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Mamihlapinatapai

de
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*traducción de
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(texto completo en inglés)

Mamihlapinatapai ¹

By Itziar Pascual.

Translated from the Spanish by Phyllis Zatlin

Dramatis Personae:

KÍPPA: Last mother of the Yámana tribe

Place: From the stern of her canoe (called *anán* in the Yaghan language), speaking to her son.

Time: 1871.

¹ *Mamihlapinatapai*, a word in the language of the indigenous Yámanas of Tierra del Fuego, is identified as "the most succinct word in the world"; it is considered one of the most difficult terms to translate. It describes "a look between two people, each one of whom hopes that the other will begin an action they both desire but that neither is moved to initiate."

KÍPPA

Kíppa, sápa, paléna. Kíppa, sápa, paléna.

I, Kíppa, woman, blood, rain, now must I let you go, my weléiwa. I, who washed your face with water warmed in my mouth; I, who slowly rubbed your body against mine to give you heat; I, who clothed you in seal and otter furs; I, who guided our anán to the waters of the conger eels to feed you, now, my weléiwa, now must I let you go.

I must leave you as seaweed leaves oars when they enter the current. Thus have all Yámana mothers done. Thus did mothers, looking in surprise at their sons, as now I look at you, my weléiwa.

Kíppa, sápa, paléna. Kíppa, sápa, paléna.

Only yesterday you stopped clinging to my shoulder to take your place by the fire, your place in the center of our anán. Only yesterday you learned to bale water, to swim and to make fish hooks from töskási bones. Only yesterday you bravely held a shaft to hurl it at the seals. (Pause) Yesterday?

Why did you go near men from the interior? (Silence.)

You are big because you are small, my weléiwa. You have grown before my eyes, in the heart of our anán, by the fire that crackled in the shadows. Today I look at you and I see in you the strength of our ancestors and the spines of sea urchins; I look at the sky and I hear the restless kárpos telling that the winds are shifting.

Why did you go near men who view us with disdain? What did you expect from them? Why won't you look me in the eye, my weléiwa?

Kíppa, sápa, paléna. Kíppa, sápa, paléna. Axuá.

Woman, blood, rain. Woman, blood, rain. Ashes.

I taught you the knowledge of the Yámanas, as one teaches what should be known, without words. But I did not know how to warn you that men from the interior –with their coarse look, the evil of Kachpik – do not speak from the soul. No, my weléiwa. My oar stroke is still firm. I do not speak from loneliness. Men from the interior seek us to take our spirit.

Beyond the high tide, the shadows of men from the interior spy on our crossing. Their spirits enter the chests of the old and the weak. They bring feverish chills and sadness to the Yaguan people.

My heart knows what my mouth keeps silent. Those spirits are carrying us away. Our fishing, our waters, our bodies, and then our words and our gods. When only silence remains, my weléiwa, they will consume our memory.

Kíppa, sápa, paléna. Axuá.

Oh, but you, my weleiwa, you can scorn the trail of the men from the interior. Their words have spoken to you of travels and cities. But you and I, we are still here. I can row beyond Yahga-shaga, and leave their deceit behind. I can seek the curve of time. You can follow their path, or you can follow your anán. I have my oars ready to leave without you, or to seek high tides beyond Yahga-shaga, my weleiwa.

(Long silence. Mamihlapinatapai.)

Blackout.