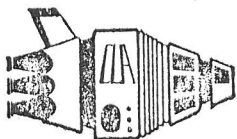


CIRCULO DE LECTORES
DE ANTICIPACION-C.L.A.



BARCELONA

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THE RECORDER

The recorder's hands seemed to multiply themselves, as a modern Goddess Shiva they covered with unusual speed the control keys of the stereophonic complex. Lights...intermittence...record change...spot-lights...tape...The public danced, turned, jumped to a mad tempo. Four had struck. Government orders were firm: at four o'clock in the morning all the night clubs had to close their doors.

The recorder placed the warning and began to turn on the lights and switch off the complex device.

All of a sudden the people dancing in the middle of the floor remained motionless. Until tomorrow, thought the recorder.

And the androids who were dancing were left alone, quite alone, waiting for a new tomorrow when another recorder would come to switch them on once more.

Jaime R. del Castillo

RAFAEL

by Angel Rodríguez Nietón

--Do you know what I think? That you are all stupid. Including you, Miguel. You are the stupidest of all."

I let him talk, there is nothing worse for Rafael than letting him talk when he is excited. He sweats, shouts, stamps his feet, and at last, he sinks into a grunting silence. Then I start a new subject and he hates me for it: because everybody forgets about him and his silly problems.

His planet, his planet! What do we care about his planet? That tiny spot in "the Milky Way". There's a name for you! What good can you expect from the people who christen a galaxy with that name. Ugh!

Then Rafael reassembles his maps and his papers and stores them in a file. I look at him from the corner of my eye, without his noticing it, while I argue about Andromeda or Perseus or the last civilization started by any of the others. We put up with him because he is very old and loves his planet madly. (The Chief will know why).

All the same he will soon retire and just as he is keeping all his poor papers since neons ago, he will have to say goodbye to this ridiculous dream he keeps calling men....

THE MAN WHO DID NOT BELIEVE IN FLYING SAUCERS

To my friend
Antonio Morales

Mr. Garcia (as he was called by his friends) was a prototype of his time and his city. Married and with two children, he lived in a small apartment-house in a modest, out-of-the-way suburb, inhabited almost exclusively by clerks and civil servants.

His dislike of the absurd and fantastic was well known by his companions. One could talk to him about bullfighting, football, wages and even women, and although he used to be rather reticent about the latter, he did not shun the subject when the case required that he face it.

Perhaps for these reasons, when he entered the Bank at 8:10 a.m. as usual, Martínez, the joker of the place, asked him while winking his eyes on the sly for the benefit of the others:

"What now? Do flying saucers exist or not?"

At the same time he was showing him a gossipy newspaper which announced in big headlines the interview with a regular line pilot who had seen the "last" flying saucer.

García felt deeply annoyed by the general expectancy raised by the question, since the chief in person had deigned to leave his table to approach the group, while saying paternally to him:

"Yes, yes, García, times change, and there must be some truth in all this."

Deferentially García agreed and read the newspaper column in silence. Nothing new, always the same. He knew it only too well. The place was different, and the hour and the witnesses, but it was always the same thing.

He considered the problem as a faith issue: those who believed in them were endowed with faith, those who did not believe in them were those who had no faith in these things. It was simply a question of faith or lack of it. And he didn't know where he had read that faith could not be acquired by accumulating scientific data, it was something given or refused. But he had to produce an answer. He was short-tempered on this particular morning, his neighbour's baby daughter had been crying all night long, it was annoying to be obliged to suffer other people's children; moreover he had plenty of work waiting to be done, and he disliked being the centre of attention in such a crowd, and to make it worse the chief was in it and if he didn't answer it might be taken as bad manners. Partly to extricate himself, partly as a boast, he exclaimed:

"I'd soon get rid of all these saucers with a few earth-space missiles!"

There was some laughter and several of his companions walked to their tables. But Martínez would not release his victim so easily and he insisted:

"And if you were in the country and met a blond fellow, six feet tall, who spoke a strange language?"

"I would summon the police," quickly answered García. "They would know how to make him talk."

There was more laughter and at last he was left alone. Good God, what a mess! They could believe what they wanted, he would not laugh at them (although it was the logical thing to do); but if he did not believe and was not interested in the whole thing, why had he to suffer them? Really, he thought, people are absurd. Unfortunately for him, flying saucers were becoming an all-too-frequent subject and the others seemed amused by his incredulity. If they had an inkling of the things he was really interested in they would certainly be surprised! But he was safe.

In 1950 public opinion was divided, those who believed were a minority; about 1980 people had begun to believe in earnest and now, approaching the year 2000 there was practically nobody who did not believe in them. The situation was beginning to annoy him. He would have to do something.

García, his work finished, went quickly to the underground. At the newstand by the exit he bought a fashion magazine for his wife and he stopped at the grocer's to buy two yoghourts for his children who would be now finishing their dinner.

He crossed the threshold of his house and went down to a tiny basement where all the neighbours kept their unused furniture.

He placed the magazine on the floor and on it the yoghourts. It was silent all around, a pale glimmer of light came in from the street. He groped for a table lamp with an ugly wooden stand. He smiled, the lamp had been sent to him by a friend, from very far away, as a wedding present, and Lolita had absolutely refused to have it in the home. That solved a problem, he thought.

He pressed the button, heard a buzzing and the bulb shone in a silvery light. García whispered:

"I'm Zzzyn, calling Vega. Psychological preparation more than sufficient, you are overdoing it. The first phase is finished. Begin to act..."

JOSE ANGEL CRESPO

BE CAREFUL!

by

GEORGE WILLIAM BROOKS

I felt the icy wind of the mountains on my face, while I ran in despair towards the valley.

What kind of intoxicating wine was flowing in my veins or what spellbinding philter had poisoned my dreams as an astronaut?

I only know that, on leaving the spacecraft, something changed in my inner being and I killed my two companions. Their names, as also their faces, have disappeared into the haziness of a remembrance which I forget if it was ever real.

Night and day I roam about this small star and search, shouting, for something I ignore the nature of and the dimension of which I cannot comprehend. Afterwards the three suns pass by and, sometimes, there is the rain, cold, blue, salty.

The woods are my home and the forsaken cities my landscape. But now I suffer, and the gctxi...because whattxzgk njix /..978, No!...Goodbye...x; -...

THE BABY

Ana looked sorrowfully at the baby, who was yawning, hungry. She would have to settle that.

She cursed once more that horrible nuclear war that had left her as the only survivor in this isolated place, alone in a deserted world, murdered by the Bomb...Alone? No! Not alone, she had the baby!

For her the world had shrunk to the size of the tiny cubicle with metallic walls that was the shelter. The deathly level of radiation outside kept her more effectively shut in than the most perfect of prisons made by man would have done.

She would turn mad were it not for the baby, it provided her with a goal, a reason to keep alive in the reduced universe of their prison, a gleam of sanity to grope for during the nights when again came the Nightmares, the Terror and the Memories.

But now it was hungry. Ana had no problems with her own food, it was assured by huge quantities of nutritional concentrates in the shape of tablets she had found stored in the shelter.

But as far as the baby was concerned they proved useless, she had tried lovingly to make him swallow them but he had thrown them up: his stomach did not admit them.

At first the milk in her breasts had been sufficient, but now he was growing and he needed meat; meat! where was she to find it?

A ghastly idea wormed itself into her mind...No! shouted her conscience, wrathfully refusing it, It is neither possible nor moral!

But the idea kept coming back, in a weird merry-go-round inside her brain. And each time it seemed more logical, and each round defeated a defence, an argument.

At last, in a supreme moment of devotion, with a supreme sigh of love and astonished at her own self-denial, Ana made up her mind: she would sacrifice herself for the baby.

She grabbed a knife, closed her eyes in a dumb prayer of attrition and pressed her teeth together. She dropped the blade. An unquenchable cry escaped from her throat while the walls seemed to start a mad dance around her. Overcoming herself she stopped the bleeding with what she found in a medicine-chest.

Later, when the shock had passed, Ana picked the sectioned

hand and, calmly, began boning it. She would cut it in tiny pieces and make the baby swallow them. Thus he would get the food he was needing!

Never, never would she let Pussy starve, her beloved baby cat!

LUIS VIGIL

COMIC

THE MAN WHO BELIEVED IN UFO's

- 1.-- Dr. Juan Ortiz, a rural doctor, is in his village home. It's Sunday morning.
- 2.-- You lost your way and ran out of petrol. It's a bad thing, but it will prove worse for Dr. Ortiz.
- 3.--"Pedro, what was the noise?" "I don't know, doctor, didn't see a thing. They say something fell from the sky, at the other end of the village."
- 4.-- "...something fallen from the sky. A plane never ventured out here. Could it be...?"
- 5.--"Yes, it could be an UFO! And you're the one to meet it. Ought to remember your heart's no longer young, though."
- 6.--"Your weapon is useless here, we are peaceful. Allow me to welcome you to the Earth."
- 7.--"Doctor, I didn't mean to frighten you. I was only playing with the outfit my dad brought me from the town."
But the doctor can't hear you. His heart wasn't strong enough for his first contact with the invaders.

.....

PEDRO, THE MACHINIST

My cigarette slowly smouldering, I am almost unconsciously taking leave of my office, of my office things, of all that up to now has been my life: inspector of ISTS (Investigation of Space-time Service). Back remain people's features, almost disfigured by oblivion; my professors of telepathy and psychoneurology, my companions in the classes of time investigation and during the end-of-term voyages to the galaxies V-329 and V-342.

I was always passionately fond of the ISTS investigation work. Yet, I am now awaiting their verdict. And all for just one sentence...why did it ever enter my mind?

We, the ISTS people, deal with the investigation of deaths, murders and suicides of the prehistoric men of Earth. Although it may sound paradoxical, they still remain outside the sphere of our intellectual domain. We know why any of the urcasians living in our galaxy dies. But the men of Earth function by feelings and desires totally different from ours. And the Council considered that in order to exert an effective control over them it was imperative to be perfectly acquainted with their feelings, specially those which compel them to put an end to their own life or that of others.

My last case was Gamma-3742-B. It was a suicide. I spoke only with his wife, a timorous old woman who kept twisting the dress in her hands while she answered my question. It was the easiest - and most sorrowful - case in my life as a policeman. Something tightens in my throat when I remember our conversation.

"Yes, sir. His name was Pedro. Everybody knew him as Pedro the machinist. Surely you wouldn't know what that means, you are so young and time runs so quickly. He drove a train. Yes, those trains you say are old-fashioned. Progress!..."

The old woman looks around her. The walls are covered by framed very old prints of old and very slow engines which a long time ago served to transport travellers. One of them bears this legend: "Inauguration of the Railroad Madrid-Aranjuez". The date wore off.

"You like them?" - The old woman gives me a look which makes me unable to speak. "He doted on them. He knew them by their noise. And he gave them all names: Queen, Butterfly..."

He had a stranger temper, you know. He didn't like the movies or television because there you could seldom see engines. When he heard that they were showing in the city a picture about engines, as he said, he always took me to see it. And then we walked to the station and he showed me all the engines. He talked with them and asked them about their journeys. I was a bit afraid to hear him talk like that, but then I loved him, you know. And he was so glad to see them!"

Her eyes shine. I guess she is on the point of crying and question her no more. I remember the news in the World Television:

"The Council has happily completed the transport works in the far-off planet Earth. In spite of the inconceivable resistance on the part of the Earth men, the old system of transport called train has disappeared, and the hyperspacial canals Z-35 have been implanted."

And by a strange association of ideas there came to my mind the film-book I had read several hours before. It was by professor Zumyn, the well-known neuropsychiatrist.

"Antisocial feelings in men can be suppressed by means of a quick education course in one of our nursing-homes, consisting in the extirpation of those brain terminals provoking the above mentioned feelings. Thus the Police Force will not be necessary."

And then to my mind came the Question:

"What will become of me when the ISTS has disappeared?"

Diego Galán Trinidad

.....

A BONFIRE IN THE NIGHT

The two men were approaching along the path, they walked in silence, reluctantly, they were tired, very tired.

"How many must they be?"

"It looks as if they were two, Sergeant."

The strangers were soon visible. The light of the bonfire was a good help.

"We are peaceful people", answered the man who seemed to be the older of the two.

As they had no weapons with them, the sergeant signalled to his companions. The members of the group got near to the bonfire.

"We had not seen you", said the older man.

"This is an old trick", remarked the sergeant.

They all kept silent. The last days had been turbulent. Weariness invaded their bodies. Somebody broke the silence:

"Who must be responsible for this."

"How should we know."

Again they were silent. Nobody could say who had been responsible. International strain during the last few months had reached the breaking point.

"I think, though," said the older man, "that the Chinese are to blame."

There were hundreds of hypothesis, but...

"You come from very far away?", asked the sergeant, trying to change the subject.

"From Barcelona..."

"I lived there," broke in a soldier. "What's left of it?"

"Nothing, a grave, a gigantic hole from the harbour to the Tibidabo."

The soldier burst out crying. Nobody moved, and the sergeant was too tired to try comforting him.

"There may be other parties left."

They did not want to deceive anybody, they said no more. The older man turned his back on them, his companion automatically did the same. Without taking leave of them, in silence, they started walking away from them.

"Here, boys, let's get out of the light. Let's go on waiting."

The soldiers went reluctantly back to their cache in the shadows.

In the background two silhouettes were walking. They would not wait. They went in search of delivery: death.

Jaime Rosal del Castillo

BALLAD

Let him take away the gold
and the diamonds and gems.
Let him quench his awful thirst;
Thus he may not return.

Note the disease in his eyes
full of envy and blind lust...
Let him empty the whole mine:
Thus he may not return.

Let him climb into his vessel,
let him fly back to his Earth:
thus he may forget us all,
Thus he may not return.

ANGEL 1968

THE APPLES

Peter observed carefully the stains on the apples. He picked some of them and, frowning, started walking slowly towards the house through the rich fields where his fruit-trees grew.

The weight was ten times less than the normal one in an apple of that size. On parting it in two brown streaks appeared, running from the stains on the skin to the core of the fruit. He compared the results of his tests with those he kept from earlier years. This would be the third wasted harvest. The short distance between his fields and that missile base was bound to be his ruin.

He remembered bitterly that some years ago his apples were something to be proud of wherever he displayed them. He had won many medals and prizes in national and international competitions. His wealth went on increasing because gradually fruit became a food for the rich owing to the lack of good earth on which to grow it; his apples were worth their weight in gold.

When that base was installed Peter did not think of sound waves as a danger for his trees.

His despair was growing uncontrollably. He thought of turning to the D.D.N.A. (Department for the Defence of National Agriculture). His complaints in foregoing years had been to no avail. But this time they were going to listen to him, it was their duty to do something.

Back from the city he felt reassured. They had promised to send an inspector to study the case and, surely, once the causes had been examined, they were sure to make total amends.

Several days passed before the inspector appeared at last. He came surrounded by a team of men and a lot of machinery, all of which were soon scattered about in the fields, under Peter's curious glance.

A missile launching was scheduled for that same afternoon. The inspector explained to Peter that his instruments would measure the intensity of the noise, after which they would verify the damage suffered by the fruit-trees and then certify it officially.

Punctually on time the engines were ignited and the missile, resting on the four fire columns, started on its giddy route.

Peter was watching the majestic ascent when something happened that his eyes caught but was not absorbed by his mind until later.

Some hundreds of yards from its departing point, that same mighty missile exploded and slowly disintegrated in a cloud of smoke and flames.

He lowered his eyes, impressed by the disaster and feeling sorrow for the men in the missile. He glanced at the inspector who, by one of his strange instruments, had been watching the accident. He noticed with amazement that the inspector was smiling and felt like slapping his face. How could he be glad after what had happened?

On the following day Peter was told by the inspector that they must prolong their stay until it was possible to register all the effects of the launching.

He resumed his daily tasks although he was beginning to feel uneasy with the presence of all those strangers around him. At first he had been surprised by their silence, and now it exasperated him.

On that afternoon, his irrigation work finished, he was walking towards the house feeling very tired when, rounding a corner, he found the jeep in which those strangers had come. Making sure that none of them was about, he approached the jeep out of curiosity and on tiptoe tried to peep through the glass of one of the side windows.

What he saw filled him with amazement, awe and cerebral horror, successively.

As if pushed by a strong current he ran away, aghast. And as he ran his mind danced in a whirlpool of chaotic thoughts.

Now everything was explained. Those creatures were the inhabitants of another world who were availing themselves of the proximity of his fields to destroy the missiles sent from the base.

Breathless he reached the base police office.

Peter's vehement flow of words made the Chief of Police laugh. He explained that the missile disaster had been due to a technical mistake already found and verified, for which reason he could not believe Peter's assertions. At last, after ringing the DDNA and learning that they had sent no inspector, he decided to send a patrol.

When the jeep reached the limit of Peter's fields they had to stop brusquely so as not to fall into that ditch.

A huge hole was all that remained of the place where, some minutes earlier, had stood green rows of apple-trees.

In the centre of the hole was a big rock, the only thing breaking the monotony of the ground. Engraved on the rock, these words could be read:

"We shall be able to enjoy these marvellous fruits in the measure they deserve."

RAMON CORDON

MY FRIEND JUANITO, THE MONSTER

Sometimes, after an awful night of nightmares and shouts, I wake up late in the day and sunlight enters violently through the high, grilled window of my cell, hurting my tired eyes.

Sometimes, the man everybody calls doctor puts to me questions and more questions, and I do not know what to answer. My name? My age? How do I feel? And I understand nothing.

At other times they hit me very hard and put me under the cold shower, dressed in a sheath that binds my limbs. And I shout, and shout, and shout. I think that once I killed one of the nurses. That day I had shouted and cried a lot, and he hit me and hurt me very much. And I took the stick from him and hit him with it, and it was he who shouted then. And I hit him so much that the stick broke and the man's head was a mass of brains and blood. I think I killed him.

From that day on two very tall and strong nurses enter my cell, and they look at me with a serious and nervous expression, yes, nervous. And when they find the cell filthy they get furious and shout and say very strange words. They hate me and I hate them, too. They always call me mad. What does mad mean?

I asked the doctor about it and he looked very astonished and excited and put more questions than ever, and I did not know the answers and he kept asking. I think I seized him by the neck, but the nurses got hold of my arms and wanted to beat me. "Don't!", cried the doctor, and I jumped in fury and shouted and bit them... Then, the icy shower and the terrible, long-sleeved shirt.

They hit me no longer. The doctor told me that if I behave they will never hit me any more. The doctor is kind, I seized his hand and kissed it and he got very serious and mournful, as if he were on the point of crying. I do not want him to cry, he is kind.

The nurses are not kind. They hit me no more; but they go on hating me and they look at me as an enemy.

I live in a very large house, with the doctor and many nurses and many mad people, men and women. Through my cell's window on the corridor and then beyond the doctor's window I have seen them in a large and pretty garden, much like that of Sister Antonia.

I remember now that I have not mentioned Sister Antonia; she too was very kind and called me child, she called us all child. I was smaller than now, and I played with the others in the garden. I also remember Juanito, he was the smallest, but his head was very big, and bald. He never spoke or wept or shouted like the others. Somebody called him monster. What is a monster? I loved him, he was my friend. One day he died, they told me, and I saw him no more. Then I think I was brought here.

At night they all shout and shout, I cannot help hearing them and I shout too. I am very much afraid of the dark, the noises and the nurses. I am alone and it is cold at night. I cannot go to sleep and I tremble and weep. The night is awful, it is even worse if I sleep, then I see things, very strange and big, and everything hurts me and the things shout more than the madmen and pursue me. I do not want to sleep.

Nobody knows; in my cell there is a secret door. Neither the nurses nor the doctor have ever seen it because it only opens at nightfall. Beyond the door it is dark, darker than night, I never dare cross it because I fear the darkness and so I do not know what there is beyond the door. Many times I get near and peep inside, but I see nothing, hear nothing. Only the madmen's voices shouting, always shouting, and when I shout too the nurses come and then the door disappears and they cannot see it. I am glad, it is mine, only mine, and someday I will enter through it.

Today I walked beyond the door. All the madmen were shouting and my head ached terribly and beyond the door there was silence. I like silence, the doctor is pleased when I am silent, and the doctor is kind. He told the nurses not to beat me. Beyond the door everything is black; you see nothing before or behind you, or anywhere. I got lost and felt more afraid than ever.

I felt wrapped in the most total darkness. The blackness was so dense that it seemed something tangible, like a thick and oppressive fluid. Never before had I felt something like it, it was very disquieting; but I went on walking without a goal. Suddenly, I felt the nearness of something alive and my hairs stood on end. I tried to walk back only to find myself lost in the darkness. Something strange and terrible is happening to me. I remember vaguely and with horror my painful state of some minutes ago. I am a madman! I have always lived in an asylum!

It is only when I conquer my fear and dare cross the door that I enjoy a relative lucidity much worse than madness itself, since in madness I am ignorant of my misery, and while lucid the painful condition of my miserable life becomes clear to me.

But I never dared prolong these brief and painful moments of consciousness: I always turned back, to the other side of the door, to my madman's cell. But today I did not succeed in doing it because I could not find the way back and now I am wandering in a place totally unknown to me and whose secrets are hidden behind an absolute darkness. I have felt horribly afraid, the presence of other beings is getting more and more real. I feel an infinite desire to shout, to return to my past madness; but I do not find the way.

Feelings follow one another in a giddy succession in my mind. Now I am swayed by the fiercest hate against all that I know. A hate demanding vengeance, blood. A hoarse groan leaves my parched throat, a raging groan, an unquenchable fury that makes me twist my limbs on the hard floor with a frothy mouth.

Some hands colder than the floor itself have helped me rise and led me through the darkness. I do not know how long I have walked like this because then I have lost consciousness; I feel as if I were floating.

And then the light, incredibly intense, white, blinding. And my friend Juanito, the monster. Only much bigger, with his protruding eyes in the bald, cyanotic head. But not only one, hundreds of Juanitos are observing me in silence, with the serene and friendly expression that used to be his! I do not understand, all around me are the gigantic heads and the eyes fixed upon me, fixed.

And now they speak to me, voiceless. His thoughts take hold in my brain and I can understand them perfectly. They tell me that they have been calling me all this time (all my life?). They tell me that they have opened the door but cannot get beyond it without my help. That it is they who allow the cobweb of madness to leave my mind, thus letting in common sense and understanding...

They have told me what they want. They want me to help them enter my world, they want me to open the door from my cell so that they can slip into the man. Who are these monsters really? Their appearance is truly awful; but there is something soft and melancholy in their eyes, something I saw many years ago in Juanito's red pupils, so much like these creatures'...an expression of friendliness that only the doctor has given me afterwards.

I do not dare do it, my mind is getting clearer and I feel as I never felt in my life. Good God, I think I am reaching sanity!

But these creatures stare at me, demand me, suffocate me with their deep, fixed eyes. I have tried to resist them, something tells me I must not believe them, must not rely in them; but I hear strange noises, all is turning around me, before my eyes, colours, colours! I have escaped through dark corridors, through huge rooms full of ghastly mysteries. Shadows, cries, colours. I fell and rose again. The monsters are following me. I cannot find the exit, I shout a piercing shout...

I have looked at what I have written and I understand nothing. There are many words unknown to me, and I remember almost nothing of what I write about. Everything is as it was before: the nurses, the doctor, the cell, the madmen, the cries...

There is something different. My friend Juanito. I remember him no longer as a beloved creature, I am afraid of him. And the door is closed every night. I know that they are waiting for me to open it. Now the door fills me with horror. I cry and shout every night and pull my hair and knock my head against the wall until the blood blinds my eyes and gets mixed with the tears and the nurses come and I want them to see the door, but they do not see it. I want to die. I want no more showers, no more cries, no more friends.

Today the doctor called me and said he is angry with me, I have misbehaved once more and made him sad. I have not answered. I do not love the doctor any more, or Juanito, or anybody. He has gone on speaking. My head was aching, I got nervous and froth has risen to my mouth. I have wanted to kill him. I hit him with the metal statuette on his table. The nurses have attacked me and thrown me on the floor, where they have hit me savagely; my whole body ached.

They gave me a new cell, this one is smaller and has quilted walls, there are no windows. What will happen tonight?

Now I know. I know that the strange door follows me everywhere. Tonight I saw it again and I felt the desire to open it and let the monsters come to the light. I must not do it.

They beat me every day. They put me under the shower. I can bear it no longer. Tonight I will open the door.

Angel Rodríguez Metón