

THE CONTROVERSIAL STORY OF B, THE BENEFACTOR

THE SILENCE OF THE GODS

The prohibitive treatment of my grandson was a weight that sank my soul into the nauseating and merciless mire of our caste. The rage accumulated over centuries receded into the background. In my mind, there was only him, so tender, so helpless... After gathering the cattle into the pen, as evening fell, I took him in my arms and went to ask the master for help. I wept, I begged, I crawled at his feet. All in vain. After a slight, malicious smile, he took his cane and struck us viciously. My little one fell to the ground, emitting such a sharp, pitiful cry that, finding myself equally battered and bruised, not only did my heart ache, but in that very instant, I swore that one day the young master would get what he deserved. He still heard her thunderous voice: "Accept your fate, you wicked woman, you are my servant. You can't demand what isn't yours."

She worked well, Nick, the foreman, says, but she was a woman who had to be kept in check. She often broke the rules, thinking her work was essential to the ranch's operation. I remember the day she showed up with her grandson in her arms. It was late afternoon. She told me she was feeling very ill. What could I do? Send one of my farmhands to town to get a doctor, knowing the doctor wouldn't be back for another six hours? She kept harassing me, making me feel bad, so I pulled her to her feet and slapped her to bring her back to her senses. The child certainly fell to the ground during the struggle, he was frightened, but he wasn't hurt.

The dry south wind was blowing hard. Mayela approached the landowner's house with her little boy in her arms. I never knew for sure if he was her son or her grandson, as she claimed. After a while, from the stable, I thought I could make out some shouts and sobs. They came from far away, as if I were covered by a sea of blankets. At one point, I heard a shrill, high-pitched cry; I assumed it was the little boy. Instantly, a few disjointed words came to mind: wicked, servant, you can't.

We named the boy Benjamin, although everyone called him B because it was quicker to pronounce. He came to me after my daughter-in-law died in childbirth. It's best not to speak of my son. From the beginning, B was a bright, quick-witted, very observant boy, very different from the others. At five years old, he already started working for the

landowner. He took great care in doing the tasks well, even if it took him longer. The pastor used to come at dusk and teach five of the six children on the farm to read and write. The other one, poor thing, had been born with serious problems and still couldn't hold his head up straight and didn't know how to walk.

B never stopped moving, always on the go: running, climbing, descending... He worked hard on the farm and learned easily, although sometimes we had to tell him off because he did the chores too quickly and not quite right. From the stables, we got the impression that he was in a great hurry to live, as if he didn't have enough time.

Well, I don't know what to say. I wasn't paying much attention to him either. I think he learned to read and write easily, at least that's what Reverend Jackson told me. The work he did on the farm was simple, as was appropriate for his age. Sometimes he worked diligently, and other times he was a bit distracted. He caused some trouble, and, like his grandmother, we sometimes had to put a stop to it.

A VERY CLEAN JOB

When he turned eighteen, he left the ranch. He did things the right way. He spoke with the boss and said goodbye politely and properly. He told me he had a new job and not to worry, that he would visit me often. He was of age now and had to spread his wings. His offer was fair. I, his grandmother, what could I do? Nothing, accept his decision.

One very cold morning, in the middle of winter, he decided to leave. We were all very surprised. He went to speak with the boss. From the stable, I heard shouting. Someone from the staff said that, although the conversation had started politely, as it progressed, tempers must have flared, and it ended in a threatening tone.

Everyone believes he came to see me to say goodbye. He had worked for me, I had taught him how to grow in the world of work, and when he was at the best age to manage the tasks, he decided to leave. I reproached him, telling him he was ungrateful. He just stared at me, with that defiant look so characteristic of him. He simply muttered, "I love my grandmother very much, take care of her."

In the end, he kept the business. Little by little, he became indispensable. He was a smart guy; he knew what he had to do to distribute the merchandise and keep both the customers and the boss happy. First, he hired two young men with whom he had a close relationship, then he gradually increased the workforce. He ended up having more than twenty men under his command. Anyone who talked too much or didn't do their job suffered greatly. He didn't mince words, and after a while, they were never seen again.

One day he appeared before me unexpectedly. I knew that, sooner or later, this dreaded moment would arrive. Without batting an eye, he launched into a speech that he had obviously prepared: that serving me had made him very happy; that the last job had been very clean; that, "after four years by your side, Don Alberto, making you earn a lot, a whole lot of money," he had decided to increase his fees to ninety percent of the transaction value; that I already knew he didn't like being contradicted and that he didn't mince words; that his colleagues were waiting for him outside and were going out partying; that he was sorry he couldn't invite me and that life without friends was very sad. I had to accept; I had no other choice. It was the beginning of the end. His henchmen increased steadily, his control became increasingly ironclad. A few months later, what had to happen, happened: he took over one hundred percent and all the operational infrastructure.

Don Alberto was not to be trusted. When he hired B, he had already gotten rid of several young men he had put in charge of his illegal business. As with the previous ones, he placed all the responsibility on B. B had to fend for himself. So he decided to help our families in exchange for our help. We did it gladly. After a while, seeing that the boss was a burden, he asked him to transfer the business to him. After some back and forth, they reached an agreement. I don't know anything else.

From that moment on, Nick, the boss, treated B's grandmother like never before. He put her in charge, as housekeeper, of all the workers involved in cleaning and maintaining his own home. We stable boys were surprised by this change in attitude; later we understood why.

IN THE SMELL OF CROWDS

When he turned forty years old, he ran for the general elections on an independent candidacy that he himself had launched, as we announced in our newspaper. By then, he

had a good image and a lot of respect in the popular classes. He was his guardian angel, to put it plainly and simply. He won the presidency of the country in the second round. As soon as he reached the top, with Congress also in the hands of his party, after repealing the Constitution, he proclaimed himself president for life and captain general of all armies. After holding absolute power for three decades, as a result of the conflict that had raged for years between the commanders of the armed forces and the powerful presidential guard, he was forced, after a brief negotiation, to leave the country by plane to the State that took charge of his reception.

PATRIARCHAL FORGETTEN

The military coup was not as the press reported. They wanted to put an end to it because the disadvantaged classes for the first time felt that someone was putting the nation at the service of the neediest, ensuring their educational, health, social and economic rights, seeking to reduce poverty levels and promoting equality. He had to rush to a friendly country because his life was in danger. As soon as the presidential plane left, the palace was bombed and completely razed. In the rush of the moment, when he had barely been in the flight for five minutes, he realized that he had forgotten all the rhinestones and jewels of the female part of the clan. A fact that was a source of joke among the living forces of the population.

“Getting into gold”, this was the maxim strictly followed by B. Fortune smiled on him. He liked to travel with his wife, his son and his grandmother to all regions and cities. He always did it protected by his personal guard, at great expense and at all expenses paid. This and other similar things were discussed in our clandestine meetings. We had to finish him off no matter what. Some infiltrated agent among our people must have tipped him off because he had time to take the eighteen-carat equestrian sculpture from the residential palace and finish saving all his capital in a tax haven.

HE DIDN'T ARRIVE IN TIME

His more human side is largely unknown to the public. His first son died at a young age, just eight years old. “Can I make another wish?” he asked him in a broken voice, with

the wires connected to the ECMO machine and his gaze lost in the glare of the window. Our president smiled at his offspring in a way that seemed sincere, aware that unconditional love was the best gift he could offer him in those critical moments, although, in reality, he was masking an infinite sadness. "Can I make another wish?" the little boy repeated in a practically inaudible tone. According to the testimony of an eyewitness, B exclaimed, crying: "I should have stroked his head, kissed him, told him yes, of course, yes, but this damned machine drew a straight line and a continuous beeping pierced his soul like a dagger."

After his hasty departure, his supporters tried to portray a positive image of him in some foreign media outlets. They even said that when one of his sons died prematurely, he was so sad and desolate that he almost abdicated. They also claimed that the equestrian statue in his palace wasn't made of white gold, but of stainless steel, metals that can be easily confused due to their very similar appearance. Of course, they also raised questions about the tax haven.

HEAD OF LOVE

His wife was rubbing lotion on the back of his neck. He liked the tingling sensation her fingers created as they ran over his skin. They had eaten stuffed eggplant, his favorite dish. The cook had prepared it with care; it had a richer, more special flavor. Afterward, they went down to the beach. The massages were stimulating him more and more intensely. Before his eyes, she was transforming into a sensual goddess. They returned to the villa, very affectionate. He began to feel his heart racing. Clinging to the doorframe, wracked with convulsions, he realized he was, quite literally, dead of love. He couldn't breathe and collapsed. His bodyguard recounted the story on a television network.

"According to the Interior Ministry's investigations, following a meticulous information-gathering process, the rumors circulating about his death should be disregarded. Everything suggests that the bodyguard received a considerable sum of money for his testimony. It is true that he died a few months ago at the age of sixty. The beach incident, the caresses from his wife, etc., should be questioned. Rather, it is a murky affair. B, as he was known in certain circles, was an individual very devoted to sexual pleasure and a regular user of the infamous blue pills to enhance his abilities. In the

last episode of his life, his companion was not his wife, but a young woman, possibly a minor. He did not die in the doorway. The event occurred in the marital bed,” explains the government spokesperson.

He was like a big kid; he liked pajamas with Walt Disney characters and large brand logos. He never read the messages. Not because he didn't want to, but because he couldn't see them despite carrying them with him. The advertising didn't affect him. That's how my grandson was. I'm almost a hundred years old, but I remember him as if it were yesterday when I took him in.

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