flashing, the images come to your eyes that, even when closed, can't stop seeing. You shake your head and nothing. There they are. You don't want to see them, and you can't do anything about it, they are there. They're your bare feet running through morning's frozen pasture. They're the eager hands of the guy rummaging through your crotch/between your legs. The road to your house, nocturnal, graveled, in the one-eyed view of a dim lamp. The confusion. The tearing that guided you and your desperate cries in the night.

There's no air. Better to divert. Zoom. Divert. Zoom. Divert...

You escape enjoying the emptiness that stands on end and that melts inside, outside, beside you.

You go off course. Echo. Echo. Echo. But you return.

And it's the hard and alien hand in your choking mouth. Your panties lost in your throat. The fists pounding the face. That thing entering and exiting, plunging into you, into your viscera. That voice silenced.

—You're wet. You're wet. You're wet, little bitch. You're wet...

You need air... Burning, oppression in the throat, burning... Something breaks you, it breaks, it is bursting...

THE ESCAPE

The last story. The last story you're reading, you like a lot. You like it more because everything that happened to the Character seemed a lot like what happens and has happened to you, to you, to you... Except the end. Not the end. The end no, although you're still left with the sensation of a torn sheet of paper, of pages missing, of something that ended and that ended a long time ago...

What happens is that you have no time for anything. Work and study and arrive at your house to put it in order because your brothers have the right to wait until you come—so you do it all. All you. Poor thing. It won't make you sick, you're young and you've got energy. You even know that this helps you to not get fat like your mother or your father. Won't do you harm, but you feel you are at a disadvantage. Like having been

born with the disposition to wear a skirt presupposes yet another disadvantage, the same as sitting to urinate. You're weak, they call you (frog-face). Don't pay attention. You don't have time to pay attention to them. You're weak, (frog-face). They're jokes. You don't have time to pay attention to them, you let them call you names, you let them, you go and you take the opportunity to read on the bus. The last story. The last story you read: it's about someone who lives very far away, in another time and who had the tendency to use skirts—like you. Also, this someone sat to urinate, like you—and like your brother, the one with the tiny one. (He says it's so he doesn't splash, out of respect for you and your mother, but the others say that it's not out of politeness, it's that he's got a small one. You too say it, every now and then.)

—You've got a small one.

—Asshole.

You read on the bus. Up to the part where the Character is growing, her body changes and discovers... she discovers... certain strange roundednesses that deform the body, moustaches in the armpits and a good dose of acne... Completely a monster. Poor thing. You move ahead quickly. She has a very big family. Twelve, if you count the parents. Her father was the chief of the tribe and her mother was a homemaker, how curious.

All of her sisters are prone to using skirts and they sit to urinate. Would there be toilets? No, the book says no, they urinated in the hills. All the sisters, except for the Main Character, stayed to comb their hair, to hang their trinkets that they made of teeth and wool threads from their father's sheep (seemed something like a ranch in the desert) and admired themselves in a piece of silver-plated glass more or less square that they kept from the Main Character.

—Mirror.

—It's called a mir-ror. Since no one in her house paid her any attention, the Main Character went out every morning and walked to the road that leads to the village, to plant herself until sunset in the workshop of a scribe who employed her as an unskilled laborer and made her copy scribbled court dockets that she didn't understand because she didn't know how to read.

With time she developed great skill with pen and paper. Her calligraphy was beautiful. She was a worker of the word, an illiterate copyist, if one can say that. She repeated with her hands without a lot of questions.

More or less like you, who's employed and studies and makes good time by bus from home to school, from school to work and from work to home. Without counting the many streets you cover on foot morning and night, all by yourself. You already told the others, that it scares you, that to come get you, but they say not to worry, nothing is going to happen to you. Not to you.

The thing is that you notice, on the bus' bumpy journeys, that the scribe takes pity on the poor creature who's the Main Character. And one fine day when the scribe had no constipation problems, one morning when the sky appeared so blue, and so clear and he heard the happy, filthy singing of his neighbor's pig, the same morning when in order to smoke through his last cough to the point that he spit up blood, he told her:

—Everything useful ends, foretells the luck of this old man. You see, you have to learn how to read. There needs to be a successor.

The Main Character didn't understand if this was a sad coincidence, of one more burden, or of a privilege, but she decided that the last case would be the best and so she took it.

Like you, who doesn't know if you should think that guy who always shows up wherever you are is spying on you or if he's in love with you. You opt for the latter because it makes you feel better and it doesn't scare you. These days you can't trust anyone any more. Nothing's as it seems. That's why everything's dangerous.

YOUR FACE IN THE MIRROR OR THE REVELATION

You know that each step you take, could be on your last. And since you don't pay for it, you can't take it back. You understand that life is a cruel and idiotic gift from who-knows-who. But idiotic and all, she's a gift and whoever gave it to you doesn't know and doesn't guess all that he put into that little word that blows by in four letters and can never be understood.

That's why you take care of her, because of the roughness formed in the middle of your hands from your sweat, from the tiredness and the sorrows that will come tomorrow, in the middle of the hordes of atrocious hours in which, no book tells you anything, in which your body is dead weight or engorged and because of this it's two times an empty affirmation of bewildering existence, there are things worth seeing, like the rivers or the snow or a change of season in which the divided earth wets itself like a green mouth that says flower or tree, for example.

But you were in another place—one you no longer remember, and you probably decided to think about the square forbidden object that the Main Character's family didn't allow her to know.

Our Character took to heart the task of learning everything that the man writes and shows her, and in the end, after the mechanical repetitions to transcribe, there appeared before her eyes the sinister meanings of certain horrendous texts in which were auctioned the ownership of some islands which belonged to the Nation and in which this risk was discussed—the risk of losing the sovereignty of a country. The Character, upon understanding the contents, held the opinion with respect: Yes, it is playing with the sovereignty of a country to sell in pieces its territory. With scraps of paper that had been destined for the trash, not even the recycling, the Main Character wrote a bulletin with the intention of spreading news, that was not widely known. In the end, she threw herself in the plaza where people meet to go to market and gave out the flyers while looking anxiously for a reaction.

—And what's this?

—An article.

—Nonsense, stupid hillbilly hoo-hah, pamphlets, politics.

—But read it, at least.

—It's useless. I don't know how to read and even if I did, that would be the last thing that would interest me. It doesn't say anything about the stars.

—You're interested in astronomy, Mister?

—No, show business.

Oh, horrible deception could not move the Main Character. It was as true then as it is now: to read is a privilege belonging to few and of those few, one thought cannot be made. She devoted herself, then, to the frenetic reading of all the bulletins and posters she walked over, to form a political opinion in the land of phonies and frauds, until she got into her hands a book that seemed old and thick.

—Careful.

—Why, Master?

—What you have in your hands is dangerous.

—I can't believe it. It's just a book.

—Exactly. Once you've read it there's no going back.

—But what can this object have that could be dangerous for anyone else?

—Not for others, for you. After reading it, you'll only have two options.

You'll want to write and you could, or you'll want to write and when you can't, you'll dedicate yourself to teaching.

—Are the contents that bad?

—Yes, it's called literature and it enrages the envious and puts the stupid to sleep.

—Children, maybe.

—The idiots-to-be. That's why they sleep. Give it here.

—No. I want to know.

—Are you completely...?

—Sure. Sure. I'll take care of it.

—Noted. But take it and read it in hiding because they're going to say it's pornography and I don't want problems with your family.

—Agreed.

Breathe, shake out your legs because they were getting numb, and notice him. He looks at you. You realize, once again, that he's there, but now he's closer. He smiles at you and his gaze never leaves you. He doesn't seem bad, he looks clean & interesting. But why is he following you. Or is it just a coincidence, he just happens to ride the same bus, at the same time. He gets off at your stop and walks behind you. Maybe he's your neighbor. But no. He's not so invisible that you wouldn't have noticed him before.

So what. You mind your own business.

The Main Character entertained herself on the journey home by reading the text. She rubbed her eyes so she could better see what was described in it.

—It can't be.

A secret agitation seized her flat belly and like a red string that hides its name and tells everyone that it's not called what it's called: DESIRE, moistened that little part.

—The noble part.

—That thing, of course.

She was suffocated by the detailed descriptions of tongues and fingers, of members and orifices in an unending battle of rubs and scratches until, oops, the final burst of come.

The book spoke of very, very different loves, unlike the ones your family referred to—of a sweaty palm and a kiss on the cheek until seven at night—that was how it was supposed to be. That's how it should have been and not how it really is. It spoke of nakedness and caresses, of gymnastic lovemaking that boiled the blood and brains of the Main Character, to the point of being transported, like a siren, with a song from flesh newly-awakened, an adventurous hand up to the loving wound that tunnels into her. Sss. But she stops herself, knows that she can't, you're behaving badly, she tells herself. That's disgusting, it's not normal being older than your sisters that this is happening to you so much later and that you're so awkward...No it's not normal...and she ran to hide.

Close to home, as luck would have it, and enjoying her experimental encounters with her young body, the Main Character found a flat and spacious cave, white and open that overlooked the parched valley. That was the home for her insanity, a perfect laboratory for the miserable cries that arose and the audacious anatomics which lead to the first of many interpretations.

But that night of attempts, the Main Character returned to her house. When she crossed the threshold, she saw no one. Hello, she said and not even a tired, old echo answered her. A light left on, made her think that there had been somebody home. How strange, she told herself, they could have let her know they were going out. It doesn't matter. She got ready to read, when she went to sit down a colorless sparkle caught her eye. Hello, there.

She hadn't seen it. The forbidden object. She got up. Nervous and trembling, the Character left the book on the table covered with the fingerprints that oozed from her frozen, sweaty hands and sighed. Establishing in that moment the battle against curiosity. If someone had asked her at that time, what she was going to do, she would have answered that logically neither Prudence nor Modesty could be a match against Desire. Two seconds sufficed for dark and deep debates to develop in the overactive head of the Character—around duty and entitlement—or not, to do whatever to whomever whenever you feel like it. When you add it all up, how can those others know if they've come to the right place or not, knowing that thing, or the mirror, or flatterers, as her many sisters called them. You said that two seconds sufficed for the Character to decide to get up, give or take one or two or three, the necessary steps in order to face up to her destiny, to clarify that which she had put on reserve. Dammit, from everything but evil could she save that thing, so flat, so shiny, so...so...so. The same thing Master Sun said about this book that far from bothering you... Oh, damn, thought the Main Character on discovering what was shimmering on the other side of the tinkling mirror that her sisters loved so much. But what the fuck, she told herself. It moves...sure it won't scare anyone to death, but there's nothing cute about it, not even a little bit funny. What a horror! Come on, it's disgusting frankly, stop looking...and that thing imitates me... what it looks like...son-of-a-bitch, no...No... It can't be. No. No, for the love of God, please no... NO.

But yes. It was her own reflection. The scream lasted like a pinch of a flea on one's self-esteem, but it gave proof enough that other than that day, things would be totally different for her. She wept silently through her bitterness until three hours later, everyone returned to the house and found her trembling in her misfortune. In looking at the thrown mirror, not very far from the Main Character, everything came clear and the silence was the best gift that they could have given her. The sisters,

with an antiseptic delicacy, unusual for them, like the one who changes the shitty diaper of a stranger's baby, they picked her up and deposited her almost softly on the bed. They left her alone. The parents decided that from that moment on it would be very difficult to take the girl out.

—Poor thing.

HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF IS HOW YOU TREAT YOURSELF

And everything files past the hidden gaze inside your eyes. When you heard the prolonged & raspy scream that lacerated the throat of the Main Character, you also felt rage, true love's painful sister, and that extinct bellow feeding on your insides. You figured out what it meant because to you the mirror doesn't tell you very pretty things, the things we say each time you dare to show your eyes inside there to lift up your hair and pop a pimple that show in braille your misfortune of a caressing hand spelling nonsense as it moves across your face. The mocking faces, the hateful stories, the mysterious glances, the solitude of your childhood and the rough pulls that those fucking hoodlums at school gave you. All a sad spectacle of humiliations etched on those who were present like the "special" people, odd, in order not to be quick to call you, simply & brutally, one of the fucked ones.

—Ugly-

—Ugly-

—Ugly-

—Ugly-

—Ugly-

—Ugly-

Ugly. You're as ugly as a beating to God, as spitting at a child, or letting one die of hunger, like smashing a rat with the rough sole of your newest shoe.

Looks like it's no big deal, but it hurts. It hurts a lot. It's a type of functional disability that you use...in order to function, nothing more. If your smile is not harmonious, too bad. If you're too short, too bad. If you're fat or you're skinny, bad. Bad, bad, bad. Not to be skinny, or white, or in style, is to be ugly. To be ugly is almost as bad and as sad as being Black in Germany, or Arab in Spain. Or an Indian around here. Almost as bad as being poor in any part of the world. You're worthless. But to be ugly is worse. Because being Black or Arab or Indian, you still have the possibility of being more or less salvageable, not as thrown into the street from bitterness. If you're handsome you're almost Black, or almost Arab or Indian. If you're not ugly you're saved from the flames of indifference and the quintessential shyness of late adolescence that won't let you feel good about yourself in any circumstances. You see, being not so ugly and poor, you still remain in the comfort of the street and prostitution. There have always been those dirty or clean, someone with designs on your flesh, as long as your little face doesn't look kicked in by a horse. Nope, when you're ugly you're doubly-fucked. The ugly ones have the crumbs of the marginal, the social misfits who turn to the sad comfort of school and books. Seems like nothing happens. That it doesn't hurt anyone to call them ugly. But they don't think about the subway tracks that take into their arms the heavy-handed suicides, not the fat girls that end up as the hairless bones of anorexia, nor the weakling who gobbles up steroids to bulk up. No, they don't think about that handful of

millions of insomniacs who self-medicate with the bitter inducements of late-night TV ads that nurture the idea of obliterating who you are: a horde of depressives. To be ugly is another name for the national shame.

But you're happy anyway. Don't let it get to you. You breathe and brush it off. To be ugly has its advantages. Ha. Its advantages.

The ugly one is under the radar, a self-sacrificing nonconformist, a walking scar. Ugly is the love of the Wounded. He does the world a favor when in a noble gesture he guards his slovenliness for as long as possible. An ugly one in these days in which everything enters through your eyes, in which everything is an image, an image drunk over life itself, it's an attack on order; it's the vindication of difference in an era that produces mainly what is the same—the massive cloning of the same thing now without an original; it's a tiny wrinkle in the neurotic, oily skin of the world, a subversive cry of nature that says, I live, that claims, I live, that affirms "I live," even though there's not much to live for; an ugly person is living phlegm without dreams, a winged worm with feet and hands and automatically a hick, because nothing he wears or does suits him...motherfucking, nothing.

Faced with such an outcome, hardly stimulating, and stifling, all you have left is the comfort that can also be called into question: you think you're intelligent. Ha. You think, nothing else. Because you think or you tell yourself you think. Because there's a worry and a certain finality that they make you change, to doubt, to never be still and ask yourself questions you don't know how to answer.

—You have nothing stable, you tell yourself.

—You have nothing certain, you understand.

—You have nothing for sure, you accept.

But you move...

The night you read this sad passage in the fictitious life of the Main Character you had a very strange dream. Non-existent animals surrounded you and raised you in their shapeless appendages to drag you, feet tied and shackled to who knows where. Your eyes were livid witnesses that, in a place you didn't know, to which you never had been, but to where you were going. You saw yourself watching death watch you. You awake with a start, the night invades everything. The bed is wet. Wet with you and your strange, inexplicable longings...for what. For what. For you don't know what, because until this day you didn't know what is hidden behind that word with its S of sarcasm,

That stupid, screaming E

And its "X"—spread-eagled.

(Also its very obscene "O" in Spanish.)

Heat. Asphixia. The new and old anguished sensation that you had already lived this. You're alone and you hold yourself. Horrible sensation of inner vertigo, of nausea barely suppressed by the closed fist of your clenched mouth. You couldn't sleep and you continued in spite of yourself, with the reading. Here is how our poor dear friend—the sad, and pained Main Character is described:

"She is a creature of harmonious figure, possessed of almost perfect curves: breasts that fit and sweeten the hollow of one hand: firm and tasty hips of a solar young woman; shapely, long legs for hugging tightly in love-making; small feet, each a girlish repetition of soft-footed serenity, with an appearance that is carved in an improbable balance, carved and lunar. The skin of that body is so

snowy and fragile, with the powerful brilliance of morning glow, that could also call itself cloud or sky or light...”

Yes her figure was beautiful, but:

“...For this involuntary natural, living monument one put up with the plain ugliness of an asymmetric face, stricken with acne. For eyes, she had two leaking bulbs, hyper-trophic & wall-eyed. She attached herself to the serpent with a very dark and twisted smile. She was crowned, besides, by red, straw-like down on a head too small to contain it, and on her face as I have already described, that enormously big penis-nose with a big pink wart on the tip, aquiline and twisted.”

It couldn't be closer and more forbidden, the idiotic idea of happiness for the Main Character. Having the Main Character fall completely in love required, a meeting of the bodies, for the rubbing, the push-push, the -in-and-out/in-and-out; to get joyfully stuck whenever your need said “I'm going,” the sad luck of having that little face—the biological curse impeding her, once and for all, the possible continuation of her offspring. Worse, denying her forever, and never having the opportunity of knowing the perverse heat of the dual population of sweats & souls in bed, excluding inevitably the indescribable blemish of sexual sluttiness. And it's because a good part of it enters through the eyes. And it's the eyes, implacable, gregarious tormentors, who will condemn the compassionate nausea of ugliness.