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The negress

de
Luis Miguel G. Cruz

traducción de
Nuria Agulló

(fragmento en inglés)

Daytime, the Captain's studio. ANA and RAY observe the tattooing gun.

CAPTAIN

You see, Ana? You see the needle? Really fast. Hundreds of pricks a minute. You'll just feel a tickling sensation. Fast. A thousand small stabs... small, short, minuscule. Thousands of darts. The skin bleeds. Sweet... the blood oozes, the whole skin is a wound. A black wound. Blood. Black blood. It's hard to trace the drawing, get the lines right... each incision, each cut, each prick..., each spot is a wound, an indelible wound. It's not paint... It's blood. Blood. A machine gun. Thirteen shots a second, seven hundred and eighty stabs a minute. It's a mortal weapon.

ANA

It's scary to think about.

CAPTAIN

You see?

ANA

What?

CAPTAIN

My pulse. My hand. See how I'm shaking?

ANA

Yeah.

CAPTAIN

I can't work. I can't work well...

ANA

Come on! You can't fool me. I've seen tattoos you've done recently.

CAPTAIN

What you've seen aren't tattoos.

ANA

They have your signature.

CAPTAIN

They're crap.

ANA

No... They were really good. Believe me, they're really good, among the best I've seen. Among the best.

CAPTAIN

I could kill you...

ANA

It's a risk I'll have to take.

CAPTAIN

Any little movement, any blink, any dozing off and it's... goodbye little Ana..

ANA

I'm not a child. You can't scare me.

CAPTAIN

Goodbye, Ana. Just like that.

ANA

You're a coward.

CAPTAIN

I'm a has-been.

ANA

Stop feeling sorry for yourself, captain.

CAPTAIN

I've been responsible for quite a few deaths.

ANA

I'm not interested in your regrets, grandpa. Are you the captain? Then act like it.

CAPTAIN

The captain works when he wants to. With whom he wants to.

ANA

You can't escape, captain. You're not a coward. You know that. You know this time you can't escape.

CAPTAIN

Get out of here.

ANA

You can't abandon ship, captain. You can't escape from yourself. Whether you like it or not, you're the captain, and you can't stop being that. You know that. There's no way out. You've got *la negra*. You've known that for a long time. You can't escape, you can't escape from yourself, captain...

ANA leaves. RAY watches the CAPTAIN, who switches off the small gun.

CAPTAIN

Who told her? Who told her about..?

RAY

No one, as far as I know.

CAPTAIN

How does she know? How does she know about her?

RAY

Everyone knows. Everyone knows about *la negra*, though perhaps it's just a made-up story. I'm not even sure what *la negra* business is all about.

CAPTAIN

You don't know?

RAY

I know what everyone knows... what everyone says... That's all.

CAPTAIN

That's it?

RAY

That's it. You've never spoken about her. You've never said anything.

CAPTAIN

Never. I've never said anything.

RAY

About *la negra*. Nothing. Ever.

CAPTAIN

Last night I had a dream... odd, very odd... I dreamt...I dreamt about her. It had been a while, a while since I'd dreamt about anything... It was very odd...

RAY

Why?

CAPTAIN

Why? What?

RAY

Why was the dream odd? Why was it odd?

CAPTAIN

Were you there?

RAY

You were talking about a dream... A dream with her in it... And that it was odd. Odd. What's so odd about dreaming about her?

CAPTAIN

Nothing.

RAY

So... why? Why was the dream odd?

CAPTAIN

The dream... It was just a dream. Just an image. An image that haunts me. Many times... I've dreamt it many times. I dream that I'm walking in the street, at night... Sometimes I'm not even dreaming, I'm awake. Confused. I see the shadow of the trees on the ground. Swaying in the wind... In the night... I open the door to my house and go in.

RAY

What's so odd about that?

CAPTAIN

It happens a lot... The dream. A lot...

RAY

Is that what's odd about it?

CAPTAIN

The odd thing was her... Yesterday she was there...

RAY

Who is she?

CAPTAIN

She?

RAY

Yeah, who is she?

CAPTAIN

La negra.

RAY

La negra? So la negra exists?

CAPTAIN

No. Not anymore.

RAY

She was a real person.

CAPTAIN

A real... person.

RAY

And what did she do in the dream?

CAPTAIN

It wasn't the right place. She was out of place.... That's why the dream's odd...

RAY

I see.

CAPTAIN

She opened the door and I went in. It was dark inside. I went in but... the one that was looking on in my dream, the man that looks on in dreams... me... I stayed outside. The door closed, the captain entered, but I stayed outside...

RAY

That's odd.

CAPTAIN

She went in. She entered my house... my parents' house. But my eyes stayed outside. That machine. That machine that films dreams stayed outside. The door closed, and the dream ended.

RAY

La negra closed the door.

CAPTAIN

Everything was dark.

RAY

That's odd.

CAPTAIN

It'd been a while since that happened...It'd been a while since I'd dreamt... about her...

RAY

That's what you have to do.

CAPTAIN

What, Ray?

RAY

That's what you have to tattoo, what you have to tattoo on her. *La negra*.

CAPTAIN

What do you mean, Ray?

RAY

Enough with the simple lines and the little kiddy doodles.

CAPTAIN

Kiddy doodles?

RAY

You're the best, and the best doesn't do that crap. You have to do your masterpiece... the captain's masterpiece.

CAPTAIN

A family of junkies is living off those doodles.

RAY

Tattoo that. Her. Paint her. Another *negra*.

CAPTAIN

Her?... It'd be like death.

RAY

Painting death?

CAPTAIN

It'd be my death...

RAY

It has to be you. No one's going to do it for you... no one's going to help you. Who's the captain?

CAPTAIN

I was just talking about a dream...

RAY turns about face and goes to the door. ISABEL enters at that moment.

CAPTAIN

Ray! Where are you going?

RAY

Nowhere.

CAPTAIN

Give it to me. Give me my quarter.

RAY goes through his pockets and gives the CAPTAIN a fold of paper. The CAPTAIN takes it and sits down to inspect its contents. RAY looks at ISABEL and leaves. The

CAPTAIN starts to shoot himself up.

RAY

It has to be you, Captain. It has to be you.

ISABEL goes up to the CAPTAIN and caresses his body, his chest, trying to arouse him. The CAPTAIN pushes ISABEL away violently, making her fall.

The CAPTAIN's pulse trembles and he can't hit the vein. He gets desperate and in a fit of rage throws the syringe across the room.

ISABEL

You realize, don't you? It's her age. She's ripe. The best age for a woman. Just budding. She's boiling. She's fresh. Her blood's boiling, just about cooked. You know it. Yes, you know it.

CAPTAIN

Stop babbling.

ISABEL

Ana. I'm talking about Ana.

CAPTAIN

Ana.

ISABEL

You don't have to do it. Who is she? What does she matter to you? You're the captain. If you get a hard-on, you fuck her and that's that. But you're the captain, no one can tell you what you have to do.

CAPTAIN

No, no one...

ISABEL

It's him... He's waiting for your downfall. He's not interested in her. Who says you have to do it?

CAPTAIN

You want to see her again?

ISABEL

Who?

CAPTAIN

You want to see her dance again?

ISABEL doesn't respond. The CAPTAIN grabs ISABEL violently by the arm and strips her naked.

The GYPSY and RAY are sitting on the same bench as before.

RAY

Did you know her too?

GYPSY

I know a lot of people. There aren't many people in this world I don't know.

RAY

What was she like? What was *la negra* like?

GYPSY

La negra?

RAY

Yeah, her. You knew her, right? You had to know her. What was she like?

GYPSY

La negra is the tattoo the captain has on his chest.

RAY

I know that. I mean the real one. The real *negra*.

GYPSY

La negra?

RAY

Yeah. What was she like?

GYPSY

Black.

RAY

I guessed as much. If she weren't, why would they call her *la negra*?

GYPSY

That's what I say. If she hadn't been black, they wouldn't have called her *la negra*. They'd have called her White. *La blanca*. Yeah, if she'd been white they'd have called her *la blanca*.

RAY

Who was she? You knew her, you must have known her. You must know what happened. Come on, tell me. We're buddies, aren't we?

GYPSY

Come on, Ray. I'm just a poor gypsy, a dry land gypsy, a poor wandering gypsy. Did you bring me my little gram, Ray? Come on, Ray, pass me that little gram. Do your good deed of the day. A gram for a poor old gypsy who doesn't even have a place to go off and die.

RAY

So you don't want to tell me? Ray doesn't forget. Ray's got a good memory. Ray doesn't forget. Ray knows who his buddies are.

GYPSY

I don't know anything. I'm just the cook. The crew's cook. The cook never knows anything, not even what waters are being navigated, what island the ship's anchored on, what sun's burning him. I'm just a poor gypsy. I just prepared the vegetables. Lots of vegetables and orange juice. To treat the scurvy. Come on, give me the gram. Give me that little gram you cut in the garbage for the gypsy junkies. Come on, Ray. I've told you everything. I've told you everything I know. What more do you want to know about a fucking *negra*? What do you care about a filthy *negra*? Come on, give the gypsy his filthy gram of smack.

RAY

You owe me five hundred bucks.

GYPSY

Oh, come on, Ray! Are you gonna charge a buddy? Are you gonna charge a poor gypsy who's got nowhere to go and die? Come on, Ray! How am I going to pay? I'm just a poor gypsy, a poor gypsy junkie.

RAY

The merchandise's finished. The crew's finished. And the captain's finished.

GYPSY

The captain was finished a long time ago.

RAY

The captain's working. He needs to concentrate.

GYPSY

The captain's hand isn't even steady enough to jerk himself off.

RAY

The captain's an artist. He's doing a tattoo.

GYPSY

The captain, working? I'd have to see it to believe it.

RAY

You can't disturb the captain while he's working.

GYPSY

What about you, Ray? The dealer? Are you gonna strike a business deal? Are you going to sell the gram to a museum? Come on, Ray, give me that fucking gram! Can't you see I'm a dead man? You're not going to have to put up with me much longer, Ray. One of these days this shit'll do me in, and I'll be grateful to you for that. Grateful to be dead...

The GYPSY picks up his guitar and plucks the strings without playing anything as he tries to sing a flamenco tune.

GYPSY

Ray, my friend Ray, Ray from the crew, sent me sweetly to my death. You'd be glad! Proud! Come on, Ray! My ration... the gypsy junkie's little ration.

RAY give the GYPSY a fold of paper.

RAY

You owe me a half grand, gypsy. And you're gonna pay up.

GYPSY

How am I going to pay, brother? I'm a lazy son of a bitch....

RAY

Sing.

GYPSY

I don't know how to. I'm a gypsy, but I don't have a good ear.

RAY

Sing, gypsy. Live and be happy. Sing, but don't forget. Ray'll come to collect the money. Whether you sing or not. Ray doesn't forget. Ray never forgets. Ray always comes to collect.

The GYPSY prepares to shoot up.

GYPSY

Bit by bit, bit by bit, brother. Don't be in a rush. A little Christian charity. Bit by bit. You won't regret it, brother, you won't regret it.