

Translation Practice 24

Excerpt from *Cinco horas con Mario*, by Miguel Delibes

Después de cerrar la puerta, tras la última visita, Carmen recuesta levemente la nuca en la pared hasta notar el contacto frío de su superficie y parpadea varias veces como deslumbrada. Siente la mano derecha dolorida y los labios tumefactos de tanto besar. Y como no encuentra mejor cosa que decir, repite lo mismo que lleva diciendo desde la mañana: “Aún me parece mentira. Valen, fíjate; me es imposible hacerme a la idea”. Valen la toma delicadamente de la mano y la arrastra, precediéndola, sin que la otra oponga resistencia, pasillo adelante, hasta su habitación:

– Debes dormir un poco, Menchu. Me encanta verte tan entera y así, pero no te engañes, bobina, esto es completamente artificial. Pasa siempre. Los nervios no te dejan parar. Verás mañana.

Carmen se sienta en el borde de la gran cama y se descalza dócilmente, empujando el zapato del pie derecho con la punta del pie izquierdo y a la inversa. Valentina la ayuda a tenderse, y, luego, dobla un triángulo de colcha de manera que la cubra medio cuerpo, de la cintura a los pies. Dice Carmen antes de cerrar los ojos, súbitamente recelosa:

– Dormir, no. Valen, no quiero dormir; tengo que estar con él. Es la última noche. Tú lo sabes.

Valentina se muestra complaciente. Tanto su voz –el contenido y el volumen de su voz– como sus movimientos, recatan una eficacia inefable:

– No duermas si no quieres, pero relájate. Debes relajarte. Debes intentarlo por lo menos –mira el reloj–. Vicente no puede tardar.

Carmen se estira bajo la blanca colcha, cierra los ojos y, por si fuera insuficiente, se los protege con el antebrazo derecho desnudo, muy blanco, en contraste con la negra manga del jersey que la cubre hasta el codo. Dice:

– Me parece que hace un siglo desde que te llamé esta mañana. ¡Dios mío, qué de cosas han pasado! Y todavía me parece mentira, fíjate; me es imposible hacerme a la idea.

Aun con los ojos cerrados y preservados por el antebrazo, Carmen sigue viendo desfilar rostros inexpresivos como palos cuando no deliberadamente contristados: “Lo dicho”; “Mucha resignación”, “Cuídate, Carmen, los pequeños te necesitan”, “¿A qué hora es mañana la conducción?” Y ella. “Gracias, Fulano”, o “Gracias, Mengana” y ante las visitas eminentes: “¡Cuánto le hubiera alegrado al pobre Mario verle por aquí!” La gente nunca era la misma pero la densidad no decrecía. Era como el caudal de un río.

(403 words)

Suggested translation:

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Having closed the door, and the last visit having left, Carmen leans the back of her neck slightly on the wall until she feels the cold touch of its surface. She blinks several times as if dazzled. Her right hand feels sore and her lips swollen of so much kissing. And, as she does not find anything better to say, she repeats what she has been saying since early in the morning: "It still seems unbelievable to me / I still cannot believe it. Valen; I just cannot get myself to believe it / this is happening". Valen takes her carefully by the hand and drags her behind her along the corridor, her not putting up any fight, as far as/to her room:

- You must try to sleep a bit, Menchu. I like seeing you this collected/calm, but don't fool yourself, my dear, this is completely artificial. It always happens. Nerves don't let you rest. You'll see tomorrow.

Carmen sits on the edge of the large bed and obediently takes off her shoes, pulling out the right shoe with the tip of her left foot, and the other way round. Valentina helps her (to) lie down, and then folds a triangle in the duvet so that it covers half of her body, from waist to feet. Before closing her eyes, suddenly distrusting, Carmen says:

- No, not sleeping. Valen, I don't want to sleep; I must be with him. It's the last night. You know that.

Valentina seems compliant/lenient. Both her voice –what she says and her volume–, along with her movements hide an indescribable effectiveness/efficiency.

- Don't sleep if you don't want to, but relax. Try to, at least / You need to try at least –she looks at her watch-. Vicente shouldn't take long / Vicente won't be long.

Carmen stretches under the white duvet, closes her eyes and, in case that were not enough, she protects them with her bare right forearm, so pale in contrast with the black sleeve of the jumper that covers her up to the elbow. She says:

- It seems like ages since I called you this morning. My Lord /Good Lord/My God, so many things have happened! And it still seems unbelievable to me, mind you / And I still cannot believe it, mind you; I just cannot get myself to believe it.

Still with her eyes closed and guarded by her forearm, Carmen keeps seeing a parade of faces as expressionless as sticks, if not deliberately afflicted. "Bye for now" / "Well, we'll see you"; "We can't but resign ourselves / What can we do but resign ourselves?", "Take care, Carmen, the children/the small ones need you", "What time is the funeral tomorrow?" And she would reply "Thanks" to this one and the other, and to the prominent/noted visitors she would say: "Poor Mario would have loved to see you here!" People were not the same all the time, but the density did not decrease, though, just like the flow of a river.