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The old masters

de
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traducción de
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(fragmento en inglés)

CHARACTERS

VALVERDE. About 50...

Skin tanned after many summers.

Unfulfilled dream: going around the world.

Detail from his past: aged 15 he climbed an electricity pylon to rescue a trapped peregrine falcon.

He has never told anybody about it.

Secret favourite book: *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson.

Public favourite book: *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson.

He likes getting drunk listening to Van Morrison.

SOFÍA. His niece. Very young, just over 20.

She limps slightly, suffers intense pain in her legs (as a result of Madrid train bombings)

Unfulfilled dream: being a classical ballerina

Detail from her past: she was on one of the commuter trains bombed during the 2004 Madrid terrorist attacks

Secret favourite book: *Wuthering Heights* by E. Brontë

Public favourite book: *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth* by Warsan Shire.

She doesn't drink but smokes a joint before she goes to bed while listening to Callas

MIQUEL. In his 40s.

Always wears white, elegant, but not formal. Shaman's necklaces.

Unfulfilled dream: being a writer.

Detail from his past: he donates blood every year.

Secret favourite book: *White Nights* by F.M. Dostoevsky

Public favourite book: *Freedom from the Known* by J. Krishnamurti

He rarely gets drunk although he is a co-addict; but probably eats too many sweet things.

PROFESSOR BOYER. In his 60s. Sofía's father, VALVERDE's brother-in-law.

Hypochondriac. Handsome profile. Hands crafted by Michelangelo.

Unfulfilled dream: being awarded an honorary doctoral degree by Harvard or Columbia University.

Detail from his past: He squandered 19,000 euros in just one night.

Secret favourite book: *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* by Yasunari Kawabata.

Public favourite book: *The Collected Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*.

Take many medications, prefers Möet & Chandon for inspiration.

MALENA Early thirties, but nothing is certain in her case. Wife of Professor Boyer.

Unfulfilled dream: being Jeanne Moreau.

Detail from her past: it's difficult to say, because she hides it tenaciously; but Malena isn't her real name.

Secret favourite book: *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories* by K. Mansfield

Public favourite book: *White Nights* by F.M. Dostoevsky

She is a co-addict and already, very possibly, an addict. Although she gets drunk she never loses control.

The dialogue is light, everyday, insignificant.

Early spring. It's been a bad winter with stormy weather. The weather is unusually cool for this location.

A campsite.

Small, friendly.

Called Owl's Bay

On the Mediterranean coast; pine trees, rocks, seagulls, pebbly beaches and an abundance of washed up seashells.

Winter has been cruel. The beach is devastated by storm damage.

A yellow bulldozer is replacing the sand and levelling out the beach.

The campsite includes a building with rooms like a modest guesthouse.

On the lower floor there is restaurant-cum-cafeteria,-cum-bar,-cum-games room.

The tables and chairs are draped in white.

Comfortable easy chairs, low tables, a chill-out corner.

Bar and bar stools.

A glass cabinet with books in several languages, piled high.

A jukebox.

A pinball machine, with coloured lights and music. It still works with 25 peseta coins.

A pot with 25 peseta coins.

Through the large windows of the restaurant

-cum-cafeteria,-cum-bar,-cum-games room,

an old fig tree in a patio covered with gravel and weeds,

the low whitewashed wall that separates the campsite

from the mounds of sand and the sea can be seen.

ACT ONE

1.

VALVERDE at the pinball machine. Plays a game. He plays nervously, talks to the machine, goads it and insults it. He has a glass of beer next to him.

Sofía enters pulling a basket on wheels; there is dirty linen in the basket.

SOFÍA

The Brits are staying.

VALVERDE

Cool.

SOFÍA

I've promised them that I'd talk to the guy who operates the bulldozer to ask him not to start so early.

VALVERDE

The bulldozer operator has a schedule to stick to, it's his job.

SOFÍA

Yeah, but people come here for a holiday.

VALVERDE

If they don't fix the beach nobody will come here on holiday and that'll be a lot worse. It's still early days. It's not hot. They'd best get on with it as soon as possible.

SOFÍA

Sure, the Brits are very understanding, they totally get the problem, they just want to sleep in until at least eight o'clock.

VALVERDE

Well, let them buy earplugs. We could buy earplugs from the pharmacy and sell them on at a slightly higher price.

SOFÍA

The weird thing is that the bulldozer operator starts at seven thirty and then stops at nine, and sometimes he seems to take a two-hour lunch break. That can't be right.

VALVERDE

That's how things are done in Spain. That's the way it's been all my lifetime.

SOFÍA

We're like a couple of old folks having a conversation in a lift.

VALVERDE

Which floor are you going to, miss?

SOFÍA

I'm going to the laundry room.

VALVERDE

The washing machine broke down yesterday.

SOFÍA

What?

VALVERDE

Use ours. Anyway, you shouldn't carry so much.

SOFÍA

You've already served yourself a beer? It's only ten o'clock.

VALVERDE

I think it's the rubber seal, it's always the seal. Bloody machine, it's a pain in the arse. I'll have to go to Tarragona to get a replacement, they don't sell them in the village.

SOFÍA

(Not harshly) You look like a shitty old man in a shitty roadside bar. You haven't even shaved.

VALVERDE

People drink, Sofia. If you don't drink you dehydrate.

SOFÍA

There's loads to do.

VALVERDE

I'm going. I'll go.

SOFÍA

What's wrong, uncle?

VALVERDE

It's my lucky day, that's all, I'm going to beat this flaming machine.

SOFÍA

It's my father. I know you don't like him but...

VALVERDE

Your father is a man, and he happens to be the man I can't stand. It's got nothing to do with him being your father or that he was my sister's husband or my mother's favourite or the god of fools.

SOFÍA

I expect he'll leave on Monday. He won't stay long.

VALVERDE

What time are they going to get up? At one o'clock in the afternoon, like yesterday? They live like pigs. Or royalty. Which is one and the same thing.

SOFÍA

Dad works at night. He's always done that.

VALVERDE

Writing nonsense, that's not working, sweetheart. He's the biggest cheat I've ever met.

SOFÍA

Don't start, uncle.

VALVERDE

And I've met some cheats in my time. Starting with the crook who sold me that fucking washing machine.

SOFÍA

Don't swear uncle, the machine's over thirty years old, it's bound to break down sometime.

VALVERDE

Everything here is over thirty years old. Everything except you.

SOFÍA

Yesterday I had a serious talk to granny about how we need to buy our own van, Yuri can't always use his van, he's an employee at the end of the day, I told her that we have to have our own van for work. She took what I said on board.

VALVERDE

The old gal won't give you any money, take my word for that.

SOFÍA

Uncle, you know you're really handsome when you shave. You look like a wolf with all that hair growing on your face.

IVAN

I like being a wolf, so I can scare Little Red Riding Hoods.

SOFÍA

But there aren't any Little Red Riding Hoods here, just the poor Brits and they don't scare easily.

VALVERDE

And what about you, princess?

SOFÍA

Pfff...

VALVERDE

(Very quickly) And your stepmother, princess?

SOFÍA

What?

VALVERDE

She's almost a girl too.

SOFÍA

When you're in Tarragona getting the rubber seal you'd better get your eyes tested too.

VALVERDE

Have you seen the bikini she wears? With Mickey Mouse slap in the middle of her arse. She's funny alright.

SOFÍA

When are you going to trim the hedges, whitewash the walls, fix the connection on plot eight, replace the tiles in the shower, when are you going to...?

VALVERDE

(Cuts her short) You're just like your mother, you're so funny when you get serious. *(Slight pause)* Why did she love that old fool so much? She was too young for him too. Why do girls like that like have such a passion for palaeontology?

SOFÍA

He's always been a hit with women.

VALVERDE

How many times did he cheat on my sister? How many? *(Sofía shrugs her shoulders)* And she adored him. *(Slight pause)* Is it true that you caught him once getting it on with the cleaner in the junk room? *(Sofía nods)* I'd like to kick him out.

SOFÍA

But you can't.