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A galaxy of fireflies

de
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(fragmento en inglés)

A sample scene 1

Daylight. Morning in the tropic.

I've spent years sitting on this chair. Stuck. And I'm incapable of moving. Atfirst... At first, I thought it might be some...

Did you hear that?

That sound?

No?

Another mango has fallen down.

They usually fall down every day.

Ripe. Delicious.

Plop.

That sound. Plop. As it lands on the ground. It calls me. But I can't reach for it. I've told you already. I can't lift my ass off this chair. The mangoes keep falling down, and I'm not able to eat them.

At first, when I got stuck, sitting here, on hearing that plop, I'd try to get up with my full strength. Every effort was in vain.

One day, more or less a decade ago, on a scorching day, I heard the impact. Sweet.

Plop.

And I didn't bat an eyelid.

I was really sweating and I didn't feel like wasting energy on something that wasbeyond my reach.

I guess I accepted my condition: sitting here, forever.

I closed my eyes.

And I took a breath.

Would you close your eyes too?

A sample scene 2

We were driving away from the settlements. From clumps of houses, their adobe walls, their old timber, their ceilings, sometimes built from coffin scraps. The details...

We hadn't seen a single person for a while. The mud seemed fresher, with no trace of other cars.

A proper adventure!

Sheer bliss!

What a sense of freedom!

Shouting. Happy. Discovering the world.

Then, all of a sudden...

Stop!!!!!!!!!!

Get out of the car!!!!!!!!

Those voices sounded far away, although in fact the five hooded men, bandanas covering their faces, jumping and running towards us like savages, wielding their guns, were inching closer.

I wasn't thinking.

It's now I'm thinking.

There, I just did what I was told to do.
 Get out of the car. Hands behind your neck. Take your shoes off.
 They left mine on. I was the only woman.
 Get moving!
 We were at gunpoint and they were yelling at us. We kept following orders.
 One of them took Pedro, the driver, whose name was not Pedro, with him. With the car.
 The rest walked in line. The guys, barefoot, not me. With our hands behind our necks. And with
 four hooded men guiding us, in shouts, away from the road.
 I was still not thinking.
 I don't think anyone was thinking.
 Well, those who had been born in this small country were surely thinking.
 I can't remember what I was feeling, either. Nothing, I believe.
 I have asked myself sometimes if I cried and, honestly enough, I don't think I did, at that point.
 We delved deep into the forest.
 Another question I often ask myself is: was I afraid?
 I don't think so, not at that stage.
 I wasn't thinking.
 I wasn't feeling.
 I was just following orders.
 It's been more than twenty years, and I remember everything. It's like having a photograph
 tattooed into my brain.
 I remember the light perfectly.
 The colour of the mud.
 The tree trunks.
 The colours they wore. And the colours we wore.
 I remember the place where we stood still.
 There was a small esplanade. A very small one.
 And they held us there, motionless. With our hands behind our necks.
 We were searched, one after another.
 I was searched three times. And each time they touched my butt.
 The third time they required my shoes.
 I had been taken away from my group. Slightly. And there was a gun pointing to my head.
 When I crouched down to take my shoes off the gun replicated the movement of my body,
 downwards. Down to my feet. That's when I cried. I can remember that suppressed crying. Also the
 tremor of that hand which held the cold pistol.
 Its barrel was touching my skin.
 And I also remember my hands moving erratically. I was trembling. But I was trying to make the
 firmest, the most precise movements of my life.
 The assailant had... I think he had... a moment of compassion when he saw the tears flooding my
 cheeks. And my neck. And my cleavage. And I wasn't even sobbing.
 Don't worry, nothing will happen to you, he said to me.
 What's going on is a whole lot already, man. I thought, while his shaky hand pressed his gun
 against my temple.
 The crying receded.

A sample scene 3

We went back to our routine. Collecting plants. Classifying them. Making our herbarium project come true. Distilling eucalyptus. And lemongrass. Working in the country. Picking pipians. Going out to the small shop in the afternoon for a beer. Having dinner with our host family. Showering in the well. With our clothes on. Taking shit. In that outhouse. Liquid poo. While the flies ravaged our butts.

I was having nightmares. A nightmare, a recurring one. I'd wake up drenched in sweat. And I'd run towards the window to check they weren't there. I dreamed that the eyes of those five guys, the others, were staring from outside the window. With their faces covered. Their hoods. That canary yellow clown wig. They were staring at me, pointing at me with their machine guns and pistols. It was awful.

I tried to sleep again. But I wouldn't sleep. And despite the fear, I'd go out of the room. Without a torch. I'd go to the well. And I'd walk a little bit into the bushes. I'd grab a stone and throw it. Not too far.

And then, a galaxy of fireflies would appear before me. Always. Without fail.

It wouldn't last long. But it was beautiful. And that moment, looking at them, I felt alive. It was the only thing that made me feel anything at all. Just once, every night, waking up after a nightmare, I'd go and wake them. And when they'd fade out, I'd look up to the sky and watch the stars. Longingly. As if I was meant to be there. In the firmament. Dead. But I wasn't. I felt a very strong connection. With the soil and the sky. Something very profound to a 21-year-old child.

When I went back to bed, I would shut my eyes. Sometimes I would get close to Oriol and cuddled him so I could sleep better. Sometimes, sound asleep, he welcomed me in his arms. Some other times I didn't cuddle him. I just touched him with a foot or a hand, some patch of his skin. More or less clutching onto him, I'd close my eyes and conjure up over and over that moment when, after throwing that stone, the galaxy of fireflies ignited for me. And that way I was able to sleep. Among fireflies, among galaxies.