

ct

Fire and brimstone

by
Juan Diego Arias

translated by
Claudia Montilla

(excerpt in English)

“And that faceless laughter with no soul,
no lips to correct it, no eyes to humanize it.
To me it was vindictive, torturous,
and these days it still repeats the grimace from beyond death
and I shiver with dread”.
The Vortex

“Part of Tourette’s syndrome, at least, is no more than this:
the release of a playful impulse
normally inhibited or lost in the rest of us”.
“A Surgeon’s Life”, Oliver Sacks

CHARACTERS

A PROSECUTOR

DR. ULLOA, *lawyer*

SINGLE ACT

A prosecutor's office. A desk and three chairs. The prosecutor's chair is a reclining chair, but its quality is not very good. Over the desk, there are a laptop, some pens, a photo frame, a calendar, a lamp, a telephone, a printer and a yellow notepad. There is a little very modest bookcase behind the desk. In the bookcase, apart from ridiculously big books in which adding one more thing would be impossible, there are big letters with drawings of animals written by the prosecutor's family, a football team themed wind up clock, a telephone and a shamrock green soft toy. To a side, there is a lectern with Psalm 11 in a huge format and made of stable and delicate material. There are shelves full of files all around the office. The floor is also full of files.

The PROSECUTOR is seated, he is doing a breathing exercise: he exhales and inhales in order to increase his breathing rate.

He is wearing a suit. The jacket is on the back of the chair. It's 4 in the afternoon.

Someone knocks at the door. A tic starts in his face: he makes a grimace. He notices this. He changes his face. The PROSECUTOR stands up and opens the door.

PROSECUTOR

Dr. Ulloa? (*DR. ULLOA nods. It's a man with a marble head. He wears elegant and expensive clothes. His movements are cold, but harmonious. He carries a cane and a briefcase. He is limping: he has just had a hip operation. He puts the cane against the table, near him.*) Please, go on. Have a seat, have a seat. (*They shake hands.*)

DR. ULLOA

Thank you. (*They sit down. There is a 3 or 4 year difference between them.*)

PROSECUTOR

Dr. José Fernando Ulloa, right?

DR. ULLOA

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

Today acting as legal prosecutor for Luis Ernesto Bautista y Compañía building company.

DR. ULLOA

That's right, Mr. Prosecutor. I...

PROSECUTOR

May I be imprudent? (*Pause. The PROSECUTOR observes him for a moment.*)

DR. ULLOA

No. Mr. Prosecutor, the building company is very sorry for the deaths of those people... (*The*

PROSECUTOR *snorts unintentionally.*) I'm sorry?

PROSECUTOR
Are you listening?

DR. ULLOA
What?

PROSECUTOR
If you have ears but you don't listen, what's the use of it, Dr.? *(Pause.)* Thank you for coming.
(Pause.) What happened to your leg?

DR. ULLOA
That's none of your concern.

PROSECUTOR
Rich people also limp, don't they? *(He laughs. Pause. DR. ULLOA looks at him offended.)* Please don't be upset, Dr. It's OK. I just wanted to know if some misfit had done that. You know: there must be many people who want to hurt you. Right?

DR. ULLOA
No.

PROSECUTOR
People are sick here, Dr. This is an incredulous, vindictive and jealous generation. *(Pause.)* Great building company: Luis Ernesto Bautista y Compañía. *(He laughs.)* They are doing well, aren't they?

DR. ULLOA
What are you insinuating?

PROSECUTOR
Keep calm, Dr. Ulloa. I would like to ask you a favor: open your ears and your heart for me.

DR. ULLOA
Let's talk about my case, please.

PROSECUTOR
This won't be long. *(Pause.)* Do you have any children?

DR. ULLOA
I have two.

PROSECUTOR
(Smiling.) They grow up fast, don't they? How old is the oldest?

DR. ULLOA

Twenty-six.

PROSECUTOR

No way! What an age! Is he consecrated to the Lord? Do you live with your wife and your two children?

DR. ULLOA

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

As it should be, as it should be... (*Pause.*) OK, I'm beating around the bush. My son is a headache. What is your son like?

DR. ULLOA

(*Ironic.*) Doctor, this is not the place...

PROSECUTOR

Doctor! How dare you! You are the doctor here. I am a simple prosecutor, who has a simple local university degree and a simple specialization... You, I imagine, have completed your studies abroad.

DR. ULLOA

No, I studied here.

PROSECUTOR

Only Law?

DR. ULLOA

And Economics, but I have not practiced it for a long time.

PROSECUTOR

No way! A professional, a real doctor. Nowadays, if you don't study you don't have any value. That's what I told my son. He doesn't want to study anymore. He is stuck with the bachelor's degree. He is consecrated to the Lord, but he is a sheep gone astray. And when I tell him to study, to do something in his life, he says: "It's OK, dad. It's not a big deal, dad. Take it easy: It's OK..." That's the way boys talk. But I always accept him; have you heard the Tale of the Prodigal Son? At least he knows how to speak in español. And you? How is your español?

DR. ULLOA

Good.

PROSECUTOR

Me, nothing. Nada de español for me. Besides, it was a different time. Law would suffice. Hmmm. Right?

DR. ULLOA

I don't know.

PROSECUTOR

Forgive me if you feel like I'm talking a lot. I know you are probably in a hurry. Renowned lawyers like you are always in a hurry. But this is my last shift and I... I'm tired, that's it.

DR. ULLOA

Don't worry, but please, Mr. Prosecutor, let's talk about the case. (*The PROSECUTOR imitates him as an involuntary echo and out loud in a female voice: "Prosecutor", "Prosecutor".*) What are you doing?

PROSECUTOR

(*Pause, looking at him.*) I'm sorry, I can't help it. (*He checks the laptop.*) Are you bored?

DR. ULLOA

(*Faking a smile.*) Look, I came here in order to talk about my case.

PROSECUTOR

(*He closes the laptop.*) I consider it boring to wait on people so fast, but there is so much work to do. It's not possible. And you are so calm. I mean, your children or your wife weren't killed... And you didn't kill someone else's children. Or, well, we can say so, but it wasn't you... Dr. Ulloa, are you going to compensate the families of the victims?