

## THE APOCRYPHAL SOLILOQUY OF ELIJAH

I was eagerly awaiting the breakfast break. The night with friends had been long and well-lubricated. At some point during the revelry, I must have fallen because I woke up with pain and a bruise on my left thigh. The moment I entered the office, I felt an urgent need to clear my head. I remembered that in Western movies, actors pour buckets of water over themselves to recover from the drunken stupor. Oh, what a pleasure! I calculated that, in my case, I would need about ten or twelve buckets. I envisioned the office in a sorry state: wet papers, flooded desks, and, to top it all off, the boss, who rarely made an appearance, slipping and falling like a sack of potatoes to the floor. She would look at me—a very strange and unusual thing, because she is very refined and delicate, not a flesh-and-blood person like me—with a forced, cold smile:

"Well, well, Mr. Martínez. I never would have thought you capable of such a high act of treason."

And, without taking her eyes off mine, she would continue:

"By the way, it's not 'valla, valla,' like a wall, Mr. Martínez. It's 'vaya, vaya,' an interjection that, in this context, expresses disappointment or displeasure. So, I'm suspending you for two months' pay, not only for the outrage you've just committed, but also for being unable to represent with the appropriate symbols the sounds that have just reached your ears orally."

Then, perplexed and blushing at the unforeseen effects of my wish and at my superior's telepathic abilities, after a few minutes deciphering the new message, my mind rewound and found the right symbols:

"Vaya, vaya, Mr. Martín."

She, from the dishonorable position she was in, exploded:

"You think you're so clever, don't you? You're not Mr. Martín, you're Mr. Martínez! Don't take out your fault and its consequences on your poor colleague."

"With all due respect, Your Honor, Martín isn't poor. He lives in a ninety-square-meter apartment and his mortgage is already paid off."

"You, Mr. Martínez, are completely clueless. You can't go out partying at night as if nothing's wrong and then come to the office looking like a woodchuck. My apologies to the woodchucks, because they're clean and tidy, and you give off a sour, acidic smell that I'm finding very difficult, if not impossible, to tolerate. Do you understand me now?"

I didn't agree with the woodchuck analogy. What did they have to do with what happened? Had I had any problems with them on some Himalayan expedition? But I didn't say anything about it because, obviously, my interlocutor wasn't in a receptive mood for exchanging ideas and opinions.

"I think I've perfectly understood the meaning of your pertinent comment, Your Honor." For my part, from now on I will do everything in my power to be a disciplined employee and strictly fulfill all my obligations.

Next, I went to where the injured lady was to offer her a hand to help her transition from the horizontal to the vertical plane. At that moment, I thought my spatial reasoning skills were more brilliant than my linguistic ones. However, she interpreted my kind gesture as a military salute and snorted conspicuously.

With my hand outstretched and her still in her initial position, her skirt hiked up above her knee and her stockings bunched up—due, as she would reproach me on numerous occasions throughout my professional career, to the unfortunate incident for which I was primarily responsible, not Mr. Martín—she snapped at me:

"Don't address me as 'Your Honor.' Don't use formal titles for two reasons: because they're irrelevant and because you don't seem to have a proper understanding of them. On that subject, you're completely ignorant. So, your suspension will be extended to four months."

Still crouching with my hand outstretched, I replied:

"But you can't go up two at a time, Your Excellency, it was just one more offense."

"I've underestimated it, there are eight: one for each ladyship, another for the "most excellent" part, and another for the unacceptable state of my pantyhose."

I was crestfallen. And now, how was I going to pay the mortgage and the twins' daycare fees? Life was hard, inexplicably hard, very hard, extremely hard, incredibly hard, exceptionally hard, very, very hard.

Then it dawned on me that my wife held a high-ranking position at a very powerful multinational corporation. I took a deep breath.

"Great, I'm not the head of the household!"

"Your partner earns much more than you, you blockhead," the injured woman interjected as she turned her back on me and closed her office door.

I was in the middle of all this when I noticed someone standing in front of my window. They must have been waiting for quite a while, and for whatever reason, they seemed annoyed and rather grumpy.

"What's wrong! Is there only room for you and your cronies in your world? Because yesterday, whiskey after whiskey, you didn't even pay attention to me when you paid for the round. By the way, you took quite a tumble on the stairs when you went down to the bathroom, don't you remember? Ah, finally, you recognize me! What a sight you are this morning!" The "sir" comment stung intensely. I looked up again. The waiter was gone, vanished. I needed a long coffee, a really long one. I ran out, desperate, like a bat out of hell, to the café next door.

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