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**WE
WILL
DREAM
IN THE
GARDEN**

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**WE WILL DREAM
IN THE GARDEN**

Translated from Spanish (Mexico)
by Adrian Demopulos

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Long and short-term goals:

- *Get into swimming*
- *Work hard to pay school enrollment fees*
- *Scrape up money for El Cervantino*
- *Build the closet*
- *Paint the house in September*
- *Buy the dining room chairs*
- *Buy some shoes*
- *Read Plato*
- *Talk to and be friendly with people*

Handwritten note by Erika Nohemí Carrillo

(in a photograph by Mayra Martell).

The orange trees will be heavy with fruits, and their flowers will fill the humid air of the western garden. A silky fog will cool the ends of the grass, of the herb grown from that meadow. The sun will always come out behind the almond tree and the branches of the oldest tree, a stocky *ahuehuete*, will extend first toward its rays, lengthening like a girl who wants to stretch. Around nine the garden will become populated with silhouettes. Some will greet each other. Others will be frightened by the falling of an orange, and they will run away laughing toward the shadow of other leaves. Some more will look toward the sea that, beneath the slope that elevates the western garden over the beach, will roar and will extend enough to climb up to the grayish blue of the sky.

The assistants will check that everything is in good condition to receive the visitors, because in the mid-morning many groups of first graders will arrive accompanied by their teachers, some of them still apprentices. They will come out of the vehicles between tiny shouts of excitement and stumbles. The apprentice Teacher will warn them “No running!”, with a girl in his arms who had fallen asleep during the trip, with her mouth half-open and cheeks colored.

The Caretaker of the garden, a smiling old woman with a steady gait despite using a walking stick, will give the assistants the rigorous recommendation: support the apprentice Teachers at all times, accompany the children in their emotions, have the snacks ready at 2, every hour distribute water to slurp. Later she will quicken her step and stand at the front of a long line of children who will sing thunderously and off-key in a joyful procession on the pebbled path before arriving at the western garden. Some children will lose the rhythm, one girl will get distracted by a lizard hidden beneath a rock, and the apprentice Teacher will have to guide them again to the path, mark their steps, their palms. The small steps will be heard in unison over the gravel. The children’s laughter will float in the air, mixed with the scent of honey and the salty aftertaste of the breeze. The temperature will be very pleasant, a comforting warmth.

Before the tall brass bars that shelter the garden, the party will stop. A pair of teachers will continue entertaining the children, the rest will turn to listen to the warnings of one of the garden assistants.

“As you all already know, the idea is to let the children interact with them and intervene only when necessary. Do not be afraid of the reactions of the children or try to limit them, they are part of the educational process. We will be close by and aware of what they need at all times.”

The brass doors will open slowly with the magnetic key that The Caretaker carries like a necklace. The infantile ruckus will disperse through the western garden until the children notice the presence of *them*.

The silhouettes will shine with pearly glimmers that will enchant the visitors. They will be made, as in all the old tricks, of lights and mirrors, a complex mechanism that will remain hidden to the visitors. In the open air they will possess a subtle transparency which perhaps will permit a view of the landscape through them, but even taking a closer look will make one appreciate their defined features, they will seem solid, *alive*. Beneath a tree will be the ones who study; moving from one side to the other the ones who play; sat on the grass the ones who speak to others. Upon moving too fast they will emit a tenuous gleam which will leave in their steps a brief luminous wake.

The Caretaker will walk toward the apprentice Teacher, who will continue juggling the sleeping girl his arms and the boy who hangs on his leg like an anxious dog.

“Do you need help? You could share a bit of that love” she says to him as she opens her arms as if to receive the girl.

“Thank you. Maybe one of the assistants could help me check if I have something on my right leg. Oh, it feels so heavy! What could it be? I think I’ve been climbed by a Tommy!

The boy in question will be so entertained by the joke that he will cling even more to the game. But finally one of the assistants will take him with her. The Caretaker and the apprentice Teacher will observe them getting lost between the rest of the people and the silhouettes.

“You’re very kind. I’d like to take this opportunity to tell you that it is a true honor to meet you, ma’am. Your work in...”

The Caretaker of the garden will smack her lips and with a gesture ask that he not continue, because she will find the recognitions uncomfortable for reasons more than mere modesty. But as she won't want the guy to feel scorned, she will take him by the arm so that they can walk together.

Marisela, better known as The Caretaker, was born in September of 1985 in Veracruz. She was the last of three children. Her favorite memory of that time was to hang out the laundry in the sun with her mother: the smell of soap, the sound of the fabric as it extends, like the wings of a bird, and also the games of her mother, who disguised herself as a ghost hiding under the bedsheets to scare her. This way they forgot the daily routine, which was heavy. Every day Marisela and her mother served the food and ironed her brother's shirts, which they wore to the movies when they had time, on special occasions. One night, in her relatives' house, one of her mother's brothers entered the room in which she slept. She didn't know exactly what it was the man did standing there next to her in the darkness, because she was too small to understand it. She got the impression that her uncle was squeezing what he had between his legs like a wet rag. She was scared but she never told anybody. And she felt guilty of keeping a secret. When she was fifteen she and her mother moved alone to Mexico City. Marisela had to get a job to support them, first in a shoe store. Her boss soon wanted *something else* from her, he said it spitting into her ear, between the stacks of merchandise in the stockroom, smelling of new leather. She refused. In the truck ride home she was so worried about what would become of them that she didn't realize until much later that the man had put his hand between her legs. Thanks to her uncle (the one who had done *that* in her room), she started working at a Big Telecommunications Company. At first it was simple to answer telephones

and push buttons, but then technological advances complicated everything. They said goodbye to many girls who didn't know how to use the new machines (among them, to a friend of hers who was also from Veracruz, Paquita). She decided she would take all the available courses. At night she studied the functions of cables and computers, of mirrors and laser lights. She wanted to learn the function of what the company called "the image of the future," holograms. She got the highest grades in her classes. She got promoted. Married. She had kids. Her husband was "a good man", (being a good man meant he washed his own underwear and cared for her and her daughters if they were sick and made dinner once in a while and almost never reproached her for spending too much time outside of the house).

The Caretaker and the apprentice Teacher will observe a typical scene: the boy will run, will play at touching the silhouette and immediately taking away his hand.

"Hey, don't do that, Thomas! You don't even know her yet. Greet her, tell her your name first" the tone of the assistant will not be one of reproach and she will be able to ignore the pouts of the boy produced by the electric current.

The apprentice Teacher will want to approach Thomas, but The Caretaker will hold him back.

"Surely this touching thing wasn't around in your time. The first thing the kids tend to do is go through them with their hands, but upon crossing the meadow, the system emits a current. The stings aren't very pleasant, but they're tolerable. They always think twice before putting their little hands in again. The instruction at all times is that they treat them just like people of flesh and bone."

"Okay" the apprentice Teacher will then furrow his brow, considering a new problem. "But what if they want to touch them?"

The Caretaker will offer him a melancholy smile.

“They can’t. It’s part of the lesson.”

It will be a little hard for the apprentice Teacher to understand why. But finally he will admit to its logic: the dead will never be able to receive our caresses again. Not even them, even though they’re “back”.

One morning Marisela arrived to work and was met with the news that Paquita had been murdered in Mexico State. Her body was found recently thrown to the sidewalk, like people do when they run over an animal. They had done horrible, horrible things to her.

Paquita had gripped in her fist the keys to her house, the place to which she hoped to return. She had used them to defend herself. What if she were heading down the wrong path, they said, what was she doing alone at that hour. But what if she were on her way to work! said the Teacher, and if she were walking on the “wrong path” (*and it would be your fault, because you fired her, although she didn’t say that*) what, she deserved it? The rest shrugged their shoulders. They quickly continued minding their own business. But she still could not stop seeing the absence of Paquita, nor the corpses of one and another and another woman. There were too many. And all of them, in the eyes of decent people, seemed to be at fault for what had happened to them. They didn’t even recover their names in the footnotes of the newspapers: “Drug Addict Murders His Mother,” “Ex-Girlfriend Slain out of Spite”, “Woman Who Reported Rape Killed for Being a Gossip”.

The key will be in combining the dynamics of play and conversation to maintain the children’s attention. The teachers will seem affectionate to communicate security. And although they will keep their distance, they must be within reach at all moments.

“Hello, what’s your name?”

“Thomas, but everyone calls me Tommy. What do people call you?”

“My name is Ruby Marisol, and everyone calls me Ruby. What pretty eyes you have, Thomas.”

“My mom packed cookies in my lunch, want one?”

“I would, but I can’t eat.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t have a body like you” she joins her hands in front of herself with her palms facing upward and then slides one through the other, passing through them. “See? But we can still talk.”

The boy will be perplexed. He will try to do the same, and then will want to touch Ruby’s silhouette, but he’ll remember that the sensation is not pleasant.

The apprentice Teacher will seem to become uncomfortable with the situation. The Caretaker will try to alleviate the tension.

“Do you remember the first time you came here?”

“Yes. I never forgot. I was ten. But bringing them at this age seems dangerous to me. They don’t yet have all of the cognitive tools to understand the significance of this place, we haven’t told them the meaning of death, just the death of all of them.”

The Caretaker will listen attentively. Meanwhile she will observe the numerous tiny white butterflies that will fly around the silhouettes, the children, the flowers. They will look beautiful, but she will not stop asking herself if they won’t be, perhaps, a plague.

One day they found the body of Dulce, who to be able to pay for her computation classes on the weekends worked Monday through Friday cleaning offices, among them, Marisela’s. Dulce’s friends (most

of them were barely just girls; they weren't even fifteen) started to meet every Tuesday to remember her and to practice punches, kicks, slaps, whatever kind of defense would protect them. The first days they finished the sessions with red faces, disheveled and sweaty, crying together from pure fear or pure courage. After a couple months they laughed a bit more, punched harder and finished the training by eating something sweet to recover. They searched for a name. They liked The Gossips, because that was a word that people used to judge them, to tell them to conform, that they'd better be still and shut up. One evening Marisela came to the door and asked to join the group. Those girls taught her to kick well with her stockings and uniform and everything, to throw her elbows, to be brave and to cry in good company.

"Why don't you have a body?"

"Because it was taken from me. I'm dead."

Upon detecting the boy's silence, the silhouette of Rubi will emit more concrete answers.

"That means that I can't eat, or play, or kiss my mom."

The boy will look around, as if searching for some key. He will look toward the sea and then he'll study the appearance of his interlocutor.

"Are you a ghost?"

"No. I'm a memory. Like a photograph."

"Like a video of before?"

"Yes, exactly that. Thomas, do you have grandparents?"

The boy will ignore the question.

"Why were you killed?"

"I don't know. Why do you think it happened?"

Thomas will think of the answer squeezing his lips together,

furrowing his eyebrows.

“Because you did something bad. Maybe you made someone really, really mad.”

The silhouette of Ruby will consider those options.

“It wasn’t my fault. It was they who did something very bad.”

“They hurt you?”

“Yes.”

“And your mom made it better?”

“When you’re killed, it can’t be made better.”

The Gossips made a pact: they would take care of each other. Girlfriend or daughter-beaters, abusive bosses? They’d find out if they could take all of them at once. When one of them asked for help, the rest would show up en masse to make it clear to their aggressors that they would not leave her alone. They grew until they formed an army made of women of all ages who went where their presence was missing. They started to appear in the news, to be considered, to give advice.

The years passed, and the friends of Dulce, those preschool girls, turned into mature women who made people listen, who demanded justice. People learned to look at them with respect, and that respect was slowly extended to the rest of the women like the humidity of the waves of the ocean reaching the hot, distant sand.

Marisela got older too. She kept working at the Big Telecommunications Company, in her laboratory of mirrors and laser lights. She saw her daughters grow up, she saw her mother die, always accompanied by her friends. A longing emerged in her. She had a plan.

The apprentice Teacher will also notice the white butterflies, the unpredictable dancing of their flight, the aroma of flowers and salt that

will float in the western garden. The Caretaker and he will enjoy all of that during an activity in which the assistants will have the children sing a very old song, one that will talk of planting a seed, and leaving it to grow in peace, and knowing to wait to see what it turns into.

“You’re probably right” The Caretaker says to him in response to his worry about the age of the children. “And the people who decided to start bringing them at earlier ages were also probably right. Learning that there are different paths of life, that there are alternatives to violence, takes time. Better to start immediately, I guess” the teacher shrugs her shoulders.

“You don’t sound so sure...”

“I am. It’s just that, in the beginning, the objective of this place was different.”

Marisela’s plan consisted of obtaining resources to construct the holographic memorial that she designed along with the Gossips and other organizations who carried a reliable record of the victims. Every one of the murdered women, with her body and her name, would be replicated in a three-dimensional hologram using testimonies and materials provided by their relatives, friends and, above all, the information recovered from their personal email accounts and social media: photographs, videos, letters, conversations... everything would be used to recreate in the most precise way their voices, their movements, their reactions; to, in some way, *bring them back to life*. If they got enough money they could use the more advanced technology that allowed them to set up the system in the open air, in nature. Maybe in a garden by the sea. It would have to be a beautiful place, the closest thing to a paradise that they could give to them and their families to remember them alive and happy.

The apprentice Teacher will imagine the placid memorial that this garden once was. He will appreciate the idyllic scenery with its trees and its beach, the peaceful wandering of the silhouettes.

“The place is just as pretty as I remembered. There are more trees, sure, the ones we planted have grown. Everything is very well conserved.”

“It’s true,” responds The Caretaker proudly. “Although I don’t know what’s more astonishing: that its beauty is being conserved or that it’s being conserved even though it’s *in Mexico*.”

The apprentice Teacher will laugh more because of the ease with which she says these things than because of the joke itself: he will not consider it implausible that Mexico could keep anything in good condition. Between her generation and that of the apprentice Teacher there will be an abyss.

“It must be surprising to you how the country has changed. You’ve seen it all.”

“Well, I’m 94 years old. If I hadn’t seen it all, I’d ask for a refund on my admission ticket.”

“I imagine that that era must have been terrible.”

“Yes, it was.”

There was a time when nobody called them *silhouettes*. Their families came to visit them and they felt almost happy. The teacher saw The Gossips’ wish fulfilled when the mothers and fathers, and the brothers and sisters, and their friends, saw them inside the garden, alive, smiling. They felt the joy that justice had not been able to give them. As is natural, many families disappeared with the passing of the years, pulled by the river of life, by their chores, their loved ones. But some did not return because the garden did not compensate for them in any way. “It’s not them,” they said.

The problem is that Marisela had been naïve: it wasn't possible to make up for everything. For some they barely had a name, a blurry photograph. Of others there were only bones. From those who had left an ample testimony of their path through the world were almost perfect, precise holographic replicas, but even then: a life is a unique weave, a thread within a great tapestry, and if it breaks, the thread that replaces it will not be the same. It isn't possible to patch up their flesh, blood, breath, learning, desire. Their future.

When few families were left, the State decided that the memorial should serve an additional function to earn the right to permanence. It would serve as an educational space against violence. The younger population would come, mandatorily, to learn the history of the murdered women of Mexico with the purpose of it never happening again. The teacher would understand the intention of this change, and what's more: as part of the Gossips, she would believe it necessary. But she detested feeling like they were being used. She refused to reprogram them, to convert them into text book chapters. She cried and fought to keep them intact.

In the end she had to do it so their memory wouldn't disappear. From that point on the silhouettes would have to repeat to the children, time and time again, that they were dead.

"The country came out on top because of people like you, people who never tired of demanding justice.

The Caretaker will make another incredulous gesture.

"There's no merit in that. It was the only thing we had left. So much horror left us with no purpose, no meaning. Conserving the memory was the only way out."

"At least the deaths of all those women were good for something."

Clinging to her cane, The Caretaker will turn brusquely to respond.

*“Good for something? For what? To teach us that we’re a horror? We already knew that. It’s one thing to voluntarily give your life for a cause and it’s another to be killed for it. Which would you like more? That your life had been good ‘for something’ or to have lived? Bite an apple, smell the rain on over the dirt, know the sea. I don’t know. As I get older I think that transcendence is overrated. It’s a comfort of fools, a comfort for the living, but not for the dead. If they could really speak (*them*, not the silhouettes), what would they say to us? ‘Listen, it’s nice that my death was good for something, but I didn’t want to die.’ This”* she said extending her arms and the cane, as if trying to encompass the whole garden *“is not enough. How can I fix the damage? Can you imagine that at one time they piled them up in a tower of anonymous bodies? Can you believe that they were blamed for their own deaths? Nobody can imagine the pain they experienced in their final moments, and you all, the young, don’t know the horror of knowing that those who did it weren’t monsters, it wasn’t Jack the Ripper: they were their classmates, their boyfriends, their relatives, the friendly taxi driver that you chatted with yesterday, the police officer on the corner. It was the world, an environment that made us beauty queens while they kicked us in the ribs, and called us crazy if we complained. It was that horrible.”*

The apprentice Teacher will listen to the reprimand without looking at her face. He will look at the children, who will keep digging holes in the dirt, singing the old sowing song.

“I’m sorry, it’s true. Of course they didn’t die in vain.” The Caretaker gave a long sigh before continuing. *“The anger it caused us to lose them was the start of it all. We rose up, repeated their names in the*

streets, we got to change the path. They were the wind that propelled the sail of this boat, of our future. I just wish that we had learned before the lesson, that all of them could have kept living. That they could have had, at least, the possibility of doing what they dreamed of.”

The apprentice Teacher will look in her eyes and agree respectfully. He will note that many silhouettes listen to the children who are singing and even applaud them; others continue about their business mechanically, somewhat estranged from the present tense, trapped in the programming of the tasks that they themselves decided on a long time in the past, when they were alive and confessed, in many spaces of online life, what they liked, to what they were dedicated, or what they wanted for the future. He will rummage in his memory:

“You know what I want to do? Study to be an engineer” Mariana Elizabeth had said to him when he was a ten-year-old boy (he never forgot her name).

“I don’t really know what that is.”

“Someone who builds things, like bridges or machines.”

“If you study, my mom says that when you grow up you can do whatever you want.”

“I’m not going to grow up because I’m dead. But how I would like to...”

The seed song will finish. He will ask the children to gather up everything and say goodbye. They will react in different ways. Some will start to cry, some will say goodbye with an indifferent gesture. A pair of girls will want the silhouettes to keep their drawings.

The apprentice Teacher will have to approach Thomas because he will sense his confusion: he will be there, looking at the nothingness. Before he takes a step, the boy will wrap his arms around the sil-

houette, and feeling nothing, he will hug himself inside Ruby's luminous silhouette.

"I want to hug you because it's really mean that they killed you. I want to hug you because they hurt you and left you all alone."

Tommy will feel the electrical currents through his whole body and will resist them until the apprentice Teachers takes his hand, separates him from Ruby.

At six in the evening the sun will begin to hide itself in the western garden. The visitors will have to go just as the darkness arrives, which will make the silhouettes even more beautiful. Their luminous colors will stand out, refined and clear, before the nocturnal sky. They and the children will wave goodbye, and for The Caretaker everything will have the appearance of a movie from way back when, where everything was happy and the people on the dock waved goodbye to the boat setting sail, and there was music and streamers.

The assistants will make sure that everything is clean and in order before leaving. Marisela, who will insist until the end of her days that she be the one who leaves last every day (they call her The Caretaker for a reason), will wander around the garden as is her custom, making a sound with her cane on the stone paths, recharging every so often by a tree.

With the magnetic key that she carries on her chest she will lock the brass doors that separate the control room from the garden. The silhouettes will sleep by the sea, lying on their sides, mouths half-open, hands under their chins or over their laps, a nice illusion that occurred to her when she updated some of the systems, an image that day by day allows her to stop the motors without feeling that she unplugs them, that she erases them, that the world will once again be without them. Just like that, it will be like she turned off the lights so they could sleep

after telling them a story. Oh, if only life would allow her to finish the program that will make them dream! But Marisela, just like the Gossips, is very old, and there is still so much to detail. Others will have to finish it and take the risk of putting it into action. During the day they will be heroines, silhouettes, memories, they will say that they are dead, but the nights will be theirs. They will construct what was taken from them. In the garden they will dream of their future.

Marisela will watch them sleep. And then she will press the button. The silhouettes will shrink until they become miniscule points of light mixed up with the stars that hang over the sea. After a bit everything will be dark without them.

“Rest, my girls,” The Caretaker will murmur. “Rest.”

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FUTURS D'AVANT.



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