

The Witch Apprentice

DANIELLE PEREZ GUILLEN

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Acknowledgement	i
1	A Lie	Page 3
2	The Travel	Page 15
3	Arrival to Eisenbaum	Page 23
4	Beginning the Learning	Page 33
5	The Classes	Page 41
6	An Old Friend	Page 47
7	The Practices	Page 65
8	The Persecution	Page 93
9	On the other side of the Bridge	Page 100
10	The Return	Page 115
11	Febo's Island	Page 126

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Some time ago I translated myself one of my books. Unfortunately I have to recognize that the translation was not as good as I would have expected.

Nevertheless, one of my readers from www.free-ebooks.net, Farideth, commented on my book and spoke some nicely about it that I took the courage to translate this, my second book, “The Witch Apprentice” solely and exclusively for him (or her) to read it. To all my other readers, I just apologize in advance if the English translation does not match your expectations.

1

A LIE

I have been awakened by a cold and glacial fear. The eve of a trip is always an event which exalted the audacities of the adventurous spirit that sailing toward the unknown is ready to receive the feast of the unexpected. But this, my trip to Eisenbaum, the land of magic, is not a touristic trip but a mystic journey by training purpose. ¡Yes! Finally, the courage of resolution took me by surprise and planted itself in front of my indecision, and cried out loud: ¡You will be a Witch! ¡A Witch! ¡No matter the cost! ... And the subsequent events of that summer were synchronized in order to comply with my destiny.

Nevertheless, a few hours before beginning my dreamed journey, while my body was still warm and deflated on a foamy grey leather armchair, dressed with a Spanish lace gown, I was battling between continuing sleeping or awakening. I was watching the new-born daybreak winking me the eye against the background of the incipient solar clarity, through the transparent rose cotton curtains that Ño Josefina so prodigiously hung just the day before.

A lot of worries rained upon me, but not even one had to do with the path that my sisters, Beatrice and Mariana, would transit; thanks to the trust fund that we inherited from my dear grandfather Gennaro, always a trustful and foresight man, and whose custody I had been granted for having arrived to the majority of age. We could live wherever we wish and as we wish, without the fear of tasting, once again, the horrible and bitter fruit of poverty; casual guest that slip through our lives during the time we lived with our grand stepmother, Gertrude, far away in Saint Andre. Our lawyers were still struggling in court in order to gain the property, The Borrascosa, again, usurped dishonestly by the malicious Gertrude and her exasperating granddaughter, Leticia.

Saint Andre... Saint Andre... Strange place that little town! How far it seemed now the memories of that incipient valley where I had my first encounter with magic! And how far, also, the memories of the Black Book

of the Witch Zarnia that I misappropriated, and the enchanted and pernicious ring that threatened to put an end to my life; but that all is part from another story, another past.

The reason of my worries had a deeper root, almost embarrassing, that extended its tentacles until strangling the few peaceful moments of my existence. Some months ago, before receiving the news of the acceptance of my postulation for the Apprentice Witch Program; I filled out some forms to inform to the Witchcraft Institution of my personal and familiar data, listed with details my abilities and skills, praising with generosity my strengths and minimizing meticulously my weaknesses. The statement of my health status, some personal references and the required recommendation letter from a personage of the magic world were also attached to this document compendium. So far, so good; because I had as well the support of Americus, Lord of the Magicians, which was more than enough guarantee to enter in any magic apprenticeship institution. However, as this exposition of my life before the eyes of third parties that do not know me were not my liking and considering that my life experiences were not as exciting as they should have been; and considering that I was below the standard required to be a good apprentice, I opted for seasoning this insipidity with some episodes of my life that never happened. In other words, I lied! And I lied unashamedly! And I lied knowing that I was lying!

I shall clarify; nevertheless, that not all the information sent was false, quite a lot was adjusted to reality: and that was my name and my age; the rest was fantasy fragments and truth approaches. My lavish pen, in an inspirational outburst, embellished me with the most coveted virtues and the most exciting life experiences, more befitting a fairy tale than a biography, I must recognize. But, how to allow that other eyes scrutinize my life to the smallest detail and judge it so bored, so little thing, so unable to raise the smallest feeling of envy? It is really a regrettable sin to enlarge our strengths and to minimize the tiniest character imperfections? I should say that under the circumstances, my behavior was more than justified. However, the cold and glacial fear that had installed by my side the very first moment that I delivered my application in the Post Office to be remitted to Eisenbaum National Magic Learning Institute, was keeping its reign in my thoughts and emotions, sharing place with an old and forgotten friend, the insomnia.

In few hours, Americus would be knocking at my door to escort me to the famous city of the magicians, and, another unusual feature, for some reason that I was not able to elucidate, I must get there by my own means, in other words, without using magical tools. Ah! What nostalgia I felt for my luxurious magic carpet! How it travelled patrolling the blue skies! For a moment I resented the fact that I gave it away to the Genie Batam-Al-Bur.

THE WITCH APPRENTICE

It has been more than six months since I had not heard from him. What would have happened on his life? Would he have encountered at last the tranquility in the warm and stormy deserts of his loved Persia, as was his wish? Or would he continue being as frightened as always looking for shelter in the interior of his extravagant bottle at the least sign of threat against his person?

After all these considerations, I forced my attention to the actual problem and the fear I would feel if my little white lie was discovered. After long minutes, or hours?, of looking for a solution, which does not threaten to unnecessarily expose me to the public shame, I had to conclude that all remedy passed, no doubt about it, through the narrow and often-impassable road of the truth. Yes! As it is customary in the most fierce Catholics to expiate the blame, there was no other remedy that the confession! Sure as I was that Father Sebastian, loyal friend of our grandfather Gennaro, who has kept strict contact with us and tried by all means and with his best Sunday sermons to keep us on track, would never understand the helm of my behavior, I decided to confess myself, as soon as I can, to Americus. Yes! I will do it! He will understand! I was decided! And I would do it without delay, before the little lie ghost comes along again and persuade me of leaving aside my regret.

A gentle knock on the door of my room, took me out of my thoughts and little by little the heavy oak door opened giving way to the silhouette of my sister, Mariana and, behind her, mimicking her steps with his tail wagging, Bartolomeo, barking and gasping after his short hike by the green gardens that surround the house; already accustomed to his new life of rich and wealthy dog. Far away in his memories the days of shabby dog of Saint Isidro Square, full of fleas and ticks, where battling for food against other dogs of unknown origin, was found by Mariana, one morning, to the verge of collapse and malnourishment.

My sister stretched out her arms around me and we were crouched in the armchair, with Bartolomeo at our feet, with submissive attitude. After briefly looking at me, my sister added:

-It seems that you did not have a good sleep night! What a face so large and exhausted, ah? Is it because you are leaving us? It is just one year and we are going to be taken care of by Ño Josefina, you know that, right?

And then, without preamble:

-By the way, a few minutes ago she told me that you have to go down as she is already serving breakfast. You must eat and leave behind that laziness! She will not allow you leave without your nutritious food. A cup of warm milk sweetened with honey, a fresh oatmeal bowl and an “arepa” with white cheese, which looks so delicious, all that is waiting for you ... ah ...and the orange juice to repel the flu. She also prepared a food suitcase for the journey and, as I see it, you will have more than enough for a whole

year –said jokingly, then paused to talk:

-Will you miss us?... Promise that you will miss us!

I stroked the two rosy-circles that formed on Mariana cheeks every time that she made a significant effort, as walking up the gardens perfumed by the aromatic gardenias, or contemplating the exquisite gladiolas, or cutting back her pretentious lilies and the whitish orchids with hints of red and yellow, imported from Brazil, born and raised by the tenacity and effort of my little sister, Mariana, who against the recommendations of two master gardeners that stated with vigor and arrogance: *This soil does not serve to grow plants!, That is to throw money away, lady, the orchids will never grow here!, They will get rotten by humidity and will decay by fungi!*, she strived for cultivating the extravagant plants. The truth is, whether for reasons of the lovely care that my sister provided them or as the orchids, horrified by the bloody destiny predicted by the almighty gardeners, insisted in growing in that hostile soil, dried and foreign soil, flourished beautifully, even against the rules of nature, reason and experts. They flourished in the north side of the garden, from there, walked reaching the house entrance, and as excited by the frenzy walking, continue flourishing and exploring, fragrant and shameless, until climbing the old and lonely oak, which guarded our playing area, and then, continuing flourishing and flourishing until reaching unsuspected heights in our neighbor's yards.

A slight smell of cinnamon exacerbated my hunger and, shaking Mariana off the sofa, I stepped up to follow that delicious aroma that was coming from the kitchen. Just baked cinnamon rolls sunk in a creamy English sauce. Uhhh! What a pleasure! I could not wait to dip my hungry teeth in such a delicacy! I knew that Ño Josefina would prepare a special dish as a farewell gift for me, besides the oatmeal. Hurrying, we went down the stairs, with Bartolomeo as escort rolling on our feet, until almost tripped on the aristocratic figure of Beatrice, who was gracefully walking to the kitchen. My sister dragged her expensive white silk satin gown, edging with some tiny feathers stitched to the sleeves, which gave her a feeling of Hollywood actress of the thirties. Her shining hair touched her waist and was swinging as she moved. Her gigantic eyes posed inevitably on me:

-But for God sake, Camila. You are so foolish! Why are you running around the house as a wild animal? Not even Mariana behaves like you! Should I remind you that you are the oldest and that it is time that you become an adult?

I stopped in my tracks on the unjustified comment, overall because Mariana was emulating exactly my actions and, however, she was excluded of the nonsense accusation that Beatrice was given me, but, I ignored the sarcastic comment because Americus will arrive soon and I did not want to say goodbye with a fight that would embitter, even more, the pain of the farewell. From the early days of our infancy, our fights were pitched battles

of rhetoric, a lot of metaphors, a lot of sarcasm, moderated doses of arbitrary accusations, abundance of adjectives and a variety of nicknames, but, we never crossed the lack of respect frontier.

We sat round the table and Ño Josefina began the display of her gastronomical delicacies. Both Ño Josefina and her daughter, Salome, moved out with us as soon as we left The Borrascosa, and she became a sort of adoptive mother, loving and intransigent when was required and it was required very often. Although she was treated as a member of the family, there were two things she was not yet used to: one was leaving the kitchen management on the hands of third parties, the other was the pronunciation of the letter “s” of some words of the English language and she was constantly skipping them from any sentence or phrase she pronounced: *Thi roat i unavory* (This roast is unsavory) – used to say – or *Umju, thi paella i lacking affron* (This paella is lacking saffron) or *Thi cream i lumpy* (This cream is lumpy). The following was that she rolled up her sleeves until the elbow, swirling a scarf around her head resembling a Hindu midwife, then, placed an apron, and beating and beating the cream until it had the silky consistency of oil. For her part, the little mulatto Salome, sister adopted by our reciprocal love, attended elementary school displaying her exuberant love to colorful attire and the inharmonious melodies that she loved so much to sing at inopportune moments. Little Mariana and Salome, both very similar and different at the same time, as if a soul were divided in two different persons, so was the relationship between them; they loved with the same intensity the same things, shared with the same passion the same laughter; cried over the same misfortunes and outraged at the same injustices. Never two people with so different origin shared so much affinity of taste and character, as if two drops of water were sprung from the same spring.

We started breakfast. Under the reign of Ño Josefina, there was no room for loss of appetite. Everything that we took from the bowl must be eaten in its entirety. This rule was unavoidable, as Beatrice was able to see when we first arrived at the house with the mulatto and her little girl.

It happened an April morning, when gathered all under the canopy that protected the garden table, we were about to receive our morning breakfast. As soon as the bowl was served, and placed at the center of the table, Beatrice, in a gluttony episode, so used to wasting and showing bad manners, took two jam-and-cheese croissants, her favorite, a generous piece of bread covered with guava marmalade, a thick slice of lemon pie, two apples and three apricots. With so much food on just one dish, an overflowing was threatening. And my sister, chatting and chatting, innocent of what was coming up, was nibbling a bit of this and a bit of that. After the dessert, Beatrice tried to get up when her breakfast was almost intact and that was the time when, zas! Ño Josefina took advantage and with just one

blow pushed her back to her sit:

-Why you getting up table, little Beatrice, without finishing breakfast? –said placing her arm on Beatrice’s shoulder. Something should be told in order to comprehend the relevance of the scene and that is that Ño Josefina’s hand is not just “another” hand. They seemed huge lead gloves about to explode and that the last phrase “*without finishing breakfast*” was told with a thunder voice, in an accusatory tone, as the one that God would pronounce if he were talking from the heavens. Beatrice, ignoring this circumstance, in spite of her frequent boastings of intelligence, failed to notice the situation and the tone and made a second attempt of getting up... and zas! Again the heavy lead glove pushed her back against the chair.

-Do not get up until eat food –stressed the mulatto with bad English and approached the dish to Beatrice’s face.

-But... Ño Josefina, I am full. I do not want to eat any more!... I am going to explode! Please have mercy, I could eat those croissants later... I am not hungry right now! –Erupted in a series of bizarre excuses that were not enough, distancing the dish with her two hands.

But Ño Josefina, collecting the impulses of her valuable African race, turned a deaf ear to Beatrice’s excuses and ignoring her crying continued deploying her Samaritan sermons:

-If you full, why you took more? –And with an unyielding voice said- God gives us food to treat it with respect. Not waste it. A lot of people on thi (this) Earth do not eat, is starving. Children hungry everywhere. Food do not have to be wasted. You have to respect food, so eat!. If no eat, you do not get up the table –and these words were told in a decisive tone, which did not accept excuses.

Beatrice tried unsuccessfully to convince the old lady that, this time, let the incident pass, Beatrice kicked, Beatrice insulted, Beatrice cried, Beatrice begged, but all was in vain; Ño Josefina seemed immune to her dramatic deployment.

In that moment I understood something that I was suspecting since some time ago... What Ño Josefina wants, Ño Josefina gets! After long hours of being pushed back against the chair with the dish at her sight and listening lectures on the sin of gluttony, Bangladesh history and Gandhi teachings... and as the list seemed to never end, Beatrice, finally recognized that she would continue being prisoner of the lead glove until she accepted the defeat and had no other choice than to eat to the very last piece of croissant covered with lemon pie and bread with marmalade; and was very close to eat, also, the apricot seed!

The educational tenacity of Ño Josefina had its routes in life wisdom and the teachings of her ancestors; her methodology was empiric and rough, very far from the precepts and practices of the Modern Psychology,

THE WITCH APPRENTICE

but was not less effective. That day the breakfast proceeded smoothly.

I walked back to my room with the retinue of sisters behind my back, ranting all at the same time as poultry brooders: If black velvet prom dresses were the most appropriate for celebrations, that I should wear mine just in case the occasion arrives, if black patent leather shoes were passé but were preferable to the blue patent, which in addition to ugly, cheap and ordinary, are damaged when rain water falls, which it was to be expected since they are the cheapest in the market.

-Nothing like a good pair of shoes to raise self-esteem -stressed Beatrice while helping me to order the garments that I had selected for my trip into the small grey leather suitcase that was lying open on the bed.

Tips of how I should behave when I find Leonardo rained down from Mariana and Salome, but their voices reached me from afar, as murmurs from a distant land. Away as I was in my own thoughts the mere mention of Leonardo evoked in me a bittersweet sense of nostalgia and regret. Those verses delivered to me by Americus in Saint Andre, in quiet confidence, as written by the hand of Leonardo for me, had left more questions than answers in my heart.

Thousands of times my eyes had reviewed, line by line, sentence by sentence, word by word, scrutinizing the thin and worn pages that suggested Leonardo's undeclared love, but I did not find evidence I was the muse that inspired them. The possibility existed that the romantic prose had not been written for me and Americus, blinded in his role of father, had confused the feelings of his son mistakenly thinking I was the object of his love. Leonardo's long silence and absence during the past six months were not fitted to other thinking.

-Camila, Why are you so silent? Aren't you excited about the trip? -asked the mulatto Salome while throwing her body down on the bed, pressing her elbows against the mattress with her arms in a "v" shape, and squeezing her cheeks with both hands.

-It is not that...- I hesitated.

Immediately Mariana interrupted:

-As you are going to dedicate yourself to the business of magic, do you think that there exist any spell that would serve to revive Filomena? Wouldn't it be nice to have it again hovering around the house?

Beatrice stopped what she was doing and very upset replied:

-Are you crazy? That is the last thing we needed! A zombie chicken in our house! Help me God, such nonsense! Thinking of the undead? It exasperates me, but thinking about a dead-zombie-hen is the worst. I can imagine it, walking by dragging her two bloodied legs, scratching the carpet and looking for someone to nail her peak! No! No! No! Everything has to have a limit, I had enough magic in Saint Andre and do not want to know anything about it for the rest of my life! I do not understand your

commitment to become a witch, Camila -she said addressing me, then continued:

-Aren't there enough witches already in this world? When goblins, trolls or any other gruesome creature are chasing you, do not call me! Enough magic I have already had in this life! Enough! Did you hear me?

The familiar sound of the buzzer echoed in my room and put an end to the discussion and as animated by an invisible spring, we got up and walked through the narrow space between my room and the living room.

I was the first to get the angled door and opened it, I was so anxious to see Americus and confess the secret that tormented my soul; behind me landed Beatrice, Mariana and Salome, but the figure that stood on the other side of the door was not in any way Americus'. The enigmatic sapphire eyes, the perfectly cut hair, the impeccable coat of black leather that covered him until the heels, were unmistakable.

There he was, after all this time, six months to be exact, Leonardo, lying on one side of the gate, suffocating me with his eyes and waiting for a reaction on my part that refused to appear. Flushes flooded my face, drowning me the voice.

My sister Beatrice, pushing me with her elbow back, immediately took charge of the situation:

-Wow, Leonardo! So long without seeing you...We were expecting to see Americus. However, you are also welcome. Come in now! -said excited making a small gesture with her hand indicating him the entry.

We all instinctively moved aside leaving free space. He gave a few steps and was standing in the lobby, waiting for the invitation to sit down. I gave a quick glance at the studio, which was the room that could be seen from the lobby. It was indeed a welcoming piece decorated with very good taste, by my grandfather, Gennaro, shortly before his death. There was a sturdy desk in the middle of the living room, lying on a stucco wall dressed in the immense canvas of a landscape where some young ladies were playing in a colorful garden of ochre and pinkish tones. So vivid was the scene that seemed that these ladies were about to jump off the framework to play with the large mahogany armchairs placed in front of the desk. The armchairs reflected the hospitable spirit of my grandfather; stationed there, they seemed to open their arms ready to dispense a warm embrace.

Suddenly, I was aware of my own clothing. I did a quick inventory: my favorite pajama was a faded cloth that barely sketches of the small bunnies that originally populated the fabric. Although the garment was an atrocity to the eyes, to the skin was like the caress of a cotton swab, and only for this reason I had defended it from the aggressive attacks of Ño Josefina, preserving it in a privileged place in my closet.

My hair resembled a tangle of elderflower wool tangled by the antics of a cat. And my slippers? Not to mention! A small hole on one side left to

escape a small gut of rubber foam providing a really grotesque spectacle. In a flash I realized how little graceful I should look to the eyes of the wizard and ran to my room in search of shelter and more encouraging clothes.

Beatrice, Mariana and Salome also made their own inventory because they ran in search of best costumes. So Leonardo was left, alone, standing in the room, with the company of the furniture and Bartolomeo, which was entertained licking his already polished shoes. Minutes later, fortunately, Ño Josefina appeared and took the role of hostess.

On the other hand, chaos reigned in my room, remains of clothes, shoes, and makeup scattered everywhere. I ran to the closet, looking from side to side a suitable cloth, but no garment seemed good enough for the eyes of Leonardo. In the end I selected a plain jean and a white blouse and a pair of brown suede boots to match the belt. A styling liquid helped me to master my rebel hair, then, already tamed, I combed until I got a small ponytail.

My image on the mirror was very satisfactory and I was very pleased of the result. However, before leaving, I took in my hands the humble pajamas, faithful fellow of many nights of pleasant dreams, and despite the pitiful look that the little bunnies threw me, full of resignation and accusations, I threw it without remorse to the dustbin, determined as I was not to ever repeat the embarrassing spectacle of the faded pajamas. The damaged slippers also had the same end.

Already dressed, I started down the stairs without much noise or stridency. Leonardo, in the studio, was conversing animatedly with Ño Josefina explaining the reason for his visit. I hid behind a pillar where I could see him seated in one of the front seats and Ño Josefina was in turn on the sofa with hands entwined on her lap.

-My father is finishing a very important assignment outside Eisenbaum. He could not come but commissioned me especially to escort Camilla to The Fortaleza and make sure that she is properly installed.

The mulatto scowled, she did not quite understand the magic stuff. She watched over us as if she were our own mother.

-I disagree (*disagree*) with the desire of Camila to become a witch. Playing with magic and orcery (*sorcery*) does not bring anything good. In my good time (*times*), girls wanted to be teachers or nuns, or in any case, marry a lawyer or doctor with a generous provision for the future. Those girls listened to what our grandparents had to say and we let us guide by their experience and advice. We raised a lot of children, that is true, but now, girls only want to be self-sufficient, professionals and become a model or a witch!

Leonardo laughed and I saw him taking courage and patience while he was about to reply. His laugh was like a dark lullaby to my ears and his presence was like rosewater to my eyes Ah! ... What divine is the kitsch of

love!

-My beloved lady, magic, like everything else, is an instrument that can be used both for good and for evil. Precisely for this reason there are institutes, to educate the powers and use them wisely. A Wizard knows the power of herbs to cure diseases and save lives, knows the vibratory power of phrases and spells and, at will, alters climate and other events. Who has not heard of the powerful amulets to attract luck and love? Who has not felt tempted to listen to prophecies from a fortuneteller through the reading of the cards or the revelations of the tarot? Even churches use the power of candlelight to request desires or ask the good omens for a project. Don't be so sick with wizards. Weren't we the ones who saved Camila from her fatal fate in Saint Andre?

The mulatto released a resignation breath. Leonardo was well versed in reasoning and eloquences issues. Whatever he said had the force of conviction and, Oh!, poor of those guys who made against it, by dint of approaches, resolutions, justifications, voice modulations, allegories, metaphors, epithets and similes, sustained in such a way the reasoning that the opponents were very convinced that what he said was authentic and irrefutable truth and ended up adopting his convictions.

At that moment, my sisters came and packed behind me. We walked together toward the studio. The magician turned his eyes towards us and getting up from his seat said:

-I thought for a moment that you had seen a ghost. You ran so fast that I couldn't greet you -and without waiting for our reply, he waved one to one with a squeeze of the hand and a kiss on the cheek. Then, he turned to me:

-Camila, I have instructions from Americus to take you to Eisenbaum. Unfortunately, he could not come because had an urgent matter that could not delegate. He sent you his greetings and apologies. You will have to travel with me. My car is outside. I hope that your luggage is arranged. The journey will take two days and I already made arrangements to stay the night at an Inn.

As my words abandoned me and a brief chill was whistling through my body, I nodded with a slight movement. Ño Josefina, instead, having heard the word "night" and "inn" in a same sentence, frowned on such a way that I thought that her face was going to be cut into two halves. I saw her, first, inflated like a raging bull and then, abruptly, I heard her mumbling sentences in which emphasized the words "inappropriate", "indecent", "disrespectful", pronounced with the strength of the Spanish of the 15th century, but, Ah!... Leonardo... who was not afraid neither of bulls, nor the tones or the circumstances, charged against her with equal force with his collection of sentences and appeasing in which abounded the words "principles", "values" and "regards", leaving reduced to pieces the

poor Ño Josefina reproach. She was very convinced that I would travel to Eisenbaum in the company of the very same archangels.

Then, without further delay, she called Juancho to look for my luggage and take it to the car. Beatrice sat with parsimony besides Ño Josefina while playing with a tiny tuft of her hair, inquiring about the place where I would stay in Eisenbaum. In addition to being intransigent, Beatrice was curious by nature and greatly pleased in the investigation of the personal affairs of third parties.

-We made arrangements for your stay with a family -replied the Magician- we think that this way you will not feel lonely. Severa and her husband are waiting for you. They live on the low lands outside The Fortaleza and have three boys. The familiar atmosphere will be beneficial for you. You will have a week to settle down and then will start the training.

-Will you call us as soon as you arrive? -Mariana, replied with a hint of melancholy.

Immediately the Magician intervened:

-The communication will be by letters only -objected- We do not allow any other means since trainees are distracted and neglected their responsibilities by thinking in the outside world. We have a very good mail system, so letters are received and shipped from one day to another.

Salome went to the kitchen and brought a crimson, large and very well polished apple which offered to the Magician, accompanied by her smile from ear to ear. He appreciated the gesture and kept it in his coat, while mentioned:

-We should go now, Camila, I want to take advantage of the daylight - and while saying this, he walked to the door that had remained open throughout this time.

No Josefina and my sisters came to say goodbye. A feeling of nostalgia stirred my spirit and excited my anxiety to the unknown. I had never before been separated from Beatrice or Mariana, and a veil of tears began to cloud my view. The old lady gave me a hug that literally made my bones creak. Beatrice, with her goddess aura and floral perfume, gave me a huge and sonorous kiss on the cheek while whispering in my ear: *-If you do not take advantage of this trip to get him as a boyfriend, you will stay single forever.* After such lofty advice, she dropped me as if I were a hot potato. Mariana, for her part, always subtle and unobtrusive, let me covered by kisses and tips: *-Sister, do not miss this opportunity!...* and to not be outdone, Salome, amid laughter, also made me part of her recommendations: *-Bring him as a boyfriend, although you have to thread him by the neck!*

So many exhortations to appropriate me of Leonardo's attentions made me feel like an old woman, bossy and spinster, whose only chance of happiness was sailing in a ship called Leonardo.

I left the house, crestfallen; a light breeze cooled my face and ruffled

my tears. Leonardo waited in the car. When I turned my head toward the house, I found four sad heads behind the window, waving their hands in farewell, and it was at that moment, I confess, that my crushing heart could not be stopped anymore and a sob fountain erupted uncontrollably, overwhelmed by sadness and emotion. Huge rows of black mascara crossed my cheeks until landing on my newly purchased blouse in white muslin, decorating it with some amorphous blackish circles.

When I entered the vehicle, Leonardo tended me a delicate tissue, so clean but as clean, almost a shame was burdening it with the secretions from my sadness. So, with dissimulation, I saved it in my bag to preserve the garment with his manly aroma, and wiped my splotches with the edge of the sleeve, which after all, was already discredited. The car started.

2

THE TRAVEL

The road coming out of the city is a submissive and narrow line that moves undulating through obese mounds and deflated valleys. On its back there is an endless procession of cars, trucks and vans. I have always thought that cars, thus formed one after the other, high, short, chubby or thin, are very much like toy soldiers marching toward an uncertain destiny or an unknown battle. When it is afternoon and traffic is heavy, the soldiers, anchored as they are in one place, observed the pointed pines that parked on the side of the road seem to applaud them in silent attitude.

When traffic is light, the soldiers march hurriedly, abstracting unintentionally from the magnificence of the environment whose colors, blurred as they are by the effects of speed, are dressed in a homogeneous stain of greenish tones. There is nothing more beautiful than a sunset on the road, it seems as if the nuances of the sky were fading and frayed from falling into the horizon as a kiss.

The magician had remained in respectful silence behind the wheel, in tribute to my sadness. A soft classical melody sent its chords to the wind. Seated, motionless, gazing at the window, scanning the strange shapes of buildings and vegetation that we were leaving behind, I was wondering: what would Leonardo think of my innocent lie? Would he judge it innocent, really, or believe that it was all a calamity?

I lacked of the sufficient confidence to open my heart to him and confess my fears, moreover, when I should, in addition, modulate my words and dose my gestures for not ratting, in any way, my feelings towards him. I hoped that arriving at Eisenbaum I could talk to Americus and end, once and for, with this entire hoax. Far from my thoughts was the fact that I might be testifying in the Magic Supreme Court, again. The ultimate experience was frankly unpleasant and the least I wanted was to face a mob of angry magicians besides the fact that I could end up, perhaps, roasted on

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

