

## ELIJAH'S APOCRYPHAL STORY

His name was Elijah. A biblical name to which his mother was particularly devoted. After becoming pregnant, he swore before the crucifix in the church that his child would be called with this name. Had it been a girl, she would have been called Carmen, in recognition of her baby's father who was a deep-sea fisherman and whose life consisted of a constant to and fro on the oceans and seas. One could safely say that the child, from an early age, went unnoticed by a vast majority of the inhabitants of his home village. He was an obscure child in every sense of the word.

He never liked this adjective referring to himself and when he was a teenager, every time someone mentioned it, whether in jest or seriously, directly or indirectly, he would recite all the prepositions as an inner monologue, in order to ward off the insult and protect himself from it. At first the declamation went smoothly, but as the years went by, with some confusion. Why, you may wonder? Quite simple. He knew by heart the ones he had to learn at school so that the teacher did not hit him in the hand with the hazel stick. Well, what an exaggeration! You might think. You must know that some years ago the emotional world was not as well cared for as it is today. Sensitivity was defined simply as the nonsense and gibberish of soft people. You could be slapped by the teacher, the priest and anyone who passed by you, as long as they were a respectable adult, because if you were slapped, for example, by a drunk, you told your parents and they got really angry, with insults included. That was what my grandfather told me, I have no more information, so it may or may not be like this. As you can see, you are dealing with an indecisive, insecure writer, for whom everything is very relative. Undoubtedly, a relevant aspect when it comes to assessing the story.

I have lost the thread of the story. Let's go back to Elijah and the prepositions. As I mentioned before, for a while he had a little problem with them, because he had forgotten some of them (you know, everything gets worse with age) and, in addition, he had to sum up the new ones that usage had added. But he insisted on the matter and, finally, when he reached sixty, he managed to integrate them all into his memory, duly ordered, an aspect that, undoubtedly, facilitated their retention. At that moment he felt special, he stood in front of the mirror and it gave him the image of a fully realised man. Don't you know prepositions? Well, here they go: in, on, at, for, during, while, till, until, by the time, by, to, towards, into, for, of, from, since, by, about, with, without, as, up, down, over, under... (I'm sorry, but I don't remember any more, age also affects writers).

Once retired, he told himself that he would recite them from cover to cover every time he heard a comment against him or his thoughts and opinions. When they met acquaintances or sat on the terrace of a bar with friends, while his wife chatted naturally, he was attentive to what came out of the mouths of the people they were with in order to set in motion such an unusual defense mechanism whenever necessary. His wife, noticing his tension, knew perfectly well what was going on, as she had been suffering in the intimacy, for a long time, the grammatical explosion of her husband, but not to himself but in a very loud voice. So much so that their downstairs neighbour, a young man recently arrived from Greece, managed to learn the prepositional challenge in less than a week.

"Look, don't go that way," Elijah threatened her, "or I'll preposition you" and then she would stop talking to him for a few hours, one day, a week or, sometimes even a month. It all depended on how much anger she had built up. As you can understand, it was not easy to live with an individual who, instead of talking to resolve disagreements, kept throwing so many grammatical elements in her face. Our man suffered because he felt helpless without the love of his partner. If she asked him for divorce, what would become of him? Alone in life, with no one to love him and no one to love.

Altered as he was in the midst of one of these couple crises, he went for a run around a circuit near a well-known shopping centre in the suburbs. On the first lap he discovered, after landing on his feet at the bottom, that a power line pit had no cover. On the second lap he placed a board over the hole as a footbridge so that no one would fall into it at night, since lighting was poor. On the third round, he removed the board because if someone stepped on it hard or was too large, they would rush down unexpectedly and the injuries would be greater. On the fourth, he was reciting for the fourth time the magic words he had so proudly learnt and it was he who fell into the hole. At that moment he remembered the song: "Boy, you are dumb, you are dumb and they've got to know it at home." A faint smile appeared on his lips. He looked everywhere and, though he tried to get out quickly, it took him a while to do so. He noticed a sharp pain in his right leg, but he began to walk and nothing stopped him. Fortunately, he had no fracture. So he continued with his sporting activity. It should come as no surprise, we all know that jogging is addictive. If it weren't, there would not be so many people jogging in the streets twenty-four hours a day. On the fifth lap, his mind went back to abstraction and again he saw himself inside the cavity. Finding himself in such a painful situation, he resorted to his verbal self-protection mechanism. A maintenance worker of the Light Company, of Bengali origin, seeing a man of a certain age who kept making strange sounds, called the emergency telephone. Our protagonist was hospitalised for polytraumas.

After their separation, his wife went off to travel the world: here today, there tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, we'll see. Nothing has been heard from him. As usually happens in the tabloid media with celebrities who have fallen into disrepute, and in reality with unimportant individuals, he fell into oblivion, into a definitive and total oblivion. However, with the passage of time, when I asked a group of people from the village where Elijah developed his life project about him, some believe that he dedicated his last years to writing anonymously the best-selling best-seller in history: "I was never a prophet in my own land". Others say he may have been one of the many anchorites who lived in a region near Tibet. For most people, he remains a completely unknown figure in whom they have no interest.

The oldest ones here, the ones who are close to a hundred years old, when asked for their opinion about him, look me in the face very seriously and say: "Go and tell your story somewhere else. Some of you no longer know what to do to brighten up your banal existence." Then they let out a long, loud, biting laugh and sigh: "If only Elijah were born again ..."

**"Stories without mufflers" (2006 -)**