

MELTING PLOT

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In reference to my travels in the Amazon rainforest.

SATELLITE

The sun was almost gone. It must have been around six o'clock. The man sitting in a narrow canoe hollowed out from the trunk of a Hymenaea tree, knew that there is still at least half an hour to wait until the lake will be covered in complete darkness. He reached into a bag hanging from his shoulder, took out a thick mapacho cigar rolled in a dry leaf and lit it up.

The lighter he used was a present from a woman who had passed through the village some time ago. This bright yellow object was very useful and he always had it with him, hoping that it will never stop working. These days it was easier to make fire, because they regularly sent someone from the community to the closest larger village, to exchange fruits and vegetables for boxes of matches and other supplies. But a lighter was still something special. For the last journey, he had managed to hunt down a large tapir. They had cut the meat in pieces, put a huge amount of salt on it to keep it fresh and had exchanged it for several flashlights and batteries. He couldn't imagine to live without such a light anymore. He attached it onto a piece of fabric and tied it around his head so he could use both hands while illuminating the space in front of him.

Now the light was switched off and the surrounding forest was swimming in the last shades of dark red and purple. He blew the mapacho smoke to all sides around him, on his knees and feet to protect himself from the river demons.

The nocturnal animals were wide awake. Loud buzzing and squeaking sounds were crawling through the heavy humid air and spreading in an echo across the calm lake surface. He reached once again inside his bag and grabbed a little package made from palm leaves where he was carrying freshly made ambil. He dipped his finger in the sticky dark tobacco slime and shivered as he tasted the familiar bitterness on the tip of his tongue.

The man started to paddle very silently through the tall grass. It was the right time! All the caimans should be gathering above the surface calling at each other with deep choking shrieks, hoping to find a mating partner or at least capture some more interesting prey than a fish. He has to succeed tonight and bring back at least two of those creatures for the celebration feast! He carefully positioned a long spear next to him so it is easily reachable at the right moment and began to imitate the caimans' calls. After several minutes of concentration and smooth movement through the thick blackness, he got the first answer from close by. Depending on the deepness of the sound he can predict their size. This one couldn't be too big for him to handle. He quietly changed his direction towards the sound, slowed down and repeated the imitation. When the second answer came it was clear that the canoe must be about two meters away from the prey. He switched on the flashlight on his head and directed it towards the reeds where he instantly saw two red eyes reflected in the thin tunnel of yellow light. The caiman was paralyzed, didn't move an inch! Breathlessly focused, the man gripped the spear and waited for the boat to pass the stone still animal. He was just above him, precisely pointing with the tip of the spear to the creature's neck. With one brisk and hard hit the beast was dead.

The man dragged the body, which was over one meter long, into the boat, held its jaws with one hand, in case it would still want to snap, and with the other hand took the spear out of the scaly skin. He washed the blood of his hands, lit up the rest of the mapacho cigar and blew the smoke over the animal while murmuring prayers.

It was a good catch! This caiman was well fed, the hunter guessed it could weight almost 20 pounds. But there was a big family waiting in the village, the man was not giving up yet. He positioned the spear once again next to him, turned off the light and continued to paddle along the reeds. This time he didn't even have to start with the imitation sounds. He heard a deep call about

five meters ahead! The man slowed down, almost stopped because this animal seemed to be much bigger than the one before. He quietly put away the prepared spear and reached to the back of the boat for a longer and thicker one. He switched on the light and began ever so slowly to move towards the creature, looking for its red eyes above the water.

Suddenly a very loud thunder sound cut through the air. The beast vanished, startled. Caught by surprise, the man also jumped and the spear fell out of his hand and disappeared. But he didn't even notice because his eyes were fixed on the sky where the sound was coming from. There was a huge object on fire falling down. Within seconds it had hit the ground. The earth shook.

Before the man could swallow his shock, cold waves splashed to his face and almost flipped the boat over. He managed to stabilize the canoe and stared towards the bushes on fire. Massive clouds of smoke were spreading through the trees. He couldn't believe it. He laid down on his stomach inside the boat and tried to calm down his breath. After a while he stopped shaking and looked out again. The wet humid vegetation consumed the flames and after a short time also the smoke began to thin out. The man waited, expecting something extraordinary to happen. But the forest became still and silent.

He paddled to the shore, took his machete and started to cut his way through the thick bushes. Soon he was standing at the edge of a burned out circle, trying to understand what is it he is looking at. The wrecked metal parts, laying all around, partly black from the fire and partly gleaming and reflecting the flashlight, were leading to a huge object of a squeezed cylinder shape. It seemed to have on the both sides something similar to wings, made from blue plates of a strange glossy material. Something shone through the crushed trunks and layers of ash, a couple of feet in front of him. He leaned forward and wiped away the dirt. A golden board appeared covered with strange engravings depicting radial lines.

BONES

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Muutsújiúvu bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Biirúmúji bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Tájcu bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Llééu bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Ócáji bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Úúcúme bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Óóbawá bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Wááhi bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Píicyá bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Mééni bájcu.

¿Ácooca íbajcuj?

¿Ácooca íbajcuj?

¿Ácooca íbajcuj?

¿Ácooca íbajcuj?

¿Ácooca íbajcuj? Whose are those bones?

¿Ácooca íbajcuj?

They are the birds’.

They are the snakes’.

They are the monkeys’.

They are the pigs’.

They are the tapirs’.

They are the jaguars’.

They are your daughters’.

They are your sons’.

They are yours.

They are mine.

TRYING TO MANAGE

Finally the air cooled down. I felt relief crawling down my spine as the refreshing breeze hit us behind another river turn. Sticky sweat was dripping from my chin, I was feeling lightheaded and had to blink my eyes a couple of times to outrun the dark spots coming from the sides of my vision. My canoe colleague was in a similar situation, guessing from the heavy breathing and the dark red sunburn on her arms. We had been paddling all day long, passing only one small village in the early morning. The fisherman had been right: the river had begun to rise and now covered all the sandy beaches along the shores, which were the perfect places to spend the nights. Now the river didn’t have edges any more and was passing through the trees into the dark bushes of the jungle. The stream was getting faster and there were lots of fallen trunks floating around us, so we had to be fully focused on finding passages between them. It was getting dark and we desperately needed to find a place to camp.

Scanning the flooded shores in order to find a dry piece of land, my friend pointed out sandy looking surface appearing out of the dusk in front of us. We both shrieked with excitement! Indeed, that does look like a beach! For a moment, I was so overwhelmed that I forgot how to navigate the canoe and with all my strength moved the paddle in the wrong direction, so we started to spin... again. Wait wait wait! A trunk! I stood up and tried to push a huge tree out of the way so we don’t stay crossways against the stream. I pushed the bole with one leg and my friend used another trunk to pull the front of the boat back to the right position. The canoe was straight again but one branch sticking out from the tree hooked onto my paddle and dragged it into the water. I jumped into the river and chased the paddle, while my friend balanced across the narrow boat to take the back seat, because from the front she probably wouldn’t be able to prevent another spinning. The beach

was now on the right side. I climbed back up and with all our strength we paddled, turning against the stream towards the land. When we were closer I dipped the paddle to see how deep the water was and realized, that I can already walk and help us, by pulling the rope, to get to the shore. We finally moored.

With all the action around the mooring, we somehow managed to not notice that our awesome beach was actually an island, about 50 square meters in size. In the middle of it was a tiny patch of dry sand, the rest was wet. The most probable explanation was that any time nature so decides, the island is flooded. We stuck a branch into the sand and tied the rope around it to secure the canoe. It was almost dark, we couldn't continue navigating and we hadn't met any person since morning to ask how far is the next village. We didn't see any other piece of land close by. We had to stay there. Should we sleep in the boat in case of tide? This option was rapidly condemned due to the clouds of mosquitos who suddenly attacked us from all sides. With the night rolling in, all those hungry beasts come to look for their daily supper. It was like a punch in the face. We didn't have any more time to think about potential problems. We carried the bags to the middle of the island and began to dress up as fast as we could. When we had about five layers of clothing on, we unpacked the tent and started to put its parts together.

Out of habit, I glanced towards the boat. Just in time! The branch had got loose up and the untied canoe was slowly sliding out into the stream. I screamed and ran to it. I jumped fully dressed into the river, got hold of the rope and pulled it back in, as far up on land as I could. I then had this brilliant idea to use the wooden paddle as a hammer to dig the stick deeper in the sand. With one hard hit the paddle broke in half. I had forgotten that I had already cracked it once before, when I was trying to hook myself onto the roots of some tree while mooring. Great! So now we have just one paddle. I turned around and wanted to present my misfortune. My angry looking colleague was standing next to a pile of crumpled

plastic with one of the skeleton sticks of the tent also broken in half. We looked at each other's broken sticks and without a word began to repair the tent. Praise to Gaffa tape!

By the time the tent was finally standing, we were in panic, because the mosquitos kept on biting, no matter how many layers of clothes one had on. Face and hands were covered with red spots. We crawled inside the tent, closed it and began our everyday killing routine. Each grabbed a piece of paper and started to squeeze every blood sucking creature we saw inside. There were three kinds. First we had to get rid of the big mosquitos which are the ones actually transmitting malaria. Those are sneaky ones because they are detecting body heat and not reacting to light, so it is hard to find them. Then there are the tiny flies, even hard to see, but if they bite, it's terribly itchy. The little guys though, are attracted by light, so it's enough to point the flashlight towards one point and wait, until all of them gather in front of it. Then it's time to attack. The third kind of suckers are quite big flies, whose bites swell to huge red blisters. Mostly it so happens, that approximately half an hour to one hour after the massacre, one of us urgently needs to pee. It is enough to open the door of the tent for two seconds and another fifty hungry fellows will enter our shelter.

The rain woke me up. I sighed and rapidly crawled out of the tent to check if the island is getting flooded and if the boat is still there. We packed everything inside preparing for emergency and waited for daylight while taking turns of checking the situation. At some point we both fell asleep. Finally the pale blue morning light woke us up and we decided to leave this bloody island as fast as we could. When we got out of the tent ready to pack it up, my stomach shrunk into a tiny stone ball. The edge of the river was about three meters from all sides of the tent. The canoe was gone.

We panicked completely, looking along the stream for any signs of our boat. It was there! Some hundreds meters away, it had got stuck in the fallen trees by the other side of the river. There was nobody around. We had to get it ourselves, somehow. Many

people had told us to be careful about the anacondas and all kinds of creatures living in this river. Of course we swam in it many times, but always very briefly, just to cool down. Now we had to swim far. Was it better if one stays and one swims? Or would it be better to swim next to each other and pretend we are a bigger mammal? So we both swam... it seemed never ending. The whole time I was imagining the point of view of some huge monster looking up from the bottom of the river thinking how tasty we could be. We made it. Climbed into the boat, trying to catch our breath. What the hell are we even doing here? I was looking towards the little pitched up tent on the tiny island in the distance. Now we just have to paddle back, against the stream... with one paddle...

SHAPE SHIFTER

She walked the same path every day to get to her far away chacra, a huge field with carefully planted yuca. It was almost six months ago that she had put the roots in the ground, any day now it would be time to harvest. At midday, she was returning to the village through the well known bushes, thinking about all the sweet masato she was going to prepare.

For a moment her vision blackened and she felt a slight tickle on the back of her skull. She stopped, shook her head, hesitantly opened the eyes again and continued walking. Something was wrong. The woman wasn't sure if she still knew the trees surrounding her. But her mind was clouded and the feet kept moving forward against her will.

She saw a pure white shape partly hidden within the leaves. It was a man. A man in a white suite and a strange white hat, leaning against a thick trunk. The woman passed the tree... he was gone. Somehow, she knew where to look to see him again in the distant green shadow and without any hesitation her body followed his lead.

Her conscious self seemed to float a bit behind the controlled physical one. She knew the legend. The legend about a man in white, the human appearance of a shape shifting river dolphin. The seducer of the hidden wetlands. They say that those who follow him will not return.

She was never seen again.

LULLABY

vioko vio vioha
vioko vio

Ilihiuvu niimuhe Ilinetu
okaji okaji ullehi ullehi
iijkuinvube amuvhake

vioko vio vioha
vioko vio

If you misbehave, the wild pigs will eat you alive in your dreams.

DANCING WITH THE DEMONS

Silence fell. Maloca, a huge wooden circular shrine, was sinking into the twilight of the surrounding jungle. A full moon was dripping silver light through the gap in the middle of a palm leaf roof, illuminating bodies petrified by concentration. Three tribes had gathered tonight to perform a ceremonious dance, for which they had begun to prepare many weeks before. Now, everything was ready.

All the men were standing on one side of the maloca, divided into three groups. The members of Witoto tribe were the hosts of this secret event, which gave them the right to begin the calling. They stood next to a long hollow tree trunk laid across the room, decorated with a snake pattern. The beginning and ending sides of it were wedged into a wooden chocks, the trunk was lifted a couple of inches above the ground. The men stood side by side in a row along the entire length of the bole, then each placed one foot on top of it. The women were facing them from the other side of the maloca, standing still. Time froze in this last silent moment of collective thought filling the space. Now, the demons will be invited. We are going to host evil, the spirits of Bufeo. The men began the rhythm. They all pushed with one foot the trunk down, so it touches the ground. Within the first four powerful pushes the whole trunk starts to vibrate and creates loud deep repetitive booms when hitting the floor. The maloca is trembling and the resounding echo of the sound is calling into the darkness of the forest.

Each man had in one hand a long thin branch with cacha seed pods attached to the top. As one, they start shaking it to the rhythm. For every boom, the synchronized bodies emerged from the shadows and met with the cone of moon light. Black painted chests were glistening with sweat. The women were waiting, preparing to welcome their guests. All the heartbeats followed the rhythm. The man in the middle of the row, richly decorated with necklaces made of teeth and feathers, began to sing. A deep

TV HOUSE

hard voice in the Murui Huitoto language rang through the jungle. The furious waves of the strange melodies glued to the collective consciousness, as all the other man joined in the calling. The song seemed to get louder and faster within the uprising agony of this daring invitation.

A cold, wet smelling wind was blowing through the maloca, sneaking up through the feet into the blood, spreading shivers. Feverish waves of a strange foreign force began to pulsate in their bodies but the thick black lines painted in circles around their hearts and necks protected them. The lines were defining barriers behind which no evil could enter and manipulate their feelings or overwhelm their minds.

The black paint on the feet and hands played a trick on the visiting powers: the darkish blue human flesh pretended to be dying sick, so those mystic shadows crawling in from the darkness, carrying misery and illnesses, didn't feel tempted to attach themselves to the living, because the living seemed to be already affected. The living seemed familiar.

The women stared in front of them, strictly avoiding the whispering rattle sounds calling their gaze to the side. But they did peripherally see dark shapes floating towards them, entering the maloca. Now was the time of the welcoming dance. As one, they started to move with the rhythm, adding a powerful group stamp to the ever escalating celebration. They held each other's hands, swung them up and down swirling the air around, shaking off the coldness by a passionate physical rush.

They all have to show their strength to the demons, enter the conversation, exchange respect and set the terms of the future togetherness. They will continue throughout the night and the whole next day, go behind the physical boundaries and reach a state of trance. A space where human ego vanish and raw existence consumes life and death. Then, they might all understand. There was a long mad night ahead.

"Would you go with me to my cousin's house? There is a television! From six to nine they will turn on the power in the village so we can watch a movie!" "Sure! Wow a movie... do people have TV here?" "Well, not really, we have just this one and everybody comes there to watch, there is also a little shop!" Answered the girl called Willka, and jumped down the wooden stairs into the muddy grass and began leading me along the flooded path.

"You know, when I grow up I would like to be a doctor! But my family can't afford to pay my studies... they said, that they can only support two of us, and that are my older brothers. I have another six sisters." She waved at a little boy hanging from the top branch of the tree in front of us and screamed, "Will you go to watch TV with us?" "I will catch up with you soon!" said the boy and began to climb down. She continued: "Some people from the city came to talk to us at school, and they told us that our native language is dying out." "Is the language called the same like your tribe? Shipibo?" "Yes it is... they said, that if we study it hard, we could apply for a program to become a professor of the Shipibo language. In this case they would pay the university for us, because they want to help the native communities and conserve our culture." "And do you speak the language?" "Well... not really, I know some songs... but my grandmother knows how to speak it, she is helping me! So I could become a professor and earn the money to pay the other studies!"

The boy suddenly jumped in front of us from the bushes, releasing a loud roar and we both gasped with shock. He started laughing so hard, that he fell into the mud and continued squelching in it for another five minutes. Another group of boys approached us from the side. "Look, I shot two parrots today!" Said the oldest one and handed me one bright green dead bird. "They are very tasty!" "Ehm..." I was looking for what words to say.

LIGHTNING

“Thank you, but I already got some fishes, keep it for your family! You must be a really good shooter!” I pointed at the gun hanging around his shoulder and gave him back his parrot.

One of the kids from the group started splashing mud on the laughing boy on the ground, which then escalated to a mud war and soon they started to throw dead parrots at each other. Suddenly loud growly sound filled the surroundings. “They turned on the generator! It must be six already, lets go watch the TV!” Said Willka, grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the laughing crowd. I followed her to the closest house, where we stopped by a barrel full of rainwater and began to wash off the mud.

Another young girl emerged from the door carrying a baby. “Shumay! Do you want to go watch TV with us?” Asked Willka. The baby looked at me and his face froze with surprise, he tightly hugged the girl and burst into tears! “Oh come on! Look! Its just a gringita.” The baby seemed to become more and more afraid and refused to look at me again. “I will come there later!” said Shumay, smiled and went back inside.

We arrived at the TV house. It was crowded with people. Some were sitting on chairs, some lay in the hammock, the kids were sitting on the floor. We joined them and seated ourselves at the back of the room. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s face filled the huge plasma screen. Today we were going to watch Last Action Hero!

“Please tell us the story again! Tell us how you saw them?” The young boy was teasing his uncle so long, that in the end he had to agree. The older, fit looking man with the always serious expression sat down on the woodblock by the fire and began.

“It happened at night. I was alone in the canoe setting up the fishing net. I heard a strange buzzing in my ears. My net got stuck somewhere and I was leaning out of the boat trying to pull it up from different angles. The buzzing became louder and suddenly I was disorientated, poking with my finger inside my ear. Then the sound changed to something like a whisper. It was a woman’s voice and I could also hear children laughing. It was more like a noise, not words, or it was some language I had never heard before. I saw light coming from the depth of the river getting brighter and brighter as it was coming up towards me. Then I realized, that if I move, the light is covered by the shadow. It was a reflection. When I understood, I turned around in shock and found myself looking into blinding white light which seemed to be levitating very close above me. I saw some flickering figure shapes inside of it! Then the noise escalated to an unbearable beeping sound and I got electrocuted.”

Everybody was silent. “Then I woke up, laying still in the canoe. The sun was already rising. I must have been unconscious for some hours and everything was hurting me.” The boy put some more wood in the fire and said. “You know lots of people around here had similar experiences! They say that a long long time ago there was an old civilization. The legend says, that they are still here, that they just found some door to a different time.” Everybody nodded. “Sometimes they come to visit... but I was lucky!” Continued the man. “It also happens that people get killed by the electric shock.”

There was a visitor sitting with them, listening to the stories.

He decided to intervene. "There are lots of storms in the jungle", he said. "I hear the thunder almost everyday. Couldn't it be, that sometimes people get hit by lightning?" The visitor asked. "Because there is something called 'ball lightning' and it is described quite similarly. Maybe then, when you get electrocuted you go through some kind of delirium which could cause hallucinations."

The people around the fire were looking at the visitor with an amused expression. "He doesn't believe us... he doesn't believe in them! It's so hard for you to believe in anything!" They all began to laugh very loud. It took them quite some time to calm down again. The visitor's doubts were left with no more comment.

Four walls. The water is dripping. The faucet leaks, it has to be fixed at some point. I will put a towel under it to stop the sound.

The clock is ticking. I might just take out the batteries. I never look at it anyway. The days go by... time is a strange substance. When it is getting dark, I have to turn on the light: that's what's left of the daily structure.

I have to write something. Should I know exactly what it means? Should I write what I was looking for and why?

I feel stuck in the kitchen. I thought it will be easier to focus if I change the room. I have to open the window. It smells like if something was burning here. The view to the inner yard. I guess spring has arrived while I was sleeping.

The jungle. I still have confused dreams. The images are tickling through my stomach. The sounds! I still hear them in my mind, the epic forest orchestra. The monkeys that roar through the night like some unidentifiable monsters. The snakes which seem to copy human laughter. That bird who starts to sing in his sleep to pretend he is fully concentrated.

That old lady, who was catching each lightning bug which entered her house and whispered: "They are the messengers!" She said: "You have to tell them to let you be, that they should continue their journey, cuz it is not your time yet!"

The room. I have to make some coffee. Quarantine. The memories get blurry, the reasons are fading. The colors are different, filtered through fantasy. Romanticized realities. I don't know what is the truth.

The mud was very slippery! I like walking barefoot. The sticky sweat. They say someone is stealing the faces of their children. The doorbell is ringing! "Post!" buzzz... "Zweite Stiege, vierte Stock." Oh, I really ordered colorful Christmas lights. Now I can have a cozy purple corner in my room.

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