

The Sacrifice

Story by Iacyr Anderson Borges

Translated from Portuguese by *Desirée Jung*

*It is those who kill
On demand
or settling scores.
Also educate
in their tenderness.*

*In their tenderness
that we don't touch.
The warm side
of death.*

Edmilson de Almeida Pereira

Tonight, I overdid it. Drank too much. My head hasn't stopped turning. From time to time the floor threatens to disappear in the room, while I attempt to push away the bothering, imminent urge to vomit. I am just delaying the sacrifice. I will have to get up anyway, rush to the bathroom, throw my face into the toilet and open the gates. There will be no way out. Even if this is not a novelty, though, it scares me still. This drowning misfortune. The air escaping the lungs not by the force of waters external to the body, but rather to internal sources, unsuspecting volcanos that explode up the throat and gain the drains of the world.

While I postpone my sacrifice, I think about the future sacrifice of the woman who sleeps beside me. Without knowing it, she sleeps her second to last night. Tomorrow she will be in a better place. Her tranquil and just sleep, however, doesn't denounce such big catastrophe. Little does she know that at her side, trying to delay the inevitable vomit and anchor his head in some fixed object in the room, is her future assassin. The man who got her out of the street life and that now, merciless, will take it away from her. What can I do? I have no choice.

We made love all night long. I needed to say goodbye in grand style. She is a very beautiful woman, with a measured body and penetrating gaze. Yet not a good partner in bed. Maybe

her excess of physical talents allows her to be absent in the act, without any excuse. For her, I believe, the luminous presence of her hips, the curve of her tights and the arrogant profile of her breasts dismisses any other effort on her part. Many times, I felt alone beside her, noticing her cold and distant – without a single tremor in her lips, no inflection in her gesture or voice, nothing that showed the smallest sign of my presence. In the beginning, this alienation didn't affect me. It was enough to make use of her body. After, as it is natural, other demands incited my spirit. Since I had had many other affairs before meeting her, I had already tasted, and well, the flavor of this business. Now, for old times' sake, I need a lover *stricto sensu*, more dedicated to the pleasures of the bed.

The room stopped hovering. My head no longer drifts and the urge to vomit seems to be diminishing a little. May I escape from the sacrifice. Next time, I shall go easy on the reds. I'm even a hard nut, but today I overdid. After two bottles, she even gave me an entire Shiraz-Malbec from her own mouth. Lying and naked, I asked. I barely had the strength to get up. She filled her mouth, and gluing it to mine, satisfied me. The sheep feeding its executioner.

When I met her, she wore extravagant clothes, said she studied at night and already was, at the time, a call girl. Now she is a professional model and no longer lives with her parents. Of course, I take care of the rent and great part of her expenses, but everything is done in whispers, because I don't want to be caught with my trousers down. Count to my favor the many partners she still has, people from high society, involved up to their necks if things turn sour and they won't want a scandal. The job done and they won't have how to implicate me in the case.

Six on the dot. Soon she will have to leave to the airport. The flight will be at nine. Tomorrow she will be back, bringing the promised money. I can't wait to put my hands on the dough. I will wait her in a restaurant situated in the arrivals terminal. We will have lunch together. Later I will leave her in a street near her apartment and the others will do the rest for me. A good simulation that, if it gets any space in the papers, will be highlighted as burglary followed by homicide. No clues. I see her sleep like this, so serene at my side, and I feel sorry. Something in her reminds me the quiet and elusive manners of my daughter. I don't know exactly what.

Six two. I recall now, by the way, the promise I made to my daughter. She asked me to wake her early, because she wanted to see the sunrise with me. There aren't many times the girl insists on my company. Of course, there is a logic to this choice: I usually sleep little and leave the house early hours of the morning. As for her mother, that useless, she can't really be bothered to be awakened in the middle of the night, no matter what. Without blinking, I said I would do it. "You will forget again, dad. It's been a while you promise. Last time I was up very early and went to your room. Mom was alone. You hadn't sleep at home." What could I say? That now I was giving her my word and everything would be different.

My head stopped turning, the room became sensible around the bed, but the urge to vomit became worse again a bit. Weakened, the aurora lights the windows, drawing illuminated shapes on the walls. I get up. The floor seems to escape from my feet. Dazed, I close my eyes and I grab onto the closet's door. I let myself stay there for a good time, waiting. I open my eyes again: the discomfort hasn't left me. Only the contours of the day appear clearer. My daughter was right. I won't be able to fulfill my promise. I know she must be up again, beside her mother, waiting for me. The image of this vigil deprives me of energy. The vomit is now inevitable. Clenching my teeth, hands over the mouth, I run to the bathroom and I accept the sacrifice.