

Translation Practice

Excerpt from *Terra Alta*, by Javier Cercas

Hasta ese momento, la noche **ha sido** tan tranquila como de costumbre. **A esas horas de la mañana** no queda casi nadie en comisaría y, mientras Melchor apaga las luces, cierra el despacho y baja por las escaleras desiertas poniéndose su americana, la quietud de la comisaría es tan compacta que le trae a la memoria sus primeros tiempos allí, en la Terra Alta, cuando todavía era un adicto al **estruendo** de la ciudad y el silencio del campo le **desvelaba**, condenándole a noches de insomnio que combatía a base de novelas y somníferos. Ese recuerdo le devuelve una imagen olvidada: la del hombre que era él cuatro años atrás, al llegar a la Terra Alta; también le devuelve una evidencia: la de que ese individuo y él son dos personas distintas, tan opuestas como un malhechor y un hombre respetuoso de la ley, como Jean Valjean y el señor Magdalena, el protagonista **desdoblado** y contradictorio de *Los miserables*, su novela favorita.

Al llegar a la planta baja, Melchor recoge de la armería su Walter P99 de 9 milímetros y una caja de munición, y **se dice** que hace demasiado tiempo que no lee *Los miserables* y que aquella mañana tendrá que **resignarse** a no desayunar con su mujer y su hija.

Ya en el garaje, se monta en un Opel Corsa y, mientras sale de la comisaría al parque infantil que se abre ante ella, telefonea al sargento Blai.

—**Reza para que sea muy importante lo que tienes que decirme, españolazo** —gruñe el sargento, con la voz **empapada de sueño**—.

—Hay dos cadáveres en la **masía** de los Adell —dice Melchor.

—¿Los Adell? ¿Qué Adell?

—Los de **Gráficas** Adell.

—**No jodas**.

—**Jodo** —dice Melchor—. Acaba de llamar una patrulla. Ruiz y Mayol ya están allí. Yo voy de camino.

Comentado [BA1]: The use of this tense with 'Hasta ese momento'/'Up until that point' is weird in both English and Spanish. Guess it's a literary resource the author uses.

Comentado [BA2]: Impossible to understand the meaning of 'desdoblado' without knowledge of *Les Misérables*. Basically monsieur Madeleine and Jean Valjean are two names for the same person in the novel.

Comentado [BA3]: Unsure about this word in Spanish. I'm guessing this is in Catalonia and 'españolazo' can be understood as an insult?

Comentado [BA4]: This expression is not common in Spanish, so I thought about coming up with an uncommon one in English too, something like 'the voice full of sleep', but 'sleep' also means 'legaña' in English, so that wouldn't work. Tricky one.

(302 words)

Suggested translation:

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Up until that point, the night **has been** as calm as always. **That early in the morning**, there's barely anyone in the police station and, while Melchor switches off the lights, closes his office and walks down the deserted staircase putting on his **blazer**, the quietness of the station is so dense that it takes him back to his first few days there/it brings back his first few days there, in Terra Alta, when he was still addicted to the **hustle and bustle** of the city and the silence of the countryside **kept him awake at night**, condemning him to sleepless nights that he'd combat with novels and sleeping pills. That memory brings him a long-forgotten image: that of the man he was four years ago, when he had just arrived in Terra Alta; it also brings him some evidence: the fact that that person and himself were two different people, as opposite as a criminal and a law-abiding citizen, like Jean Valjean and Monsieur Madeleine, the **two-faced** and contradictory protagonist of *Les Misérables*, his favourite novel.

When he reaches downstairs, Melchor picks up his 9mm Walter P99 and an ammo box from the armoury and **says to himself** that it's been too long since he last read *Les Misérables* and that **he'll have to accept he won't be** having breakfast with his wife and his daughter.

Once in the garage, he gets in an Opel Corsa and, while he drives out onto the play area in front of the police station, he phones Sergeant Blai.

- **It'd better be very important, bloody Spaniard** -the sergeant groans, **with the voice still husky from sleeping**.

- There are two corpses at the Adells' **villa** -Melchor says.

- The Adells? What Adells?

- The ones from Adell **Printers**.

- **You must be kidding**.

- **I kid you not** -says Melchor-. I've just called a patrol. Ruiz and Mayol are already there. I'm on my way.



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