

XAMÃ

*Um jogo que tem de ser jogado...
Quando Tudo está em jogo*

FRANCISCO
CAPELO

CURRENT COVER IMAGE



OLD COVER IMAGE

SHAMAN

francisco capela

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Author's Note:

This book is based on three things:

- Facts that everyone believes*
- Theories not everyone believes in*
- Intuitions I tend to believe in*

And if anyone ever tells you that true knowledge cannot be attained through intuition, bid them a polite farewell and accompany them to the exit door. Because, my dear reader, intuition is life itself.

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SHAMAN

.STORM.



(PART ONE)

Storm - I

1995

It was an afternoon like any other, ashamed perhaps of its own banality, but the sun made all the difference. Gabriel passed the ball to Pedro Antunes, who lost it to Lam. He was not a basketball gifted, but his uncle had taught him the basic steps of the game.

And on this Sunday afternoon, a Sunday like any other, this afternoon and this game had never seemed so beautiful to him. His friends from university had come to visit him. Very good people, he thought to himself. Really good people. They didn't sell themselves to the rector's advisors for a buck and a half, like some others, not these ones. He existed studying from the height of his twenty-three years, with the sobriety of a certain youth, more confident in his own

merits than simply arrogant. Two years of those twenty-three had been wasted, suffering in the confines and anonymous existence of a mathematics course that was always too abstract, always too vague.

Could poetry be measured with numbers alone? Would emotions be part of some private accounting of God?

No. It shouldn't be like that. He had gone into mathematics under various influences, but he went back on his decision. And you did well. Very well, indeed. Now his old master had taken charge of his destiny. Víctor. Always him. Víctor Masse, a brilliant teacher who, by the way, all he wanted was his own good. Víctor had been, since early childhood, a great friend. But now he was there, with Pedro and Gabriel, and Luis. It seemed that their generation spoke louder, stronger, and it even seemed

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

that they all knew everything about each other's souls, there; without any kind of sorrow for the past, because it was so short, and total confidence in the future. And, in terms of the present, José Santos had just scored the most important basket of his life.

- We won, Paulo! We won!

- Hey, man, ok, it was a good match but don't exaggerate. I want to see your Sporting tonight, save yourself for that! Don't throw fireworks before the party! said Gabriel, falling to the floor, wet with sweat.

Lam sipped the air from the stream that meandered a few metres away and thought, for the first time that afternoon, of his uncle. *Is he well? I haven't seen him for so long...*

Groups of boys would come out of their homes and gather there, in that ring. Everyone wanted to play against the

SHAMAN

winning team. Lam chose the opposing team
with a brief glance.

*How good it is to play this game. How easy
it is to be happy like this.*

Storm - II

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

It was already a long day at work. Masse had given his all that day. He was exhausted. That department had been busy with minor, even bureaucratic, matters for weeks. *We don't even get a break from all this paperwork... what a bore. For this I had stayed in some office of some Ministry, back in the Portuguese assholery... not even the states leave us alone with these things that put lots of papers... uff.*

Masse was interrupted by an errand boy, who was distributing mail between the various departments. He arrived at 200 an hour, mounted on his white horse. Which is to say: on supersonic skates. *Anyway... American sissies.*

- Yes, Dos Passos? Anything for me today?
- Mr Victor, you have four letters here: one from Washington, from Congressman Louis...
- Ah, good old Louis... what else?

SHAMAN

- ...one from the treasury, from Martha...
- Ah, I know, I've already spoken to her. And the others?
- ... one by a certain Boris Kepps...
- Yeah, he's a NASA researcher, my friend. And the last one...?
- ... a registered letter with acknowledgement of receipt...
- Oh, come on. From where? A registered letter...? Who's it from?
- It's from Portugal, and...
- Let me see!

Victor Masse analysed the letter from top to bottom. It looked simple, poor even. A few stains could be seen, grease stains perhaps. The seal had been glued with his saliva: it was coming loose in at least one corner, half crooked. The sender's handwriting was

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

horrible. I've never seen anything like it...
my God, what a letter...

- Mr Victor, eh...

- Oh, sorry, Dos Passos, do you want me to...

- Yes, the acknowledgement of receipt
remains to be signed, just, it's quick, I have
to...

- You have to go to other departments, I
know, I know. Let me see a pen... I sign here,
right?

- Yes, it's right there.

- All right, you can go about your business.
Just tell me one thing...

- Yes, Mr Victor?

- Isn't life on skates comparable to riding a
boat in the middle of the sea? There must be
many icebergs out there, many wild waves...
Eheh...

- Ahahah. No, Mr Víctor, I love what I do! See you later!

- See you later, kid. And be sensible! You almost ran over Kramm the other day, huh? He can't even see you! Remember that!

- "I'll remember, next time I see him!" said a fast-paced Dos Passos, already crossing the corner of that floor to the next department.

He opened the letter slowly, with a deafening sense of timid apprehension. I wonder what this Helena Torres wants from me...? I've never seen her father... I wonder how she got my contact...? Ah, I know. I left the department's contact info on that damn NASA documentary... from there it's easy. Too easy. Now there's nothing to be done, so be patient. All that remains is to be prudent... some information is best kept hidden for the good of all...

- Hm. Just one leaf. Let's see where this goes.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

"Dear Mr Victor Masse, I appeal to your good heart. I saw the contact of the department where you work in a documentary, and I took the liberty of writing to you, asking for something I would never ask, if it were for me. But it's not. It's for my daughter. I'm sure it will be a daughter. I want the best for her, but due to complications in my life, the Court will surely take away her custody from me once I give birth. I just ask you to treat her like a father, if she had one, would. I want my daughter to have the future I never had. But what can I do to convince you, can't I? Well, I've thought about that too. And here I leave you a poem of my own, dedicated to my daughter. If you are not convinced, there is certainly nothing I can do. But my conscience will be much more clear."

Well... even if you were Fernando Pessoa... well, let me at least read this. After a day of work like this... a letter with a poem. Look, it

may serve as a tranquilliser for all the bureaucracy I've had to deal with today. After all, poetry isn't good for much else: only and only so that we don't brutalize everything at once. Eugénio de Andrade, Herberto Helder, Sophia de Mello Breyner, Al Berto... I have the complete works of all those great poets. This one must think she's going to surprise me, with her pocket poetry, from some alley in the Mouraria... I love poetry, yes, but I've always hated fado; I can't stand Carlos do Carmo, nor Mariza, nor that Camané guy - they're all unbearably the same, in the end. And as for sung poems, only Trovante and Ary dos Santos did some funny things. Well, I'll read this and then go home. It's already 8.33pm and I'm infinitely tired.

The poem was on the only sheet of paper contained in the envelope. Masse turned the sheet over and smoothed the paper, which had already come, a little crumpled. And it

wasn't the aeroplane that was to blame for that.

"The life of who I am, the life you are to me

They tell me you're the most important thing in my life

They tell me you're very beautiful inside

They tell me all this, so that I feel your forgotten life ...

In the life of my love's life

I feel you so beautiful and so pure ...

That I think of lives from other lives

I feel so full of your madness ...

That I have already made those lives forgotten

*And I live forever who you are, being who loves
who I am ...*

*That this life is my life, that I love you here where
I am.*

Thank you, Mr Victor. Thank you very much.

Helena Torres. Lisbon. 14/February/1972"

Masse remained in deep silence. He hadn't counted on the fact that a single poem by a person who was totally unknown to him and only a few lines long, written thousands of miles away, could affect him like that.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- What a soul... reminds me of Florbela Espanca. In these troubled days, between war and easy consumerism, a thought still of this purity...

Helena. Who has to say "thank you very much"...

- *That's me.*

Storm - III

17/September/1995

- So you tell me, Tiago, that this student...

- Yes, Mr Provost. He refuses to be...

- But this is very serious... very serious indeed. In nineteen years, it's the first time it's happened to me. Is he... is he all right in his head? Does he look normal?

- A little overexcited, Mr Provost. But only when we sting him. I think that's normal.

- Look, ever since I saw a lady on a television game show saying that Papua New Guinea was a province of Mozambique, I've found everything normal!

- Eheheh... Carlos agreed. - Yes, really...

- But did you want to tell me anything else, Tiago?

- He... he has a T-shirt...

- T-shirt? What's that? Do you know what that is, Carlos?

- A jumper, Sérgio. A light jumper, to put it simply. That's it.

- Ah. Yeah, and what's with that jumper, Tiago?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Um. It's got some... weird sayings on it.
- Weird? Some hairy mess, maybe? These young people are capable of anything now... these colleagues of yours...
- No, Mr Provost... well, it says: "Brigada Anti-Praxe - 21 457... 69 69" - imagine!
- Ahahah! And you got scared by that? Did you hear that, Carlos? Did you hear that?
- Sergio, yes, it's funny, but there may be something here that we...

- He threatened me and Filipe with a court case if we...
- You see, Sergio? There was something here that was badly explained... now it's obvious what he wants.

- Or what he doesn't want! And he doesn't want to be hazed, like all the others are, Carlos! We have to keep order, dammit, you

know perfectly well that the teachers agree in silence with this system, which has existed for decades in the universities, because it suits us and in what way, and if we now allow an exception, the kids... they will revolt...

- I know that very well. Don't think I was born yesterday. But tell us, Tiago, what is the name of this irresponsible prevaricator?

- He... refuses to tell us his name, Professor Carlos. But a colleague told us his name was Paulo. Paulo... Lam.

- What? Victor Masse's kid? Sergio, we...

- Yes, I know, Carlos. And we're going to have to *gram* him for the next five years. Get ready. This isn't gonna be easy. Not for him... not for us. You see... Victor's kid is *really* smart, he's not like the other sheep that go off to the slaughter...

Storm - IV

The university refectory was quite large in relation to the dimensions of the school itself. However, there were always some students who found it difficult to walk along the corridors between the abandoned tables and chairs, like sore castaways in a sea that was too salty, afloat on a surface that was always too greasy.

Daisy did not hold back a small groan the moment her tray grazed Lam's head and when, with a sudden gesture, she managed to balance herself, he smiled:

- It happens. Are you all right?

Paulo Lam. A not very bright student: he used to say, jokingly, that if work ever found him, he would be getting inspired again, and not doing anything. He was a little older than his classmates, having tried and succeeded in re-entering the university, having rediscovered some of his classmates from two years ago. Frankly, he didn't have the patience to put up with any of that anymore, and his strongest wish was to do all 5 years in one go, without once asking for a grade improvement.

Lam could not find anything positive in the university: too much theory, too much hay, he said, inwardly, to himself. On the other hand, his study was made of the most extreme intuition, of the purest inspiration, of an almost animal instinct, and not of the attentive and rational analysis of the dull subjects that I have to deal with every day. His hair was very dark and always short, but already quite white, his eyes were also very dark brown, and he had a terribly ambiguous look, combining the good and the evil of childhood, his features were almost noble, like a Renaissance prince: Sometimes he would spend a two-hour class staring at the ceiling, distracted, and sometimes with a surprising oratorical tirade he would take the whole class by surprise, including and especially the teacher, who had no choice but to defend himself against such intellectual brilliance with an evasive answer in the style of a famous politician. A terror, said the professors, one to the other. - Have you

seen what he said in my class? - Did you? Well, in mine it was even worse: imagine that...

Although it was a distinctly right-wing university, there was a certain contempt on the part of many students for this ideology; it was well known that in Portugal intellectuals were more given to left-wing ideas, and, as those who went to Social Sciences were above all intellectuals, an obvious contradiction between teachers and students was formed from the outset.

Contradiction, with which Lam played various unstable balances, giving true lessons in the beards of those people, when confronting the structural ideas of the masters with those of the conjunctural professors of the university. His physique was not impressive: tall, it is true, but somewhat hunchbacked, and with an almost

light brown complexion, long arms, very large hands and feet and extremely long fingers, his colleagues sometimes called him the Arab, and some even nicknamed him, due to his constant feats in arguing with the professors, the terrorist.

It was evident that the Lam character was much discussed in the academic environment, not only by students but also by professors, who sometimes questioned his mental sanity and capacity to be in a university, and sometimes praised him, within the restricted walls of the Higher Council, for his luminous intelligence and clarity of analysis.

And there seemed to be no way of getting his hands on it in disciplinary terms. We have here an enigma, was the phrase most people heard. Finally, a challenge up to our

standards, was the dominant idea among the thinking heads of the university.

And yet, there was something about him that unsettled. That provoked apprehension. A strange fear that only the most gifted among the teachers dared to scrutinise. To understand, to make that detail visible, could make all the difference.

With Lam there, something deeply disturbing had come to the surface.

For better or... for worse...

Storm - V

1972

Victor Masse had already walked a good 400 metres, through interminable corridors and stairways that only served as mazes for those who were not used to those walks. The right place should be called the secret place.

The indications were also vague: the first and perhaps last names of a woman who was about to give birth, at the Alfredo da Costa Maternity Hospital, according to the latest information she had obtained from a busy and unhelpful rector. That the girl was known to a student at the university, from a humble family, but who had fallen into a bad life... drugs... and sometimes prostitution, which is what follows in this short list. A brief contact with this student, provided by his teacher, had been enough to know what Masse wanted to know.

Damned Sergio. Always the same suspicious... it's not as if he already has grandchildren. He manages that university with the classic spirit of always, the ruler and square. Anyway, does it really have to be like this?

He was interrupted in his thoughts by the unbridled rush of a panicked nurse who emerged from an almost invisible doorway: she was coming down the service stairs, apparently from downstairs.

- Hurry up, Marília, we're losing her! The lady who had a boy... has already gone into a coma, and... call Afonso and Zé - Hurry up, woman!

Masse tried to remain indifferent to that desperate woman. Maybe they were normal, those situations of professional stress. And human. Above all that. He headed for the reception on that floor, already disappointed: it was the third attempt he had made, and the room where the mysterious Helena was was becoming more and more inaccessible.

- I'm sorry, I'm looking for...

- Excuse me, one moment please, I have to make a phone call. Hello? Afonso? Go to

Felísbela's room, take Zé, and tell him to bring the cardiac defibrillator, quickly, go now! Oh my God... tell me, I'm sorry, I...

- All right, it's perfectly understandable... I wanted to know if this is the floor where a pregnant woman is, I only have her first and what I think is her last name, her name is Helena Torres, do you know if she is on this floor?

Marília was petrified. Mute. Not a muscle of her face moved, and the soul of her gaze had disappeared elsewhere. Masse was perplexed, finding this behaviour strange.

- Ma'am...? Are you feeling all right...? Is there something...

- She..., stammered the receptionist - she's not here on the third floor, but... you shouldn't visit her now, she... is in labour at the moment, and...

- It's all right. I'll wait. Can I wait here?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Q... can, can, yes...

- By the way, can you tell me which room she's in? So that after the birth I can go and visit her...

- Oh please don't ask me that. Please.

- I beg your pardon? Are there any internal regulations that don't allow me to...

- It's not that. It's just that Miss Helena is... she's...

- Yes?

- Room 16.

- All right, I'll wait here for the birth.

- Oh my God, you don't understand...

- Marília! Marília!

- What is it, Alfonso? Tell me what's going on!

- WE'VE LOST HER!

Storm - VI

- Professor, how are you? I apologise for addressing the professor in this way, I only know him from TV and... the sentence remained unfinished, as the slow, heavy and strangely melancholic rector had just entered the main corridor of the lower part of the university.

An endless wall seemed to give the rector's broad shoulders an even greater aura of

authority than usual, and the student, foreseeing his dialogue with Masse, immediately excused herself and fled, frightened, mixing her banal figure with those of the dozens of her colleagues who by then were leaving the 10.15 class.

Victor Masse was perhaps the most prestigious professor in the Social Theory faculty of the university. At that time he was on professional secondment and teaching in the USA; he had moved from the social sciences to mathematics with astonishing speed, and physics was his current field of choice. *An enlightened one*, people used to say in the corridors; *a master*. A veritable Don Sebastian - and distance had the effect of further increasing his aura of untouchable genius.

His curriculum was impressive: besides 3 Master's theses on particles and waves, each

one going deeper and deeper into this subject so essential to modern physics, he was also a member of the very restricted NASA Council of Sages, with which he was in permanent contact by encrypted email and by secret telephone, when necessary.

About five years ago he had been proposed for the Nobel Prize in Physics, but, as he used to tell his friends jokingly: *I am too serious and anonymous for that; no way.* Among his peers, he was a star that shone brightly; unbeatable and extremely captivating at a pedagogical level, he also fulfilled with devotion and efficiency his functions as principal adviser to the Rector, in internal disciplinary and curricular matters.

Loved by teachers and pupils alike, and not only for his competence: an extremely elegant 1.78 centimetres, a well-trimmed grey beard, very light transparent rimmed

glasses, a careful physique, at the height of his 71 years he inspired confidence, protection and an authority which, in itself, was completely natural.

The girls at the university called him just *The Professor* ever since they had seen him in a NASA documentary on television and, for them, where he was there was no one else. In fact, the word you heard most often when someone tried to describe him was: *irreplaceable*. A discreet and seductive *irreplaceable*.

Not bad for a humble Chilean, I used to think.

Storm - VII

The pseudo-statistics teacher had come in killing in the first class. It was like an earthquake.

But, thought Lam, after an earthquake may come a tsunami. Let's wait and see...

After authoritatively asking several things that the students were supposed to know, he staccato with his suspicious eyes well placed in a place that was supposed to be the middle of the classroom, and fired a very audible one:

- But you ... are you kidding me!?

Fifteen, thought Paulo Lam. Fifteen years of silently pacting with a lapsed and atrophying education system, on this and the other side of the Atlantic, without any kind of creative flame, to now, at the end of that same system, be accused of making fun of a banal teacher. A functionary. A bureaucrat of ideas. Really, that's all I need. You've got a lot of nerve... Hang on and I'll make you a sheet... Stay there...

The teacher continued his blind and unconscious assault into the deepest core of the education system, only to repeat the fateful and malicious question in front of him:

- But you ... are you kidding me!?

Lam waited a few seconds. The indignation of his colleagues was immense, but nobody dared to speak. He felt that his argument

had to be: effective, convincing, accurate. Not a second more or less, and intonation was also important.

And just as that being was preparing to continue his laughable litany, he fired:

- No, Mr. teacher. We are not making fun of you.

The class was in a state of shock. 15 years had been enough to numb their self-love. *It's OK, I can manage without you. Now you just listen, rest assured...*, and continued:

- Professor, I happen to be a mathematics major. But these people are social sciences. Many don't even have a 10th grade maths degree...

Another pause. The pace was devilishly slow, and as he spoke, both his tone of voice and his posture in the chair sank like a lazy

Titanic. Very, very lazy. Lam put up with it (the guy must get lost in long speeches), and then concluded with an ambiguous:

- Perhaps if you gave the matter another way...

This was followed by a complete void.

The bomb dropped where and when the teacher least expected it. With a few sharp words, Lam had called into question the teacher's lack of competence, and his initial aggressive arguments had totally backfired. Everyone knew it and everyone felt it. The professor paused - but not to think - a few hundredths of a second. Then he went into hysterics:

- But who are you? Do you want to tell me now how to teach?

Lam remained silent as a cursed tomb.

And his silence was so awkward, and the teacher's reaction so desperate, that it was the very pupils at the front desks who proved him right in his insult to the class, and tried to calm him down. *Fear still reigns supreme...*

Slowly, Lam emerged from the ocean from his chair. *One-nil...*

Armed with terrible eyes cast in the shadow of the once-teacher, Lam stood in the middle of the room. His gait had something sleepwalking, but also feline. Fear was evident, in everyone. His presence had become demonic.

A fraction of a second later, and with an abrupt, dry gesture, he revealed his left hand under the light suede jacket, and his index finger began a dangerous, unpredictable dance, swinging around his wrist like an ambiguous pendulum. It would seem that a

huge STOP sign had just at that moment been carved into his face.

The dense silence became unbearable. Suddenly, he stormed out of the room, leaving behind him the trail of silent fury that only dignity still has.

Storm - VIII

2000

The tram moved at a slow pace and stopped in front of the university to welcome some tourists. The doors opened automatically, letting them in with the patience of someone drinking a coffee in the morning on a holiday.

The rector looked at him, allowing himself the necessary calm to see him leave, in the direction of Bethlehem. *Anyway, at least this will distract me.*

He got up to fetch a book by Max Weber from the solid mahogany bookcase. *An antique.*

Nowadays nobody values antiques. These young people think that time is eternal.

He sat down again. The desk was also old, in an inverted u-shape, and his legs barely fit in the space that had been allocated for them under the top.

On the desk, a sheet of paper, half crumpled, handed in by an angry teacher at exactly 11:34 that morning, stood out. A piece of paper that had been blocking his movements for more than half an hour.

And that book by Weber had been just the last glimmer of hope, the last attempt to calm down.

I was now standing in front of that paper. And it was obvious that it was not going to disappear...

Someone or something knocked on the office door. The other side of that door was rather quiet. Ceremonious, perhaps.

- Yeah? Is that you, Lopes?

- Mr Provost? There's a gentleman here to see you. May I let him in? His name is Mast or Massa, something like that. A strange name. It's foreign.

The rector felt a blessing run through his whole body.

- Lopes, let my saviour in, I beg you.

- His name is not Salvador, Mr Provost, it's Mass something.

- Lopes!

- Excuse me, Mr Provost... Mr Mast, please come in.

The shadow of an elegant figure loomed in the doorway.

- It's not Mast, it's Masse!

- Come in, Víctor!

The rector stood up slowly. His 63 years of age did not allow him any more grand vehemence, and he greeted Víctor Masse with an embrace that only the two of them understood.

- My dear man, I thought you were in Chile!
To what do I owe this honour?

- Sergio, I came on holiday for a week to Portugal to see how my protégé is doing. Is he doing well here at university? How are his grades? Have you been following the boy?

The Dean grimaced, and sank down onto a genuine leather sofa adjoining his desk.

- Víctor, please sit down.

Víctor Masse understood immediately. *The bloody family temper....* He twisted his lip.

- Listen, Victor, you've got to help me. Lam's got two disciplinary files on him. One of them was handed to me this morning. He defies the authority of teachers outright, refuses to do his recommended end-of-course work, and has friends helping him with the racket.

If you want him to graduate, you better come up with some kind of magic potion. My professors refuse to give him his diploma, and I give them full reason. And he'll spend the rest of his life either here at the university getting into trouble, or somewhere else getting into other trouble, unless you come up with a solution.

until now I've been delaying the progress of the disciplinary processes, but they're already pressuring me. Lemos... António... Carlos... all want an exemplary punishment.

Víctor took a deep breath.

- Bummer... That boy was practically raised by me... I promised the family I'd look after him. I promised them that, forever, you know? What a disappointment... Look, Sergio, give me some time, I have to think a lot.

- Víctor, you have until this Friday. Save me from this. I know he's your boy. But there are certain situations you just can't hide anymore.

- All right, Sergio. On Friday, without fail, I'll give you the idea.

Víctor stood up and extended his hand to the rector.

- When will you be back in Chile, Víctor?

- I still have to go to Badajoz for some bank business. Next Tuesday I should be back home. The NASA guys won't leave me alone, I have to start work again as soon as possible. It seems there's a new chemical

compound of some kind. Anyway... well, tell Carlos to take it easy. My boy... I know he's not very thoughtful, but I also know that deep down he can't hurt a fly.

- Víctor, go in peace. And have a good trip.

The door opened again. The elegant shadow was now more trembling, and moved by making small, jerky gestures.

- Víctor! Before you go...

- Yes...?

- Your idea...

... will have to be absolutely G-E-N-I-A-L...

Storm - IX

1998

The Students' Union was strangely silent. Students who went there to buy their new year's books were faced with a blank sheet of paper taped to the closed door, which had "Meeting - Do Not Disturb" written in large letters in green marker.

- What horrible handwriting... Marta, did you hear about this Association meeting today?

- No. But maybe that's normal. In an hour they should be open. Come, let's go to the cafeteria, I have to talk to pr...

- Well, well, well. Closed...? At this hour of the morning? Marta, do you know anything...

- No. We were just talking about that. Well, let's go, Monica. See you later, Hugo.

- Bye.

The exterior silence hid an interior tumult, which took place in the second room of the Students' Association. It was the room where important meetings were held, where annual tasks for the student workers were organised.

- Lam, that's all very nice, but who tells us that you...

- I HOLD my word of honour above all things. Now, that's far better than James will ever offer you. Isn't it, Ines...?

- I... eh, I find all this...

- Dangerous, Lam, Pedro finally said, to break the deadlock in the conversation. - Too dangerous. If we leave hazing, we're left without the support of the Executive Council, and that...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Ah, but it's not only the hazing that we're leaving behind, my friends... the meetings with the Pedagogical Council are going to have new rules... oh, if only..., we're going to have a new say in the National Association of University Students, there will no longer be spontaneous demonstrations alongside the other sheep, we're going to have exhibitions of contemporary art installations that show what higher education means today, with the proper explanation by critics of modern art who are not bought by the usual newspapers...

- All this is...

- Too revolutionary, Anabela?

- S... yes, we have no pod...

- Power to do this? Ah, but if we are students enough to pay our tuition fees, we are also students enough to, in our own right, assume that...

- What's going on here, may I ask? What are you doing here, Lam?

- Me? Are you talking to me, Tiago? I want to remind you that...

- What, what? That you are part of the pedagogical section of the Students' Union? Ah, but that's simple to explain: look, it was just a favour from your friend... Pedro. Isn't that right, Pedro?

- Hm...

- Anyway, you have no influence here, you're too...

- Radical?

- Yes, that's it.

I was going to say: INTELLIGENT, you idiot...

Storm - X

The three classes, one from Sociology, one from Psychology and one from Anthropology, had been in the room for over 15 minutes. Conversation was catching up at a deafening pace.

More than 250 souls lived in the university's aula magna. The hall of congresses, of important meetings for the life of the university. It was an honour to be there, but also and above all a duty to obey the tradition of the house. In that room exceptional teachers and brilliant minds had taught, but one more than all had left his mark: Afonso Nunes. Former member of the government. Ex many things; an impressive curriculum vitae. A man who, it was said, was the authority on wisdom. Although he belonged to a party that some called the extreme right, perhaps it was the students of leftist leanings who most appreciated his aura of excellence and, after all, he had distanced himself from the new

generation of politicians, as if to preserve his lucid analysis. And there he was, in that room, the aula magna, a framed canvas with his grave face, so that the generations of students who passed by would always ask: - *Who is that?* which would be followed by the quiet chanting of his mythical name, like something you fear at birth.

A nice old man is escorted to his pulpit. A young girl, perhaps a trainee teacher, brings him in. The now classic good morning is followed in unison by the same good morning from the immense number of students present. The deafening background noise ceases, like a bee that had been crushed in mid-flight. The memorable class had begun.

The professor talks about generic concepts of the social sciences and, in the midst of an amalgam of ideas, throws the hook to the still distracted audience:

- Does anyone know what Charisma is? Think about this concept. In a few minutes I will ask you again, and I hope to have an answer about the correct definition of: Charisma.

Lam woke up, suddenly. Charisma. The concept of charisma. Is it really true that this professor asked this? Is it possible that he really wants to know what we think about the concept? That he actually asks for our opinion? In four years of university, it would be the first time... one should be suspicious...

Paulo Lam drove his thoughts to the core of the concept of leader, the conceptual basis of Charisma.

Think, think fast, dammit. You only have a few minutes.

. Born leader. A phrase that stays in the ear, that is not questionable, with an insurmountable beauty, undisputed by any teacher...

. The expression of a superior idea... Superior.

. Emanation of an absolute truth ... Irradiation.

. A leader's characteristic... The primary characteristic of a leader... Strong personality. That's it. Personality.

Now putting the pieces together... "Superior Personality Irradiation".

This expression is unique, it can never be changed. Only accurate brainstorming, only intuition allows you to get there... I found it.

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Now, we just have to wait for him to ask the staff the fateful question... wait and I'll tell you...

The teacher, meanwhile, was talking about the list of personal misfortunes to which he had been subjected in the last few years: cataracts in his eyes..., kidney stones..., he couldn't be operated on X because of Y and he couldn't be operated on Z because of X... well, *this one is easy prey... let him down...*

When the professor finally straightened his glasses over his aduncular nose, Lam was a little nervous, as he tended to easily forget what he was thinking.

- Well, now that I have given the introduction to the lesson, I ask again: what is, for you, the correct definition of charisma?

There was a growing buzz in the room. But nobody raised their hand to answer. *Typical*

of the militant sheepishness that is rife in this university.

Making the fish yield, Lam there raised his arm. The professor had to be alerted to that mysterious arm, planted in the middle of the room, which apparently challenged him. Paul Lam could see the professor from above the small amphitheatre; the master class had a structure similar to Greek theatres. That was precious, a great advantage. *Those who see from above, see better...*

- Ah! I see there is a student who thinks he knows the definition of: Charisma. This is a very complex concept, I remind everyone, and there have been many social scientists who have tried to establish a definitive version of this concept. Tell me, dear young man, tell me. By the way: what is your major?

- Sociology, Lam said dryly.

- Let's hear your concept then.

A curious silence took the master class by storm as that young man showed an Olympian calm as he faced his teacher.

- Superior Irradiation of Personality.

The teacher let a few huge seconds pass. His body was no longer relaxed. As his posture gained some undisguisable rigidity, the 268 students laughed heartily, making fun of the apparent theoretical inviability of that concept.

When the next moment the teacher took the floor again, those voices were silenced forever.

- You have just given me the true meaning of the concept of Charisma, Sir?

- Lam. Paul Lam.

The students burst into wide, uncontrolled laughter - which the teacher didn't understand, because it all sounded like one of those typical Bond jokes: Bond; James Bond.

- That's right: irradiation of a superior personality. And this definition, dear students, applies directly to one of the greatest leaders Portugal has ever known: Nuno Borges de Carvalho.

Paulo Lam was somewhat relieved at the unconditional acceptance of his definition of charisma, but something was not quite right; not only did the expression seem strange to him, but Nuno was also far from being a hero of his youth. *My God, another politician... well, obvious choice of name - it was right-wing, died in the style of James Dean - but limited.*

So here we go again... another brainstorming, this one to reveal where the bases for these two mistakes were: one conceptual, the other casting.

Let's look at the concept in depth...

Irradiation of Superior Personality.

But... this is not what I said! My definition is: Superior Irradiation of Personality. Only this way, the concept remains general and abstract, applicable in ALL cases, like all good laws! And only this way, this concept could be applied to the particular case of Nuno Borges de Carvalho!

A feeling of unrestrained revolt grew in Lam. Immediately, his heart beating wildly, he put his hand back in the air, signalling his will to speak in a very visible way. The professor, who at this point was still talking about *Saint* Nuno's extraordinary

leadership abilities, took a while to notice the raised arm. Once again he was alerted to the fact, and had to allow Lam to speak again.

- Professor, that may be your concept, but it is by no means mine. I said: Superior Radiation of Personality, not: Irradiation of Superior Personality. You have changed the position of the preposition: from *in* the expression of the concept, which makes it meaningless. Please tell us all which concept you think should prevail.

The professor stalled, in the middle of the main platform. I didn't expect this. What the hell, what do I do now? A few seconds passed, too painful for everyone. Especially for Lam, who still believed in the word: Pedagogy.

The professor remained absolutely silent and, after those brief but long seconds,

continued his dissertation on the subject of charisma without blinking.

Furious, Paulo Lam apologised to his classmates, tucked his subject notebook under his arm, and walked down with a slow, measured step, always looking defiantly at the teacher, who remained quite chatty and apparently cheerful.

When he was already at the same level as him, Lam stopped for a moment, and shook his head, disappointed. The whole class looked at him, not understanding the full extent of that feeling. The teacher then gestured to the two trainee teachers present to stand still.

Lam left the room. The door closed softly from the outside.

THE PESADELO was over.

Lam could not know it, but not far from there, a journalist revealed to the media that a Minister had changed the position of a single letter in the drafting of a Decree-Law, in exchange for more than 500 thousand euros...

Storm - XI

2000

Sérgio was sweating profusely. He had walked all the way from Bethlehem, under the infernal heat of a September that was too hot, the hottest since 1977 in Portugal. Lopes had come from room 4B, where Professor Lemos had called him because he needed white chalk. It was already Friday, and he, like a good civil servant, was

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counting the minutes to go home. And, when he saw the rector, he was livid.

- R... rector... S... rector, what's going on...?
Oh, my God!

The next moment, the rector let himself fall into Lopes' arms.

- Mrs. Lurdes, Mrs. Lurdes, go and fetch Horatio from the secretary's office, quickly!

- All right, Lopes, I'm coming!

- Sir, sit here in Mrs Lurdes' chair... come.

- Let me, Lopes, take me to my office now, I...

- You are very weak, Mr Provost. Where have you been walking from?

- Since Bethlehem, and this heat... my car broke down, and no taxi was passing.... horrible.

Lopes led the rector slowly into his room. It was completely dark, in that muggy late afternoon, and darker than usual.

- Sit here in your chair, Mr Dean, I'm going to turn on the lights and...

- Don't do that! I want to be in the dark, otherwise the heat will rise. Bring me a glass of water: I'm a little better...

- Right away, sir!

Sergio tried to calm down a little. His heart rate was slowly returning to normal. He took a deep breath of fresh air and waited a few seconds, trying to remain silent. He turned on the lamp on his desk.

- But... what is this?!? Lopes! I eh...

- Take it easy, Sergio...

- Who's there?!?

In the dimness of the totally dark room a shadow then stood out, slowly advancing

towards the rector's desk. The light from the lamp only illuminated a little of the desk and a little of its surroundings.

- It's me. I'm back, Sérgio.

- Ahh... my God. Victor, you scared the hell out of me. This hellish walk is bad enough... but do you want to kill me, or what?

- Take it easy. I left the game there on your desk.

- A game? It's a game, the thing that scared me...? But I asked you...

- You asked me for a great idea. Well, there you go. And what idea could be more genius than a game, can you tell me?

- Yes, indeed... but what does this game consist of?

- It's a game of knowledge. You asked me for something that is virtually impossible to solve, if I remember correctly...

- Yes, that was the idea, really... your Lam shouldn't be able to get through... for us to kick him out quietly... I know this is going to cost you a lot, but... anyway, you should be able to employ him out there, after all this is the land of wedges, and...

- Don't bother explaining to me what you are going to do to my boy. I'm from the house, so I know what the house spends. There must be no exceptions, nor would my self-love admit it...

- Yes, I know. It's too bad.

- By the way, just so you know: I came in through the secret door, the one that leads to the...

- Shh! Are you crazy? Lopes could walk in at any moment, and I...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- May I come in, Mr Provost?
- Come in, come in, Lopes! Come in, can I have a glass of water?
- Yes, sir, here you are. Good afternoon, Mr. Masse.

- Good afternoon, said the teacher dryly.
- I'm sorry about the other day, I'm relatively new here, compared to your journey in this house, and I didn't remember your name...

- Never mind, Lopes. Sérgio, I'm going. If you need me, you have my mobile.
- All right. I got what I needed. I got what I needed. It's all in this envelope here on the desk?
- It's all there. See you later, then. Bye, Mr Lopes.
- Until next time, Mr. teacher, until next time. And bon voyage.

- Thank you, sir. It's okay, I know the way out.

- The professor was a bit sad, don't you think so, Mr Provost?

- We all have to make sacrifices. The Romans were already doing it, Lopes!

- Ah. And he had to make some sacrifice, did he...?

- He did. And it was a great sacrifice, Lopes, believe me. Close the door when you leave. And you can turn on the lights now.

Lopes headed for the door quickly. As he was about to leave, he was interrupted by the rector's strange question.

- Lopes... one more thing.

- Yes, Mr Provost?

- Do you like games?

- Well, I eh... like it. Yes, I do. Why do you like it?

- Because, my dear Lopes, the GAME is about to begin!

Storm - XII

Pedro was sceptical: a shot being better than Baileys?

- Carlos, explain yourself, he said, annoyed.

- Look, Pedro, it's simple: the best thing about the shot is the company. Of course, Baileys is much creamier, the shot is more acidic and so on, but the female company, my dear Pedro, makes all the difference...

Jorge nodded slightly, and the three of them giggled with satisfaction.

- Well, look at those chicks!

- Where, where?
- Those who go there, man, the chick and the other one, who must be her mother. And she's even hotter than her daughter...
- Yep, I see. My God, what a pair... What they needed was a Zezé Camarinha, that's what it was...
- Ahahah! The guy must hit this beach too, man, you must not be far from the truth!
- Well, I think I'll go to the bath, people. You guys want to come?
- No, someone has to keep an eye on things, you can't make it easy, said Jorge. - You go, I'll stay here.

Jorge was right. Trafal beach, in the borough of Quarteira, Loulé, had been much safer than it is now. Frequented mainly by hikers, last year alone, the local police had registered 12 attempted robberies. And in only three of these attempts had the thieves been caught. Two were even minors, so the

punishment had been ineffective. It had once been a quieter beach, one had to be alert.

Jorge watched his two friends walk away, chatting, on a not-too-distant horizon, down to the water. The beach was well composed, but not crowded: just the way he liked it.

He started reading his Angels and Demons again, as calmly as ever, when Carlos' mobile rang. *What annoying music, what the devil... the best thing is to answer it.* He checked the name on the mobile phone's display and read the 6 letters there at once. He got stiff, and read them again, now one by one.

The lazy display indicated the fateful word:

R-E-I-T-O-R.

The annoying music continued and was beginning to bother the neighbours on the beach, who looked on, annoyed. Jorge quickly wrapped his mobile phone around Pedro's towel. The music stopped a few seconds later.

uff... I did well. The Dean is old school. For him, professional relationships in the School have nothing to do with friendship. If he dreamed we were having a holiday together, he'd kick us out and do everything so we couldn't teach anywhere else. Boy... a single phone call..., if I answered it I'd ruin everything.

Jorge was sweating. But it wasn't the heat.

A few minutes later, Pedro and Carlos were slowly approaching. Jorge noticed Pedro's dark complexion, and the light layer of salty water drops that covered his body. His

movements were strangely slow, coming from a silent movie; the ocean had given him powers to dream more deeply, as happens to children and madmen.

Pedro. How BEAUTIFUL.

- Carlos, the réit... hm.

Someone called you.

Storm - XIII

Carlos. João Reis. The rector was the last to enter. The professors' room was at the bottom of a circular staircase, which went up to a very high door, almost Arabic in style at the top.

Lopes had warned him. *Hmpf... good work. We must always keep an eye on these things. We have to shortcut the path, this can't happen again.*

They passed by the two sofas at the entrance, and looked for the prevaricator. Finally, Carlos said quietly to the rector:

- It's over there. Come on.

Manuel dos Santos was the latest addition to the university's teaching staff. He had been highly recommended. A good curriculum, perhaps, but the indispensable personal relationships? no doubt. Jorge had been his patron in those dark corridors, but some pointed out his faults: too friendly. Too sincere. Too studious, even. Too competent.

Deep down, one: too human on his face, from top to bottom. In his thirties, his mannerisms didn't escape the most attentive of eyes. And Lopes was one of those: *don't let anything slip*. It was his life motto. And also his certificate of survival at the university. There, as anywhere. *In a dog-eat-dog world, you have to be a wolf*, his father had once told him, when he was very young. And he hadn't forgotten.

Nothing, nothing that his father had taught him. He knew it: at school you don't have to

be intelligent, you just have to know how to obey. Knowledge? You can eat that? He was really over the top in all of this. In a dog's world, be a wolf. You just have to be a wolf, and everything will be fine. Let the others worry about their good feelings. I get paid to watch my back. And I obey.

Manuel stowed his paperwork in his locker. Marx, Weber, Comte and even some more recent American authors from the Chicago School were piled up in less than a second. So much junk... I have to prepare for Wednesday's class by tomorrow at the latest...

- Ohh!

Three leaves fell from the locker, unconcerned. He immediately got down and, as he was getting up, he noticed the shadows that three bodies were casting on the ground in front of him. And when his eyes

met the eyes of the three men who looked like statues, Manuel dos Santos mumbled something incomprehensible, and fear took over his gestures, betraying him.

- How are you, my dear Manuel," said Carlos. João continued:

- Could we give him two fingers of conversation?

The rector was still silent. His face was laden like a cloud about to collapse in a storm.

- C... c... of course...! He didn't finish his sentence because the rector interrupted, bored:

- Well, gentlemen, I leave you with our novice. Go easy on him, I beg you.

They both nodded, with complicit smiles.

- As for you, Manuel, be prudent, and listen very carefully to what these gentlemen are

going to say to you. There is much wisdom in their words.

And, with a glance capable of killing an eagle in flight, he turned around, walking to the door. He opened it, turned back, looking again at Manuel dos Santos. A second later, the shadow of Rector Sérgio joined the Roman statuettes on the staircase.

- Make yourself comfortable, Manuel! Sit down!

The two small genuine leather sofas were joined by a third, which João effortlessly fetched from the other side of the room.

- H... h... is there a problem? asked Manuel.

- No! None, none at all.

- Yes, there is no problem, Manuel, confirmed John.

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- There is just one detail that is perhaps missing, in this new experience of yours here at the university, my dear.

- Yes. And the rector told us to talk to you about that very detail.

- W... w... what detail? I've been good, it seems to me... I've prepared the lessons, and... once again, Manuel could not finish his reasoning. Once again Manuel could not finish his reasoning.

- Manuel, tell me, what do you think about university education? I hear you come from primary schools, don't you? Must be quite a different system of education, huh...? Manuel?

- Well, basic education is...

- Yes, interrupted John again this time - university teaching is completely different... completely!

This time Manuel did not answer. It all seemed like a rhetorical game to him. What had the rector come to do there? He was beginning to feel afraid of those two. He waited a little. Then Carlos went on:

- You know, the Dean has a certain difficulty in understanding what happened this morning... remember, in the Political Sociology lecture, with Professor Clara... it all seems too... how should I say... look, surreal!

- Not to say unbelievable, even, concluded João.

Surrealistic? unbelievable? What the hell had happened in the Social Theory oral exam? He, Manuel dos Santos, had been to

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that oral exam and hadn't noticed anything out of the ordinary.

- Sorry... something unbelievable...? I was there... and I didn't see anything special...! I'm afraid I don't understand...

- Manuel... Manuel, Manuel, Manuel... I see we have to review the matter in its entirety, my dear.

- Yes, we all thought that phase had already been overcome... all of us, the dean, me, Carlos. It would be a disappointment... a teacher as competent as Manuel...

- Carlos. John. I don't understand a word you're saying. Explain yourselves, please. What's going on?

- So, my dear Manuel, you went straight to Paulo Lam in this morning's speech? Can't you see what a troublemaker he is?

- And the dangerous ones...

- Yes! And the dangerous kind!

- They are wrong. Lam is very intelligent. There is no student in this university who compares to him, I give you my word of honour.

- Keep it, Manuel.

- Yes. You may need it later...

There was a silence for a few fractions of a second. A sick... silence.

The two men watched with a deaf satisfaction of duty done the drops that formed on Manuel's forehead. Although the room was quite cool, he was beginning to sweat profusely. He felt hot. unbearably hot.

- Tell me, Manuel... what do you think about the transition from primary to basic education? And the fact that it's going from just one teacher to seven or eight?

- Well, it seems logical to me.

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- He's been called a lot of things. Logical is the first time I've heard...

- Eheheh, amused Joao agreed.

- Well, the father or mother figure in primary education makes perfect sense.

- Is that so? Then explain why.

- This has to do with the stages of a child's growth, it's common sense, everyone knows that... but, why do you ask?

John took a deep breath and resumed hostilities:

- So if all this is common sense, it might also explain why university education exists, might it not?

- Yes, university education is the end of the school journey. It imparts immense knowledge to students and...

- Excuse me? Carlos' face expressed a sudden and serious concern. - You said: you transmit a lot of knowledge?

John laughed heartily and exclaimed:

- Let's hope not! My God, what an idea! My dear Manuel, my dearest Manuel!

- Excuse me?

Manuel dos Santos was stunned. He didn't understand what those two were getting at.

- Well, if it's not for imparting knowledge, then I don't know what the university...

Carlos interrupted him abruptly:

- You still don't get it, do you? Manuel, these walls were not made to teach multiplication tables inside, for God's sake!

- N... no? But then...

- Subsidies, said John almost quietly. - Have you heard?

- Wages.

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- Renovations
- Golden - also...
- These walls," continued João, "are dependent subsidies. Manuel!
- Have you perhaps ever heard of State...? Hm?

- But... the generations that pass through here every year, the students that graduate, don't...
- No.
- No, Manuel dos Santos. No," nodded João.

- Big mistake. They are not formed... they are formed.
- Formatted, to be precise, Carlos.
- Yes, indeed. You see, Manuel, you must understand this... it's a mistake to think. It's the biggest mistake of all.

- Thinking is a very ugly defect: dangerous. Very dangerous...
- We can't let them think. Why do you think, Manuel, that the students come from an education where they memorized twenty pages and passed with flying colours, delighted with life, and here we have four hundred pages on average, per subject, ready to welcome them as only we know how?
- They decorate anyway, Manuel.
- But it is much more. And so they stop thinking.
- Well, no more.

They stopped for a moment and then they noticed Manuel, who was beginning to be a bit dazed by all those apparently infallible arguments. He was completely confused, and you could tell by the distance.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Good. We're really going to have to start the matter from the beginning, as I feared, John.

- So it seems. You have the floor.

- My dear Manuel what are schools made for?

- To... teach, impart knowledge, as I said, to give students the tools that will enable them to achieve in the future...

- My God! So many good intentions! And the world is merciful! And we shall all live happily! And there will be lasting peace for all eternity! A thousand times no! Oh Manuel! Don't make me mad, please!

Manuel sank down on his small sofa each time Carlos argued. None of it seemed to make sense. Not even a little.

- Manuel. If the students thought, it would be anarchy.

- Chaos, added João.

- And what follows chaos, Manuel?

- Social confusion. What's next?

- Most likely, an authoritarian regime.

- And next, ignorance turned into a flag.

- That's it, what do you want? Is that it, Manuel?

- But I... just told Professor Lemos that Lam was right, that Marx was in fact the author of that idea, which is now kind of forgotten, but...

- Manuel! No.

- N... no...?

- You have disavowed a highly respected professor at this university. Did you know that? Did you know that, Manuel?
- Yes. Very respected. Very serious. A very very very serious gesture.
- A master. A real master.
- Very respected indeed, reinforced Carlos.

Carlos wished he was still on the beach. Having to preach intellectual slaps to the immature, at this point in my life... But what do these guys learn in the schools they go through? Holy naivety... Then he lamented:

- And we who had such high hopes for you... a solid curriculum... a genuine taste for teaching... a personality full of the freshness of youth...

- It would bring a breath of fresh air to this university, Carlos, you can be sure of that...!

Manuel was livid.

- I would...? but Carlos..., what's going on, anyway? Am I going to be... am I going to be fired? I've got a sick wife, two kids... I'm the only breadwinner in the family... what are you going to do to me...? Don't do that, please!

Carlos and João looked at each other for a long time. This seemed to be a hopeless case.

- Manuel, we cannot in any way change the will of the Executive Council of this house... they want to make an example of this case, you know... it's all very bad standing for you...

- João is right, Manuel. The Executive Council has practically taken the decision... and after this you would have your life

difficult in higher education... I don't see how we could get you out of this one.

- But... is the case really serious? Carlos, you must be on the inside... tell me! What do they say in the Executive Council?

Carlos refreshed himself with Manuel's glass of water.

- João... I only see one way... you know, that matter we spoke about this morning...

- What subject? Ah! Yes... but I don't see...

- Yes, John, I think it's possible... good. Manuel. You can still save yourself.

- How? My God, tell me how!

My dear Manuel, if you only knew how

SHAMAN

Storm - XIV

An almost anonymous man had been waiting outside the office for ten long minutes. He was unsure, and the constant bumping into some students made him even more suspicious.

- Come this way.

The dean was tidying up some papers from that morning's class. At this age and especially with this status, still having to teach... hmpf. There's a lot of rascal out there jumping from public company to public company earning much more and doing much less. This damned attachment to sociologies is ruining my family budget, dammit...

He was interrupted in his thoughts by a slight noise outside: someone was approaching.

Before that someone knocked on the door, he bellowed:

- Come in!
- Excuse me, Mr Provost?
- Oh, it's you, Lopes, go ahead.
- I brought you a trainee teacher who wanted to talk to you. He says he's from Professor Carlos. Shall I let him in?

My God, babysitting again... it's not enough that Lam...

- Come in too, Lopes, I want you to stay.
- Me too, Mr Provost? Very well.

The two men approached his desk. He was still finishing signing some sheets, or so it seemed.

The rector stood up heavily, and made his way to the two sofas near his desk.

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- Get yourself a chair, Lopes.
- Yes, sir.
- Sit down, Manuel. Apparently, we have a lot to talk about...

- I spoke yesterday at your request with Professor Carlos and Professor João, and they
- I know, I know. Tell me, Manuel, what do you think of Paulo Lam?

- Well... he's very intelligent.
- No one says otherwise, concluded the rector.
- Maybe that's the problem..., suggested Lopes;
- A clever Chico, another one. That's what we need here...

- He's not like that at all! He's even very respectful.
- In your class.
- Yes, in my class.

- In the others you sow panic, Mr Provost, I assure you.

- But, he just thinks for his own head... I know him well, and...

- That's what doesn't interest us at all! Nothing at all! Have you seen if hundreds and hundreds of students start doing that too?

- C... how? But that's what the university s...

- Does it serve? Is that what the university is for? Is that what you were going to say, Manuel?

Lopes interrupted immediately:

- Not at all. Far from the truth. Very far from the truth. Manuel, I can't believe what you're telling us...

The rector was still quite patient, even though the day had been long and hard

work. I'll give him a chance... a good deed. After all there are them too... I'll be a Good Samaritan for a day. Are there still boy scouts ready to save old ladies from being run over? Yeah!

- Manuel is only harming himself by thinking like this. Let's see: Universities are for screening...

- Selection. A selection, Mr Provost.

- That's right. Thanks for the correction, Lopes. Manuel, the university selects the best.

- The most capable.

- The most studious. Those who, ultimately, will carry the name of our university further. We are not interested in promoting vanities. Not even other-worldly intelligences. That is of no interest to the social sciences, I assure you. Sociology,

anthropology and psychology are only one thing, my friend.

- Study, Lopes said immediately afterwards. - Books.

- That's right. That's right. Thank you. - Lopes, tell him what happens to students who are smart but not intelligent... tell him, Lopes.

- Well, first of all they create a lot of problems in class, which is a very important clue for teachers, I mean.

- What happens to Lam!" exclaimed the Dean.

- Precisely, Mr Provost, precisely. And then, they have eh... how shall I say... difficulties in passing certain subjects...

- Because we can't afford, tomorrow, to be told that we gave a degree to an irresponsible

troublemaker! This must not be possible! That's why we're here! To serve as a sieve... sorry, to select very well, and separate the wheat from the chaff!

Manuel was on a very comfortable sofa, and yet he felt bad. Paulo Lam had always been nice to him. Of course, he heard the other professors talking about certain disruptive interventions that had happened in their classes, but basically they were always professors with obvious pedagogical difficulties, and some of them were even cabotinos, who came to the university only to receive their paychecks, and little else.

Something told him they wanted something from him; if not, why go to so much trouble to convince him of something he would never in his life be convinced of? He slowly woke up from his lethargy, and asked, already quite calm:

- Mr Provost, with all due respect... don't you think that students have other means of expressing themselves? After all, if they have talent, sooner or later, well... they write books, question theories... isn't that why sociology exists...?

- My dear Manuel... oh my dear Manuel. How can I explain this to you...

- It's OK, I'll explain, Mr Provost. - Manuel, nobody will give a cent for a book written by someone who has not yet graduated and has no prospects of graduating any time soon...

- But, Lopes, Paulo's almost finished the course! In fact, as far as I know, he only has two marks to go, mine and Professor Dinís'. And I know that Professor Dinís has already given him a mark of 15, and I'm also going to... hm

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- You've hit the nail on the head, Manuel. There's one detail Lopes and I wanted to discuss with you.

- Eheheh... yes, there is a detail.

- One note, Manuel. A note that can make all the difference...

- All the difference in the world. That can turn a nobody into a Sociology graduate of this prestigious university...

- Take a deep breath, my dear Manuel

Breathe VERY deeply...

Storm - XV

Manuel dos Santos was a little nervous. The task he had in hand was a thankless one.

For years on end he had been aware of some of Paulo Lam's scenes at the university, which at first seemed to him cases easily explained by a rebellious adolescence, but whose ambiguity he now admitted.

What if Lam was not totally sincere with his teachers? If he had some sort of dual personality, all the oratorical feats attributed to him would certainly be explainable.

The Lam legend had begun to overlap with reality, in fact. A disturbing student, but capable of brilliant intuitions, of arguments worthy of the great brains; everything seemed to him too theatrical to correspond to the true personality of Paul Lam.

- Manuel.
- S... yes?

- Room 6 is already empty, Professor Antunes has just left with the Anthropology class. Come in.

Caught outside the teacher's lounge, Manuel didn't even have time to say: yes, nor to leave his Cultural Anthropology books in the locker. Carlos' pace was hurried; he seemed bored and strangely determined. The task had to be accomplished. Carlos knew it. And now Manuel also knew it.

They quickly descended the staircase, turned left, through the open air and through the door of the student bar, up the spiral staircase of white marble, leaning on the rusty metal handrail painted green. Carlos turned to Manuel, who was coming a little further behind, and commented:

- You see the garden? It looks like the jungle, doesn't it? The rector insists on this... it

must remind him of the African savannah. I've told him several times that it doesn't give the university a good image, but...

He left the thought unfinished, since, as he turned his face forward, he bumped into another face. That of Paul Lam.

- They seem to want to talk to me, don't they? Lopes told me. What's going on?

Manuel was speechless. His anguish was great, and he had never been able to disguise it since he was a child.

Carlos stalled. Lam's gaze was suspicious and even a little defiant. *I'm almost through with this course. Everything they've tried to do to me is over. What do you want now?*

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Well, there are certain matters that are best discussed in private in room 6. For your sake, Paulo.

As always, isn't it? Isolating the student so that his anonymous suffering does not incite others to revolt...

- Manuel, let's go then.

When Manuel walked to room 6, only one word could penetrate his thoughts. That word was unspeakable, but he later learned its name. A painful name, a name that he tried in vain to keep in the shadows. A name... cursed.

TREASON.

Storm - XVI

Carlos turned the key in the lock on the door to room 6 and entered. It was not one of the larger classrooms in the university. It was used mainly for some exams where great control was needed over who was copying. It was a kind of small-sized master class: the

upper part was wide and allowed for a detailed study of the students' nervous gestures.

This made it easy to control. And Lam knew it well: he had almost been caught cheating on the Social Science Methods test. Almost. A teacher had come up to him in desperation, eyes flashing, barely giving him time to hide his cheat sheets.

By the time he feared public embarrassment, her watchful gaze had transferred to a student behind him. *The biggest scare of my life.* He, who in primary and secondary school had never used cheat sheets, now, faced with an amalgam of gigantic books that he had to memorise, found himself obliged to do so... But then... that room 6...

This is where you almost got caught. Cowardly students who denounce other

students to the trainee teachers, who then draw up the blacklists of the full professors... yes, it is quite possible that this room is a message for me...

- Lam, please sit down.

The last thing he felt like doing was sitting in that place again. A place of fear. Fear of incorporeal authority, of absent wisdom, of youth forever lost, in the mazes of adult memory at any cost.

- I prefer to stand, he murmured at last.

- Very well, said Carlos. - Manuel, bring that chair and sit here.

Manuel felt good in his automaton skin. *I will need a lot of courage.* He thought better of it. *Or none at all.*

- Lam. Professor Manuel told me that his grade had been lower than expected.

underwhelming? Lam had already spoken informally with Manuel, and he had told him nothing

- But, Professor Carlos...

- Lam. I'll be honest with you.

It would be the first time...give up: you are not used to telling the truth....

- The Pedagogical Council of this house is about to expel you.

- How? But all I need is a chair, and...

- You misbehave every chance you get, dammit! There are professors who want to see you expelled. Give up pretending: assume you've created a multitude of problems. And there's a lot of antibodies around here to behaviour like that.

- I merely reacted to intellectual provocations. You shouldn't expect me to shut up when that's what's at stake! You can't do this to me, not now! I'm about to graduate! Manuel!

But Manuel had absorbed his whole new role, full of the indifference so dear to university professors. He didn't even move, and turned his face to the side where Carlos continued:

- Good. This is the situation. Things are ugly. Very ugly.

- But... can't I do anything? I need the diploma! Sociology is my future, I've lost 5 years of my life here!

Carlos seemed half asleep. The whole situation amused him inwardly. Just as we predicted. A harried student. We blackmailed what we could blackmail. We hit all the right notes. Suddenly he woke up

from his daze to throw a lifebuoy to a drifting Paulo Lam:

- Of course there is a chance... a last chance...

- A race in which Paulo demonstrated all his worth.

- Yes, Manuel. Not to say that he went to university just for the sake of it, like many others...

- A test that is difficult. That only a truly gifted person, a true intellectual can overcome.

- "THE" PROOF!

Lam followed the rhetorical ping pong movements of the two, but could not discern what they were getting at.

Finally, Carlos took a deep breath and, after a few seconds of meditation, he slowly opened his bag, from which he took out a sealed letter. He held it out, and Paulo held out his hand as well.

- What... what is this?

- Have you seen the mythical film Casablanca, by any chance? This, Paulo Lam, is your passport to freedom. Whether you will achieve it, only God knows...

Storm - XVII

Paulo Lam's test

- 1- *Psychology - (The Third Man)*
- 2- *Christianity - (The Origin of Species)*
- 3- *Linguistics - (A Golpada - movie)*
- 4- *Astronomy - (Around the world in 80 days)*

4 one-word answers

Carlos Lacerda

- Q... may I know what joke this is?
- You can, Lam. But I assure you it's no joke.

- It's a game, Paulo, Manuel said timidly, trying to help.
- But a very serious game: a game of knowledge.

- Yes, but it says here: 4 answers: answers to what? And what are these names... of books

and a film? What do they have to do with the subjects...?

- So many questions, my dear Paulo. So many questions...

- But we don't want questions, Lam.

- No: we want answers - answers!

- Yes, but answers... to what? What, for example, does linguistics have to do with the film *The Sting*? It doesn't make any sense!

- And yet this game was put together by a very knowledgeable person. It's time...

- ... to prove to us that it deserves this diploma.

- Well, no more. That's right, Manuel. Lam, you have four subjects here, four disciplines. You are to study them deeply and, with one of your brilliant tirades - which some teachers are so fond of - aren't you, Manuel? and relate them to the title or the content or

some hidden meaning of the work mentioned in front of each of those subjects.

- But this... is a never-ending charade! How the hell am I supposed to guess all that? Is it crazy?!

- Yeah, maybe it's all those things at once. But the game is there, right in front of you. And if there's someone who can design it, I'm sure there's someone else who can solve it. It's in your hands.

- Or rather, in his mind, corrected Manuel. Lam was in deep thought. He hadn't expected any of that.

- *A game of terrible complexity that only an intuitive can unravel. This one is a challenge up to my standards.*

- Accepted.

- We would expect nothing less from you, Lam. All that remains is to say that from now on, you will only be in contact with me and Manuel, who will assist me in conducting this process. If you want the diploma, that's how it will be. Think of it as your coursework. We don't want to give you the same trivial jobs that your colleagues do year after year, do we? By the way, have you seen some of these papers in our University Library?

- Already.

- Then you know what I mean.

- Hmpf. I know. No problem.

The three of them headed for the door of room 6. After Carlos closed the room, Manuel said goodbye and headed for his car.

As Paulo Lam was walking down the marble stairs, he felt someone calling him from behind. He turned around. It was Carlos.

- You missed saying two things.

Lam no longer had the patience for much more information.

- Yes?

- Yes. First: you don't have much time to find the answers... 4 days, 5 counting today: one day for each subject.

- 4 days! If this was already difficult, it's now impossible! But are they crazy or what?

- Hey, relax. Look at it this way: in 5 days you'll be rid of us. It's you who wins!

- I have seen that I am not in a position to discuss your decisions.

- You learn fast. That's the way it is.

- Okay, okay. And the second thing I should know... what is it?

- To the first wrong answer...

- Yes...? What happens...?

- You're out of the game!

Storm - XVIII

The stairs were again without any light, and there was graffiti everywhere: on the walls, on the lift door, and even on the floor. *Who would bother scribbling these things on the floor? Anyway, there are maniacs for everything.* The left third floor was almost impossible to reach in the dark, but Lam was

almost there. I wonder if Martins is at the door again. He was.

She greeted him, and sat down next to him. Your uncle's cat immediately nuzzled into your lap. Hm. Too soon. Again. He didn't know how long he would wait for him: last time it had been almost two hours. I must have the most unpredictable uncle in the world, my God....

Ever since he's been in these spiritist meetings and left the Freemasons he's been on a real live wheel, he doesn't stop anywhere...

- How are you, Martins? How are you, Martins? Uncle Rui taking good care of you? Hm?

Martins would go out through the window during the night. He would then come in around 6 p.m. through the door of the building, which was always open. Uncle Rui lived in a two-room flat in Alfama. It was a small house, which he had found with his retirement as a civil servant. He had come from Mozambique, and he still remembered how they had forced him to be labelled as a *second-class Portuguese* on his Identity Card.

Now, almost thirty years later, all that was fading with the memory of a time he preferred to forget and call past, but there were wounds that not even the years could erase. Paulo loved to talk to his uncle about a wide range of subjects, from religion to science, from conspiracy theories to the occult. There seemed to be no subject that Uncle Rui did not master.

They talked until almost dawn, and never tired of each other. Family ties spoke louder, no doubt, but there was also an exceptional affinity of personalities between the two. His 60 years, though well preserved, did not allow him to exert much effort.

After a heart attack when he was 52 years old, he could not afford to get emotional. And how he got emotional talking about those subjects... A little shorter than Lam, strong, with thick glasses, hair always dishevelled, a wide forehead, Uncle Rui was Paul Lam's real father. With a natural tendency for conflict, an authority on scientific matters but also on parapsychology that Paul did not dare question, and a rare but disconcerting humour, Rui had been widowed at an early age and was alone. Too lonely.

My favourite uncle - and not because he is the only one; he would always be my favourite, just because he IS the only one. The cat was very quiet now, with Lam's parties.

Yeah, and I need to be calm too. This could take hours.

. THE GAME.



(PART TWO)

The Game - I

It was almost 8.34pm when someone entered the always open door of the building on Rua do Salvador, in Alfama. The shadow moved, tired, to the lift. Broken. Hmf. Again. But is there no way anything could work in this building? The shadow turned back and looked at the post office. Then it slowly climbed the stairs, one by one, in the dimness. Not even a cat could be heard outside. And Martins, where could he be? First floor. Second floor. Groping, he reached the last flight of stairs and looked up.

- Paulo! Are you here!? Martins, come here!

Martins immediately jumped up, welcoming Rui with his usual cheerfulness. Sometimes you even look like a dog... Paulo Lam woke up startled and, still sleepy, caught sight of his uncle's face in his recent dreams.

- I see you're still half asleep! What brings you here, Paulo? Is everything OK? Come in, come in!

Ruí turned the key and the three of them entered. Martins went straight to the sofa in the living room, but not without first going through his bowl of milk.

- We'll talk, Paulo, go into the living room, and switch on the TV. We'll talk. I'm just gonna wash my hands.

- All right.

Lam made his way down the corridor and switched on the TV screen. It was an old television set, at least twenty years old. One of Uncle Ruí's first purchases since he came from Africa. The whole room aroused apprehension: African figurines, a leopard-skin rug, from the time of the hunts in that hidden corner of overseas, far away. It was a strange place, as if childhood in those distant lands conferred magical powers on

those who had witnessed it. There was a certain distrust among the most *authentic* Portuguese people of the imaginary heritage that these people brought to Portugal. Portugal, the capital of the Empire. A colonial Empire, with the still sore wounds of a decolonisation that was carried out in a hurry, on the spur of the moment, like everything that had been managed by Lusitanians since time immemorial.

Portugal, the land of dreams. Portuguese, the intuitive ones. Since the Discoveries, in the 16th Century, there had been nothing else to note in these parts. We had given new worlds to the world, but immediately afterwards we had strategically withdrawn our existences from that world that was so much too real that it was almost frightening just to have to live it. Rui entered the room, and broke the spell of those brief but profound thoughts, with the reality that had so tormented the Portuguese for centuries.

- So, Paulo, how are you? What have you been doing? We haven't spoken since last year, right?

- Uncle, you have to help me. I'm at a dead end.

- What do you mean? Did you get into something? What now? Is it serious, Paulo?

- Uncle, I'm in trouble at the university. They'll only give me my degree if I break a bloody code, otherwise they'll kick me out: and they have good reason to... You've got to help me.

- A... a code? What are you talking about? Hold on, I'm gonna turn off the TV. Okay, that's it. Just stay calm and we'll figure it out. Go ahead.

Lam took the folded letter from his pocket and handed it to his uncle. John took it, read it calmly and thought for a few seconds. He slipped the paper back into the letter and handed it to Lam.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- As I understand it, it's some kind of game.

Explain to me what they want from you.

- It is a knowledge game. I have to give them very precise answers, following these clues of the titles of famous books and a film, for each of the subjects.

- You'll have to study hard...

- Yes. I'll have to study hard. Not least because there are two more rules for this game...

- Is that so? Hm... complicated, the code. What are these rules?

- One is that I have only 4 days to solve it: one day for each of them.

- 4 days!? Only four? Very short deadline indeed... It will take a good strategy... But, tell me, what is the second rule they impose on you?

- If I get any answer wrong... I get kicked out.

John meditated for more than three minutes. Every now and then he seemed to have found the solution, only to fall back in disbelief, shaking his head. He was studying hypotheses. Lam had come to the right place. If there was one person who knew the definition of the word strategy, it was his uncle. During the war in the former colonies he had already been one of the military men who stood out the most: he was brave in combat, never let his colleagues fall into ambushes, and soon there was talk of his genius intuition in the Maputo barracks. He was born in Africa. That said it all. Land of tribal rites, which his grandfather still practiced on the savannah, and which he never forgot: it was in his blood. Land of the shocking slavery that so many generations had taken to other continents, at the cost of countless deaths and separated families, in the despair of mothers who kept true wisdom inside. It was time for his uncle to help him.

Blood of my blood. Here, or anywhere.
Suddenly, John leapt up and exclaimed:

- I've got it!

- What, Uncle? Tell me!

- It's so simple, Paul, don't you see?

- What? Don't see what?

- Do you still have your Oeiras Library card with you? It's a nice library, isn't it?

- S... yes, uncle, but I don't see where you want...

- One day is over, Paulo! Four more to go! And today we can no longer study! But tomorrow I'm going to the library to get ten books.

- But my card only allows me to bring five, it's the Oeiras Library's regulation, and...

- Have you forgotten that I still have my card from there, from when I lived in Figueirinha, Paulo? That's ten books, not just five! Come on, your head is a little

rusty, what do they teach you at that university?

- Yes, yes, but what made you jump like that, what do you know anyway?

Ruí suddenly looked serious. He measured Paulo Lam from top to bottom, took a deep breath, and then spoke in a low voice:

- I know what kind of study they want you to do.

- S... you know? And what kind of study is that? I've thought about this over and over again, and I don't think I have time to...

- Paulo! From now on you live here, forget the room that Víctor Masse rented for you, in Carcavelos. And I'll help you.

- Thank you, uncle. I needed to hear that.

- And you're gonna crack that damn code, if it's the last thing I do in my life!

The Game - II

- Wake up, sleepyhead!

When Paulo Lam woke up, he saw only Martins. He had come to accompany his owner in this sudden but calculated awakening, and was licking his face.

- It's ten thirty! You think you're living the same life in my house as you did at your university, eh? Here, you work, you rascal! Get up, I've already picked up ten books from the library in Oeiras, you've got lots to read from now on!

- Just a little longer, Uncle... let me sleep, I have a headache...

- What you're about to read is going to make your head hurt! Come on, you've got five minutes. Go into the living room, I've got some biscuits and milk.

- Hmpf...

Lam sat up in bed, and tried to remember the previous night's conversation. It didn't take him long to remember. A game. The Game.

He waited a minute, to regain full consciousness: he had dreamt a lot, and very deeply. Dreams in which he was in a lake, with his mother, and it was hard for him to walk. Apparently he was running errands between imaginary points, walking with water up to his chest. And something, something was urgent, for he was in quite a hurry. But of that dream only a vague memory remained, and he gave up trying to relive it. The doors of the unconscious had closed, perhaps forever.

Lam didn't know it yet, but he was about to dive into the magma of the primary forces, which someone had described as the real psychic body of the iceberg we are all made of.

He entered the room still groggy, greeted his uncle, and as he sat down, Rui began:

- Eat something. You must be thinking: why the hell doesn't my uncle go to a

bookshop and buy the necessary books, right Paul?

- Well, ehh, yeah it's a bit weird, uncle, and...

- Because I can never find anything in bookshops! So, when I want to find something very specific, the best thing is to go directly to a good library, like the one in Oeiras, which has a bit of everything of the most important that is written on a certain subject. You can find books with codfish recipes, mystical stories, "cursed" books, crime books, art, poetry, a million things from all branches of knowledge.

- Yes, indeed, that is true, but...

- And have you seen how much time we have? The best Portuguese bookshop I know is a website, somalivre.pt, but we only have one day for each subject, Paulo, one day! Just one! How do you expect me to order all these books in such a short space of time? And

besides, there's nothing like going through the indexes of the books one by one. That's essential, Paulo. You do the study - because you're intuitive and all that - and I give the strategy, the tactics for each of the problems. You are the player, I am your coach! Welcome to my football team! Ahahah!

- All right, all right, all right. It's enough that I have to kill my head with this game, I still have to put up with mockery from my own uncle... hm?

- Don't worry. When we finish this, we'll go see a Glorioso game. What do you think of the new coach, Paulo?

- It's the usual litany: a foreign coach, one more...! They make a two-year contract, knowing he'll only stay one; by the time he adapts to our country's football, to the stalling tactics of small teams, by then he's already lost the championship. And, when

the managers realise that once again the championship is gone, they send him away, but he demands compensation because in the meantime he has one more year of contract...

- Anyway, look: the usual!

- So, what do I have to read today? Which books did you bring from the Oeiras Library?

- Today you will study the human spirit. Psychology. Freud. The theories, ideas. All of it. And you will, with your intelligence, filter out what is essential, and take away what is accessory. Is that all right?

- Okay. What books are those?

- Ten books: some deal only with Freud's work, career and life. I'm of the opinion that, read one, you've read them all... but that's for you to decide. Let's go to the books:

- Sigmund Freud - A Tragic in the Age of Science

This one might be weak, Paulo, but take a look at it. It's a small book, it should read well. Remember that we are looking for a detail, which may appear on any page in any of these books. Be attentive, and pay close attention to detail. A particular aspect of life, an anonymous episode, may explain what we want to find.

- More. Let's have another one, Uncle.

- Introduction to Psychoanalysis - Freud, by Michel Haar

This is a kind of summary of one of Freud's fundamental works. You should read it carefully, it might be of great interest to us.

- The 10 great ones of the unconscious, written by several authors

It has a summary of the ideas of ten fundamental authors of the theories of mind, and also questions and answers

about each of them, including personal life episodes.

- Ok. Next! Ehehe...

- You're in the mood to read, hm? Well, there's plenty to keep you entertained...

- Freud and his followers

This should also be of interest.

- Freud and Piaget - Affectivity and intelligence

A comparison between two theories, that of Freud and that of Piaget.

- Freud

There are two other books with the same title on this central author in the science of the spirit; one by Roland Jaccard, and the second by Edgar Pesch.

- Freud was wrong. Why was he wrong? -
Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis

is a book that has created a lot of controversy. The author has gathered a lot of consensus on his views. It caused quite a stir, if you have some time take a look.

- Introduction to Psychoanalysis -
Contemporary theory and practice

, it is a book that unites theory with practice. I found the index very current and concise. And we have reached the end, only one book left:

- The interpretation of dreams - 100th anniversary edition, by Sigmund Freud

This is the book that Freud himself considered his masterpiece. But perhaps it has only some residual interest for us, in this context of the game of knowledge that has been proposed to you. I leave it to your

consideration. Maybe you won't even have time to pick it up.

- Whew... I think I've had enough, uncle.

- I think so too! Let's get the table up, you'll be working here. I've already numbered the books, and made a summary of the indexes, so you can get your bearings. From here on, it's up to you!

- Very good. I'll get right on it.

- And I go out shopping, for dinner, and I visit a friend downtown.

- Do you have any clues to give me, uncle...?

- Yes, start by searching the net for the content of the work: The Third Man. That may be the secret of this first problem. I think it will be related to Freud: man is the cornerstone of all psychology, after all.

- Okay uncle, I'll do that.

- My computer has dial-up access to the net. Use it, google it. You should find that on

movie sites, maybe. Orson Welles is in that movie, you know?

- Yes, I did. I hear it's a quality film.

- That's just the problem, Paulo! Films today are so high quality and so quick to make, that nobody is interested anymore in the books that gave rise to them! What's the point, if a month later there's already a film based on that book...?

- Yes, really... Well, let's get to work. Do you have any blank sheets?

- Take it out of the printer. And there's a pen next to the computer. I'm going out.

- See you later, Uncle!

- When I come back, Paulo, I want to know everything about my mind!

- Eheh, don't worry, I'll make a summary of this whole mess. Come here, Martins! Come on my lap!

Ruí went out and closed the door.

Paulo Lam turned on the computer, and listened to the slow purr of the CPU. *Geez... it's a Pentium 1, very weak... It must be at least five years old, I have to be patient...*

As Lam waited for the login screen, Martins looked up at him, petting him, in his lap.

Yes, Martins... we're going to have a very long morning...

The Game - III

Paulo Lam began by researching Wikipedia, in Portuguese. Incomprehensibly, there was no information on The Third Man.

I have to find this, no matter what. Next stop: Google.

He typed in the phrase, and searched. The search result gave a few sites related to the film, not to Graham Greene's work.

A writer struggles all his life to be recognised, and then what remains is the film, not the book?

The first site was too incomplete and fleeting, but the second contained a synopsis of the film, ideal for Lam's study. He immediately copied it into a blank Word document, and printed it out. While the film synopsis sheet was being printed, Lam created a directory in My Documents on his uncle's computer with the title: O_Game, and saved the document inside that directory.

He had just printed it out. He pulled out the paper and began to read. It was in Brazilian. Paulo Lam mentally translated the rest.

"After the end of World War II, Holly Martins (Joseph Cotten), a 6th rate American writer, arrives in Vienna. Holly was penniless, but his old friend Harry Lime (Orson Welles) had promised him a job. Holly tries to find Harry and then learns that his friend was run over and died instantly. Harry was soon buried and, stunned, Holly watches the burial. Near the grave is a beautiful young woman, Anna Schmidt (Alida Valli), who after the ceremony is over quickly leaves. After the brief funeral Holly is stopped by Major Calloway (Trevor Howard), who asks the writer if he wants a lift back to his hotel. Holly accepts and the two end up in a pub, where Calloway, a member of British intelligence, begins to take information about Harry from Holly, telling him that he was a cheat and a murderer. Holly is so enraged by the accusations that, were it not for the prompt action of Sergeant Paine (Bernard Lee), a sort of security guard for

the major, he would have assaulted Calloway. As the major knew Holly was flat broke, he gives him some money to spend the night at Sacher's, a modest hotel, before travelling the next day. Calloway orders Paine to drive Harry there. At the hotel Paine introduces Holly to Crabin (Wilfrid Hyde-White), who says he represents a cultural entity and would like to have Holly at a lecture on contemporary romance, as Holly's books are quite popular there. Holly claims that he can't afford to stay, so Crabin assures him that he will gladly pay for his lodging for as long as he wants. This was all Holly wanted, so he could do his own research into Harry's past and clear his friend's name. Kurtz (Ernest Deutsch), an impoverished baron, contacts Holly and tells her that he witnessed the death of Harry, who crossed a street without looking where he was going and was hit by a truck. However, Holly finds Kurtz's statement inconsistent and wants to meet the young woman who

was at the funeral. At the same time it seems that Calloway wants to see Holly out of Austria, as Paine never tires of reminding him that he must travel. When talking to actress Anna Schmidt, the young woman who was at the funeral, one thing is raised: at the time of the accident there were only Harry's friends at the scene, and the strangest thing is that the one who ran Harry over was his driver. This makes Anna raise the hypothesis, that it was no accident. Trying to elucidate a confusing case, Holly discovers that three people carried Harry's body: Kurtz, the Romanian Popescu (Siegfried Breuer) and a third man."

What a strange story. There's no point to it... Well, if I saw the film I might think it was a masterpiece. And for God's sake, someone should tell the Brazilians not to try and imitate the Portuguese...

A man. Run over. A trap? His friends seem to know more than they're letting on. They pick up his body. A third man. *Could my uncle be right? What does this have to do directly with Freud?*

- Martins! Already asleep? We've got a lot to do! Hunt the third man, hunt!

The Game - IV

When John arrived home it was 4.32 p.m. He entered quietly. He entered quietly, anticipating his nephew's sleep and dreams in the living room. He left some bags in the kitchen, and passed silently into the living room, through the dark, narrow corridor.

A cubicle house. To walk a man fighting all his life, to die in a tiny house like this...

hmf. I'd rather die in Africa, there at least was savannah, clean air, warmth, smell of earth.

And my childhood.

- Lam!

- Hm?

Lam woke up from the dream world. His trunk was lying on the table, and in front of him were dozens of scattered sheets of paper, handwritten in his usual indecipherable handwriting. It had been like this, from primary school, right through to university.

I write in terrible handwriting, it can't be helped.

In Grade 4, the teacher had organised a competition for the best letter of the class and, seeing that Paulo Lam's writing was one of the worst, she had organised several

prizes, up to five; then, seeing that she couldn't classify him, she had increased it to seven prizes. And when Lam was about to be rewarded for his effort, he who had worked hard that day to make a beautiful letter, the bell rang and he and the teacher stood face to face, as if saying to each other: *I wish I could... we'll have to do it next time.*

Meanwhile, computers and Office and Word had arrived, shaking up the whole female structure of making- letter- pretty- for- teacher- to- see.

My turn has finally come. Now my handwriting is just like all the others.

Rather like this.

The Game - V

- But what is this? I don't want a lazy nephew!

- Ahh... not at all, uncle: I've done a lot of things. I fell asleep from exhaustion...

- I know, I know, Paulo, I'm joking with you. I'm just going to the bathroom, and then I want to discuss these ideas with you. I was

talking to a psychoanalyst friend, who lives downtown, and he gave me some insight, I'll be right back. In the meantime, put this away, okay?

- It's all right. Let me just wake up. I already know the story of The Third Man.

- Well, that's good. I'll be right back.

- Martins, tidy up! Have you seen the mess you've made here on the table? Oh, dear...

- Meow...

- For now you escape. Well, let me organise this... Book 2 - libido, repression, dream, this is here; Book 3 - Jung, Lacan, Adler, this is here; Book 4 - Oedipus complex, catharsis, ego, superego, this goes there. I am ready.

Let's play the game...

- It's so hot outside, Paulo, you don't even want to go out today! This doesn't even seem like a September day, I tell you!

- I can imagine. This house is like a sauna.

- Well, but this house is International Style! Big deal, huh? Every suburb of the third world has houses like this! Le Corbusier, Wright, Bauhaus and so many others were working to improve people's living conditions, and at the end of it all, what do they give us? Cubicle houses! The worst of the functionalist architecture tradition, is always the worst of all things, the one that survives its founders, believe me!

- Probably...

- Well, but let's get down to facts, not the mere opinions of the poor of this so-called civilised world, who don't deserve to live in this world of other people's opulence. Paulo, give me good numbers to play! This game is for the best players, hm?

- Uncle, I have here the result of a day's work. It is the summary of all the ideas that I think are interesting in these books. Some of them I haven't even picked up, because I think they are out of place in the context of our study.
- Yes, some of them yes, I think so too. I brought them just to make numbers, I confess, and after all, any hint will be useful to us... Let me see the list.... Book 1, Freud, a tragic in the age of science, tell me what you thought of this one.
- Nothing good. The typical case of: a lot of parra but little grape.
- Really? I thought it might have some interesting details... I thought there might be some interesting details about Freud's life...
- Really, nothing at all. A small book in form and also in content. Nothing to point out, uncle.
- Okay, go on.

- Book 2, Introduction to Psychoanalysis, Freud, by Michael Haar, a very interesting book. I have the key ideas here.
- Yes? Can I see?
- It is the summary of one of the most important works of the founder of Psychoanalysis, Freud. He always talks about divisions in two or in three.
- The Third Man... everything is about everything, and nothing is what it seems, it seems to me....
- Yes, well, but those are mere puns. First division: according to Freud, there is a pleasure principle (the famous libido) and a reality principle. People live between one and the other: on the one hand they want to have maximum pleasure, and on the other, they have the reality of social constraints, which limit their libido, which will later give rise to neuroses. He also talks about the recalcitrance or censorship, which is a mechanism of the pre-conscious, relative to

his classification (in three), now classic, of the mind into: Unconscious / Pre-Conscious / Conscious.

- And the dream?

- Calm down, Uncle. I'm coming. The dream is very important in Freudian theory, every dream is the illusory realisation of a desire: since the individual cannot realise it in reality, he escapes into a world where satisfying this libido desire is finally possible. It is divided into: manifest content (symbolic representations concretized in the mind, which we remember), and latent content (the true interpretation of the dream, what it really means).

- Good work, Paulo. Keep it up.

- And then there is another mechanism intrinsic to the functioning of our mind: according to Freud, neurotics suffer from recalcitrance, which confirms the decisive importance of infantile sexuality in the

formation of neuroses. Thus, what actually happens is the regression of the libido, by the recalcitrance, to previous, infantile stages of sexuality.

- That is, the oral, anal and sexual stages. Am I right?

- Yes, uncle, that's it. As for dreams, Freud says that those of children are simple, they express the direct expression of a desire; they are not deformed, whereas in those of adults the desires which are not accepted because of censorship are disguised in countless forms, and most of the symbols in the dream are sexual symbols.

- And the nightmare? What is the nightmare after all? It doesn't seem to fit that theory, after all it's not the expression of a desire, surely... what is it then?

- Freud says that the nightmare is the unformed realisation of a repressed desire; ah, and don't forget also the destructive phase of the evolution of personality, while

we are children: there is always a negative, aggressive drive, which can explain a lot...

- Okay. You got away with it. I hear you.

- He goes on to say that the unconscious lives in a space in which there is no time.

- What do you mean?

- There is no past, present or future - there is no chronological order; it lives "outside of time" - this is its expression, *ipsis verbis*.

- Hm... Interesting.

- Then there is a whole series of ideas that I think do not interest us much: perversions, which are divided into sexual end (masturbation, for example) and sexual object (homosexuality, among other things). The field of sexuality includes the infantile period, which is the only one that can explain both perversion and neurosis, and normal sexual life.

- Yes, fine, but explain the stages of childhood sexuality, I'm curious...
- Well, the stages of infantile sexuality are based on perverse erogenous zones (because not procreation-oriented), and are as follows:
 - . first - the oral phase (this is the sucking phase; the baby demonstrates his auto-erotic attitude from an early age);
 - . second - anal phase (the baby gets pleasure from evacuation and retention);
 - . third - sadistic-anal phase (between the first and the third year of life - a tendency to domination and cruelty develops; it is by a fixation of the libido to this phase that sadistic and masochistic perversions are explained);
 - . fourth - phallic phase (characterised by the Oedipus complex; it is not the sexual instinct, but love for the mother and hatred of the father which occupies the foreground);

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. fifth - latency period (between six and eight years of age - the period when sexual development stops).

- Uff...

- Yeah, uncle, hard stuff... Now, Freud and Piaget, *Affectivity and intelligence*, book 5 - it is limited to making a detailed comparison between the two theories, it has no interest for us. Book 9 - *Introduction to Psychoanalysis: contemporary theory and practice*, very interesting, indeed.

- Is that so? Tell me, tell me.

- Yes, uncle, a very useful book to define concepts. According to the authors, psychoanalysis comprises - guess what? - three interrelated parts:

. a set of specific psychotherapeutic techniques

. a model of psychological development

. and a "metapsychology", i.e. speculative hypotheses about the nature and structure of the mind.

They divide into four phases the history of the psychoanalytic movement:

. 1885 - 1897: the "pre-analytic" phase (study of hypnosis with Breuer)

. 1897 - 1908: psychoanalysis itself: Freud's years of solitude and discovery of the practical and theoretical principles of psychoanalysis. The culmination of this phase is his essential work: The Interpretation of Dreams.

. 1907/8 - 1920: The beginnings of the psychoanalytic movement

. From 1920 until Freud's death in 1939: he was an influential theorist until the end of his life.

- Get some rest.

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- I'm fine, Uncle. Next up, another three-way split...

- Another one...! They were still few, weren't they?

- Eheheh... yeah. Psychoanalysis can be defined as the branch of psychology started by Freud that deals with 3 distinct areas of study:

. the development of the mind and the influence of early experience on adult mental states

. the nature and role of unconscious mental phenomena

. and the theory and practice of psychoanalytic treatment.

And yet another classification based on the number... three!

- Another one!!???

- Outra. The pragmatic demarcation line between psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic

psychotherapy has to do with the frequency, intensity and duration of therapy:

- . more than three times a week - psychoanalysis

- . three times or less - everything else

(of course this is not always the case, uncle, it's just a very real generalisation)

- Are you finished?

- There is still one last one, which is divided into - guess what?

- Three!

- Bingo! You've won the first prize! Stop by the cashier to withdraw your money, and...

- OK, I get the idea. Go ahead, Paulo.

- The image of the mind proposed by Freud went through three phases:

- . object trauma model (external painful events affect behaviour and emotion)

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. topographical model (different psychological functions are in different places: division of the mind into unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious systems; the two principles of mental functioning - primary process and secondary process; theory of instincts)

. and structural model (Id - innate impulses; Superego - ideal Ego, represents the internalisation of the relationship with the parental figure and also Ego - rational part of the personality). And I'm done for the time being.

- You go on, hold on. I spoke to a psychoanalyst friend, as I told you. I told him about The Third Man; he doesn't know the book or the film very well, but we discussed it and came to several conclusions.

- Yes? What conclusions?

- As I had told you, this must be related to Freud. This friend of mine, Pedro Borges, he says that there are several hypotheses to solve this riddle, to conjugate the third man with Psychology:

. first: Freud and his early followers; finally, the origins of the psychoanalytic movement;

. second: don't forget that we are studying the theories of the mind; so, there can and will be certainly second senses, metaphors - the third man being for example the Ego, or the Id, or even one of the sexual phases of our childhood - the paths are open to multiple interpretations, Paul

. third: to be or not to be Jewish

- I don't get that one, Uncle. Explain it to me, please.

- Well, this is a long story. According to Pedro Borges, Freud studied and lived in Austria - in Vienna, but when Hitler and

National Socialism annexed it, he was at risk: he was Jewish, you know...

- Ah! I didn't know. Or maybe I just skimmed over it and forgot. I certainly didn't think it was important.

- Yes, Paul, almost all the great European brains were: Einstein, Freud, and many others. Look, Adler was also Jewish.

- The follower of Freud? Yes, I think I read something about that in one of the books.

- Peter explained to me that Freud was dying to hand over the running of the whole psychoanalytic movement to a non-Jew, because he felt the weight of this insurmountable heritage on his shoulders. Hence he had entrusted Jung with the task.

- Could that be the key to this first mystery...? But how?

- That's where we come in, Paulo. I think there's something here. But we don't have much time to figure it out: the first day is almost over, and...

- But let me finish what I was telling you, Uncle.
- It's true, I'm sorry. Say it.
- The book #3: The Big Ten of the Unconscious.
- Yes, that book is essential, I feel it.
- Well, in the light of what Uncle told me, I am going to tell you about the work of Adler, Jung and also Lacan, who is a very interesting author.
- Go ahead, Paulo.
- In 1908, at the Salzburg Congress of Psychoanalysis, the differences in principle between Freud and Adler become manifest; and in 1911, at the Nuremberg Congress, the rupture takes place. Adler's work can be schematically studied under four aspects, Uncle:
 - . the personality theory (based on the study of the process of psychic compensation that

tends to rebalance the state of physical inferiority of the body's organs)

- . the conception of neuroses and mental health

- . psychotherapy

- . the teaching and practice of psychopedagogy

For Adler, the unconscious does not block the personality: it serves it. The human being must be observed through his social relations

- psychology of the interpersonal relationship. Thus, for him sexuality is not the essential motor of our psychic life.

- That must have been when he became incompatible with Freud...

- That's exactly right. In fact, Freud and his followers aggressively rejected any attempt at theoretical innovation in their midst: it happened to Adler, to Mélanie Klein, to Carl Jung, and to several others. They were a cohesive group but when someone said

different things, they joined forces and formed a real pack...

- Jesus Christ, Paul.

- Yes, but that's how it was. They criticised straight away, and fiercely, from what I've read.

- But, go on.

- Good. For Adler, neurosis is an attempt for the individual to evade any coercion that society imposes on him, and he does this by means of a self-induced counter-coercion, which paralyses his movements. In conclusion: he also looked at child psychopedagogy: pedagogy found a new impulse and a new orientation in Adler's doctrine, according to these authors. I will now summarise Jung's thinking.

- Go ahead.

- Pass me the glass of water, uncle.

- Here you go, take it.

Get ready, Uncle. Now it's gonna get hot...

The Game - VI

- The Big Ten book of the unconscious begins this chapter killing, Uncle...
- Is that so? I want to see that.
- It's there, on page 108: "Carl Gustav Jung: the rebel", imagine!
- Well, this promises... I'm all ears, Paulo.
- Jung is considered by many as one of the great thinkers of the 20th century; a true spiritual master who tried to unite religions, East/West, mysticism, astrology, psychism, deep studies of cultural traditions of various peoples, among countless other things...
- My goodness, all that? But Paul, why do they call him the rebel? I had read something about him a long time ago, I think it was also related to spiritualism, my master likes him a lot. Pedro didn't tell me anything good about this Jung... it's strange!
- Strange, Uncle? Perhaps strange would be to have spoken...!

- What do you mean?

- Jung is a myth. But a very dangerous myth... Psychology universities are running away from him and his work like the devil from the cross! - a friend of mine who is studying psychology, Miguel, told me. It is the best kept public secret of the theories of the unconscious. One of its essential concepts - the Collective Unconscious, by itself, and if it were studied without prejudice, would destroy the base of the Freudian theory.

- Really? Well, I already had an intuition on that level, but I didn't think it was that important...

- Yes, Uncle, Freud's followers - which is the vast majority of psychoanalysts - reject Jung from the outset: Jung the dreamer, they say; Jung the lyricist; Jung the damned thinker....

- What an intriguing story. But I hear he had a close relationship with Freud... which is true and which is a lie, Paulo?

- Uncle, let's start from the beginning. Adler and Jung were part of the first group of Freud's followers.

- Okay.

- But...

- Why the hell does there have to be a but in everything, if we only have a few more hours to decipher this, you don't say???

- Yeah. In the social sciences, there's always a but, really. When Adler and Jung became aware of Freud's almost unique focus on sexual drives - which he used to explain virtually all human behaviour - they both "snapped", and decided to leave the group.

- And then...?

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- Then... well, like all those who diverged from Freud's theory, they were ostracised by the psychoanalytic movement.

- Here they are made, here they are paid for...

- Well, no more. As I told you, they were very aggressive when their authority was questioned. But let's go to Jung. 1911 - He founds, with Freud, the International Society of Psychoanalysis, of which he is appointed president; 1912 - Numerous disagreements arise between Jung and Freud during the IV Congress of Psychoanalysis, in Munich and, in the following year, Jung resigns from the Society, adopting for his method the term "analytical psychology" and, later on, that of "complex psychology". Between 1921 and 1926 he travelled through Africa, Central America and India. He saw psychology as a spiritual research. The bond that united Jung to his mother was very strong: the mother, beyond the simple

physical body, is the original ocean, the collective unconscious, the first incarnation of the archetype *anima*, personifies the whole unconscious.

- Let me breathe, I beg you!
- Ah... excuse me, uncle.
- All right, all right. Go on now.
- Following on from what I was saying, this double-faced mother, sometimes loving and sometimes fearful, the bearer of anguish and a place of refuge, embodies archaic nature, the instinct capable, at a glance, of knowing reality in depth. Jung debated the ideas of parapsychology with a sceptical Freud, and tried to demonstrate to him that the collective unconscious could explain premonitory dreams, presentiments, the phenomena of synchronisation and telepathy. This collective unconscious leads to the fact that, at the heart of itself, the psyche is universe. However, the two men clashed: Jung did not

accept the sexual theory of neuroses and opposed Freud's psychoanalysis with his analytical psychology which is based on another theory of the psychism, uses another technique and gives access to another philosophy. Pass me the glass of water, uncle. Thank you, uncle. Glup glup... Martins! Are you paying attention? At the end I'll give you a test!

- Come, Martins, don't pay any attention to our Paulo. Here, come.

- Well, to continue: although Jung wrote a lot, he only did so in the second half of his life: before that, he lived, had an intense psychiatric activity, read, travelled, cultivated himself in three great domains - esotericism, Eastern thought and Ethnology. The psychic system he elaborates is of great complexity, increased by the imprecision and multiplicity of meanings he gives to his concepts. There is always a

counter-weight which rebalances everything in his thought. The animus is the masculine in woman; the anima, the feminine in man. His theory is based on three parts:

- . the conscious, which at its centre, encompasses the ego and, at its periphery, a set of functions that ensure the individual's relationship with the outside: the persona, formed by:

- . the personal unconscious, shallow and formed by repressed or forgotten elements and

- . finally, the collective unconscious, the common heritage of all humanity.

- Three parts... the third man... is it possible that they always divide everything into three? It's a bit of a mess, if this has anything to do with the pure theory of these guys...

- That's right, uncle. But that's how it is. Besides, there is only one more important thing to point out: the psychological types - introversion and extroversion, a typology which is complicated by the psychic functions: thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation. Now, from here to Astrology, it is not a very big step. In other words, Jung was both a doctor and a spiritual master. Now, Lacan.

- So much... well, carry on.

- He is a French author who has always maintained stormy relations with psychoanalytic societies. It is difficult to distinguish, in this author, provocation from the demand for rigour. Psychoanalysis is only one of his many activities. His essential works: - Writings and - The mirror stadium. Lacan is a true Renaissance man; his merit is that, in France, he has imposed the necessary return to the letter of Freud's

written work, to his original texts, without second interpretations by other authors. He united psychoanalysis with Language/Linguistics.

- That alone must be immense, indeed.
- Yes, Uncle, and his work is very lucid. The connection with Linguistics gave a very effective and innovative stamp to his interventions, which were mainly lectures and oral expression. For Lacan, it is through identification with the image of the similar (in the mirror - self-image) that the child imaginatively anticipates the mastery of its bodily unity - it is the first sketch of the Ego. Concluding this book of the ten great ones of the unconscious, we also have Wilhelm Reich, an extravagant personality, who provoked numerous conflicts; with the authorities of the United States, with the Austrian and also the German Communist Party, and who devoted himself to the study

of the theory of the orgasm - forces which are retained and which cause disturbances. For him, orgasmic impotence was not an effect of neurosis, but its ultimate cause - it blocked energy: it would give rise to neurotic distress. Reich focused his analysis on the theory of genitality - the third stage of Freudian theory, after the oral and anal stages. Basically, he made the synthesis of psychoanalytic theories and Marxist theories. He died in prison, half mad, or at least with a delirium of persecution. One important fact: he never disowned Freud, and vice versa.

- Okay. Next!

- Eheh. Is that you now? Let me drink some water... that's it. Let's go to the next one. Jean- Martin Charcot: was a strong early influence on Freud. He founded neurology. The main reason Freud went to Paris was that Charcot undertook the study of the

problems of hysteria and hypnosis: Charcot was the first scholar to attribute hysteria to nervous disorders. Under the influence of ideas based on the Christian religion, pleasure was linked to sin and hysterical manifestations were seen as an intervention of the devil - many hysterics were burned because of this confusion. And now, Mélanie Klein.

- A woman! At last!
- Did you become a feminist, uncle? Eheh...
- Not at all! But so many men and no women studying the mind, it's strange. Go on, go on...
- Good. Mélanie Klein elaborated a technique of analysis of children based on the use of play. She recognised the primordial aggressiveness of psychic life in the destructive (or sadistic) phase of the oral state. Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, vehemently contested the existence of

transference neuroses in children and, consequently, the very principle of a psychoanalytic cure that was adapted to them. Klein's installation in London thus precipitated the polemic (Anna had already been living in this city since Freud had been obliged to emigrate from Austria because he was Jewish).

- This is all polemics... these guys are a bit confrontational, eh, Paulo?

- Ehehe... Well, to continue: soon there was born, within the British Psychoanalytical Society, an authentic "Kleinian" school, which soon took on the aspect of a real dissidence. Its healing process uses several elements: transference neurosis (anxiety hysterias, conversion hysterias, obsessional neuroses) in children, whereby the unconscious desires existing in the person being treated are actualised in the person of

the psychoanalyst. It organises a game, which

- Look, another one! Another one who'd also like to play! Don't think it's only your teachers who...

- Yes, yes, yes. Listen to me, please.

- Oh, sorry...

- It's okay, uncle, this is very boring, it's natural. As I was saying, Mélanie Klein organises a game for children to play: in a room, she sets up a small table with lots of objects: small cars, houses, swings, dolls, scissors, paper, needles. And, as soon as the child enters the room to start the session, all her behaviour, all her gestures, all her words, as well as their sequence, assume a value of information for the analyst. She proves that, as in adults, the psychoanalysis of children gives rise to a transference; Klein demonstrates that the Oedipal relationship is very early and that the satisfactions and

frustrations of the newborn determine his entire psychic life. Whew. There, that's it. And that's all I have studied today.

- Excellent work, rest now, Paulo. Let's go downstairs, to the café. I need to talk to José at least once a day. Have you had coffee?

- Yes...

- Have another. Come on.

Paul took one last look at Jung's face on page 106. A face that, more than answering, was asking... uncomfortable questions.

Rest easy, Jung. Freud is dead.

The Game - VII

The café da Esquina, that's what it was called. And, in fact, it was on the corner between Rua do Vigário and Rua dos Corvos. It was a historical café, a family café; from the Lima family, from behind the hills. A land of good people. José was the third generation of the Lima family, and he ran the café with the good humour of a player who had just scored a goal. It didn't give him much income, but that didn't mean he didn't clean and wash it every day after work.

*A little bit of cleaning a day... it can't hurt.
And it fills me with pride.*

At their tables, they played chess, checkers, cards; beans during the week and money when the police weren't looking; that is, at weekends, in the back. Rui came in, bragging, with his nephew by his side. He was already known in those parts, and the usual people greeted him effusively.

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- Zé! Serve my nephew here! He always wants an Italian one, with two sugars, imagine! And a big one with green eyes, eh?
- Ahahah! He's got good taste!
- Eh... Hello, how are you...?
- Everything's fine, thank you! Rui, the usual?
- Yes, you already know what I like, you little rascal. A full coffee, and the house coffee, in the special glass, eh? I want it well served!
- Yes, sir! Here, the customer is always right! And if the customer's name is John, he's twice as right! So, let's get down to our special...
- Uncle, what are we going to learn here? We don't have much time, dammit!
- Calm down, Paulo. You're still young. Enjoy the good things in life. There are two things I want to teach you now.
- Yes?

- Yes. Firstly, as the ancients used to say: "Calm is the mother of all things".

- Excuse me...?

- In today's Portuguese: calm is the realm of wisdom; well, that's more or less it, Paulo.

- Yeah, okay. And the second one?

- I wanted to bring you to José's café. Here you breathe pure air, full of - there you go - popular wisdom.

- Clean air? It's full of tobacco smoke! Cof cof!!! What the hell do you expect to learn from it anyway? That's an illusion.

- Is that so? Then listen carefully to my conversation with José.

- Here are the coffees, John. The house special will follow as soon as you finish your coffee! So everything's OK?

- All right, Zé, all right. Me and my nephew have a big case on our hands.

- Is that so? Can I help you?
- Who knows, Zé, who knows if you can help? You like cinema a lot, don't you?
- Immense, Rui! I particularly like crime novels: Poirot, Sherlock Holmes, I devour all that! And I have a photographic memory!
- Very good, very good. That's precious to us, Zé. Look, do you remember a film called The Third Man?

- With Orson Welles, yes yes, very good. Very old, from the 40s... Wait, John, I'll get the credits for that film.
- Do you have a file on this film?

- Of course, of all the masterpieces of cinema, that's indispensable to a good cinephile. I have a giant database in the basement of the cafe. Wait a minute.
- I take it back, Uncle...
- That's what I wanted to hear, Paulo.

*Your uncle still knows how to play this
game...*

- Okay, Rui, I have here the complete file for the film. Each individual file consists of: credits, summary of the film's story, awards, cast, reviews and trivia.

- Trivia. Start there. Paul? Do you agree?

- That's fine with me, Uncle.

- Now then, let's get down to the curious facts of *The Third Man*:

1. Producer David O. Selznick initially wanted Noel Coward to play the character Harry Lime. Orson Welles was only hired at the insistence of director Carol Reed.

2. Carol Reed wanted James Stewart to play the character Holly Martins. The choice for Joseph Cotten was a demand from producer David O. Selznick, who had the actor under contract at the time of filming.

3. Screenwriter Graham Greene based the character Harry Lime on British agent Kim Philby, who was Greene's own superior in the British Secret Intelligence Service.

4. When he negotiated his participation in *The Third Man*, Orson Welles was offered a large salary for his performance, or a percentage of the film's box office profits. Welles chose to receive a salary, but realising that the film would become a great success, he tried unsuccessfully to change his pay to a percentage of the profits.

5. Between 1951 and 1952 Orson Welles premiered a radio series chronicling the adventures of his character in *The Third Man*, prior to the events shown in the film.

6. The Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival, which was won by *The Third Man*, was the equivalent at the time to the Palme

d'Or, which was only awarded from 1955 onwards.

- And that's about it, at least on this chart...
1949 film, Original Title: The Third Man,
genre: suspense, running time: 105
minutes, screenplay: Graham Greene, based
on a story by Graham Greene and
Alexander Korda, cinematography: Robert
Krasker.

- And do you also have the story of the film?
A description that is clear.

- Hold on, hold on, hold on. There are several
here. I'll do a summary: "Based on a novel
by Graham Greene, it tells the plot of an
American writer who goes to Vienna,
Austria, just after World War II, at the
invitation of a friend."

- Vienna, Paul. Be aware.

- Huh?

- Vienna, damn it. Freud's *magic city*. You have to pay more attention if you want to decipher this. Keep going, Zé.

- This one is also interesting, it seems to me: "The film, based on a work by Graham Greene, was directed by Carol Reed and starred Orson Welles. But the legends (always the legends, as John Ford seems to remind us, which persist rather than the truth of the facts) tell us that Orson Welles' presence in the studio was enough to make his influence on the directing too considerable to ignore. The film's story is simple: a man invites his best friend to visit him in Vienna, Austria, but when he arrives he discovers that his host has died in a car accident. But the friend, police writer that he is, is suspicious of the strange circumstances surrounding his death and begins to investigate the case.

After much persistence, he discovers that, at the moment of Orson Welles' supposed death, a third man, unidentified by the police, was present. And he discovers that this third man (who was Orson Welles himself, after all still alive, in an astonishing parable of what would be his future artistic life) was the main inspiring source of all the city's criminality, an evil river that will only end in his death in the sewers. In the film, that friend of Orson Welles, in a process of investigation, discovers who his friend truly was, disowning him and his pathological evil when he finds him still alive. "

- This is it, Paulo! This is it! Ah... excuse me...

The card players at the next table, who had reacted with displeasure to Rui's shout, returned to their game.

- Calm down, Rui, life doesn't end tomorrow...

- Sorry if I scared away your customers, Zé... but, don't you see, Paulo?

- Watching? Watching what?

- My God! And you're the intuitive one, and I'm the strategist!? Up, now! We have to find the key, we're close, I can feel it! Zé, put it on my tab, okay? I'll bring you this chart tomorrow.

- All right, see you later, take it easy...

The answer was always before our eyes...

The Game - IX

Ruí stormed into the small flat, and Martins came to the door, startled. Lam immediately tried to calm him down.

- Calm down, my little one, it's all right, your owner is nervous, that's all. Come on, come on my lap...

- Paul, let's take a good look at this text! We just need one more confirmation, and the key is found!
- Really? I don't see anything... you don't want to tell me what it is yet?
- No. I myself am not absolutely sure. Let's think together. Okay?
- Okay. I'll set the table.
- That would be a great idea. I'm going to go to the kitchen and put our dinner in the microwave.
- What is it?
- Lasagne.
- Miam...
- Martins is the cat... Ahah!

Paulo Lam took his first look at the file for José Lima's *The Third Man*. It had several pages, stapled together. On the third sheet,

halfway down the page, was the text that had so worried his uncle.

But what the hell did he see in this? It's a perfectly normal text... Another summary from a film critic, about this film: nothing important.

I was tired. I had read more than 600 pages of challenging but intellectually demanding material. A lot of work.

- I'm back. Paul, now let's go through this second synopsis of the film word for word. Give me the chart.

- Here you are, Uncle.

- Now where did I see this...? Ah, it's here! Check it out: "(...)Orson Welles' presence in the studio was enough to make his influence on the staging too considerable to ignore(...)"

- what does this tell you?

- Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Isn't Uncle seeing things?

- Paulo! Don't get me mad! You told me great things about Jung yourself!

- What does Jung have to do with this now...?

- Jung also had a tremendous influence on his disciples, wouldn't he...? Huh? And look: "(...) a man invites his best friend to visit him in Vienna of Austria(...)" - Freud! Freud invites his friend Jung to visit him in Vienna!

- Hm. But still, this is not solid... these are just loose ideas...

- Really? Then read: "(...) at the moment of Orson Welles' supposed death, a third man (...) was present. And he discovers that this third man (who was Orson Welles himself, after all, still alive(...)) was the main source inspiring all the crime in the city(...)" - the third man is Jung! Who is, in the end, Freud himself!

- Hm... yes, a kind of...

- Mirror! Freud seen in the mirror!

- Oh, boy.

- Ah, my dear Paulo, but there is more! :
"(...)the so-called friend of Orson Welles (...) discovers who his friend truly was, disowning him and his pathological evilness when he finds him still alive." - Jung disowned Freud and Freud disowned Jung!

- Yes... Jung would be the 'crown prince' of the psychoanalytic movement, uncle! He was the one who would inherit Freud's legacy; Freud treated him like a son!

- There you are! Get me the Big Ten book on the unconscious right now!

- It's here, it's here, take it, uncle!

- I wonder where this is... Let me see... Jung, the rebel... He's here! It's here, Paulo!

- Where? What are you...?

- Boy, do I have to do everything?! Page 125, quiz on Carl Gustav Jung: read answer 20 out loud, if you please, Paul.

- Now then: "Jung relates two conversations, one about the corpses in the marshes, the other about Amenophis IV about which Freud and he were at odds. Irritated, Jung defends his point of view vehemently, and at that moment Freud fell out of his chair senseless. We surrounded him without knowing what to do. Then I took him in my arms, carried him into the adjoining room and stretched him out on a sofa. While I was still carrying him, he came to his senses and gave me a look I will never forget. From the depths of his affliction, he looked at me as if I were his father. - C. G. Jung: My Life".

Paulo Lam let himself fall back into the arms of the chair. He was exhausted, but he had finally understood. His uncle's intuition had been right. From the very beginning.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Uncle: Freud, first, Adler, second, Jung, third... the second to leave the psychoanalytic movement is...

- The third man. Jung.

- Jung formed an alternative system of thought to Freud's, and equally important...

- Jung: The Third Man, Paul.

- Jung was commissioned by Freud himself to take the movement very far: my non-Jewish "crown prince", which helped and in what way...

- Jung - The Third Man.

- Yes, Uncle. And finally...

- The son who becomes the father. Orson Welles is carried on shoulders by three men, one of whom is himself...

- Jung takes Freud in his arms... who looks at him and sees...

- Your son... - Dad!

- Yes, an unresolved paternal complex...
which Jung always accused Freud of!

The two remained silent. To a genuine pride of both, an equally sincere tiredness was mixed, and the two fell asleep on the sofa, with Martins providing the necessary warmth to make that May night memorable in several ways.

The dream world had won the bet.

The Game - X

- Waaa... how sleepy... uncle?
- I really was there, next to you, last night, Paulo. But I got up two hours ago.
- @... what time is it?
- Ten-thirty. Again, again. Those habits of yours...
- I'm sorry, Uncle, I...

- Never mind, you were tired, I understand. I've brought you four more books.
- What are those from?
- History of Christianity. And also Ethnology of Religions, some Anthropology... this challenge is enticing, in fact, and I think I know the answer.
- S... you know...? What is it?
- But you're here to do this work, or to copy the test for another student, eh? Let's study, and right now!
- But if Uncle knows the answer...!
- I think I know, I think I know. At least I must be close by, and it will be easy for me to find out...
- Come on, uncle... tell me the answer.
- Paulo... I've already spoken. You'll be a bit confused, but it will do you good, you'll see.
- Hmpf.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Cut the ribbons. Well, these are the books:
two History of Religion books:

. Philippe Tourault's Concise History of the
Church, Europe-America;

. and a classic, written some 20 years ago:
Pierre Pierrard's History of the Catholic
Church.

and one related to Lusitanian Christianity:

. Origins of Portuguese Christianity, by
Moisés Espírito Santo.

- Tell me, at least, what should I look for,
uncle... at least that, no...?

- Okay, that could be. As you know, our clue
is Charles Darwin's book: The Origin of
Species.

- Yes, I know.

- Well, this book triggered a huge protest from Creationists.

- What is that? Can you eat that? Ahahah!

- Boy, this religious culture... oh oh oh oh oh... Creationism is the movement of thinkers linked to the Catholic Church, who maintain, according to the Bible, that the world was created by God. Well, Darwin defended exactly the opposite: that there was an evolution of species and, through natural selection, they adapted, some, others died out naturally, and in the end only those who had been stronger in this process remained. But the most important thing to highlight is that he single-handedly demolished a whole system of religious thought about the creation of the world.

- Oh, boy.

- Eheheh... you are completely blank, Paulo... what do they teach you, there at that university, hm...?

- Uncle, you may find it strange, but I think the more I know, the worse my intuition gets. Because, believe me, that's the natural selection process that works on me...

The Game - XI

- Well, I understand that.

- Do you really understand, Uncle...?

- I came from Africa, Paulo: do you think I don't know primitives even more blank than you?

- Yes, really...

- And believe me, those primitives have never even seen a school, let alone a university!

But I'm forgetting the other book I brought you. Keep an eye on this book:

. *Origins*, by the essential author Mircea Eliade, who made a comparative study of various religions.

- Yeah, yeah, okay. Any more leads?

- These are the main ones: if we take the word: *Origin*, from the title of the book, this could have to do with the origin of Christianity; Jesus Christ is the strongest hypothesis, but that would be...

- Obvious?

- It is clear. It can't be that simple, it's too direct. But it could also be the origin of today's Christianity, that is, historical evolution, coming from the Middle Ages, for example. Then there is a striking parallelism: *Evolution of the Species* /

Evolution of the Church, and here we may be talking about both the past and the future of the Christian religion. Not to mention again the controversy that is still very much alive today between evolutionist and creationist perspectives.

- But you told me you thought you knew the answer...?

- I think I know what they want with this. But I'm gonna let you go your own way. Tonight you're in for a surprise...

- Come on, Uncle! A surprise?

- Eh, Paulo: first the study, then the sweets, eh?

- Come on!

- I'm going fishing, to the river, near Alcântara. In the afternoon I'll come back, and I want my lesson well studied, hm?

- All right, all right...

- And no copying!

The Game - XII

- I'm home!

- What did you catch, uncle?

- Bah! Rancid mullets, that any youngster catches by buoy. There's no more fish like there used to be, Paulo...

- But... the bucket is empty...! Uncle!

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- But do you think your uncle is a liar, like any ordinary hunter? I caught 4 mullets, yes sir!

- Yeah? Then where are they, hm?

- I found Martins outside, and decided to give him a feast before dinner...

- Well, this test has passed! Now, come here and help me solve this puzzle, okay?

- Go into the living room, and get ready: I'm the one doing the test now...

- Yeah, yeah, yeah.

- Okay, I'm here. What do you have to show me today, Paulo?

- First book: History of the Catholic Church.

- Let's get to that one, then.

- I focused on the origin of religions. I hope I have done well...

- Go ahead, I want to hear you.

- Good. Judaism was the refuge of a very high monotheism, whose God - Jehovah - had a direct relationship with the Jewish people through the Torah - the law of Moses or Pentateuch. There were Hellenized Jews who elaborated the doctrine drawn from the Scriptures into an organized theological and philosophical system; and it will be this system that will pave the way for Christian theology. It was in the bosom of this small but proud people that Jesus was born, who would later claim not to have come to revoke the Torah, but to complete it. In 1963, Monsignor van Dodewaard said that "the Church is the heir of the Jewish people", thus echoing the famous expression of Pius XI: "We are spiritually Jewish". What do you think, Uncle? Have we found the solution?

- Calm down, Paulo. You still have a long way to go... keep going.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Christianity was born from the preaching of a Jew whose first disciples - also Jews - addressed themselves first of all to Jews. In the Christian community, the Jewish rites are enriched by an original liturgy: the administration of baptism and also, at community meals, the Eucharistic rite of the breaking of bread. Second book! Next!

- Well, it was fast, really eheheh...

- Concise history of the Church. More of the same: Christianity was born in the present-day Middle East. The growing admiration of the crowds for Jesus aroused the susceptibility of the dignitaries of the Jewish hierarchy, who agreed to denounce him as an agitator to the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. Having been condemned to death, he was crucified on the eve of the Jewish Passover. The Gospels and St Paul say that he was resurrected on the third day. Then, on the day of Pentecost, the twelve apostles had

the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and the apostolic mission of the Church was defined there.

- Yes yes, it's really coming along...
- Ahahah, uncle, I didn't think you were so anti-Christian!
- Bah... I'll explain later, Paulo.

- In the sixth century before our era, the Jewish people were deported to Babylon and had to endure the domination of the Roman Empire. This domination reminded them of the prophetic texts of the Old Testament: a Messiah would come to save Israel, a king from the race of David, who would found a kingdom of God and save man from sin. All those who believed in Judaism were monotheists, which distinguished them from the Romans, who invoked multiple gods.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Well, Paul, so far we have: Roman Empire, Judaism, Middle East, Messiah. Please continue.

- Yes, Uncle. Let us now go to those who spread the Christian faith: Paul - he took part in the murder by stoning of the deacon Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. But, converted by a divine apparition, he spent the rest of his life doing missionary work around the Mediterranean basin, which earned him the nickname throughout the centuries "the apostle of the Gentiles", that is, of the pagans.

- Do you know what paganism is, Paul?

- I eh... well, I have an idea...

- It's not enough to have ideas. You have to have a thought connecting them... but it's a good thing you don't.

- Really?

- No doubt. You'll find out later.

- It's mysterious today...

- Haven't you ever heard that secrecy is the soul of business... hm?

- There, all right. Now, Peter - he is considered the founder of the new Church. He advocated much more than Paul a certain union of Jewish tradition and Christian revelation. In about two centuries of expansion of the new religion, the message of Jesus spread in the civilised world, around the Mediterranean basin, and without any official support, since the emperor and the empire still invoked paganism and ancestral gods. There were numerous persecutions of Christians, but by the 3rd century, Christianity finally came out of hiding and became public, and the Roman emperors' support for Christianity in the 4th century ensured its extension to the empire, even as paganism was banned in the meantime. Next!

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Have you...? This is going too fast, really... now what?

- Now... *Origins*, by Mircea Eliade.

- That one must be good, its author is...

- Like this, uncle, like this...

- Oh yeah, funny man? I want to see you find the solution to this, that's what I want to see!

- Ahahah! It was just to see your reaction. But let's get to the book.

- It is better.

- He talks about various authors. He begins by saying that the anthropologist J.G. Frazer argued in his famous work *Golden Bough* that in the history of the human race magic preceded religion. Durkheim, Freud and Jung adopted and reworked the pre-animistic hypotheses and insisted on the importance of totemism, which for the first two authors meant the first manifestations

of religious life. Freud maintains that God is none other than the sublimated physical Father, and that it is he who is murdered in the totemic sacrifice: this slaughter of the father-God is the ancient original sin of humanity. This guilt of death is expiated by the bloody death of Christ.

- Oh, boy.

- This is heavy stuff, I know, uncle. As for Jung, it was the incredible similarities between the many symbols and mythological figures of distant peoples and civilisations that forced him to postulate the existence of a collective unconscious, which manifests itself through his famous "archetypes". Eliade also says that we have no means of investigating "primordial religion" since we ignore everything that pre-lithic man thought for hundreds of thousands of years. Many other ethnologists of various orientations have tried to

reconstruct the beginnings and growth of religion, ranging from animism, magic, teriorism (sacred animals), totemism, among other concepts.

- So much... we have to pull some rabbit out of the hat this time.

- Yes, uncle. Eliade also refers to the work of the School of Myth and Ritual, or patternism, "King and Saviour", in which the common elements of the cultures and religions of the Ancient Near East are insisted upon. G. Widengren considered here that the king was considered to be responsible for the well-being of the Cosmos, and that this conception would later have given rise to the Iranian ideology of the saviour and to Jewish messianism. It is known today that agriculture, the culture of Neolithic settlements and, finally, urban civilisation started from a centre with many spokes, located in the Near East.

SHAMAN

- Add two things to our list there: Father and King.
- Dad?
- Freud...
- Oh, of course, Uncle. Oh, I'm sorry.

- You're forgiven. Anything else from those books you read?
- Yes yes. In 1871, Edward Tylor published Primitive Culture, in which he identified the first stage of religion with animism, that is, the belief in a soul in nature. Now, from animism developed polytheism, and polytheism gave way to monotheism. But!
- Ah, yes, of course... there had to be a: But in this story... say it, say it!
- But... in the last years of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century, animism was no longer considered the first stage of religion.
- We've already missed this one...

- Eheheh. Two new theories have appeared in that period:

1st theory - Andrew Lang, which establishes a belief in a Supreme God in the early days of religion

and 2nd theory - mana theory: the belief in an indistinct and personal magical-religious force.

And Eliade ends this book with the following statement: the historian of religions knows today that he is incapable of reaching the "origin" of religion...

- So we're done for.

- Yes... so it seems, uncle. If Mircea Eliade says so himself...

- Now it's me saying: But!

- Oh yeah, uncle? So...?

- But maybe Eliade is wrong...

- Really?

- Seriously, Paulo. This guy must not be reading the same books I am... but, contradiction of contradictions, the most lucid books I have read...

... are his!

The Game - XIII

- Uncle is not being honest with me! You have the answer, I can feel it!

- Hey, easy there. Next book.
- Hm... okay, whatever. Origins of Portuguese Christianity. A very interesting book, indeed.
- So it seemed to me, back at the library. What does it say?
- He says that, in the current range of scientific disciplines, only historical Ethnology and Anthropology have some capacity to reconstitute the vanished religions, since the religions of the Book - Jewish, Christian, Muslim - in their initial purity, are only orality, leaving no trace.

- Yes, but Eliade himself, who is one of those things, discards himself... eheheh.
- Yeah, it feels like we're banging our heads against walls, doesn't it, Uncle? These guys don't give us any hope that a solution can be found, do they?

- But don't worry. Keep going, I'm enjoying listening. Looks like you're not the only one who's a little confused on this subject...
- You don't want to tell me the solution...?
- Not yet. The contents of that book, Paulo...?

- Hmpf. It speaks of astral archetypes, which have an important place in religion and the sun, which represented the ultimate God in ancient Semitic cultures.
- Sun. Add to the list...
- This book analyses the moment of transition from paganism to Christianity and claims that there are no ruptures in culture or in religions, but rather overlaps of symbolic and cultic strata. Young men, driven by a "vocation", castrated themselves to respond to the imperatives of religious myths: a matriarchal culture, the cult of the Great Mother, was lived out.
- This is still the case today, Paul, even though Christianity is totally man-centred.

- Come on! Castration these days?

- Well, that's it! Have you heard of vows of chastity...?

- Ahahah! Oh, that? That's much more...

- *That, as you call it, is only the Church's way of adapting to a reality that has not changed much, from the third to the twentieth century. And, as you see, the matriarchal cult and the man-centred Christian cult do not differ much.*

- Hm. Maybe so, in fact. Well, moving on: this book talks about the essential treatise *The Syrian Goddess*, by an author called Lucianus. "It is said that, of all the peoples we know, the Egyptians were the first who conceived the existence of the gods (...) and formulated the sacred doctrines." The universality of the cult referred to by Luciano is confirmed by archaeology, numismatics and the Greco-Roman chronicles. The entire Middle East, Asia

Minor, Greece, Egypt, Arabia, Brittany, Gaul, Iberia and Germania practised this Syrian cult under various names.

Other spiritual influences and many heresies are also of Syrian and Palestinian origin: Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Arianism, Nestorianism, etc. The concept of post-mortem salvation on which Christianity and Islam are based is older among the Syrians and Phrygians, and appears neither in the Old Testament nor in Judaism. If today we attribute the origin of monotheism to the religion of the Jews, we must confer the origin of the present conception of a universal God on the religion of their Syrian neighbours.

- The Magna Mater - mother of the gods...
Cybele.
- C... how do you know, uncle...?

- The cult of the Mother Goddess? is very well known, Paul. It is a reflection of the matriarchy that existed legally in the Middle East and in the Semitic world, if I am not mistaken, until the 8th century BC, and which is still very much in evidence in the Mediterranean cultures that have become Catholic.

- Well, I see that you know this better than I do... to continue: what is lacking in the humanity of the Christ of Saint Paul is even more so in the Apocrypha; here, yes, Jesus is true God and true man. And the same is true of Mary. Saint Paul was concerned to exclude women from the priesthood and from preaching, and he forced them to wear the veil in assemblies, as Mohammed would do later. The difference between the canonical and the Apocrypha regarding the presence of Mary is easily explained: the Apocrypha are of popular origin and express the popular view of the life of Jesus and his mother, they reproduce the

ancient matriarchal culture that was reflected in the cults of the Magna Mater. As for the canonical ones - which were written in Greek - they originated from erudite authors assimilated to classical culture; the Apostles were Jews. And for 5 or more centuries the dominant Jewish culture was patriarchal. Imbued with misogyny, the theological, liturgical and juridical texts favoured only men. The exclusive valuation of men became total with Islam. With Emperor Constantine, mass Christianity erupted and became the only religion, all other cults having been banned.

- You see how things are done throughout history, Paulo? It's just like that: always join the winners, choose the strongest wind and go with it, wherever it takes you...

- Yeah, Uncle, maybe...

- It's not: Maybe it sure is. Do you have anything else to tell me?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- It's just some final notes, Uncle, I'm almost done.

- Very good. I hear you.

- The Catholic cult of Mary, its dogmas and oldest festivals came from Syria, and is a basic fact in the history of Christianity. With the prohibition of pagan religions, Christian pastoral work and liturgy were reformed to satisfy the religiosity of the multitudes, former followers of the matriarchal cults of Syrian and Friesian origin, which had spread throughout the empire. Monotheism was established in the Iberian Peninsula through Judaism; the Jews being the holy nation, the interlocutors of God, the guardians of the word, their presence created unease, remorse and envy in the Christians.

- You're finished, right?

- Yes, Uncle, I'm done.

- Well, where you have finished, I will begin.
And believe me, Paul, the end is still a long
way off...

The Game - XIV

- Well, Paul, today you get a field trip.
You've worked well, and...

- What are you talking about, uncle? I don't...

- You'll get a life lesson. And for free, huh? These tassels are out of date, but I...

- Um... a field trip, uncle? Where are we going to...?

- To a place you know well... to see something strange... and then you will understand something you don't know.

- You are very mysterious today, uncle... what is it?

- I can't tell you. It has to do with my business, I'm studying some things and...

- All right, all right, if you don't want to say it, don't say it. But I'm going to be on tenterhooks... when are we going on this field trip? Are we going on a bus rented by the school? Do we have to pay for the ticket? Ahahah!

- Enjoy it now, while you can. It's going to be, look how the Brazilians say; *barra pesada*. It's a shocking topic to say the least!

- Well, this is promising...

- And, to answer your question: we're going after dinner.

- Okay.

- And you're having just a small steak for dinner, and some rice, it's already done, and...

- Uncle! Please don't do this to me! I am starving!

- You don't understand, Paulo... what we're about to see...

- Yes?

- I still can't visualise what it is, Paulo, but whatever it is... it's something scary, when I explain to you what it means.

The Match - XV

- I ask you the question again, Uncle: where are we going? We are almost at my university, and...
- Exactly there. You gave the answer. Paul.
- Let's go to the... to the...

- To your university. Let's go there, yeah.
- But why? It's the last place I want to go, because...
- Because today is a party day, Paulo: didn't you know? I put a little paper in the windshield of my two-horse, the kind that advertises parties at universities now.
- What a monotonous thing, a university party, I can't believe...
- Ah, but we're not going to the party...
- No...?
- No. Let's... look, enjoy the party...
- I didn't get that one.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Eheheh... now I'm making fun, huh, Paulo?
Calm down, I'll park right here.

- Hmpf.

- Don't pout, come on, you're about to know
the secret...

- But what is this secret anyway?

- The secret that hides in the catacombs of
your university... buuhhh...

- Yes, yes, I can see that.

- Ah. I forgot to tell you something.

- What...?

- You will see almost nothing. You'll just
hear...

The Game - XVI

- There's a big commotion at the door...
- It's the custom, Uncle; it's always like that on festive days here.
- All right, here's what you're gonna do. Here's what you do: You go in the front door, follow the main corridor, and take the first left, at the end, before the...
- To the library? I'm going to the library? What's there? Is that it, Uncle? Do you want me to go to the...
- That's just it.
- But... it's closed at this hour! What do you expect to find in the...

- I don't expect to find anything, Paulo. I know what I'm going to find, more nuance, less nuance. I know perfectly well what I'm going to find there.
- Okay, okay, okay...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- I have to lock the car. Go now. You'll wait for me in the corridor leading to the library, that's enough...
- Dark? Dark, uncle?
- Now you understand... Our game also has some trumps, Paulo...
- Okay, I'm going now, will you come?
- No doubt about it. I'm coming. Next - it's to keep a low profile.
- I understand, uncle. See you later.

The night was dark. Very dark. Ideal for...

...a move like this.

The Game - XVII

The university was almost deserted, in its lower part: only a few couples of lovers courted each other, half ashamed. That was, after all, the least crowded area of the university: it was higher up, on the first floor, that the parties took place, with the newly-enrolled doctors seducing the freshmen in crazy nights of sex and something else, with the complacency of the most renowned professors. It was necessary, after all, to follow the fashions; to adapt the old traditions to the new times and to even younger girls.

Lam did as his uncle asked. There was the recess before the library door: a half-curve that was a paradise for the keenest of lovers. *Whew... I have to thank the heavens that no one is here. This way we're at ease. I hope Uncle John will come soon.*

A few footsteps approached, quickly. Then they suddenly stopped.

- T... uncle?

- Yes, Paul, it's me.

- Uff... what a fright... I thought that...

- I saw your shadow and thought someone had arrived first...

- But uncle... who would come here?

- Paulo, you can't even imagine who comes here on these festive nights...

The Game - XVIII

- How do we get in?
- Let me check my pocket... ah, here it is!
- What is it?
- A lock pick.
- Uncle!
- A friend of mine once gave it to me, and taught me a few more things. Come on, don't give them to me like that. We gotta get inside fast.

- Close the door now, no noise, Paulo.
- Okay, uncle. This is totally in the dark...
- You can't see anything, I know. And so I brought this... voilà!
- What is it? Are you there, uncle?
- I am, I am. Ah, there, now you see me...
- A lantern!
- Shh! Keep your voice down. I'll point the lantern down, no one can see us here. Now

let's go to the second door... the gazoo,
again... this is difficult...

click.

- Okay, that's it, Paulo. We're running out
of time. I'm going to turn on the lights for a
brief moment, be attentive. You see that kind
of mirror, there, I'm pointing with the torch...

- Yes, uncle, what about it?

- Try to mentally record every detail of that
mirror. I'm going to turn on the light in this
inner room...

... now!



The initial impact was one of visual shock, attributable to the immediate contact with

light after a few moments in absolute darkness. Then Lam tried to adapt, and began to quickly memorise everything that seemed important to him.

- Uncle!

- Hurry up! It's coming people!

The footsteps were sneaky, and after they closed the secret door of the library, those footsteps continued to be very careful. One would say they heard everything, all around them. Cautious like an extreme mother. A big problem, that's what it was. Lam looked at his uncle, who was nestled with him under one of the two large wooden tables in the library. The den... perfect. - *You don't have to see... you have to listen.* Lam was beginning to understand the cards in that game. The footsteps became more discreet, and as they entered the second room, they were muffled by the soulful emptiness of the night.

- Uncle.

- Chh! Keep it down. What's wrong?

- What do we do now?

- Now, my dear nephew, let's get out into the fresh air. And you will begin to know the story that is hidden within these walls...

The Game - XIX

- Hurry up! Get in the car, Paulo!
- Lower me down, Uncle...?
- Yes. I'll watch.

- I can now...
- Yes. They haven't seen us. Let's get out of here - and right away!

- But uncle, who was that who...
- Probably an insider.
- Initiated? Initiated into what? What's that?
- Paulo, have you ever heard of... magic?
- Well, I watch Luís de Matos' programmes, and...
- No such thing. Those are cheap tricks. Well, not always that cheap, but...
- You're talking about the magic... eh... magic...

- I'm talking about the magic that comes from Africa, Paulo. The magic that... alters behaviour... that can only be used when people are asleep - during their sleep: why do you think, for example, that it is said that people who live the night life are *more lucid*, eh? Ah, that's right...

- Don't tell me that...

- I tell you that and I tell you many more things, Paulo. Because I come from Africa, yes, but my heart is your heart. And you have always, always been pure, and I can't betray those of my blood.

The Game - XX

Ruí remained in deep silence all the way home, and Lam did not want to bother him any further with questions that would have to be... awkward. The whole matter was too serious, too serious, for conversation to take place within a 2 horse jostling.

- Let me lock the car... There you go. Paulo, let's go up.

- Yes, Uncle.

The foyer in the building had a few lights on and the lift was finally working, but that was definitely not a night of joy for Ruí. It was the night... of the truth. Of telling his nephew the truth about a number of matters that had been worrying him for a long time, ever since he had come from Africa: maybe even before.

- Go and sit on the sofa in the living room, Paulo, I'll just have a drink of water, I'll be right there... oh, Martins, you're here!
- Come on, stay still, Martins, Uncle Rui's not here... eh
- I know, I know. I'm not well, isn't that what you were going to say, Paulo?
- I... eh...

- If you had the things I have on my conscience, you would be like that too.

The Game - XXI

- You don't want to tell me now, uncle, what...

- I'll tell you, I'll tell you, don't worry. Let me just have another glass of water...

It was already the third or fourth that Rui had drunk in less than five minutes. He had switched on the television and stared at it without getting any information from it since he had arrived in the room. Finally, he seemed to wake up from his daze, switched off the TV with the remote control, and stood for a few seconds in silence again, meditating. But now he seemed much calmer. And lucid.

- Paul.

- Yes, uncle...?

- What I'm going to tell you stays within these four walls, do you hear? Don't you even

think of repeating what I'm going to tell you to anyone...

- Okay, Uncle. You can count on me. What's going on, anyway?

- You know, you've studied that Freud's theories, and those diseases... anguish, hysteria, neuroses, psychoses, schizophrenia, even... all that is illusory, my nephew.

- C... what do you mean? But these diseases do exist, he wouldn't invent that...

- In the primitive world none of that existed, I assure you. Nothing, none of that existed.

- Primitive world? What is it?

- In African tribes, of course. The aborigines of Australia. In some places in Indonesia. In the tribes of South America. In the tribes of North America: Apaches, Sioux, and so many, so many others, that the convicts of the British prisons destroyed, when they went to colonise the New World, bringing disease and war to the native Indians behind

them. Yes, my dear nephew, the great America has feet of clay... only those who have not studied the history of the United States of America do not know this... they want to hide it at all costs...

- Well, I had heard about this story of the English prisoners, but I didn't think it was imp...

- Important? Yes, it is important. But there's one thing that's even more important, Paulo.

- Wha... what thing, uncle?

- O... Shaman.

- What is it?

- The African healer. The tribe's witchdoctor, for the Amerindians. The community shaman, in the Russian tribes, where the European tradition of shamanism comes from, which many have tried to keep in the shadows... including psychiatrists, especially them, Paulo. Look, yours must know something about this. But he hides it

from you, of course. Or else he's afraid of certain things...

- Afraid? Afraid of what?

Ruí took a deep breath, and thought very carefully before saying it. And when his breath found its way to speech, he knew that his nephew would never be the same from that moment on. Yet it was something important. That it had to be said. He felt it. He knew it, more than anyone.

- Fear... of the *spirits of the dead*, Paulo. And that, not even Freud will ever be able to control, with his well-thought-out, pseudo-rationalist theories...

The Game - XXII

A stunned Paulo Lam stared at his uncle Rui from top to bottom. Neither he knew how to react to this, nor did Rui know what his reaction would be.

- Uncle... Uncle is joking, isn't he...?

- On the contrary, Paul, I am very serious.

- Explain yourself. I only heard about it in...

- Nursery rhymes, I know, I know... it's normal: everything that cannot be explained by Western science becomes myth, a bedtime story... well, that's what we have!

- Are you sure about what you're saying? Because that's...

- Is it strange? At first, no doubt. Then, when we study matters better and use our intuition, everything makes sense. Get

ready, I'm going to ask you some questions, okay?

- Okay, shoot.

- Why is it that in primitive tribes there are so few cases, percentage-wise, of individuals considered insane?

- Because, eh... well, I have no idea!

- Answer: because psychoses are socially induced; in Portuguese, an individual becomes schizophrenic because he lives in societies with immense restrictions, and develops these pathologies due to the ultimate and only cause of his social adaptation. That is, when one lives in full communion with nature, none of this happens. That's why I told you about the terminology that Freud and others used: none of this actually corresponds to objective realities, when we go back in time and analyse tribes. Clarified?

- Ok...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Next question. What materials does a shaman (in the European tradition), or tribal sorcerer (in the Americas), or healer (in Africa) deal with?

- Well, uncle has already said... with the spirits of the mort...

- Exactly. But many more things. Many more. And do you know, by any chance, what is the name of the magic that the shaman performs, that he offers to his community, to his tribe?

- N... no uncle! What is your name...?

- White Magic. Because he deals with benign spirits and not evil ones, and sometimes he can even undo spells from... from...

- M... magic...

- Exactly, my dear nephew. Exactly. Magic... Black magic. The magic that

spread to various parts of the world through the African slave trade and that has various names: voodoo and many etceteras. And it is this magic, originating in Africa - but deep black Africa, not the cities, please note - that the great western minds have seized to...

- What's it for? What's it for, anyway, Uncle?

- To... control the masses. So that the mind is active during the day and sleeps at night, when that magic can enter the spirit at will, in the form of dreams... why do you think the Amerindian tribes make those dreamcatchers you see so much of, in the bedrooms of western houses? It's a kind of white magic in disguise...

- My God... uncle, that's...

- Machiavellian? Certainly. But far more Machiavellian are the spells that are cast

around to keep people's anxiety at acceptable levels in society...

Lam's uncle drank some more water. His nephew was calm, for an intuitive. That was good, very good. After all he wanted him to sleep well that night: there was still a lot of work to do.

- Uncle, but Freud, he... well, surely his theory contains a lot of truth, he can't be wrong about everything, and...

- Paul, Paul... even you can't imagine what Freud knew but didn't tell anyone...

The Game - XXIII

- And now, on this subject, there is just one more loose end I wanted to explain to you, Paulo.

- Anything else? Tonight has been a box of surprises, really...

- Yes, despite being returnees from back home who are doing these things here in Portugal, I had to tell you this, Paulo. I couldn't help telling you, you who are the blood of my blood.

- It must have cost him a lot, the...

- Not even you can imagine. You know, the generation that now holds the reins of power is basically my generation. And we all know a little about all this that is going on, but out of fear we don't say it, and the

knowledge is lost. The younger ones can't even imagine... well, but let's get to that loose end I wanted to tell you.

- Yes, uncle, go ahead, I'm listening.

- It still has to do with the primitive tribes, Paul. Did you know that in those tribes the madmen were considered very wise people?

- Well, well, well.

- That's right! And do you know why? Because it was thought that they were in direct contact with the gods: and the voices that these people heard and what they said were listened to with fear, but also and above all with attention. And even the sorcerers held them in very high regard and, in the state of trance, they imitated certain behaviours close to these realms of madness...

- Well, this is just revelations...
- You have surely heard the expression: "The mental hospitals are full of geniuses...!?"
- Yes, but that's for fun...
- Not at all. Look, it's like the story of the spirits, which is told to little children, to make them afraid of something, for example: they are based on truth, but that truth is too true to be told directly and totally... eheheh.
- My God... and there's more, Uncle...?

- There are. Poets, like Fernando Pessoa. The Painters, like van Gogh.
- Yes? What do you have?

- They have too much madness inside them, that's what it is. Or genius... call it what you like, it's to the customer's taste! They also hear voices, like the madmen and shamans of the tribe... and if you ask a

psychoanalyst or a guy of that ilk, they all tell you the same thing: ah, yes, van Gogh? A schizophrenic this, he suffered from such and such... all lies, Paulo! Don't even listen to them, those snake oil salesmen!

- Come on... my psychiatrist...

- Well, that one's harmless. I know him well. He's a good guy, he is. Limited, of course, but...

- But... what does that have to do with the whole primitive tribes thing...? I'm not...

- You see, my dear nephew... those who are geniuses can quickly turn into madmen if you get them into a mind doctor in a hurry...

- Really? Do you really think...

- Oh, that's right, Paulo. And there are so many of them, out there, ready to prescribe legal drugs, a la carte, for foreigners to see... be very careful with yours. Be very careful, indeed....

The Game - XXIV

- Do you think you can handle hearing the rest, Paulo?

- If I've heard this far...

- Good, good, good. Let's go, then. There are five, maybe six focal points around the world...

- Focal points? What's that?

- You must have the patience to listen to me until the end. These are places where routes meet, where cultures coexist, where, in short, there is an influence that can be exerted over an entire region. Do you know the principles of Acupuncture?

- Yes, the basics: these are points which centralise certain energies in the human body, and which the needles...
- That the needles will then act on these points to create different energy fields, or redistribute the energy again, in a therapeutic way. Well, that's just it.
- But... what does that have to do with...

- It has everything to do with it, Paulo. There are, as I was telling you, *magical* places in the world. Places that, if the negative energy of black magic is triggered in them, act upon a whole region of the globe.
- And... but my university... what is it that...

- Your university... your university is at one of those points, simply.
- Tell me why, then.

- Once again, it has to do with African origins. As you know, after the 25th of April, there were a lot of returnees from the former colonies in Portugal, especially in the civil service.

- Yes, I know that for a fact.

- That's right. I was also one of those returnees, Paulo. I was also a *second-rate Portuguese*...

- What a horrible name they were given...

- Yes, very sad indeed. But, as I was saying, those people brought from Africa not only their childhood memories... they brought much more than that: Magic...

- Black...?

- That's right. And a few years later, when some of those returnees already held influential positions in Portuguese society, they immediately set about negotiating with the states. For Portugal, an eternal peace and a dream life. In exchange for...

- Yes...?

- In exchange for a plan. The Plan.
- W... what is this plan, uncle? What...
- The Plan of Continents.
- What? What's that?

- Remember the five or six points of the world, which I told you about earlier? Hm?
- Yes, but what...
- You are certainly inattentive. Now, how many continents are there in the whole world? Huh?
- C... five, because you ask... oh!

- Ah, that's right...

The Game - XXV

- This game is very simple to play, Paulo. It has very, very simple rules. Or did you think that the human being evolved from barbarism to civilisation so suddenly, with the snap of a finger? Ahm?

- But I still don't understand the connection between...

- Black Magic only acts effectively on land, unlike telecommunications, for example - those have other obstacles, such as mountains and caves. For magic, there are other types of geographical obstacles...

- Q... what kind of obstacles? Uncle?

- Water. Mountains of... water. Salt water, clouds, rain, rising and falling winds, very cold or very hot, storms at sea... those things. And that's why there has to be a point like this on every continent, which does sort of redistribute the original message, to numb people's minds - because only that can enable life in modern societies, have no doubt.

- Is that all? It's just the magic that...

- The Mass Media also act at this level, I forgot about them... subliminal messages, the news, the programming itself is studied according to very deep psychological studies (which are not found in university libraries, you can be sure of that...), in order to induce states of extreme happiness or sadness.

- What's the point? All that, what for?

- For a few days or weeks or months or even years later some diabolical global plan is carried out, be it a war, or whatever: by then,

people's mentality is already tailored to these plans, which have been operating for years in the background.

- Uncle... are you sure what you are telling me...? It's all so...

- Strange?

- Well, whimsical, strange, delusional even, a bit of all that. It's hard to...

- Believe it, Paulo?

- S... yes.

- You must be watching too much television...

The Game - XXVI

- Give me two books from your bookshelf: Origins of the Sacred and The Shaman, Paulo.
- Yes, Uncle. Is this it?
- Yes, and the shaman's one with the black cover... that's the one. Bring me those books, please, and sit here next to me.
- Not now, Martins, go away.
- Míaaaauuu...

- Don't be mean to my pussy. Come here Martins, on my lap, that's it. Now where is this... ah, read me this underlined passage from that page where I opened the book of the origins of the sacred. Read it aloud.
- "The shaman is the earliest human manifestation of spirituality that we know of; and it has continued apparently without

interruption from the ice age, or even earlier, to the present day. It may be found in many primitive societies, especially of northern Siberia, among the Gilyaks, in the Indian tribes of North America, among the Eskimos, and among the aborigines of Australia."

- Shaman? Is he the origin of...

- No doubt about it, Paulo. Without any doubt. Mircea Eliade has demonstrated that the essential core of shamanism is an "original phenomenon", inherent to the human condition itself, and consequently known to all archaic peoples. Shamans are specialists of the sacred, men capable of "seeing" the spirits, of ascending to heaven and meeting the gods, of descending to hell and fighting demons, illness and death. Through his special techniques - fasting, drumming, meditation and certain drugs -

SHAMAN

the shaman enters into an ecstatic trance, and uses it for the good of the whole community, to heal and protect. During the shaman's period of initiation, he meets an animal which teaches him the Language of animals and becomes his spirit companion. Have you ever been to a rock concert? Have you heard of The Doors, and Jim Morrison?

- Yes! And I'm even a big fan of your music, why...?

- Rock concerts often use drums. Do you know what the shamans used drums for?

- No. What for?

- To call the spirits, my nephew... and current rock vocalists use music to provoke a collective trance identical to that of the shaman...

- Oh, come on! You're not going to tell me that Jim Morrison...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- I'll tell you what is the truth: Jim Morrison had a road accident when he was very young. An accident with... Indians... and the soul of one of them, who was a shaman and who had just died, entered Morrison's spirit.

- Ahahah!

- Hey there! Do you want me to tell you lies, or do you want to know the whole truth?

The Game - XXVII

- Sorry, Uncle.
- That's better. Now hand me the shaman's book.
- Here.
- Now where... ah, it's here. Read, I've drawn an arrow on the part we're interested in.

- Let me see... here it is. "The idea that the shaman is a surviving archaic religious figure is common in many scholars' interpretations, positive or negative. (...) Western scholars have long been attracted to the problem of the ultimate origin of religion. (...) Paleolithic discoveries in the twentieth century paved the way for interpretations that made the shaman the primary figure in the search for the origins of religion. Barre argues that all our knowledge of the supernatural or the divine comes from shamans and similar visionaries."

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Now page 145, reads, below.

- "Realm of Sickness and Health: Body, Spirit and Soul:

1. Soul or spirit closely related to the body:

a) Concepts of Soul and Spirit - Shamanic practice

b) Concepts of Spirit - Psychoanalysis and other humanistic forms of psychiatry

2. Spirit or brain in greater opposition to the body - Clinical psychiatry and medicine".

Uncle, surely you're kidding me...! What does this shaman thing have to do with psychiatry...?

- Read that part, above: the healing power of dialogue.

- "Shamanic healing will comprise a dialogue between the patient and another

SHAMAN

person - the shaman or a spirit. This reaches extreme points in *sora* shamanism, but is equally present in psychoanalysis, which is also a 'healing through conversation'. The *sora* patient talks to the dead through a specialist, while the patient of a psychoanalyst talks to the specialist about other personalities, at the moment absent from the patient's life."

Oh my God... uncle, this is...

- This is what it is. And it's very serious, Paulo. Or did you think that humanity has always lived in cities... hm? Even before psychoanalysis was born and there were already shamans healing entire communities... that's right...

- And do you think... do you think this is the solution we were looking for...?

- One thing I know, Paulo.

- What thing, uncle? What do you know?

- There could be a million answers to this problem of Christianity. But if you answer: Shaman...

- Yes? What do you think they'll say...?

- ... no teacher in this world and its surroundings will be able to say that it is the wrong answer. And he will not be able to do so because it is, of the possible answers, the truest. And now, let's go to sleep. There's more tomorrow.

The Game - XXVIII

- Filipe, I wanted to tell you something rather hm... confidential.
- You can count on it. Say it.
- I have a student at my university who... well, he's a bit of a troublemaker, and...
- Cut him off. Put disciplinary proceedings on him, then kick him out. What's so complicated about that? You've done it plenty of times, I'm sure.
- Well, it's just that he... his name is Lam.
- Victor's kid. Ah, I see.
- Yeah, the Masse kid.
- The bloody favours... always them.

- Yes, I gave him my word of honour that the boy would go all the way in this Sociology course. And the boy is intelligent, that's not the problem... too smart, if you know what I mean...

- I know perfectly well. They are the worst. And historical examples abound to remind us of that... Karl Marx, Bin Laden, Adolf Hitler... spoilt brats who play at being perfect societies... usually geniuses misunderstood in other fields, who devote themselves to fabricating ideas of rupture... and sociologists are the worst, you know that. You can't condone concepts of this importance, dammit. You know well the orders we have to...

- I know that very well. And that's why I wanted to get it off my chest with you, Filipe. I know that at your university they've been very scrupulous with these orders. I think they manage to peacefully expel dozens a year...

- Yeah, they get sick of it fast. The most capable, of course. The smart ones. You don't even want to give a guy like that a straw: they'll fall on you, the...

- Yes, don't say any names, I beg you. I know that. Don't think I've forgotten.
- But then, if your university complies with those social science standards, what is it that's worrying you anyway?
- It's this Lam, you know... Because of Masse... he even proposed this to me, a game. A kind of knowledge game. So that the boy can get his act together and prove that he deserves his diploma. I thought it was a good idea at first, but now... I don't know.
- That could be a double-edged sword...
- I know. You think I don't know? It would be a last chance for this young man, Paulo Lam. But I'm afraid that...

- Fear? Fear of what exactly?
- Afraid that this game will give him the necessary lights to play a game with even more important cards, you understand?

- But if Masse is the one who gave you the rules of that game, I guess he must know what he's doing, no?

- Yeah, okay, but I was thinking about that... you know?

- What, in theory...

- Shh! Shut up! I told you not to say certain things out loud. Just tell me what you think about it.

- It would be very serious... But, isn't your university only a social science university? Surely the boy can never come to know... right?

- Yeah. Masse thinks so too.

- Tell me, what is he like? I mean, what kind of intelligence is he?

- It's hard to say. He has such a temper... Masse says it runs in the family.

- I meant, in class, what kind of comments does this Lam make? What subjects interest him the most? Does he read a lot? What kind of language does he use? Does he write well? Does he have a clear reasoning? Or is he just another magician who has suddenly woken up from some Rousseau book?
- Ehehe... well, but this is no laughing matter. It seems that he is rebelling against the education system, against the pedagogy of the teachers at the university.
- I didn't know she existed! You guys are really going all out over there...
- Not at all. We do things as you do them. Besides, there are strict rules for the conduct of professors in a university: do not let the students talk, do not let them approach him, extreme rationalisation, and you know it well, don't lecture me on this subject!
- Hey! Take it easy! It was just an aside, just an aside. You're very nervous.

- Yes, I know. I've been in a bad mood. I've never seen anything like it. The boy... has unbelievable power of expression. Any teacher understands his talent immediately. It's immediate, I tell you. I'm afraid he can actually solve this game.

- This Paulo Lam guy... he's starting to interest me. But tell me about the game Masse invented. He's very creative, for a mathematical scientist... maybe he reads too many novels!

- I'll tell you the game. You'll even laugh...

My dear Dean of UTS, You can be sure that laughing is the last thing you will see me do....

The Game - XXIX

Ten minutes after saying goodbye to Sérgio, Filipe entered his house: it was already cold and his garden was no longer as sunny as it had been until then.

- What's up? How's Sergio? He's a beautiful old man... but he's still in great health, isn't he, dear?

- Yes, yes, he's a very energetic dean, no doubt. Look, I'm going to my office, I've got some papers I want to tidy up. Tell the maid I don't want to be interrupted for the next half hour, please.

- She's tidying up my rooms now. I'm going into the living room to do my oil painting: the fruit bowl is almost finished, and...

- Ah, very well, I'll see in a few minutes, I want to be the first to appreciate my wife's art.

Filipe entered the office, closed the door and sat down on one of the two sofas. He needed

to think. A phone call had to be made and a person had to be contacted.

Because the rector of UTS had told him things...

unthinkable.

The Game - XXX

- Good morning, uncle, did you sleep well?
- I slept very well, Paulo. Really well. I guess Freud was right about the catharsis thing...
- What do you mean?
- Never mind, one day you'll understand. Get the Martins out of that chair and sit down. You've got three books there.
- What will I study now?

- Now it will be Linguistics. One of the pillars of wisdom of all time: Language. He's no dummy, the guy who invented this game, he's not, no...
- Let me at least eat something, uncle.
- Ah, yes, of course, sorry. You have honey, bread and milk there, it's not cold, you can drink it. As for your study, Paulo:
 - . History of Language - Julia Kristeva, should be very interesting, this.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

. The Sign - Umberto Eco, it is essential to know what concepts the experts make of the sign, Language, read carefully

. Foundations of General Linguistics - Jesus- Antonio Collado, talks about the ideas of Saussure, who dreamed of founding Semiology, a science that encompassed Linguistics, among many other sign systems, this one is likely to be interesting but not decisive.

And that's it. That's it. And you're very lucky...

- Lucky? Why?

- Because your uncle can also help you with this part. The last part, of Astronomy, is that I don't see what it is, but Linguistics has very simple principles, apart from the terminological confusion of this paraphernalia of complicated scholars... but anyway.

- Very simple principles, Uncle? As far as I know, it is a very technical subject, full of theoretical understatements, second senses in concepts, an absolute relativization of terminology, I don't think it is simple, for the little I studied there at university...
- Yes, Paulo, what you study at university is rarely what matters most...

- What do you mean? I didn't understand...
- To understand real linguistics, its foundations, its concepts, you have to abstract yourself from linguistics itself.
- What? That doesn't make any sense!
- What doesn't make any sense is to study Language from the very limited perspective of Linguistics, I assure you!
- But what does the linguistic uncle know anyway?
- Me? Not much. But I studied in depth the theory of Modern Art.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- And what does one have to do with the other?

- Everything. Have you heard of Beuys?

- Ehm... no...

- Marcel Duchamp?

- I think so...

- Jackson Pollock?

- Not really, but...

- So, if you don't know the work of these universal geniuses, start studying the books I brought you. Now. I'll be back after 2:00 in the afternoon. I left your lunch in the fridge, then just heat it up in the microwave. I'm going to exchange impressions with a friend.

- All right, uncle. This friend... he studies Language?

- No doubt about it. He's the most extraordinary painter I've ever met. And also

the most unknown. That's life, Paulo. For some, fame and profit. For others, hard work.

The Game - XXXI

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- I'm back, Paulo. Have you summarized the books?

- Yes, Uncle, here are the sheets, I'll just number them so I don't get lost in the middle of this mess...

- I'll get some water, I'll be right back.

- So say it, my nephew.

- Book History of Language: Language exists to communicate, it is a process of communication of a message between at least 2 speaking subjects: Sender - (message) - Receiver.

- This has already started badly...

- What is it, Uncle?

- Nothing, nothing, it was just an aside. Say it.

- Linguistic signs are at the origin of any symbolism: the first act of symbolization is symbolization in and by Language. For

Saussure, meaning is the concept, the idea, and the signifier the acoustic image, and there is no relation (it is arbitrary) between signifier and signified. Chomsky - one of the current exponents of Linguistics - was not interested in the symbolic aspects of Language, he studies its strictly formal order, that is, he abandoned the word and is concerned with the structure of the sentence. As for the discussion on the origin of Language, it is almost unanimously considered that the phonetic obtained autonomy, and writing appeared as a second step to fix vocalism.

The science of writing, systematising the archaeological data concerning the various scripts, has distinguished 3 types:

- . pictographic writing
- . ideographic (or hieroglyphic) writing
- . phonetic (or alphabetic) writing

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

This traditional typology is contested and replaced by a classification into 5 categories...

- Don't get tired.

- What? Won't you listen, Uncle?

- That's a load of rubbish to make a fool believe. Skip it.

- Okay, if Uncle says so... now, the book talks about the relationship between Anthropology and Linguistics.

- Now that's more interesting, he says.

- Primitive man does not recognise in the act of speaking, symbolising, communicating, an act of idealisation or abstraction, but on the contrary as a participation in the universe around him. This is the main idea of this part of the book.

- Very good. Very lucid idea.

- Christianity replacing Egyptian religion is perhaps one of the reasons for the decline of the elaborate Egyptian writings. In Egypt, writing was distinct from orality, and disappeared when trade with the Greek civilisation invaded the Mediterranean basin.
- That is very important. One communication system being replaced by another for economic reasons... Go on, Paulo.
- Chinese writing: signs are ancient representations or ancient symbols, but for the most part they have no visible connection with the ideas indicated by the words they represent.
- That, Paul, is essential. And it demonstrates well what a symbol really is.
- Is that so? For me this is all a bit vague... By the way, what do you think the clue

means? That movie, *The Score*, with Robert Redford and Paul Newman?

- I bought the DVD, let's watch it next. Hold on a second.

- Ah, OK. The book, in the final part, also talks about *Psychoanalysis and Language*: Freud considers that dreams are not reduced to symbolism; they are a true Language, that is, a system of signs, with its own structure, syntax and logic. On the other hand, discourse contains and imposes an ideology; and every ideology finds its discourse. Any ruling class particularly watches over the practice of Language and controls its forms and the means of its diffusion: information, the press, literature. Literature is undoubtedly the privileged domain in which Language is exercised, made precise and modified. Several signifying systems seem to be able to exist without necessarily being built with the help

of language or from its model: gestures, the various visual signs, photography, cinema, painting; studying all these systems as languages is the object of a vast science which encompasses Linguistics and which is only now beginning to be formed - Semiotics.

- Now, yes, we are starting to get somewhere...
- Now the book *The Sign*, by Umberto Eco, uncle.
- I am listening to you attentively.
- The sign is used to transmit information, it is part of a communication system of this type: source - sender - channel - message - receiver.
- These guys really confuse everything... concepts like this mean nothing, really, it takes patience...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- What's that, Uncle? Don't you agree with this author?
- I obviously don't agree, it's mystification after mystification, so that man's navel remains at the centre of the world... it's disgusting. But go on, excuse me.
- Well, Eco says that this scheme applies to all communicative processes. There exists between sender and receiver a common code, that is, a series of rules that attribute to the signs of the message a meaning.

The sign as an element of the process of signification exists in a triangular relationship:

- . meaning (concept, idea)
- . signifier (acoustic image)
- . referent (the thing referred to, the object)

The signs can be:

- . unambiguous (1 single meaning)
- . misunderstandings (various meanings)
- . plurivocal (metaphors, connotation, double meanings)
- . vague (or symbols, with a range of meanings)

Linguists consider that the minimum unit of meaning is monemes (others call them morphemes), which are grouped into words.

- That's what I say, Paulo. In footballing language, those guys are missing out on the game! Ahahah!

- Eheheh, well, if Uncle thinks so... I want to see later what he has up his sleeve for this part....

- Anything else from that book, Paulo?

- Yes. Several concepts: Sign - is information of a quantitative order and is

calculated on the basis of the binary logarithm of the possible choices.

- That must be a laugh. You've been reading too many computer manuals for sure...

- Sign - there is a sign when by preliminary convention any sign is established by a code as meaning. Third book: Fundamentals of General Linguistics, which focuses mainly on the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure.

- Okay, okay, okay, okay. Let me just drink some water...

- Drinking water already, uncle? I'm supposed to be tired, I'm here talking, and...

- It's just that I tire quickly when I hear too many lies, Paulo...

The Game - XXXII

- Well, if uncle thinks these guys are all wrong, I don't know what...
- Nephew, these guys, as you say, all study by the same primer: writing, books and more books, devour entire libraries. But it is not wise who devours book culture or who wants to... eheheh...
- Uncle is preparing some...
- Come on, we still have to watch the film and it's already 3.45pm, hurry up.
- This book talks about the need to define what language is.
- At last! Hallelujah!
- For Martinet: "The language which the linguist studies is that of man".

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- After all... the mountain has brought forth a mouse, Paulo!

- Eheheh, isn't this what you were expecting, uncle? Moving on: Language only manifests itself through a plurality of languages.

- Wrong. Very wrong, Paulo. I'll explain later.

- Okay, but let me finish.

- Ah, sorry.

- The features common to all languages and which must exist in every communication system:

. the arbitrariness of the sign (the bond that unites the signifier to the signified is arbitrary)

. articulate oral language

. the double articulation (in meaningful units - monemes/morphemes and in distinctive units - phonemes)

For Saussure, the Signs are divided into:

- . 1. natural
- . 2. artificial
 - a) Representative (iconographic signs)
 - b) communicative (conventional)
 - . motivated
 - . arbitrary

(both motivated and arbitrary signs are symbols)

Language is understood as the capacity to speak, or rather, the system of phonetic-acoustic signs that constitute language, which is used to communicate. Language and thought are inseparable. The author of this book makes intelligence directly dependent on the use of language. And that is all.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- And that's enough. Now, let's watch the film.

- Is there popcorn? Ahahah!

- There's just too much attention. Paulo, keep your eyes open. It's not the film we're going to enjoy...

- Well?

- You are on the lookout for hidden meanings hidden in the film that might have to do with Linguistics. That is what will make the difference.

The Game - XXXIII

- All right. I'll turn off the DVD player. I'm turning off the DVD player. I got it. You got it?

- Did I understand...? Get what? It's already an old movie, about a scam by some scammers, to get a few thousand dollars... what's so special about it? Don't tell me it's the music? Jazz, right?

- My nephew, you're going to have to smarten your ears for the next part of the game, Astronomy, otherwise this is badly stalled. Now seriously: don't tell me you didn't get the play.

- Of course I got it. Newman and Redford were done with each other, to...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Eh! You really didn't understand anything at all! The final phone conversation, dammit!

- Yes? What about it? And what does this film have to do with...

- That is what I am trying to explain to you. Pay attention. One of the commen tells the bandit that horse X is going to score, and... he doesn't finish his sentence, doesn't he?

- Yes, and then what?

- Then, the bandit was so tense that he didn't hear the rest, he didn't hear what the other guy was saying, that is, he didn't understand that it was another horse, horse Y, that won, and he went straight away to bet on horse X, losing half a million dollars.

- Yeah, that was it, but what does it mean?

- It means - in our game - that the receiver does not understand the sender's message. And so that you understand what is at stake, I have to explain to you the wrong things you have been studying in Linguistics today.

- Hm... okay, I'm all ears.

- Paul, you read me a classification of signs in which the symbols are inside, within a category of signs. For it is exactly the opposite, the truth of the facts.

- What do you mean, uncle?

- Symbols do not have to symbolise: another pious lie, for the incautious scholar to understand only half of things. And signs are not signs, they are signals.

- What? Uncle, you're not making any sense! How is it possible that...

- Yes, it is possible, Paulo. And, not only is it possible, but it is what happens. There is a wise mixture of reality and fiction, of true concepts and half-truths, in the science of Language, whether this science is Linguistics or Semiology, or Semiotics, or whatever the hell these guys want to call it. It is already a miracle that they assume that Linguistics is after all within the immense field of Semiology, I tell you.

- But... why are there these confusions of concepts, Uncle?

- We'll come to that in a moment. The Language we use is not real Language either: it is just a code, made up of signs - since they only have one or a few meanings, depending on the context of the discourse where they appear. A sign is a symbol, there is no big difference.

And a symbol... is a whole Other thing, my nephew... a different world... nothing they say, I assure you. A symbol has countless meanings, so many that it can, in itself, symbolise the whole of Language, of which it is only a tiny part. And modern painting is the missing piece of the puzzle to prove it.

- The... modern painting? Uncle must be joking...

- Get the Jackson Pollock book from the bookcase. You can also bring Miró and Tapies, they're very close. Yes, the one with the grey cover, bring it to me, Paulo. That's it. Now open it, on any page.

- Jesus Christ! What are these crazy signs?

- Did you hear what you said, nephew...?

- What did I say...?

- Yes. You said: signs...

The Game - XXXIV

- And what about it?

- It has that you yourself, without having any deep theoretical knowledge of this matter, said the magic word, and in a totally intuitive way. You didn't need any linguistic dictionary to find immediately the concept, the idea that is at the base of all modern art: the ultimate origin of human communication...

- Huh? Did I say that?

- Yes, yes, you don't want to get away with that! Eheheh, take it easy. Now, you're bringing me the Taschen book on Picasso. Thank you. Thank you. Now where is this... is here, read this underlined part.

- "Wanting to find meaning in everything is the disease of our time"

- Did you get the message from Pablo Picasso, Paulo...?

- What message? Uncle, this is getting more and more confusing...

- Good, good, good. Let's go then. Picasso demonstrates with this simple sentence that the whole focus of linguistics is going in the wrong direction.

- Is that so? How is that possible? I don't think it has anything to do with that, Uncle...

- The wise words of the masters teach us a lot, Paulo. But we have to know how to listen, otherwise they pass us by and we don't understand them; look, like the bandit in the film: he was in such a hurry that he didn't understand a thing! Here's the thing: modern linguistics considers language to be only human language and speech - wrong. More: it even considers that the simple transmission of messages, through a code of signs understood by sender and receiver, is authentic communication!!! Imagine that!

And, obviously, the biggest mistakes come right after: to consider the sign as a sign, and to consider the symbol as a sub-category of sign, thus completing the egocentric attitude of man, in this intellectual masturbatory relation, of being pleased with his own image in the mirror: "the only Language that exists is the one I use", and that cannot even be considered as Language, it is only a rudimentary code,

because it is not formed by symbols - which would have multiple meanings - but only by signs, which transmit - and do not communicate - messages.

Capitalism accentuates the domination of the economic over the cultural factor in society, despite the fact that for more than half a century people have been well off, and that the next stage of human evolution is envisaged, in which the quality of life would be optimal for everyone.

- Hm. This is starting to make a bit more sense, Uncle.

- I've already told you about the small difference between mad and genius, haven't I, Paulo? Well, look, a genius artist, Antonín Artaud, he invented new words.

- Did you invent new words? What's that?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- You don't have to be surprised. That's common among poets. Your mother, she also invented new words, Paulo. I'll just get the notebook I still have, of her drafts, on my desk... here it is. Read this, Paulo.

- I laugh at the new words...?

- Yes, Paul. It's from your dead mother, God rest her soul. Read it...

"River of new words"

Ychmuala - Ofgtuio

Dertygh - Miochgt

Frertoa - Burnbuie

*River of new words, that don't fit in your womb, reality
They are lights of colours, people's faces, and they also die of longing*

*I wanted to be beyond, of signs of death to live
But I cannot be a believer in you, before I dream of another being*

*I believe in the world only when I hear it cry
I think then: how beautiful and profound is your gaze*

*The mountain is Rio's mother, she is its past and future
 And the river dreams awake in its pure bed
 River me, you are water, stones, absent in the present and poetry
 when stranded at sea*

*And for your end to find you just have to be demented and
 remember.”*

- It's... it's...

- I know, Paulo. It's very beautiful. Your mother was very special. Very special, really.

- I wish I could have met my mother. I really miss you, Uncle.

- I know. It's tough. Victor Masse did a good job, but nothing replaces our blood, right?

- Let's get back to this matter, uncle. I...

- You want to forget, I understand. Well, back to the point: some people make intelligence depend on the use of language, which is infinitely stupid.

- Is that so? And why is it stupid...?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Joseph Beuys was a genius artist, who clearly assumed this: animals are more intelligent than man.

- Now that, then, was completely...

- Wrong? These brilliant intuitions don't usually fail...

- But why was he saying that?

- Because of instinct. Animals, he said, use instinct in greater doses than humans do, so they are more intelligent: and they need neither "organised thought" nor "Oral and written language" to manage to be more intelligent than us...

- Well, what is the solution to this riddle, anyway?

- Remember the bandit in the film?

- Yeah, what about it? It must have something to do with this, right?
- He didn't understand what they told him, did he?
- Yes, he didn't understand.
- Nor would you understand - as you did not understand - Linguistics, if you had not had this explanation. Because, my nephew, the minimum unit of signification, they say, is the moneme/morpheme, that is: part of a word. But...

- And... isn't it?
- It is the symbol. Without any kind of doubt. And by the way, painting precedes written "Language", anyway. But if they admitted that, this house of cards called Linguistics would collapse at its base... it is very dangerous to think it, and even more dangerous to say it...
- So... is that what I have to answer for, in this part of the game?

- You have to say the following: symbol. And when they ask you for the concept of symbol, you just say: that of the History of Modern Art, according to the perspective of Anthropology, not that of Linguistics... against historical truths not even the dumbest university doctor can do anything. And I guarantee that they will leave you alone right away!

And now, do me a favour: take the computer to Marcelo, in Tires: it's broken again...

The Match - XXXV

The way to Marcelo's house from Lisbon was relatively easy to find, but even so Paulo Lam reviewed his uncle's directions in his mind: *you take the A5, exit at Carcavelos, pass the big roundabout at Oeiras, continue upwards and at the second roundabout turn towards Tires. From then on, you just have to pay attention to the signs.* Paulo Lam had known how to drive for 4 years: he had been a *good student, but very distracted,* according to his instructor.

It had been some time since I had driven my uncle's car: a Citroen 2 horsepower, a relic, one of those cars that had no power at all, but whose personality and strange suspension won everyone over, for some magical reason

unknown to the common mortal. And in fact, on the way up from the Oeiras roundabout to the second roundabout, the one at the São Domingos de Rana cemetery, its limits had been tested, despite the relative ease of a 5% slope well distributed along the way. *But this car is very special.*

It was. *On the negative side.*

Practically the entire interior area of Cascais had been built on the bumps, as if all those wild ducks had made their building plans on the spur of the moment after hitching a ride on those two horses.

Illegal construction was very common in that area, so common that over time it had become completely legal. After all, everyone knew that if someone wanted to become legal in Portugal, they only had to join a few thousand illegals - whatever that illegality was - and, by magical arts, the endemic

situation would soon, sooner or later, be regularised by the country's City Halls. You can expel ten people, and destroy ten houses. But if there are two hundred of them, it's much more difficult... well: the usual, thought Lam, as he put the third gear into the first roundabout.

When he arrived at his friend's house, he parked outside, on a street with no pavement. And when he got out of the car, Marcelo's dog gave him a welcome that was too noisy for his liking and certainly for the neighbours.

- Hey, Marcelo, calm your dog down, please!
- Ah, sorry Paulo, I'll put it away in the back, hold on man.

Lam stood watching his friend take the dog to the back of the house. Every now and then a timid bark was heard, which soon ended.

- I'm back. Now let's go and open the gate for my friend Paulo... Pronto. So, Paulo, what brings you here? What's up, man?

- I have a problem with my computer; I have no internet access.

- Ah, all right.

- And I have little time.

- Not much time, Paulo? Time for what? How much time do you give me to fix your PC, anyway?

- Not at all, you don't understand.

- Well Paul, don't just stand there, come into the house.

Marcelo's house was bare of any decoration. All that construction was the result of Marcelo's many weekends of work. He had come from Brazil, legalised his status recently, and his son already spoke perfect Portuguese, according to his drooling father.

As for him, he still used typical Brazilian expressions from time to time. An employee of a large software shop in Cascaís, he dealt with the worst thing that can happen in computing: viruses.

- Come into the room and sit down, I'll be right there Paul. Did you want to visit any particular site? My guri is an internet expert, I'll call him for you, hold on.

- Tsk, tsk... a computer scientist who doesn't even know how to use the Internet... my God, does that exist?!

- Hey, give me some space, Pauloo, you have to calm down, I'll just take care of the computers' ailments. Don't ask me for the moon! I'm a computer technician, *pure and simple*, as you say here, right? My man is the real webdesigner in my house!

- Ok, ok... well, call it in, I've got some stuff to Google and I've never quite got to grips with their advanced search...

- Ah, you see! It's not just me, man!

- Okay, mea culpa, mea culpa, go get the kid.

Lam settled into the room, where two computers seemed to be having a blood transfusion. There were wires everywhere, and if a CPU's mind existed, some of its soul must be in those wires.

The house was quite cold as Marcelo was still installing the central heating.

Half a minute later, a boy who was no older than 11 entered the room, and immediately took hold of one of the computers. He was obviously comfortable with the mouse and the screen. Traquina, he fired:

- Hi. What's up? You know more about the Internet than my dad, right?

- Bruno! You didn't even say hello to Paulo! Give him a handshake, please!

- Marcelo, but I thought your son... he's...
- Negative, *dude!* I stopped being a kid a long time ago. Dad, who is he?
- Calm down, my son, he is a childhood friend of your father. As for you, Paulo, I'd like you to meet my son Bruno. Bruno as a first name, Dias as a family name.
- Yes, but he's so young... I...
- 175, Paul.
- 175 what?

- 175 of IQ, no: *what, man!* Paulo, you have to understand something... my son is an indigo child.
- A what?
- A child prodigy, wow!

The Game - XXXVI

- You can talk to him about anything, Paulo, and he will always have a completely new perspective. He's been like that since he

was a kid, my son. His mother and I sometimes can't even stand him anymore...
right son?

- Because you are too predictable, come on!

- It's OK, Bruno, it's OK, I know all that. Paulo, I have to go out with my wife, we're going to the theatre. Then we'll talk to you about your computer repair, in principle this weekend we can solve it.

- I brought my uncle's CPU, it's in the car and...

- All right, when you leave don't forget to get the PC, leave it here in this room, in the corner, see?

- Yes yes, that's fine. See you tomorrow then.

- And you, kid, you're going to bed at night, as we agreed, OK? Not a minute longer, my son, I have to!

- All right, Dad! See you tomorrow.
- See you tomorrow... give your father a kiss.

Marcelo went out into the corridor and made his way to the car, where Alexandra was already. Bruno stood for a moment waving to them at the living-room window. The affection that existed in the family was evident.

- All right. They're out. Come on, let's go to the safe house.
- Hiding place? What the hell is that?

- You don't want to know... Come!

A long corridor was followed by a spiral staircase of cement, not yet plastered. Bruno went ahead, jumping up and down, and called Paulo Lam from time to time, amused. *Where will this kid take me...* He entered the second door on the right and turned on the lights.

- Enter and close the door.

- Excuse me...

- Sit on the bed, make yourself comfortable. There's some orange juice in the bottle. It's good, drink it if you want. I'll sit here.

- Okay.

- All right. Now, tell me what's bothering you.

- Say...? I don't...

- Come on. Trust an Indigo.

- I don't believe any of it!

- You don't know enough to believe or not believe!

- Well, eh... that's true...!

- I'm all ears, but I suffer from a lack of patience: so be quick.

- Hm. Okay. I have to solve a problem, but I'll never in my life be able to prove this... I'm trying to figure something out, and I feel like I need help, really.

- What is it about?

- Astronomy. I don't have a clue for the moment.

- Paulo, you don't need to prove anything...

- What do you mean? You think this is art, where only creativity counts?! I'm going to deal with very complex matters... even you don't know!

- I just know that you still don't have to prove anything. It's all very simple.
- So if it's that simple, prove it to me.

- You'll go out that door, and you'll wait in the corridor. When I call you, you come. And I will have the magic potion here, that will prove to you by A plus B that it is simple, to do what you want.
- Well, I think you're making fun of me, but that's okay.
- You can go. The quicker you go, the quicker you'll be convinced.
- Joker... I'll be right back, Mr Wise Guy...
- My nickname on the basketball court is Slow Motion.
- Ok...

- But I guarantee you've never seen someone so fast!

The Match - XXXVIII

- You can come in now!
- Okay, what...
- Cover your eyes! And then come in.
- All right, all right...
- Yes, go in slowly, in this direction; wait, I'll come and get you!

Paulo Lam was led by Bruno to a chair. In front of him was a camping table and, on it, a state-of-the-art laptop computer, open on an internet site, a sort of forum, with countless messages and replies. When Lam opened his eyes, Bruno laughed.

- What is this? Are you kidding me?
- Hey, easy. Swear to me you won't say anything to my father.

- I won't say anything to your father...?
Say nothing about what?
- I know how to make your dream come true.
- What dream? Explain yourself!
- That one, the astronomy one!
- Is that so? How's that, smart guy?
- Do you see this site?
- Yes, it's a kind of forum, what about it?

- Paul, you do NOT have to prove anything.
If you want to make an impact on a global level, you only need one thing.
- What thing? I don't understand anything...

- THE INTERNET!!!

The Game - XXXIX

- Good morning, Paulo. Come and have breakfast, it's ready. Today is the day of rest for the warrior.
- What do you mean, uncle?
- No books. No rules. No nothing at all. Because today, we are going fishing, to Carcavelos.
- Come on... we're about to dismantle this damn code, and now that we're so close it tells me...
- I'll just say that I've read a few indexes of books on astronomy, and it's unpalatable. It would take us ages to decipher that stuff, and we'd end up banging our heads against the wall, probably. We don't have time for that.
- So what do we do? What can we do?
- From now on, we will use two things, one is mine and the other you give.

- Is that so? And what are these things, may I ask?

- I give common sense and some history.

- What about me?

- You are going to give what you do best: the intuition you inherited from your blessed mother. It has brought you this far; now you move forward, it is you who will take the last step.

- And we're going... fishing?!

- "Let's go fishing"? What a poor expression, Paul. No, not "let's go fishing", of course not.

- But uncle told me that...

- We are going to listen to what the fish have to tell us. Because, dear nephew, it is in the empty spaces that true wisdom is found...

The Game - XL

- How much further is it, Uncle?
- No, the waterfront's a good way to go. We're almost there. Calm down a bit. You'll find fishing very restful.
- It's such a drag!
- Paul!
- Sorry, Uncle.

- OK, I'm going to park here. Did you know that this bend, called the pine-tree bend, was the most dangerous bend in Europe? People died here like crazy!
- But this is Paço de Arcos, not Carcavelos!

- For me, this area reminds me of Carcavelos, what do you want... quota thing, surely eheheh... bring me the small rod with the big transparent buoy and the grapnel. Today I'm going brazenly mullet fishing, I have no patience for a more elitist fishing, it's just to be entertained.

- If you say so... what do I do now?
- Now you get to thinking. I'll give you clues, we'll talk calmly. You have to notice something: what do Freud in psychology, Christ in religion, Chomsky in linguistics and Einstein in science have in common?
- Well, they are incredibly talented in their areas of knowledge... I don't know what you mean by...
- They are Jews, nephew. They are children of the Jewish people... there is someone who wants to give you a message...
- And then...?

- You have to promise me something, Paulo.
- What... what is it, uncle? You got such a serious expression all of a sudden...

- This game... it kills your degree. When they give you your diploma, promise me you'll forget everything you've learned in these 4 days. You'll get a job, like everyone else, and the game will be over. Promise me that, for your mother's sake.

- Well, uncle, but that is the most likely destination!

- Promise me. Now. Paul...

- It's okay. I promise, uncle. I promise, uncle.

- Now, come and listen to the fish, Paul. They teach us to think. Come.

The Game - XLI

- Uncle?
- Yes, Paul, what is it?
- Why did you tell me that about the Jewish people...? What does it have to do with this?
- Well, maybe it's just a hunch. But... you know, the whole Jewish culture is based on the concept of the enlightened prophet. It's just that...
- Yes...?
- There is only one thing that the Jewish people love more than a good prophet.
- And what is this thing, uncle?

- Power. Money. It is no accident that the Jews have always been loan sharks, lending money at high interest rates throughout Europe and becoming rich very quickly, making them easy targets for the envy of the well-off, as happened in Russia and then in Hitler's Germany, for example. After the

war, they allied themselves with the new emerging power...

- United States...?

- Exactly. And they have joined forces so closely that today they control all the reins of economic and political power in the world's most important organisations...

- But I don't understand how that connects to this last part of the game. Uncle?

- Yeah, I don't know. I brought you some basic books on Relativity Theory and also Quantum Physics. Take a look, maybe you'll remember some interesting details, with your intuition... They're in the boot of the car, go there.

- But uncle, these books are...

- I know I know. They're very basic textbooks, aren't they? But something tells me that what we're looking for is something very... simple. Come sit here next to me.

- Do you see any fish?

- I've seen and felt the bites of some, don't think I've lost my touch. I'm just too lazy today to pull the line at the right time. Focus, nephew. Or dream. I'll tell you the basic steps of this story. Einstein created the Theory of Relativity, and was also at the foundation of Quantum Physics, despite later disagreements with Niels Bohr. Stephen Hawking's ideas are much appreciated today: he says that there was an initial atomic explosion, the big bang, which led to a formidable expansion of space: hence our universe is so gigantic. Nowadays, there is an incessant search, by everybody, for the unified Theory.

- What's that? unified Theory...?

- Yes. A theory that explains all the facts of the physical world, that unites the macrocosm and the Theory of Relativity

with the tiny particles of matter of Quantum Physics. This is the Holy Grail of scientists in the exact sciences. Einstein, incidentally, worked on this theory for the last 40 years of his life.

- Jesus, Uncle... 40 years?

- Well, that's just it. And we can only scratch at these highly complex matters, not least because you come from the social sciences and I too navigate these waters of subjectivity, and not of exact measurements of the world.

- So how do we figure out the solution to this part of the game?

- We have to apply reasoning typical of the social sciences to the exact sciences. We must, in essence, think out loud about what might have happened to the universe. Oh, and trust your genius intuition.

- What about the track? Around the world in 80 days? What does it mean in this context?

- Hm. I don't see what it is, nephew. Leaf through a few pages of those books. I have to change the worm on the hook.
- Have you seen this sketch of the atom? It's very funny, with the electrons going around the nucleus. It looks just like the orbits of the planets around the sun!
- What did you say? Paulo, what did you say?!
- What is it, uncle? Are you all right?
- You found the solution! And it was so simple!!!
- C... what do you mean? Take it easy, I just...
- Now it all makes sense! Paulo!
- What makes sense? Uncle, you're delirious...
- Paul, what does it take to have power?
- Well, having money, making the right political contacts, I don't know...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Or... hide certain scientific knowledge, and do political and economic blackmail with those who have that power and also know the truth, isn't it? Huh?

- I don't understand anything...

- "I know that you know that I know. And since only the two of us know it, the game is ours alone!!! "

... to the university! NOW!!!

The Game - XLIII

- I'll drop you off at your university, and park at the top, on Rua Luís de Camões. Then come and see me, okay Paulo?

- That's fine. But what is the answer I have to this last part of the game?

- You know, the clue they gave us, the Jules Verne book...

- Yes? What do you got?

- Phileas Fogg went around the world, didn't he?

- Síimm...?

- And then it was back to the same place...

- Yes, it's back to the same place. Uncle, I don't...

- "How small the world is!!!"; you've heard this expression, huh?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Oh... Uncle, I'm beginning to understand...

- And just as the world is small, so is the universe small. Because the universe is only big if we human beings judge ourselves to be big and important, and measure it on our own scale: measurements are not absolute, but relative, and so space cannot be measured in absolute terms; therefore Hawking's theory may not be correct. The key word here is: atom - you said it yourself. We are coming. You know where to find me afterwards. Good luck nephew.

- Thank you, thank you for everything, uncle. Without you I wouldn't have made it!

- Hey, take it easy. You don't know if you've got it yet...

The Game - XLIII

He was more relieved now. He had Charles' word in his favour, which guaranteed him a Sociology degree. But Lam felt it. Through the crowd jostling outside the university, the sting was clearly distinguishable. And now...?

He took a few steps towards a crossroads and sat down on the cobbled pavement. He took a deep breath of the cool, almost evening air, and then he began to feel. A numbness came over him almost immediately, and from among the shadows that hovered over his face, two stood out. Later he would know what they were called.

Among about two dozen students, two anonymous individuals carried an unwell, almost fainted student into a car with tinted windows.

- Coming through, he's not well.
- Legs first, you! Hurry up! The body was swallowed up quickly, and when they got inside, the man just said: - Let's go! We've wasted too much time already!

The slow awakening was followed by a gradual regaining of consciousness and, immediately, a sensation of the purest terror. In front of him, the void. A massive brick wall, as dark as the basement itself. Behind him, his hands tied to a metal chair. His heart began to beat uncompromisingly, escaping his body. And now that he was conscious, he would perhaps need every second he was alive for a single chance at a little more life. He knew it. The shadow of himself, cast in front of him on the old wooden floor, reminded him of the Chinese shadow shows he had enjoyed so much as a child. *A piece of dream in the middle of this*

nightmare. Suddenly, another shadow joined his own and, despite the absolute silence in which the room was immersed, the psychological presence he had only sensed before had taken shape. And life. Then, a voice that could only have existence in a world of depths, echoed in the room, over his soul.

- Lam.

He shivered. He hadn't counted on the silence being broken so quickly. His name. Name evil. Time. I need a few seconds to think.

- Lam, the deep voice insisted, followed by a few more seconds that seemed like hours, of absolute emptiness.

- No one needs another dead philosopher, Lam.

His self-mastery has plummeted. You can kill me right here. Uncle. Just think. Think, damn it. Either you caught the wave of the conversation and gave a hope for your rehabilitation, or all was lost. I've got to buy some time.

- I...

- No, Lam. Don't say anything. Don't do anything else. If you do, you're a dead man. Understood, *hombre*?

A couple of seconds was enough this time for the sound and the meaning to merge in the pit of his stomach.

- Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

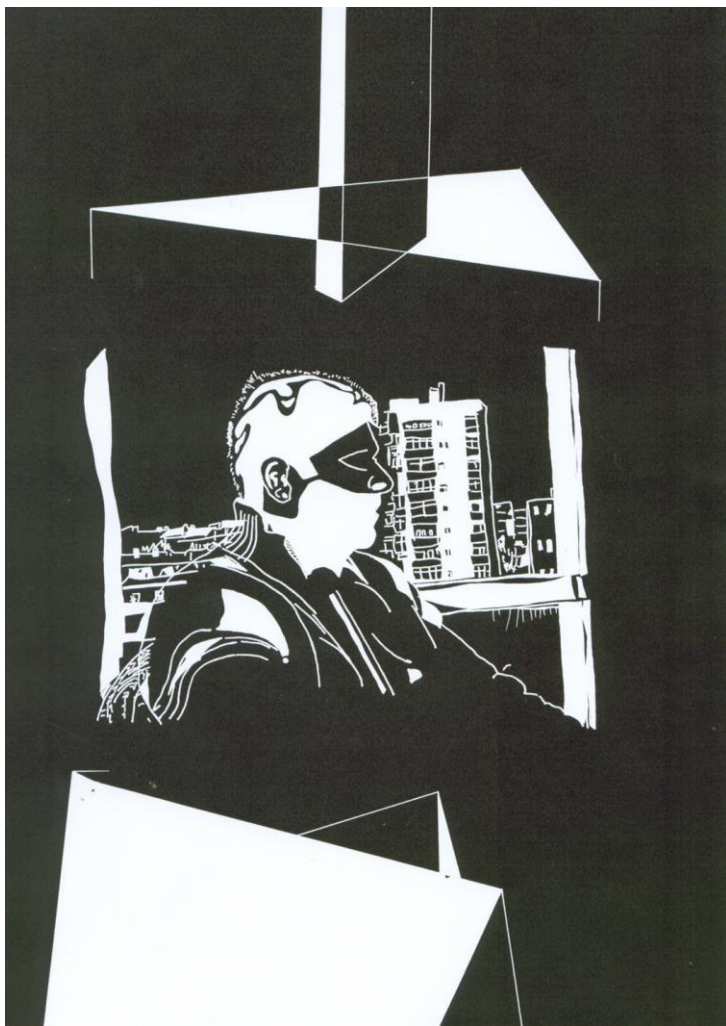
The menacing presence waited for a few seconds that seemed like an eternity. Something was going to happen, but what?

The second shadow stood up, waited again. And then walked out behind his back. The silence was then broken by a third.

- Sweet dreams, if not Lam.

Wood hit the back of Lam's head almost immediately. As he passed out, he felt relief, even he didn't know why.

. AN END .



(PART THREE)

An end - |

- You wanted to talk to me?
- Sit down, professor... make yourself comfortable...

The chair was one of the least comfortable in the room, and Victor Masse realised this immediately. Both Kramm and the doctor had special chairs. Which were used in special situations... very thorough, personal enquiries, even. And that was perhaps why Victor did not feel comfortable in that chair. And it was far from having anything to do with the chair itself: it just meant, in that context, a status. Inferior. Kramm glared at him, looking derisive. Masse didn't fully understand him, but he knew something had been said behind his back, compromising him. It was his integrity that was at stake. But not so much so: after all, to join them, he had been forced into a lot of things... a lot of things that, now, might be thrown in his face. That's the way it is in the

States: all it takes is a blow in the wrong ear to fire someone. And if anyone was on the ropes at that moment, it was him, not Kramm. The doctor took a deep breath, and filled his malignant lungs with the air that Victor Masse was also breathing, at that moment. The eyes of the two met amidst the smoke of his cigarillo, and they said nothing concrete to each other in that brief instant.

- I hear from Lisbon that the damn game you invented is going badly for us. Isn't that right, Kramm?

- Yes, doctor. Our man in Lisbon is suspicious of some things...

- Stuff.

The doctor took a deep breath. When the smoke left his nostrils, he made sure to direct it into the empty space between Kramm and Masse.

- Things. I wonder what these things are, Víctor. Do you know what those strange things are?
- Well, I don't even know why I was called here, and...
- You'd better sing quietly, Masse, Kramm said.
- You're sorry? Who gave you the right to talk to me like that, after all I've done for...
- Calm down, Víctor. I'll rephrase the question. And you better know the answer...
- I am here to collaborate with you, as I have always done. I...
- You are endangering our group, and you tell me that...
- Kramm!!! Jeez, shut up man!
- I'm sorry, doctor. I just wanted to...
- I know what you wanted. If there is one thing that is sacred to the three of us here in

this room, it is the secret we carry. But how many times do I have to tell you that that emotional speech doesn't help us at all?

- Sorry.

- Victor. What I said to Kramm applies to you too, you irresponsible bastard. I want to know something. And you'd better tell me, for your sake, and for the sake of someone very dear to you...

- I don't know what you're talking about, doctor. I always thought that...

- Too much thinking is bad for you - haven't you heard? Thinking little and obeying sometimes is much better...

- Who sent that email to Lam? Huh? It was you! It was you, Masse!

Victor Masse did not expect the question-accusation to come from Kramm. He

thought for a split second what he might say, but nothing occurred to him. *How the hell did they know...* He had very little time to react. And he had better react quickly.

- I couldn't do anything else... Paulo asked me directly for an opinion about the...

- Oh, yeah? You call that betraying the whole department? How will the boss react to this? Hm? Have you thought about it, Masse?

- Kramm. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't think that's an important question right now. Victor, let's *rewind* our thinking. Follow me, please.

- So be it. I'm here to listen to you. And I'm calm, unlike Kramm, who...

- I know what you did for him in Seattle, I know. Don't think I've forgotten it. But

consider this my last favour: the story of your collaboration with us. To begin with: you moved from the social sciences to mathematics in 1965; you got a fellowship for advanced studies in Quantum Physics at MIT in 1970; you joined us in 1978, while maintaining a sporadic activity as a professor at the University of Social Theory, in Lisbon. And in the meantime you adopted a boy in 1972. Lam. A son of a cheap prostitute, who

- She is not...!

- Victor! I'm talking. Do you mind? To each his own truth...

- The doctor's talking, Masse. Put the ball down, or else...

- Yes, Victor, otherwise... you already know what's going to happen, don't you? You can't look a gift horse in the mouth... make the most of it now, it'll be too late... hm?

- I'm listening.
- That's not enough. Tell him, Kramm, tell him.
- In good Portuguese, you who like those parts of the civilised world: when one donkey speaks, the other lowers his ears! Ahaha!
- Yes, thanks for reminding him of that, Kramm, a good Lusitanian proverb never hurt anyone. But you were wrong.
- Ehm? Me? I was wrong...?
- Yes. Because there is only one donkey in this room. I'll let you and Víctor decide who that donkey is...
- But, I... doctor!
- You take it easy too, eh? Look, Víctor, like I was saying, you adopted this kid, and you've been giving him a good chunk of what you earn here with us. Me and the committee have nothing to do with it, but...

you're showing weakness. You're being too soft, a good heart. Your stay in Portugal never did you any good. There's a thing there that... what's it called, Kramm?

- I believe you are referring to the word 'saudade', doctor.

- Yes, that's it. There is a natural disease of the Portuguese, which they call saudade. It's a feeling that is inexpressible in other languages, that only the people of those latitudes feel, how shall I put it... look, it softens people, it makes them too good! An unbearable litany, and then the fado, that horrible music...

- Don't you even think of being like that here, Masse... don't you even dream that...

- He doesn't have to think anything else, Kramm. He won't even dream anything. You've reached the end of the line, this way.

- But, doctor... I gave my life, my talent to this organisation...! I've done everything for Paulo, yes, but he's practically my son! I have a debt of blood, of honour to his mother! I promised her that...

- But you think you are recreating the mafia, now, but on your own tiny scale?

- Honour? What's that? Blood debt, Masse? You don't understand at all...

- Leave him alone, Kramm. He'll understand...

- Leave my Paulo alone! Punish me instead of him.

- Now that's no longer possible, I'm afraid, Víctor... he knows too much now. With your help, with that damned game, you've really ruined everything. Our envoy in Lisbon even had to kidnap him and threaten him, but your boy is still alive...

Víctor Masse was becoming increasingly anxious. It was obvious that something very serious was in the pipeline, and there was little he could do to help Paul Lam, his protégé. *I could never have a son. And now they take away the only child I've ever had in my life... Think. Quickly. Something, somewhere in the depths of memory. I knew it. Only one's life still commands some respect in the lives of others. That's it.*

- I have something. Something very serious to tell you, doctor.

- And is that the thing I hope to hear, Víctor? That's the big question...

- The doctor has been very patient with you, Masse. The time has come for you to cooperate. What do you propose?

- I'm... I'm almost done.
- Yeah, you're done here, David doesn't want you to...
- But do you listen to me, or don't you? I'm about to leave for good. I'm... I'm dying.

- Eheheh... you want us to believe that story about making the cobblestones cry, hm?

It only took a few brief seconds and a look from Victor Masse for the doctor to understand.

- Those analyses you did... is that it, Victor?
- I suffer from stomach cancer. A cancer... terminal. So you see, you're gonna get rid of me, Kramm, just like you've wanted since Seattle. So that there's no evidence left that I helped you...

- Shut up! It's water under the bridge! You don't test my patience, Víctor, I'm warning you...

- I don't even have time to test anyone. I just want one thing.

- And you'll get several of those things you want. This blessed cancer... it changes everything. Human sacrifices have always been held in high esteem around here...

- Quit that black humour of bringing it around the house, Kramm, you're no good at it.

- What do you want, Víctor? What can we still do for you? It will be your last request, I think you still have the right...

- Quite romantic, doctor, quite romantic... they still say we don't have a heart!

- Go ahead, Víctor. I'm waiting.

- I don't want anything for myself, doctor. I just wanted you to...

An end - II

- Do you know him? Carlos! I'm talking to you, damn it!

- Who's that? Costa?

- Yes, Costa! Who do you think I'm talking about? But are you listening to me, or what, anyway?

- I hear you, yes. But Sergio, I wonder if you're not imagining things that are too much... that could put certain situations at risk... after all, who will listen to a recently appointed sociologist? There are so many of them now... Lam is just one more... universities are like a factory of graduates. They go straight to unemployment! And you know that, you know that as well as I do, as well as any university professor!

- Are you finished? I'm telling you, you don't listen to me...

The rector got up from the small sofa and surrounded the genuine leather upholstered chair where Carlos was sitting, thus standing behind him. Carlos began to feel that some important cards of that game were

still to be played. Maybe even the Ace. He stood in the uncomfortable position of not seeing the Dean.

- Carlos, Carlos, Carlos, you don't understand...

- I don't understand but I sense something that...

- I don't pay you to have feelings! Shut up, once and for all!

There followed a silence that lasted a few seconds. Seconds too long, for Carlos. Behind him, the dean strolled, seemingly in circles. And if he dared to turn around, he would have to face him. He knew that. And so did the dean.

- Did you think the game was over, Carlos? Far from it... Who deals the cards says which trump suit... another game is about to begin, Carlos. I asked you for Costa's contact ages ago. And you have the nerve to put it off because of a feeling... a feeling!

Sometimes I wonder if you really know what it's like to be a university professor... don't you want to go into unemployment...

- Hey, easy, easy. If you want Costa's contact, I'll give you that contact. I love being a university professor, and...

- And... you want to remain so, because you're a bloody ambitious and because you have nowhere to drop dead! Everyone in this environment knows that having pedagogical competence only gets in the way at the university... isn't that right, my dear, dear Mr. Doctor Carlos...?

- Hm... eh... no need to say things like that, I, well... look, here's the contact. Here, write it down in your notebook.

- That's it, yeah. See how we understand each other again? Nothing better than both of us speaking the same language, right?

- Hm... yeah, yeah, no doubt, I'm on your side, just...

- You've just become overzealous with this little matter. I understand. But more zealous than me, you're certainly not...

- Of course, of course, that was always out of the question, Sérgio... what an idea of yours, I know my place...

- It's good that you know. Very good, indeed. That's always very useful: to know the place we occupy, whether it's in a company, in a university, in a... supermarket, or whatever, eh? Is that clear? Carlos, are you inattentive?

- No, no, please, I'm happy to be here, and...

- So you should know that good jobs don't always last. Portugal has been in recession

since April 25th, or have you forgotten? The number, Carlos... I'm waiting...

- Hm... it's... 9-1-2-4-4-5-7-8-6

- Thank you very much. You can leave, I don't need you anymore today.

- Yeah, yeah, okay, I'm going to go...

Carlos stood up and Sergio's menacing gaze stared at him from top to bottom.

- And... little judge, hm? Little judge!

- I... ehm. I'm leaving now, see you later.

Carlos' steps were anything but sure. The jolts his body made in such a short space were not accompanied by his mind. Something of his soul had ceased to exist. He was about to open the door, but stopped himself. The sound became audible, but it contained no thought, only fear.

- Since when do you know that Costa is the...

- I know, and that's enough! You can come out, Carlos. Open the door, move your body past it, close it from the outside. You know, those things.

An end - III

Doctor Cândido Costa's office was in Areeiro, near the market. There was a garden in front of it, frequented mainly by prostitutes and beggars after 7pm. It was not pleasant to look at, but, and since the white curtains

of his window were almost always drawn downwards, this did not affect him and his patients as much as it might seem at first sight, because the consultations always finished at 6.30 pm.

Carlos was the first to arrive. He was nervous, as after all it was he who had given Dr. Costa's contact details to the rector.

- I'll arrive around 5.30, not before: I have some business to attend to, an impatient rector had told him the day before, after much insistence. Carlos felt about to lose his virginity. In a cheap doctor's office in Lisbon. That wasn't, in fact, his concept of happiness. Nor of the first time.

- Good afternoon. What can I get you? asked the receptionist kindly.

- I, uh... have, I have an appointment with Dr. Costa.

- Which one? We have two: Arthur and C...

- Cândido. Cândido Costa.
- Ah. The psychiatrist.
- Yes, yes, that's him. Where can I wait my turn?
- Take a seat in the waiting room, it's just the second door on the left, in this corridor. I'll call you in later.
- Very good. Thank you, sir.

Carlos went to the waiting room. That was a floor that mixed everything: ophthalmology consultations, general practice, and also psychological illnesses. *A real mess... I don't even want to imagine who's in this waiting room... Anyway, Sérgio will know what we came here for.*

- Good afternoon.
- Good afternoon! replied the various patients in unison. There was no more complicated psychiatric case, or at least it didn't

manifest itself as such. *Wow. What a relief.
I can read my little magazine in peace...*

Carlos was sleeping soundly when someone woke him gently.

- Hm... yes, what is...?

- Relax, Carlos, it's me, Sergio. I've arrived. I'm still on time, I think...

- What... what time is it, I...?

- Don't worry, the appointment isn't until 6pm, and it's now 5.38pm. I'm just in time, don't worry.

- But what are we here for?

- Hey, shut up! My suit holds all the trumps now...

An end - IV

- Despite your limitations, Kramm, I cannot say that your intuition is wrong in this case.

- But, doctor, I...

- You? Look: you do like the donkey: you put your ears down to hear better. And this is if

you want to: there's a little office waiting for you in Seattle, right next to the...

- Please, no! Anything but that, doctor, I don't...

- "I will speak no more until the doctor fully expresses his ideas; I will lie no more until the end of my life; I will not betray Masse again..." is this what you were going to say, Kramm...? Hm? Have you lost your tongue now?

- Excuse me, doctor. I hear you.

- So, yeah. Your mother gave you a good education after all, huh? As for you, Victor... I'll give you the last cigarette of the condemned to death. And it can't be said that you haven't earned it.

- I don't smoke.

- Ahahah! Good joke, good joke, my dear Victor. Only that would make me smile, at a

moment like this. I can give you, for a start, some good news.

- I'm all ears.

- The phone call I was going to make, for one hypothetical individual to end the existence of another hypothetical so-and-so within a week at most, is now put aside. How many months do they give you, anyway? The doctors? They're always very coy, but if you squeeze them for real, they say....

- 2 months.

- At most?

- Yes. At the highest of the highest.

- That's enough to me.

- I calculated that.

- Don't be so smart, redneck. You don't calculate anything here on this committee. You never have. You've always been a cheap errand boy. I'm sorry: a cheap and expensive errand boy. Which cost us a lot for what you did...

- I wasn't supposed to do anything, how did you want me to...

- Yes, that's true. We don't exist, you say well, to do anything...

- We exist to lie softly to the public, Masse.

- Yes, you're right, Kramm. But, Victor, tell me: since when did your scruples get in the way of your sweet lie, as our Kramm says here? When did it awaken in you that awareness that was supposed to be forever buried... at last, in the confines of memory... eh? Yes, why don't you tell me that...

- You're right in what you said earlier. It was my good heart speaking louder. Paulo, he...

- I was at a dead end. No diploma, no future, no independent life. Isn't that how I put it, Masse...?

- Yes. I think you're right, Kramm. That's it. I saw my boy in that dead end you were talking about, and...

- Oh, the longing... isn't it, Víctor? That Portuguese feeling... it's a bad business, hm?

- But you are wrong about one thing. One essential thing.

- And what is that thing, don't you want to tell me?

- Lam, he... he figured it out all by himself.

An end - V

- Mr Carlos Lacerda and Mr Sérgio Lopes.
They are next. For Doctor Cândido Costa.

- We are here! We're coming... Come on,
Carlos.

- All right, everybody. Please go to room 7.
The doctor is already waiting. Then you will
pay me when you leave; it's 35 euros for the
first consultation.

- Welcome to this side of town, Carlos.

Here, human meat is cheap.

- Carlos, how are you? Mr Sérgio, isn't it? Come in, come in, please. Sit down on this big sofa. I'll just close the door... Good afternoon, so how are you, Costa? How are you? Rita, is she all right too?

- Yeah, thanks, she and the kids are great, and...

- Mr. Cândido Costa, abruptly interrupted Sérgio.

- S... yes? Mr. Sérgio, what can I do for you? From what I spoke to Carlos, you don't seem to have any psychological problems, so I find this appointment a little strange...

- You are the psychiatrist of one of our students.

- I... am...? Carlos, what is it...

- Take it easy. That student's name is Lam. Paul Lam.

- I'm afraid I don't understand you, my dear sir, I cannot give my clients' contact details, that is strictly forbidden by the Association of Mental Health Professionals, and...

- Really? And doesn't that Association have a member named Miguel? Miguel... Cunha, to be precise...?

- C... as you know... listen, I don't know what you want, but... it's impossible for me to continue this consultation, I'm sorry Carlos, I...

- Read.

- C... how? Read what?

- This letter.

Sergio held out a letter with the stamp of an Association.

- ANPSM.

- The stamp of the National Association of Mental Health Professionals...
- Yes. It's very simple to understand, doctor.
- It's... it's a letter from... from...
- From your excellent colleague, Miguel Cunha. Read, read, before you throw us out of this room, so that you know once and for all what is at stake here, my dear Doctor Cândido... Costa.

Doctor Cândido had never seen that type of letter. It was a special envelope, which was only used in situations at the highest level, according to what some of his more experienced colleagues had told him, when one wanted to communicate the removal of doctors from their posts, or something even more serious. Although that day had been full of complicated cases of decompensated patients, there was nothing like this. And what had this rector of the UTS, a university of sociology, come to do there? Faced with

that stamp and that letter, it was obvious that he knew more than he meant.

- Q... May I open the letter?

- You can and you must! And I can assure you that all these fears have no sustainable basis, Doctor Cândido. They are not justified in the least, believe me. But open it, open the letter and see for yourself.

Open the letter and... open your eyes, dummy.

An end - VI

As Doctor Cândido Costa intriguedly read the mysterious letter, Carlos wondered what the hell play was now being played, while the rector was increasingly confident: he read it, in his eyes.

- So, Doctor Cândido, have you understood what needs to be done...? It's very easy to understand, it seems to me...

- Sir, this goes against all my professional ethics...

- Eh, let's not exaggerate, eh? A few milligrams more, a few milligrams less... what is that, after all, my dear doctor... hm?

Numbers of abstract things, names of nothing... think about it, what's at stake is...

- What's at stake is the mental health of a patient of mine! If you think I'm going to jeopardize the...

- You will put it at risk, yes. And you don't even want to question that, my dear doctor.

- But this... Miguel can't do this to me! If Paulo Lam stops taking his Haldol, he...

- He's going into a psychotic break. Is that what you meant, Doctor? Ah, but we know that... oh, do we know that eheheh...

- You still dare to make fun of the situation? I... I... Carlos! What the...

- Quiet, Carlos. You're just here to listen, understand? Very quiet, don't even dare to move an inch. As for you doctor... ah, but we know the effects of Haldol... oh, if we do...

it's a drug, isn't it, doctor? Huh? A drug, how shall I say... look, that's become legal, for medical purposes! Now that's a hell of a lot of professional ethics... hm?

- Do you dare to contest my prescription to Paulo? Can you even imagine the psychic state in which he arrived here, at the consulting room, in my hands? You don't know anything about medical acts, or psychiatry!

- Oh doctor, let's get this straight once and for all... I know that there are illegal drugs - heroin, cocaine, even hashish, for goodness sake, is considered a drug, and penalised by law; and there are the other drugs, prescribed by doctors, legally, without any problems. And psychiatrists know that very well, ooh if they do... but that's not the point, that's secondary.

- Is that so? And can you tell me then what Akineton has to do with Haldol? Yes, because if I change Paulo's medication completely, he'll go into decompensation immediately, and...

- You enter the realm of magma symbols. Into the world of the primary forces. Everyone in the Western world has known this since 1900, doctor, you don't have to be an enlightened person to understand this, just read a bit of our friend Freud or his little friend Jung who has become a bit complicated to put up with over the years...

- But then... they want Paulo Lam to go straight into... into...

- Crazy? Yeah, let's say there's a 15, 20 percent chance of that happening. But we're counting on catching him in the middle of a crisis, to shortcut our way, and not let him

get into that process. At least not in such a direct way. Maybe a middle ground...

- A middle ground? A middle ground in madness? I'm afraid there isn't. I don't understand...

- My dear doctor...

... there are so many things you don't understand...

An end - VII

- Ahahah!!! Eheheh!!! You mean to tell me that... ahahah!

- Yes, great joke that, doctor... great joke!

The doctor suddenly stopped laughing, and his air was that of a monk who had just come out of ten years of seclusion, in some cave of some arid mountain at the end of the world. He meditated for a few moments. Then, in a grave voice, he continued:

- You... you're mocking us, Víctor. This is going to be very c...

- Expensive? My dear doctor... if I have no life left in a few months... how can this real joke be expensive for me... you don't say...?

- Yes, indeed, Masse is right about that, doctor...
- Lam. Paul Lam, he... figured it out all by himself? But... how? How?
- Through intuition alone.

- How? By intuition, you say?
- Yes. My boy is very special. His mother had a unique sensitivity, and she passed on all her human qualities to her son.
- You lie, Masse! She was a cheap whore! Doctor, I...

- Hey, you! That proverb about the donkey hasn't entered your stone head yet, has it?
- Ehm... excuse me.
- Keep going, Victor. You've got three minutes.

- Well, as I was saying, she was an unknown poet of great quality - you see, Kramm, nostalgia is good for something...! They over there may not have the world in their hands, but they still have a little human dignity left. And, above all, imagination, which is what distinguishes them from the Germans, eh?

- You don't... doctor!

- What do you want, you? Can't even we tell a truth once in a while for a change? Who won the second world war, anyway, Kramm? Hm? Be careful, the leash is short...

- Hmpf.

- But back to our Lam. Paul, right? Paulo Lam - a nice name, eh? Kramm?

- Yes, yes. A beautiful name. A beautiful name, doctor.

- So your Lam discovered that dreamy formula....
 - In a flash of intuition.
 - You know what happens to geniuses, you?
 - Yes. Sometimes they have to be silenced.
- Ah, that's right... and if the US didn't need the atomic bomb, probably not even Einstein would have been discovered, I say... and he would still be an anonymous rat in Swiss or Italian libraries for the rest of his life, as perhaps he deserved! Nobody needs enlightened geniuses, least of all in science. Oh, that's right, Victor. And the rest... was deified. For the populace to see. For the populace to win, like a great achievement. As if it were the true magic formula of the universe. Don't tell me you didn't know this and much more...

- I... eh... yes, doctor, but... anyway, these are just theories circulating... there's no evidence that...

- I hope there is no evidence! I sure hope our friends in those parts have done their homework. After all, they are the temple keepers of ideas of that sort...aren't they, Kramm?

- And it's a beautiful temple, doctor... a beautiful temple... eheheh...

- But you thought your boy wouldn't get that far, is that it...?

- Exactly! I... I set up a knowledge game that only an enlightened person and a master in various subjects could solve, I...

- We get it, Víctor. We get it. Kramm, escort the Honorable Víctor Masse to the door.

- Víctor.

- S... yes?
- You will have a prince's life until the day you die. And maybe even after that day: NASA will make you a hero, you know, still because of your theory of magnetic fields...
- I'm going to the Victory Hotel, is that it, Doctor?
- Now you see you know. Lucid to the end, huh? And incommunicado, too...
- I just wanted to know one more thing...
- You're asking for too many. Well, go ahead.
- I wanted to know how my boy, well... eh, how he became a danger to our organisation...
- The Internet. The Internet - always the Internet, eh, Víctor? Our boys at Vikart sent us a message. A worrying message, to say the least.

- What... what did that message say?

- You don't want to know. You don't want to know, my dear Victor Masse. Your boy's intuition is good for something after all... It's only a pity that what he discovered has already been discovered long ago... and, for everyone's sake, must not be made public. And you knew that as well as any of us. And now, get out of my sight. Forever.

Oh... and don't worry: I'll put some flowers on your grave later...

An end - VIII

- Can you tell me then, what is your goal?
Yes, because if I don't do what you ask me to do...

- Don't even think about it, doctor. You know perfectly well that I, and my friend Miguel, are only following orders.

- Yes, I assume that s...

- Oh, that's right. And now we've just brought you up to speed on what is expected of you. And don't even dream of changing your lines in this film, Doctor... there are things you mustn't question, you don't want to put yourself and yours at risk... need I say the rest?

- No, no. I understand that all this is part of something bigger, surely... o... eh, Miguel

Cunha wouldn't have asked me for this, if not...

- That's right, Doctor. You see, Paulo Lam is playing a risky game. And you're not the only one taking an interest in the boy's welfare. We are too. In his psychic well-being, and... physical, if you know what I mean...

- Ah, certainly, certainly, yes. Well, put the question in these terms, everything is different, sir... eh...

- Sérgio. Rector Sérgio. It is good that you understand this, Doctor Cândido: I am here to try to help you. Because, my dear friend, if this matter passes into other hands and leaves mine, another cockerel will crow... and I won't be able to answer for the final results of a game played with cards I don't know what they are beforehand... but I know how to count two plus two and I can guess the trump suit, eheheh...

- Yeah, it's okay. I just want to protect...
- Protect the boy. Yes, but we have that in common, don't worry. Well, I think that's all said. And you know, at his next appointment, tell our boy his medication will be changed from Haldol to...
- Yes, yes, I know. I know what must be done, Miguel was very clear. Well, I'll see you out, gentlemen.
- Candide, I...
- I understand, Carlos, we'll talk later. Give my regards to your father. Dear Mr. rector, I say goodbye, I now have the consultation of the...
- Yes, yes, neither do I want to take up any more of your time. From now on you will receive instructions by email, but only at the

beginning: afterwards we will find a better way to...

- Excuse me? How do you know my email address? Not even Carlos knows it...

- Doctor, doctor... What doesn't a concerned dean do for his favourite student... hm?

An end - IX

- Can you explain to me what just happened in the... in the...

- At your friend Cândido Costa's office? Is that what you meant, Carlos?

- Yeah, I, uh...

- You? You just played your part. And you did it well: you didn't miss a note. Congratulations.

- Yes, yes. Make fun, but...

- But what? My dear Carlos, do you think that the Americas are sleeping, or what? Do you by any chance think that I'm the mastermind behind all this staging?

- Ah, so you admit that this is just...

- Life, Carlos. Life is just this, nothing more. Have no illusions: this game began as a

game of knowledge. But it has evolved into a game of power. Because, there it is, and you know it... say it, Carlos, say it...

- Knowledge is... is... power...?

- You see how you know... after all, you learned something at university. The problem is not so much who gets there, that knowledge: it's what you do with it. If it's a guy with no credibility, fine: nobody...

- ...will you listen to him...? Is that it?

- Well, no more; you're a smart guy, after all. But now has come the great equaliser, the pseudo-democratic tool that reaches out and turns everyone and everything into ladder span revolutionaries... and you know what I'm talking about too... a new medium... hm? You want more clues?

- The... the internet...? But how...

- It's very simple. But I can't tell you everything, because these guys don't tell me half the whole story...
- It would be good to get rid of these half-assed Americans, and...
- Not at all! They've always been very useful in this country. Remember Michael Finley?
- Yes, he...
- He and John T. helped us a lot after the 25th April Revolution, he's very quiet there... otherwise we would have become commies, eh?
- Well, the only downside I see to that is... well, the US blockade, which always follows the...
- I know, I know. Lamentable. And it leads to nothing, everyone knows it, only to the misery of the people. It's regrettable, but the ghosts on the American side are always stronger... what did you want? It was many years of cold war... two coffees, please!

- No, not for me, Sérgio. Just a natural water, please, thank you.

- Is that so? Well, it's up to you... as you always have a coffee...

- Yes, yes, but not now. I don't feel like it. But after all, tell me what these Americans...

- Hey, keep it down.

- Ah, sorry. But tell me, what do they want from Lam...?

- They want one thing and one thing only, my dear Carlos.

- What the...? What do they want?

- They obviously want him to shut up forever.

- But... they're not thinking... anyway, you know... it's Masse's boy, think a bit... we have to protect him, is there really nothing we can do?

- But will you be asleep tonight? Is it possible that you still haven't understood the play? Listen to me carefully, and for God's sake don't speak loudly.

My dear Carlos, from now on there can only be trumps in this game...

An end - X

- Susana. Susana! I'm talking to you!

- Again? What you want from me.

- You know very well, what I want. I want to talk to you about...

- Yes, yes, I know. But girl, what's so special about it? We have so many of them here... it can't be unique. Why do you worry like that? The doctor knows best, don't you think?

- The doctor only comes here to check his medication. And you know very well that...

Catarina was interrupted by someone passing by with the tray too close, causing her some temporary apprehension. Susana took advantage of the momentary distraction and stood up, heading for the exit of the Gaivota Clinic's cafeteria. It was a VIP clinic. There, a patient only entered by personal invitation from one of the most

respected doctors: Doctor António, Doctor Ferreira, or Doctor Sebastião.

- Hey! Where are you going, you?
- It's my time. What do you want from me anyway?
- Come here, woman. I'm going to keep my voice down, and make sure you hear me this time, hm?
- Yeah, yeah, okay, go ahead.
- Do you know what dose of Leponex he has at the moment, by any chance, do you?
- You don't know what his file is, his past, his history of illness...
- I know, I know!
- Don't tell me that... but look that's very serious, you could be...
- Shut up. Shut up! Listen to me, Susana.

- Just say it. I don't even know why you have such a good heart: we here can't even do anything for these poor diab...

- He's a perfectly normal boy, you hear? This story is very badly told, he...

- Good afternoon, Catarina, how are you?

- Ah, hello doctor, how are you? I'm, uh...

- Look, you have to go to the X-ray room, there's a gentleman there who...

- Yes, yes, I'm coming, I'm coming right now, just to say goodbye to Susana here, who...

- Well, I'm off to the reception, Conceição wants to talk to me, I think.

Catherine let him walk away and then tugged at Susana's jumper, as if she was pleading for her own life.

- Hey! What do you want me now...?

- I smell a rat, Susana. This is very poorly explained. They're keeping the Leponex dose very high and constant to...

- Why, to keep it in a vegetable state! We have so many of those here... does that still amaze you?

- The boy tried to talk to me the other day, Susana, he talked to me!

- And... what did I tell you...?

- He told me... he told me he fell into a trap. That his doctor betrayed him.

- And you still believe these guys? Most of them are nutters, almost all of them are... with the persecution mania and stuff...

- Not this one, he's... special.

- How do you know?

- He's... he's at 8 milligrams, woman.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- well, that's hard work, really... very few can stand that dose, in one day that's the equivalent of...

- Oh, my God, you don't understand... it's not a day...

- WHAT!!!?

An end - XI

- T... are you sure... what, twice...
- Twice. In the day. In the morning and in the middle of the afternoon. And he hardly even wakes up!
- The... oit...
- Eight milligrams, Susana.
- But that's... Really, he'll be just like a vegetable. You've already warned Doctor Antón...

- He knows.
- How do you know that, you?
- I checked with Conceição: she heard them talking.
- My God... so... so you want me to...

- They want to silence him. Pure and simple, Susana. It's as simple as that.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Ah... yes, you must have a point there, he...
he... oh, poor guy...

- Yes, Susana. This story is very badly told.
They've been pulling the wool over our eyes.
Since the beginning.

- How long has he been...

- Here? For at least two months. And he's got
no *release* order. Looks like some doctor in
the states paid for a long stay around here.
We just have to keep him... harmless. If you
know what I mean.

- Yes, yes, of course. But... this stay here at
the Clinic is... is for how long...

- His whole life.

- HOW!???

- You heard right, my friend. You heard
right...

But I haven't signed any blank papers, my dear Susana... and I'm going to find out what's going on here, oh if I am....

An end - XII

The day was a bit blustery. And the room, rather stuffy. A boy was resting on a wide bed, in deep sleep, where there are no dreams yet, but when all relation to reality ends. Slowly, someone snuck into the room.

He closed the door softly, taking care to check that, outside, no one had seen his movement. It was a risky thing to do, to say the least. And getting caught in a heavily guarded access room was at the very least tantamount to disciplinary action and maybe even dismissal.

And she knew it. And yet, there was a pen that was to disappear in a few moments, and there was also a message written on that boy's hand that was to be erased. By her. A more abrupt movement and a strange noise, outside the room, startled her. She let her

apprehension turn to calm. The calm that courage always achieves, if you have a little patience. She headed for the bed.

I hope he had time to write... if anyone catches me here... where will the pen be? Ah, under the bed. I wonder if he had time. I wonder if he managed to understand what I said to him yesterday, in those brief moments when I explained to him what he should do... oh!

- Here we are, Doctor Linhares. Here we are. I'll just close the door... that's it. This way we're more comfortable...

- He has had his bi-daily dose of...

- Absolutely. The instructions we have are very clear, and...

- He must not wake up. Never! You hear that? Which nurse is handling this case? She must be a person of Doctor Antonio's strictest confidence, do you hear, Sebastián?

- Of course, of course. It's nurse Catarina, she's completely trusted by us, and...

- There you go. All right, then. I just came to check with my own eyes. And if he wakes up, even briefly, increase the dose immediately! The body gets used to it, and...

- Yes, yes, that's normal, we know... the orders were very clear, doctor.

- I hope so. You know perfectly well what is at stake. Or at least that this is a very special case. The Americans are very interested that...

- I know that very well, doctor, rest assured. They've already spoken to me, the...

- I don't even want to know those details. Don't even talk to anyone else about it. Only the three of us know. Is that clear?

- Yes, indeed, Doctor.

- Well, I'm off. I still have to go to the hospital. Today is bank day, and...

- Doctor... eh... I'd like to know something, if it's possible.

- Yes...?

- Who gave the order to...

- The order, I know who gave it. But who gave the authorisation for that order...

- S... yes, doctor...?

- It would blow my mind. I assure you, my dear man, my mouth would be open. You see... in this life you can't trust... anyone!

... even nobody. Not even in...

An end - XIII

The two left the room still talking, but on another subject. The patient was still silent, but something was moving under the bed. *Can I come out now...?* Catherine studied the

silences and the noises, and decided on the timing of her gestures. *Quickly and gracefully.*

You have to be quick and graceful. Like a sigh of love. He picked up the glass of water on the other side of the bed and moved still under it, to the side of Lam's left hand, which was falling out of the sheets. Fortunately, his palm was facing downwards: otherwise the doctors would have seen it and all would be lost.

She withdrew from the pocket of her gown a pen-lantern, directed it to Lam's hand and then... saw. When he moved, deliriously, to the other side, she already knew what needed to be done. Gonçalves told me they're transferring him to the states on November 14. We'll have to act fast... She stood up in one fell swoop and washed the patient's hand with the water from the glass. Leave the

glass where it was. Don't make any noise.
Leave quietly.

E...

decide the timing of the next move.

An end - XIV

The corridors of the Gaivota Clinic, in Cascais, were deserted. It was exactly what Catarina had expected, of a sunny

Thursday afternoon. The 14th of November. D-Day. The nurses gave the last dose to the patients, and left. Perfect. He carried, with as little noise as possible, a stretcher, whose wheels he had oiled beforehand at 3:34 pm. The operation had to be... discreet. Quick. Painless. And Catarina knew it. It was at her own risk, not least because Susana didn't want to go into unemployment "- for so little, isn't it, Catarina?".

I passed Alberto, he said to his buttons.

Catherine followed the corridor of X-rays, and headed for an adjoining room.

- Where are you going, Catarina?

- S... Mr. Doctor Sebastian, I'll fetch Mr. Correia, here to the room...

- Ah, okay. But then come to room twelve, I want to talk to you about the transfer of the patient from room 63.

- Yes, sir, I'll be right there.

I have to act even faster than I thought. Even more.

If only it was possible.

An end - XV

A nurse was carrying a patient on a stretcher down the corridor from rooms 50 to 75. She was in a bit of a hurry.

- Halt!
- Yes, Alberto? What is...?
- Who are you taking there?
- Ah, it's just a patient who's being transferred...
- What room is that? I wasn't informed of anything...

- Now, it was Doctor Sebastian who...
- And why are you carrying him covered with the sheet? Catherine, you know we can't transfer...
- Look, call Doctor Sebastian, if you want. For me...
- But first I have to see who you take there... I find this very strange...
- Does it really have to be? It's the patient in room 63, he has severe burns, any contact with the sun... he's very sensitive and...
- But I'm sure just a little bit wouldn't hurt. It's just to make sure that...

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Does it really have to be? I'm already late...
- Oh, my God!
- I told you so... this is not pretty to look at... let me cover it up again.
- What's this all about? I've never heard of this room patient...
- Top Secret.

- C... how? That's a good one... are you mocking me, by any chance?
- Doctor Sebastian asked me for absolute secrecy about this patient. Total and absolute secrecy, about his identity. He came here... at night, imagine! When nobody was here!
- Well, this secrecy of identity thing is a little more normal around here, actually. Let me just take this phone call...
- Well, can I go, or not, after all?

- Go on, go on, that's it, don't bother me any more!

And now... let's move on to the next move.

An end - XVI

A driver parks a Clinic ambulance in the entrance yard. It is 4:11 pm. He waits for a while, with the engine running.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Come on... an ambulance from our service still here at this hour? Nobody informed me that... I'll go and see what's going on.

As the guard makes his way to the ambulance, a nurse carries a patient with some speed.

- Leave it alone, Alcides!

- What, Catarina?

- It's to transport this patient, he's being transferred, to the Wall Clinic. Help me with the stairs.

- Ah, well, I'll be right there.

- Open the back door of the ambulance, Alcides.

- There, that's it. But why won't the driver help us...?

- Never mind, never mind. It's almost the weekend, they're super tired for sure. If it's not that...

- If not that, it's civil service at its best, Catarina! Ahahah!

- Now you see how you even know... eheheh...
OK, I'm up here, close the door, Alcides. See you later.

- But... no doctor is going with you?

- At this hour? Are you crazy, or what?

- Yeah. Eheh. It's already the spirit of the weekend. See you Monday, then.

- Driver, let's go!

The ambulance pulled away smoothly. About 5 kilometres away, in the old market of Carcavelos, the driver stopped. He left his seat, circled the vehicle and opened the back door.

- May I ask what we're carrying? This is all very strange. Where is the doctor, anyway?

- Your cover's really good. Thanks, Susana.

An end - XVII

- Yours looks pretty good too. He does look like a burnout.

- While driving I was cleaning his face with water and this cloth... it's almost back to the way it was.

- What are you gonna do from here, woman?
This ambulance will soon be located, and...

- Mystery...

- Don't make fun of these things, Catarina.
This is very serious. Here, here's a cloth, to
put out...

- Your fingerprints, Susana. I know, I
know. And I'm gonna do it right now. I'm
just gonna wake the boy up. He did very
well, you know.

- What did he write on his hand anyway?

- Secret, Susana, secret.

- Well, it's too many secrets for me, I've had
my share of adventure today. If Alcides
came a little closer, he would realise that...

- Oh, the men. Babies, Susana - they really
are babies. They really don't understand
anything, girl.

- What are you going to do from now on?
You've put yourself in a very...

- Nothing of the sort.

- What do you mean? You think they won't
contact the police?

- Susana, Susana... if I'm thinking about
it, contacting the police will be the last thing
these scoundrels do...

An end - XVIII

- The... where am I? I...

- Calm down. Wake up slowly. I've taken
most of your Haldol, but it has to be
gradual.

Lam looked at Catherine as if she were his mother, and Catherine looked at him as his baby. The baby she'd never had. Helpless. Big. Clumsy, like they all are. And she wanted to take good care of him. Like it was the most important thing in his life. Like it was the... last thing she would ever do in her life. She felt ready to give her life for the truth that this child carried with her. And she would go to the end of the world to get him out of that cursed torpor of medical drugs.

- Here, have some coffee. But you can't drink much more. We have to wait for it to take effect. Take a rest. But try to stay lucid. Can you hear me?

- S... yes, I...

- What is your name?

- Everything's all mixed up, I don't...

- Your name. Your parents, try to remember them. What name did they give you?

- I... now I remember... I only had a mother.

- You see...

- And she... she died.

- What is your name?

- Lam. Paul. Paulo Lam.

- Paulo Lam, I have never heard a name as beautiful as yours.

An end - XIX

- You're much more awake now, Lam, and that's good. But you need to keep taking small doses of Haldol to...

- I was in a psychiatrist for over 6 years: don't you think I know that? Give me a break, Catarina.

- Oh, right. Sorry, I forgot for a moment. So, what now? What do you want to do?

- Did you see my message? On the left hand?

- Yes. And you'll laugh...

- I'm not even strong enough to laugh, Catarina. What is it?

- I... I have a nephew who works exactly in that area. And he works in a café. A café that has lots of...

- Do you?

- Well, no more.

- Catherine, I don't know why you are doing this for me, but I feel I am with the right person to conclude this matter once and for all.

- Yes... I feel it too, Lam. I feel it too.

An end - XX

- What? Internal transfer, you incompetent!!
An i-n-t-e-r-n-a transfer! Not to take the
patient out of here!! Do you know what that
means? Do you, by any chance? Do you?

- Yes, Doctor Sebastián, yes, I know, from one room to the...

- From one room to another room, INSIDE the clinic, you incompetent bastard! What now? Where is the patient in room 65? Where is he? Where is he? Tell me if you see him!

- I... I... she told me that the doctor had authorised, a patient in room 63, from the burns, I...

- And you believed it, like the good fool you are! You fell for it! A patient in the safest wing of the clinic. Imagine that. Huh? I don't know what's stopping me from...

- Easy, Sebastián. Easy, easy, easy.

- Hm? Ah, Antonio, there you are, what do you say to this, you? What do you say to this incompetent...

- Come to room 4.

- Huh?
- Doctor Linhares has arrived.
- The... the... doctor...

- L-I-N-H-A-R-E-S. Is that clear? When you're done yelling, come and meet us.
- Yes, I...
- You're almost done here, right?
- Yes, yes, I'll walk with you, I...

- He has a horror of people who are late. Remember what happened to Guedes...? Need I say more...?

An end - XXI

Doctor Linhares was on his back, apparently unwilling to turn around, even though the door had been closed for a few seconds. Sebastião knew that something was going to happen to him, but did not yet know exactly what. There was guilt, certainly

divided, but... he was the visible face of that special case. Very very special. I didn't want him to turn around. I didn't.

- You may leave, Antonio. I want to be alone with Sebastian. But stay outside the door.

- Yes, sir.

His back was still turned. Finally, he turned around. Slowly, like someone drinking a 20-year-old malt, and never wanting to finish it.

- My dear Sebastian...

- Doctor, I can explain...

- And you think you have arguments to explain the inexplicable to me? Do you know how many years I've been working in clinics like this, and I've never, ever...

- Doctor, I...

- You? You're here for a wedge. And everyone knows it. And you were accusing poor Alberto of being... incompetent? You're lucky you live in Portugal, where the health system is what it is... I'd like to see you in a private clinic abroad!

- Doctor, please, you don't have to say...

- How? I don't need to say what? You must be very quiet. António!

- You paged me, doctor?

- Sebastian here is going on holiday. For a fortnight. At least!

- But doctor, why?

- Because, my dear friend, this air is too... professional for you. Maybe when you get back you'll have a bit more air in your mind... stop by Conceição, and wait for António there, he'll take care of it - won't he António!?

- Yes, doctor, no doubt.

- What are we going to do to him, Doctor Línhares? He's a good person, and...

- That's the problem with this country, António: everything is good people, everyone is excellent, but...

- But...?

- This case has gone too far. I have to take measures... radical.

- Do you want me to call the police?

- Not a chance. I want you to call Alberto and Alcides as well. To tell them that everything is fine, and that they mustn't talk to anyone!

- But... you just told me that...

- Look there Antony... but you want to know more than me, now...?

An end - XXII

- I'm lucid. Let's go.
- Don't you want to drink some more coffee...
- No way. By the way: what day is it today?

- 14... 14 of...

- Come on, don't be afraid. I'm prepared for anything.

- From... November. It's November, Lam.

- Hm... let me take a deep breath.

- Take your time, that is...

- Heavy? Heavy is taking minimal doses of Haldol every day for years. Now that's prison! Now I feel... pure! Free of all those drugs.

- But you know that...

- Doesn't it always last? Yeah, maybe. But let me enjoy the moment. Let's go to your nephew's cafe. You got taxi fare?

- Yes, I come prepared for several days. Don't worry. My colleague left this ambulance here to keep a low profile, it's an almost deserted place, and no one will notice...

- Ambulance? Are we in an ambulance?
- Yes! Haven't you noticed? Ahahah! You didn't even have time to notice it, huh?
- Yes, but it makes perfect sense, really...
- What do you mean? What do you mean...?

- It's just, Catarina, what I need to do from now on...
- S... yes?

- It's an... emergency!

An end - XXIII

- You can stop, sir. This is it, Lam.
- Let's go, then.

The café was opposite the Chiado Museum, and was difficult to get to: taxi drivers didn't usually like the ins and outs of that part of Lisbon, so Catarina asked him to stop

in front of FNAC, near the small fado van, the aggressive interviewers of silly surveys and the luxury shops.

- Where's the coffee, anyway? You told the taxi driver it was here...

- This way we'll be more at ease. And you walk around a bit, get some fresh air. Come on!

They passed the São Carlos Theatre, and turned right. Earlier, some beggars had asked for the usual *eternal change*.

- On the street parallel to this is the University of Fine Arts. Did you know that, Lam? A cousin of mine is there, taking a course in painting...

- Bah.

- What do you mean? Don't tell me you don't like the arts? So this sensitivity?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- And nowadays, with this hurried life in the cities, there is time for such things? That's all for foreigners to see! But you're wrong: I love painting, and I even draw a lot.

- Really? Me too! What things do you draw?

- Some dolls... all abstract, eh? I'm annoyed by the figurative... I think it's a shameless copy. They should ban figurative canvases, like Hitler did with the Degenerate Art of his time! Eheheh...

- I can't believe what I'm hearing... you're...

- Don't believe it, no, because I'm playing with you!

- Come on!

- Take it easy. You and I get along fine. Look, how much further is it?

- Now we're really here. See that sign over there?

- Where?

- To the right of the bookshop, see?

- Ah, yes. At last.
- Read aloud to me what it says.
- Oh, come on! Don't you see? Because...
- Do me that favour.
- Café- Net. What's in it?

- Nothing. I just wanted you to be the one to remind me of the word you had written on your hand: N-E-T...

An end - XXIV

- I told you not to talk to me over this line. It's not safe. It's the last time, you heard me.
- Sorry, I'll give you the details via M, but this is very important, I had to tell you. The... the little bird has fled the nest.

- That's too bad. We would have found him such a warm nest...

- I guess he didn't like it. You know how these young birds are... always with a mania for grandeur...

- I know, I know how these things are. But... how was it possible?

- He... had an accomplice, doctor.

- Is that so? Much you tell me... some dreamy teenager, who fell in love with the helpless cub, perhaps...?

- Maybe that was it, yeah. What should I do now?

- Now you wait.

- And... do I wait?

- Hey, easy. I know you got the quick trigger, but now the ball's passing to another team. Our man at Interpol will do his job,

and the satellite guys will give us the lights we need, okay? Of course it takes time, but...

- Doctor...

- Yes?

- We may not have that kind of time. If they use the...

- My dear man, if they use that, then it will be the END OF THE WORLD, don't have any doubts about that...

An end - XXV

- Aunt Catarina! Is everything all right? How are you?

- Hello, Diogo, how are you? How's my favourite nephew?

- Preferred and unique! Eheheh.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Yes, that too, you're right; but you won't stop being my favourite nephew for that, never mind!

- Is that your boyfriend?

- Oh boy, you make me blush... it's just a friend, who...

- Hello. I needed access to the net for half an hour. I really have to, it's a very important thing, and...

- Then you've come to the right place! This internet café is state-of-the-art, and...

- And you have all the privacy in the world, right? Yeah... we're interested in that too, no one can see what we're doing on the comp...

- Hey, but do you want to install viruses, or what, Catarina? The owner doesn't...

- Not at all, nephew, not at all. It's an important matter we have to deal with over the Internet. Do you have a PC available at

the moment? I know they have little rooms for Internet users, don't they?

- Yes, yes, you can go to computer number 4, it's vacant, they've just left. See you in a bit. And... judgement!

- Come on, don't be worried, Diogo... since when did your aunt let you down, hm?

- There's always a first time! Just kidding, just kidding. PC number four, it's all yours. I'll set it up for half an hour.

- One. One hour, Catarina, is better.

- Yes. One hour, Diogo. See you later.

- Okay, you can go.

The small room was quite large, considering the small dimensions of the whole cybercafé. An immense number of wires ardently desired freedom, trapped inside white plastic

tubes, with their ends hanging out, next to the computer.

- Lam. May I ask what we're here to do?

- Yeah, you can know. I'll just turn on the net... that's it. Now, blah blah blah.

- Bla bla?

- The EYEO chat. You don't know it? It's a hookup place.

- Lam, I took all these risks because of... I am starting to get f...

- Pissed off? Furious? Ah, but you have no reason to be. Hold on, I'm going into the nonsense room.

- What's that? Really, you're not making any sense... do you want to explain to me once and for all what you're...

- Let's go into this private chat room, Catarina.

- Yeah? And then you'll... you'll pick someone up with me watching? Don't even think about it!

- Catarina, calm down. Okay, we've entered the chat room. And now I'm gonna wait for a miracle. And you, well, you're gonna pray.

- Pray, me? Ahahah! If I've never been religious...

- Well, well, well. You're going to pray that Slow Motion shows up in the next hour in this secret chat room.

- Slow Motion? What's that? And you... wait for a miracle...?

- And I will wait for a miracle, yes... for the miracle of Slow Motion really being who I think it is...

An end - XXVI

In the inner room of the cybercafé, a program to detect visited sites was doing its job. In room 4, two users had been in the AEIOU.pt chat for 42 minutes. No other URL had been typed in the browser. The watchman didn't find it strange. But he already found the entrance of a policeman strange; in those

parts, it was the first time since they had opened to the public, 9 years ago.

- Have another Coke, Catarina.
- I'm not thirsty. I don't even know why I took all these risks, so that now...
- This is very important. Even you don't know how important it is... maybe when everything calms down, I can explain to you what is... Slow!
- Huh?! What's wrong? What happened...
- Slow Mow has arrived in the room. Now the game will finally begin...

The words typed themselves into the chat at the speed of a tropical storm's wind. But for Catarina, they were words... incomprehensible.

- Paraphernalia.
- Paramute.
- Rhinoceros.

- Ahahah.
- Cigarrillas.
- Bison.

- Eh, but are you guys making fun of me?
Lam!
- Shh! Shut up. This is our code. Now I know
I'm really talking to Bruno... this isn't over,
hold on.
- Okay... boy stuff, for sure.

- Mammoth.
- Michael Jordan.
- Are you sure?
- No doubt about it!

- Welcome, Slow Mow.
- What's up, Doctor of Tuganomics?
- Everything.

- So what's the plan?
- We stick to the plan... A.

- Are you sure? That's a bit risky...
- I do. Plan B is for the weak, you muppet.
- Ahahah! Well said, well said. I'll contact my friends right away. Which one do you suggest?
- Man, that server access thing is essential. The... what was his name?
- Cool Boy? You want me to contact Cool Boy?
- That's the one. And your other friend, the Frenchman...
- The Frenchman?
- Yes, that one too, will be essential for the final work, the auto-executable file on the mirror.

A voice woke them up from the lethargy that the Internet always causes. And it was a familiar voice. Familiar and... desperate.

- Auntie! Aunt Catarina!

- What is it, Diogo? Our time isn't up yet, there's ten minutes left...

- You have to leave. Now!

- But... why?

- The... police have arrived! And they're looking for hackers! They're coming here!

An end - XXVII

- Go now, auntie, they are still talking in the control room. Go too...

- Lam. Paul Lam.

- OK, you both go, I'll go out the front door, to keep a low profile, and meet you outside.

My car is parked 200 yards away. There's a second exit, for the staff, which is always deserted. Go... now!

- Hey! You! - Are you the ones from room 4, official?

- S... are. But...

- Central?

- Yes, you can talk.

- We need all patrol cars to the cybercafé area by the Chiado. Fugitives just left.

- Okay. There are two cars nearby. I'll send them right away. Check the computer, you hear?

- But, officer, if you had chased them, they were close, and...

- O my dear friend... do you have any idea how dangerous these two...? Hm? I left them for the patrol cars, there's already a special

team chasing them... they earn much more than me... let them take those risks!

- A... really? But I didn't notice any str...

- Strange? That's quite normal, I assure you. The most dangerous guys are always the calmest...

- Well... And... what now?

- Now, I'm going to investigate the computer they were on. I've got some computer lights, and I want to see...

- They were always in the EYEO chat... it's the usual, in these young people who visit us, to eh...

- I know, I know, for the easy pick-up. These young people...

- Eheheh...that's right, they're tricky...but go to room 4, it's all yours.

- I just need a half hour.

- No problem.

The policeman sat down in the chair where Lam had been. He loosened his waistcoat a little. It was tight. Too tight.

Maybe because I've never worn it before.

An end - XXVIII

- Where is your car, anyway? Diogo! I'm talking to you!
- Where's my car? In the garage!
- Grr... you told us you had... is it all crazy today, or what?
- Calm down, auntie. I know what I'm saying. I'll take you to a safe place.
- Which one? What is this place?

- The Den!
- But you'll think Lam and I are some squirrels, or what?!
- Not at all. Look, we're coming.
- Coming? Where?
- To the workshop.
- But if you have the car to fix, how can we...
- Auntie, auntie... my car is perfectly fine. I park it in the workshop, because there's never a place for the car around here! Clever!
- Is that so? And then you'll take us to Toca?
- No. I'll go, you stay here. In the workshop.

- Grr... I don't understand anything. Lam, I...
- Calm down, Catarina. Can you explain to us what's on your mind, boy...?
- I can, Lam. Have you looked at the name of the workshop?

- No. What do you call... oh...

- Ah, that's right...

An end - XXIX

THE TOCA. That's what the workshop was called. And, indeed, cars nested inside it like badger cubs or rabbits. It made sense, the bloody name, after all.

- Arthur! What's up?

- All right, lad, all right. So your Sporting, do they make it today?

- Of course he'll get away with it! It's your FCP that is a disgrace this year.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Man, I already told you: this year everything is done in the manner of the bird club! Eheheh... who are you bringing there, lad?

- My aunt, and her... um, her friend. They need to... touch!

- So you've come to the right place, you've come to the right place... welcome to my humble establishment! Hey, boy! You, there, leave that car alone, you don't know anything about it! Take a walk, the boss will pay for it! Andor! Go smoke your cigarette outside, get a coffee, go wherever the hell you want, but stay away from my lair for an hour!

- Diogo, if you think we're going to stay here in this horrible environment, you'd better think twice...

- Not at all, not at all, aunt. You'll see... he has burrows full of surprises...

An end - XXX

- Come on, come on.
- Which way? This is a wall! Diogo, I...
- You have to be more patient, auntie. Damn, trust your nephew! This isn't a wall, auntie.
- Oh, come on! You're making fun of...
- This is... Arthur, tell them what this is!
- This is a... door!

Arthur moved two small blocks off the wall, and it moved inwards a little.

- Come along. Welcome to Toca!

The corridor was quite dark and dank, but Artur carried a gambit that illuminated enough. The spiral staircase seemed to have no end. Finally, they emerged from that downward whirlpool, and came to a massive metal door. Three locks were embedded into the surface of that mysterious door.

- Geez... this looks like a safe..., Lam said intuitively.

Arthur turned back, and smiled. He looked in his pocket for his keys, and found them. Three o'clock.

When, thirty-seven seconds later, the latch finally gave way, they were dazzled by a divine light.

- What's this, Diogo? It looks like...
- A five-star hotel? It is, Auntie, it is...

Arthur turned back to them, and smiled again.

- You don't even want to know the illustrious visitors Toca has had... don't forget to sign the guest book afterwards! Ahahah!!!

An end - XXXI

- But I can't afford this... Diogo, I...
- Eh! But now you insult the owner of the lair, with impunity? Huh? A friend of Diogo's is my friend! Don't even talk to me about paying anything... his uncle saved me from certain death, near Luanda. In those days, there were no perks like this, hm?
- Thank you, Mr. Arthur. Lam and I are eternally grateful to you...

- Never mind that, I don't like that, eh?
Enjoy yourselves! The double bed, I mean...
eheheh...

- Oh, Catherine blushed.

- Lam.

- Yes, Diogo?

- I have my laptop in the car. I'll get it for you, okay? It's wireless, the net connection is paid until the end of the month, don't worry. And if necessary, in places where there's no web, you can connect by hotspot through your smartphone.

- Thanks a lot. I really needed to hear that.

- And you now... be careful.

- Yes, I've noticed that the police are after us, we have to...

- Not at all!

- Huh? I didn't get that one, nephew...

- Ah, you still don't understand what's going on, it's true. Auntie...
- Yes?
- That cop...
- Yeah, what about that cop?
- It's... it's... it's the first time I've seen him around. And I would bet my life that...
- But then...

- That's right, auntie. The last thing he should be is that: a policeman... I spotted him as soon as he entered the café... someone *big* is after you...

An end - XXXII

- What's up? Did you get anything?
 - The history files helped me little, that he had been on that site I already knew.
 - Don't tell me you didn't get any...
 - Hey, easy. That's not what I said.
 - Yes?
-
- I had to resort to the buffer. Fortunately they didn't have time to shut down the PC. I

reconstructed all the steps he took and made a print screen. But, obviously, I only caught the beginning of his conversation inside the scroll text box, with a guy from Slow Motion, who was in that chat room with him.

- These kids...
- They know a lot... or they're intuitive. I point more to the second hypothesis, doctor.
- And... what did you pick up from that conversation?

- You were right, they do prepare some. And they sound like babies talking, crazy code, I think that comes to them from American basketball nicknames, or whatever that is...
- Nick who?
- Ahm, right, forget it. It's definitely not of your generation.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- But what they prepare, that really moves my generation! Hm, well... you did a good job.

- They...

- S... yes? Anything else?

- They talk about servers. That was the last line I could read of the conversation.

- My dear friend, that may have been the last line you read... but it is my first concern, believe me...

An end - XXXIII

- Good. I expect answers, Lam.
- And you'll get some.
- I don't want: "some" - I want them all! And I want them all now! Don't think I'm financing...
- Eh, what's got into you now?

- Do you know the risk I'm taking with what I've done? I know you only woke up a few hours ago after four months...

- And a half. Four and a half months...

- Yeah, yeah, you think I don't know? I'm your nurse, and...

- You were. You were my nurse, now you're...

- Yes? What am I now, anyway? I'm...

- My girlfriend.

- What?! You think I'm like that...?

The kiss, sudden, took Catherine by surprise. Or maybe not. She couldn't release herself from Lam's embrace. As the seconds ticked by, she realised she had no desire to let go of that embrace. An embrace she had wanted all her life.

A hug and a kiss... magical.

An end - XXXIV

Catarina was smoothing Lam's unruly hair. It was already 2 a.m., and neither of them wanted to part from each other's gentle and sincere gaze. She had listened to everything, patiently, against what was her habit. And he, he had explained it all to her, with all the

details, from his entry into the university, through gambling, kidnapping and threatening, to the story of his psychoanalyst's betrayal, which had been resolved with the *final solution*: the Clinic, and a long, long sleep...

- You knew they... didn't want to eh...

- You can say it, Catarina.

- That you would wake up...?

- I imagine so, Catarina. The knowledge I carry within me is too dangerous. But now the trump suit has changed from spades to... hearts! And it is my heart, and yours too, which beats together with mine, that dictates the rules of the game. Come on, let's go to sleep.

- Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I noticed...

- What? What?

- A strange smell... it seems... gas!

- Really? But that, it's dangerous, and we're locked in here...

- Lam. Are you thinking what I am thinking?

- A... I think so. Catarina... we have to get out of here. We've been... discovered!

An end - XXXV

- Quick, the keys!

- I'm coming, I'm coming! Get dressed quickly. Hurry up!

- One lock is done. The second... too! Now...

- Hurry, Lam. Cof cof... I'm getting a little dizzy... open it, please! We have to...

- Catarina, the third lock...

- What is it?

- It's... blocked! They've put something to cover it, from the outside, that's what it must be!

- I'm going to call...

- And you think there's time for that?!? Cof cof. Ah, what a horrible thing... caught in the trap... and so close to the end.

- Oh my God... hold me, Lam. This may be the last...

- Don't say that, Catarina. Don't say it.

- Catarina...

- Yes? Cof cof cof... yes, what is it? I...

- Do you see what I see?

Catherine turned around, and at the end of the corridor she saw her. It was just a glimmer of hope. Perhaps if...

- And now, there's no time to lose. Hand me that big halogen lamp. It's now or never. Pray, Catarina. Pray... a lot! I...

... I hope your God is watching.

An end - XXXVI

- The birds have flown out of the burrow, doctor.

- Hm. Are you sure?

- Yes, the satellite guys have no doubts and warned me: two figures running, coming

from those parts, at two o'clock in the morning... it could only be them.

- Look, that's the problem with the NATO countries, our damned allies: it's too conspicuous to bomb them, you know...

- Eheheh... I imagine, doctor, I imagine. It wouldn't be nice, really...

- Not in the least. It could lead to a lot of redundancies around here... it's really not the most advisable...

- If you want, I...

- Frankly, I think it will be necessary.

- Yes, doctor...? What do I do now?

- You know the Helsinki coup?

- The doctor... the doctor is joking! That's very...

- I know, I know. I have such a sense of humour... This is the last attempt. And you better not fail. I know it's gonna cost you a

little bit, but... you know, it's out of my hands from here on out. Let the guys in the States sort it out. They're well paid for it.

- Eheheh...

- My dear friend... the civil service is the same in every country... But you don't have to be like that, do you?

- Yes, I...

- You skip over the bureaucracy and get down to business. That's why I love your competence so much...

An end - XXXVII

Somewhere in the United States, a laptop computer would make the necessary connection. He had received the order, and would gladly comply. All that was needed... was to read the password from his list of

countless passwords, from servers all over the world. CoolBoy was happy. For over 12 years he had been waiting for a good plan. A plan that he, with his 6 fairly active years as a hacker, could be useful in. The order was clear. very clear. Slow Mow had brought him up to speed on some of the situation a few months ago, and he just needed to wait for the... right moment. He sent an email to Frenchman.

And he waited, again. He was browsing the contents of a Pascal book on Amazon when he got the reply email. His heart started beating wildly.

It's now or never.

He opened the email with mad anxiety. Everything depended on what F.M. in France could do. The virus would have to be ready before... The message was only two

lines long. It was in code. uff... good.
Sometimes he's so forgetful...

"The fridge will be delivered on time, dear Mr Murray. Just make sure it is within the warranty period when our technicians arrive at your home.

Ass: Mr. Andrew

P.S.: We never had any complaints."

Eheheh... Always your personal note at the end of emails...

He accepted...

The game is on. The grown-ups take care of themselves. John Cena has started to clean house...

An end - XXXVIII

- And... is it?
- Doctor K?
- I have already said that I do not want to receive calls through this line...
- Do you happen to know who you are talking to...?
- Well, I don't know, but this line...

- I use this line when I feel like it, do you hear me, you fool?

- Dork? You'd better identify yourself, I don't...

- I'm your boss, asshole! Your boss! Do you understand me?

- My boss? The... the... from Massachusetts?

- That's the one. Say no more about my name, I also know that the line is not safe - I was the one who gave the go-ahead for these by-lines to be created, after all.

- But... something's wrong... I...

- You were sleeping, because it's 4am. That's perfectly natural. But you have to wake up and quickly, because something... strange has happened.

- What... what happened?

- Some funny guy put a file on the server. Nothing that would stay online, of course. A

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

Notepad file, to be read everywhere, by any fool who knows nothing about the internet or computers.

- Do you know on which site that file was posted, by any chance? We have several sit...

- Most importantly, of course.

- On the site of the... of the...

- Exactly, doctor. That's right, Doctor.

- N-A-S-A...?

- Let it never be said that a subordinate cannot surprise his boss

An end - XXXIX

- But... that's...
- And on our beards, and on the beards of the server boys!
- Really... how strange! And unlikely! But that server doesn't have...
- 8! 8 firewalls, 8! With every possible and imaginary antivirus, my dear doctor friend.
- Can I know what... what file is that? If it's from Notepad, he doesn't...

- It's obviously not a virus.
- So why would someone... a text file, is it?
A...
- Yes. A message. A worrying message, to say the least.
- What does it say, the message...?
- It says that NASA's website will be attacked by a virus within a short time, and will have, online, rather... compromising information...
- But they have not yet been able to locate what it was that...

- We can't and don't want to, my dear.
- Q... why?
- Because even if we could do it technically, it would take at least 3 days. And they only give us a deadline of half a day at most.
- I don't understand...

- Remember the game we thought was over?

- And... in Lisbon...?

- Well, no more, Doctor. From here on, there will have to be negotiations. Direct. Discreet. And, of course, at the highest level.

- Do you really think... he wouldn't dare, surely!

- Doctor, doctor... I don't know if this is pure and hard blackmail, or something else, to simply mock us... but one thing, I do know.

- What... what thing...?

- Your boy better have a loooooong and happy life. Because if this blackbird suffers some sudden illness, there's already a letter in a bank in bloody Switzerland waiting for us, like a guillotine over our heads, ready to roll down the mountain... And if the blackbird instead of having that sudden illness, sings, we no longer have anything to trade,

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

and more than half a century of lies of western science come crashing down... and we go down that cliff, with them behind us... you need me to draw you a picture... hm?

- Oh, my God... I've already spoken to the...
- Your boy is worth gold now, dear Dr. K. Your boy is worth... GOLD!

One end - XL

Few taxi drivers would give shelter, on a dark night, to two desperate fugitives, badly dressed and showing signs of intoxication: many would consider them mere junkies. But not Mário. That path, between Cais do Sodré station and somewhere else, was an imaginary point in his fertile imagination, eight years old at the time. And he had had fun with those two at first sight.

- Eh, you guys are a bit tired... where are we going?
- Cof cof cof... to... Quincho!

- Are you guys coming from a party or something?

- You don't even want to know, you don't even want to know,...

- Mario. My name is Mario.

- Lam.

- Catherine.

- Lam and Catarina... welcome to my modest... GTI Turbo!

- G... GTI...?

- That's right. Hold on tight, because the police have gone home to bed, and we now own the... road!

An end - XII

Lam would bet his life that that GTI Turbo was even in the mirrors. A tuning fanatic... that's all we needed now... The man was driving at a crazy speed, always dodging the cars in front at the last moment. He was like a rallie on the savannah. They were terrified. Both of them.

- Listen, we're in no hurry, and...

- But I have! There's a party in the Kremlin at five in the morning! And today I've barely slept, and I've already taken... euh, well, a few things, you know... so I can be

up, my children! Mario's all fun and games here, but he's got to be realistic! Jobs are scarce now, eh?

- Seriously, Mr Mario, please drive more carefully...

- Well, well, well! Giving driving lessons to a professional? And you haven't seen anything yet... I'm going to plug something in here that's really something!

- What... what are you going to call...?

- You are inattentive to what I am telling you... I said: G-T-I ... TURBO!!!

An end - XLIII

Catherine was in a state of shock when she got out of the taxi. She was staggering, and Lam had to support her.

- Relax... I'm here. I'll just pay the taxi driver... how much?

- 15 euros and 43 cents, please. Have you seen how quickly I got you here? It's like this, Mario here...hm?

- Yes, yes. Here, here, leave the change. Look, and I have some advice for you. For free!

- Yes? Say it, say it!

- Leave Playstation alone, man.

- Ahahah! Eheheh, well, my kid likes to play that! I just watch.

I can see he's going to be the same crazy taxi driver as you when he grows up...

- See you next time! Party, here I come! Turbo, don't let me look bad! Iahuu!

The car disappeared on the same stretch of road that it had taken along the A5, and Lam was left with Catarina in his arms and the dust from the start of the taxi in his eyes and nostrils. And when, a few seconds later, the car disappeared around a bend in the road, he could only think of one thing.

Slow Mow. Have you managed to convince them...?

- Come on, Catarina.

An end - XLIII

5632

TuríStar. A name that perhaps makes sense, a sense connected to: tourism. That was the name of that campsite, in the heart of Guíncho, where the waves turn into waves, and the surfers challenge them, full of pots, basophies, blondes and some tattoos. And that's where his nephew had told them to go in case of danger. They were to look for a trailer with the number plate number 23-35-FT.

- Whew... Let's just sleep in the open, Lam. We can't find this if we look for three whole days, I'm so tired, and...
- Over there! Come on, Catarina, there it is, our saviour trailer!
- At last! We'll be able to sleep in peace now...

17305

- An end of the world, that's what this is! Lam!
- What is it, Catarina? Calm down...
- What do we do now? I'm sick of standing here staring at walls. Which aren't even walls...
- We're waiting. My plan is in motion. In a short time I should have news from Slow...
- Let's just go to the café on this campsite and have a drink, it's really hot, and...

- OK, fine, let's go. But it's no good us being seen, who knows who and how many are those who are after us...

The café was very close to the park exit. It was large, and had a horrible coffee machine, equally incompetent waitresses, and a suspicious guard at the door. *All in good fun*, Lam thought. They sat down at a table, and as Catherine drank the concoction they called coffee there, the waitress from inside the counter shouted:

- Is there someone here called Paulo Lam?
- You hear that, Lam? Let's run away from here, and...
- Calm down! We were too conspicuous, and that guard would have caught us on the spot! Hey, take it easy!
- But if you go there they'll get us too!

- Yes, but... she has something in her hand... a telephone! Someone called me here... is it your nephew, Diogo?

- He's got my phone. It can't be.

- The girl has already asked again, she'll hang up in a moment. Well, I'm off.

- Are you out of your mind? You'll throw it all away!

- Stay put. I'll be right back.

- It's me Paulo Lam, it's me. Who's on the phone, miss?

- I don't know, they didn't say. Answer it, then.

- Hello?

- Hello," Lam repeated.

Lam slowly approached the table where Catherine was. She was on tenterhooks.

- Q... who was that, Lam? We...

SHAMAN

- I don't know who it was, it could even have been your nephew: the call fell through. But I'm not leaving here: I'm tired of running around.

- A... do you think so? We shouldn't run away, to...

- Where, you don't say, hm? Where to?

- Q... yeah... I don't know, Lam, I...

- It's not only you who don't know, Catarina. I, despite knowing too much, don't know either.

An end - XLIV

The trailer was still there, waiting for them, like a humble but loving mother. And they thanked the gods for those plywood walls, or whatever it was made of. In summer, an oven; in winter, ice. There was no middle ground there.

- Lam, come lie down. And lie down...

- We don't have time for that now, I have to check on the laptop, if the NASA site has gone...

- Hacked? That's it, what did you mean, Paulo Lam?

- Q... who's there, Lam? Ohh!

The man came out of the front compartment very calmly. His gestures were slow, studied down to the last detail. He took a few steps forward, and dropped Diogo's computer on the floor in front of Lam. It was obvious that it had become unusable. But that wasn't the most important thing. The most important thing was what he carried in front of him, in the hand of a menacing arm.

- U... um... Lam!

- Oh, my God...

- That's what you're looking at, boy. A Beretta, with a silencer. The boys back home in the States prefer others, but I'm pretty good with it. I've always been good with this gun. Tight. Small. Discreet. It's the right one, I tell you.

- What do you want...

- What do I want? Oh, but I don't want anything. It's my boss, who wants to have a

little chat with you. You didn't think this was possible, huh, kid?

- Yes, I thought it wasn't possible for someone to betray me.

- Above all...

- Yes. Above all...

- Lam, Lam, Lam, you don't even know the half of it...

An end - XLV

- How could you do this to me? He's my uncle, for God's sake...! Everything we've been through together over the years, everything we've studied, uncle has helped me through everything...!
- That would be true if it were true, Lam. But it isn't.
- What is true? I don't understand...
- It was all very simple, Lam. Reconstructing your past was very simple. Only Masse was in that delivery room, after your mother... euh...
- I know. Keep going.

- Masse was watched from the beginning. And that story about your adoption... too. There had to be a man in Lisbon to give them information. Masse was too important in the Secr... ehh, you know too much already.

- But, Uncle...

- I am not your uncle!

- What?

- I insinuated myself to Masse, and made him believe it. It had to be that way. You see, your mother... eh, she'd lost all dignity, nobody wanted...

- To know about her. And there was a child - Me - that nobody wanted either. And only Masse, with her good heart, believed in me and my talent. Isn't that so, as I say?

- Maybe, kid, maybe it is. But that talent of yours only brings you complications. This is definitely not the time for creatives, there are many people who prefer MacDonalds

instead of Da Vinci's, did you know that?
Eheheh... And now...

- Are you going to kill us? asked an already desperate Catherine. - Is that what you're going to do to us...? Let me at least kiss my Lam goodbye.

- Ohh, how romantic... I don't know what you see in this boy, girl! But you do!

- Are you going to kill us, Rui? Lam's gaze was very serious. He was calm. Too calm, even.

- Kill the lovebirds? No... that would be too easy... But you will meet the angels in heaven, have no doubt about it...

An end - XLVI

A van slowly approached outside. Rui looked through the window of the trailer. It was him at last. The Safe Transport.

- And now, you're going for a little ride... and don't even think about running away. Come on, the car's parked.

- And... and I...?

- You stay here, with me.

- Don't even think of hurting him, or I'll...

- Or else what? Don't worry, my bosses back in the States don't like these things done like this, roughly... look, call them a shred of civilisation, or whatever you want! And you say we don't treat you well... go on, walk!

And the Beretta's on the lookout, here in the trailer, hm?

The side door of the van opened. It was almost glued to the trailer's, which opened inwards. *Damn them. They've studied every last detail. I won't be able to escape.*

- Take him to tires, Samuel. They're there, waiting for you.

- Yes, sir, I already know what needs to be done.

The van door was locked from the inside by Samuel. He was a black man from Guinea about six feet tall. Lam couldn't know it, but he had once been a boxer.

One thing was certain: I would lose every fight I had with that man if I challenged him.

An end - XLVII

The van had been moving for about ten minutes, at a good pace and on good roads. Inside, an almost totally dark Paulo Lam had Samuel watching him. The silence was becoming untenable, between the two of them. And Lam decided he would be the one to break it. He couldn't wait another second, his anxiety was killing him.

- May I ask... where are we going?

The big man looked at him, with his eyes of a pure, feline green, and turned away, pretending not to have heard anything.

- Q... May I know where...

- I heard what you said. We're going to... a man. Who wants to talk to you. A man-to-man talk.

- Is that it? And that conversation will be end...

- You want to know too much. Keep calm, eh? Don't want to shorten your short life even more... hm...?

- What are you going to do to me? Speak!

Samuel moved his hand to the bottom of his jacket, and Lam caught a glimpse of it. It was even brighter than John's.

- I, eh, I'm calm, I'm calm.

- You better be. You don't want her speaking for me, and before her time, *hombre*.

My God... now I recognise this voice, this is the man who...

An end - XLVIII

Samuel waited a while, gun in hand, when the van stopped. He was prepared for anything. And as the man opened the back door and the light dimmed them both, a face smiled. It was Samuel's.

- Bang!

- Oh, my God! You... you killed him...

- I killed him, yeah, boy. But do you think we're some newbies around here, or what...? Go on, get out of here, and do it now!

The hangar was relatively small compared to others at the Tires airfield. Lam got out of the van and was escorted to the small jet. A jet that apparently had no identification. Nothing on its exterior indicated its origin.

- Get up these stairs. John, escort the boy upstairs, I'll dispose of his body.

- Yeah, I'm coming. Come on, Lam, you go ahead of me. And no Portuguese smarts. You know: one wrong move, and...

I know, I know. The same thing that happened to Samuel is happening to me.

An end - XLIX

Lam quickly climbed the stairs. Inside, the luxury plane was empty.

- Sit down. The man's coming.

Lam saw it immediately. It was perhaps the only loose end in all that. And it was in a... strategic place. *My lifeline... no one will even dream that I will...*

A door opened. It was The Man, no doubt about it. His conversation with the pilot was still going on, but you could see that he was already ready to receive him. Ready and... eager for it to happen. He closed the door to the cockpit, approached Lam, and greeted him in perfect English.

- How do you do, my dear Lam. Paulo, isn't it?

- You wanted to see me? Who are you? What is this? I...

- Caalma. My dear Paulo Lam, welcome to the informal flights of friends from Portugal. We are now heading for runway 5. And then, well, then we'll take off, to... to...

- The US...?

- Lam, the journey might even be shorter for you, my good boy... it all depends on your... look, your political goodwill!

An end - L

- Let no one say that the United States does not know how to receive - that is a bare-faced lie, I assure you, Lam!

- I believe...

- And, to prove it to you, I have here three liqueurs for you to choose, I know you like them...

- C... how do you know? Ah... never mind...

- That's right, my boy. Your uncle has always been a good collaborator of ours. And

I honestly think you have the right profile for...

- Snitch? Special Informant? Secret Agent?

- No, my dear Lam. Forget those things you saw in James Bond movies: almost everything is a lie, after all.

- So, what do you want from me, anyway? I, uh...

- You have entered a game... very dangerous... with those hacker friends of yours... we all know what they are like, frustrated teenagers who just need a good plan, to get into anti-American paranoia, but that can still be stopped... don't you agree with me, Lam...?

- Does it? That it can be stopped? I don't know, no...

- You are a smart boy, Lam... and that's why I think you and I will get along well...

Sing me the fado that I like... little do you know, that I...

An end - □

- We have already read the message you posted on the server, Lam.
- They would be very stupid indeed if they didn't notice it, my dear sir...
- Call me... Richard. No sir, please... it's so formal... between us there shouldn't be... hm...?
- Secrets...? Ah, I think so, I think so.

- You see how you understand what I'm saying? That way, yes, we'll get somewhere...

- Ah, but I also think we'll get somewhere.

I don't think I'll get where you want me to go...

- Come, come. Here at the window, I mean. Come and see something.

- What is...?

- See those little dots down at the airport?

- Yes. They're people.

- Are you sure? They still look like little dots to me. John? What do they look like to you?

- Dots, doctor, dots. No doubt about it.

- You see, Lam? John agrees with me! And I guarantee you one thing: all those dots you see down there have a little head that thinks

non-stop, and some even think they can change the world! A better world, they say! Did you hear that, John?

- Eheheh... it's really funny, doctor. It's really funny.

- What do you think, Lam, that the air lords think about those little heads, and about their ideas? Do you think that those ideas could ever succeed in this world that is so... look, so fast, so globalised, so eh... democratic...?

- Everyone has the right to their dreams. But some have the money to make them come true, others... don't!

- Sure, sure... well, you'll understand that we like to do business with just a few friends...

- But surely others have blackmailed you, too... they must not be the only ones to have that privilege...

- My dear Lam... you are clever...

- What do you want from me?

- ... but cleverness does not always mean intelligence...

An end - LII

- Calm down, drink your Baileys with all the time in the world, hm? I have to go and talk to the pilot, give him some more instructions, I didn't get to tell him that...
John, put our guest at ease!

- Yes, doctor, he certainly won't complain about our facilities. Lam, there's international satellite TV and computer games. Porn magazines can be arranged, Jacuzzi in the back, anything you...

- Okay okay, I'm fine right here.

- It's up to you.

John's pistol was still in the same place, stuck in his waistband. He looked like a ranchers' henchman from Brazil. He wasn't Samuel's extra large size, but he was much more muscular than he... had been. It was necessary to attack him at a... strategic point. They had already passed the bay of Cascais, and were now in the middle of the sea. Lam's plan might have to change. But he then... remembered. Of a predictable route, of a... it would still be possible that... wait a half hour, no more. His life tablet was still there, half hidden... it was obvious that its size made it difficult to store in those little top drawers of the plane. And if...

Time passed. And that played in his favour. But it couldn't be another minute or it would be impossible for him...

-John!

- Go ahead, doctor.

- Be aware. You were almost asleep. Lam?

- Yes?

- Shall we continue our conversation now?
Let me just sit down...

- Doctor Richard... I do not doubt that you
have some very rare chrome for the exchange.
But I...

- Yes, Lam...?

- I have already completed my collection, my
dear doctor what's-his-name. And I have a
horror of baseball cards.

The next moment, the Adam's apple of
Richard Tuck's throat received a clenched
fist that set it back two and a half inches
and John was entitled to a kick to the nether
parts. A kick so... violent, he would need at

least ten seconds to recover. It was the knowledge of four years of cable wrestling kicking in to reality. And by the time Richard was able to catch his breath and was starting to think about doing something, Lam had already resumed the Plan... A.

Plan B is for teals, Slow Mow. See ya later wallygator, idiots.

An end - LIII

The plane tilted to the left side. A dangerous tilt, which the pilot knew could only have been caused by... he spoke immediately into the internal microphone, to Richard. But no one came knocking on the cockpit door. Instead, it was a John with a little girl's voice who shouted something incomprehensible at him in a crazy gale from the other side of the door.

- My God... the plane is completely destabilised! Go see what's going on, Monica!

- You know what's going on, damn it! You want to see me fly in the back, too? Drop the

speed and height of the plane, and you're on your way!

- Are you all right back there? Is everything all right? Doctor Richard, I... ah, finally, it looks like they've closed the door... Richard! What happened?

- Cof cof cof... the Lam... he...

- Don't tell me he killed himself! Don't tell me he...

- Shut up, you idiot! The bird flew, but birds can't swim, haven't you heard?

- But he... he won't even have that chance, if he jumped...

- Nothing of the sort. None of it. The parachute that was to be used later, in the middle of the ocean... you know?

- Oh, but then...

- That's right.

This blackbird has seen too many American movies, my friend.

An end - LIV

Zé Manel was one of the few fishermen from the Azores who still fished in their own boat. Now it was the foreign companies, especially those from Spain, who took all the fish quota. He would complain to his Alzira when he arrived home from work, but his friends didn't even listen to him anymore. But he did. Somewhere in the sea, a little further away. And it couldn't have been a big mullet making all that noise. It was something bigger. But... what?

- Boat A Minha Donzília, boat A Minha Donzília, come back to shore now rss rss.
Boat My Donzília,...

The radio was muttering some sayings that, although understandable, were extremely monotonous. But that noise...

- Boss? Let's go? The radio is saying...?

- I've known what they're saying since the day before yesterday! There's a storm coming, and a big one! My knee warned me... Or do you think this old sailor has lost his touch, eh...? Don't worry, I'm not going to put you at risk, it's just an intuition... did you hear that?

- It must be a mullet, boss Zé, it's just a mullet.

I bet my life that's probably the biggest mullet you've ever seen in your life, you dickhead....

An end - LV

- Boss Zé! We are disobeying the orders of the port! The boss there will not forgive us!
- I wouldn't forgive myself if this wasn't what I think it is! Hold on to the boat, the storm is coming! You didn't have one of those storms back in Brazil, did you, you little rascal? Huh?
- What do you want me to do?
- Machines at maximum!
- Now, boss?

- Yesterday, man, yesterday! If this storm is as I'm thinking it is, tomorrow the ones baiting the fish are us!!!

An end - LVI

It was raining heavily, the wind was very strong and the big waves made the boat rock dangerously, from side to side, like a baby in the arms of a mechanical cradle that had gone mad. They reached the spot and saw the synthetic cloth and the parachute nets.

- Pick it up, man! Hurry up! Can't you see we're already in the middle of a storm? Do you hear me?

- Right away, boss Zé, right away.

- Come on, I'll help you. Whew, that's it.
But...

- Where is he, boss? I thought he was still
under the...

- I wish I knew that too, my boy. But there's
no way I'm staying here another second.
Right about turn, as the troops say, eh?
Now!

- Okay, boss, okay, Mr. Zé.

- You know, boss Zé, I... now that it's all
over, I think we should go back there... if
only to see if the body turns up... what do
you say...?

- Ahahah!

- What's up, boss? Why are you laughing?

- My dear Diamantino, the body will not
appear in those parts so soon... eheheh...

- Are you sure? What are you...

- Did you know that there is a species of bird that will lay its eggs in the nest of other birds, for them to hatch, in their turn...?

- But boss Zé, I don't understand...

- It's good that you don't understand... it's good that you don't understand, Really... because otherwise we would have to explain at the port who it was that we brought three days ago on the boat, without authorisation...

- But, boss Zé, we haven't found him! What are you saying?

- We didn't find him. You're absolutely right.

- So, yeah!

- Ah, but he found us...!

- So... that water in the basement... it was...

- That's what it is. Diamantino, my friend, this blackbird made its nest behind our ear...

and I bet you anything that at this time it has already gone to make its nest on land...

- Where? How do you know...?

- To the Continent, my muppet, to the Continent! But do I have to tell you everything?

An end - LVII

Lam saw them immediately. Dark, like that night. But with very white friends, and sharp-edged like the viperine tongue of some fine whore from the Intendente. Five-star naïfas... he tried to circle them, going to the other pavement, but they kept coming closer. It was... inevitable. And Lam knew it. So much so that he prepared himself for it. The leader of the gang, that one, took him for granted.

Come on, show me what u've got...

- Hey, Dred! How's it going with you?

- Eheheh... come here, white guy!

- What are you doing here, in this dark night, huh?

- Yes, only we can give you shelter!

- Oh, yeah? And how's that?

- Hey, white boy, you gotta learn to talk slower. Slower and with more... Tell him, SnowBall, tell him...

- Education, dumb white boy. You gotta be more polite to these brothers. Otherwise, you won't pass! And I guarantee you that instead of passing, you'll have a hard time...

- Rafa just wanted to tell you that only we have the compass to get out of this dark night. Rafa, show him, come on!

The boy was very serious. He took out a point-and-spring shiv from his pocket, and aimed it at Lam's heart. Then...

- Eheheh! That's right, Rafa, that's right. Do you understand, Whitie?

Rafa still had his shiv pointed, but he had done something that Lam only understood later. He displayed a malevolent grin, from one side of his mouth to the other.

- See these white teeth, my man?

- What about them?

- They have the only light you'll see around here.

- And the night is so dark today... oh, if it is...

An open one. A chance for... that T-shirt... could be my second lifeline.

- EMINEM?!?!? A brother who likes Eminem?!? Ahahaheheheheh!!! I thought there were no more of those bros!!! Ohohohoho...!

- What is it? What? It's pretty cool...

- But it's white! Ahahah, Eminem, oh my God...

- Yeah, Ralph, Eminem stinks, bro. I already told you you look like a bear with that t-shirt...

- You too, now? You wanna get it, Bronco Billy? He's white but he's got soul soul, bro!

The leader of that charanga looked with his heroin-charred face at Lam, from the second wave of the group. And that face and its expression were bad news for him. He came to watch the show from the front row, but at that moment Lam sensed the danger and took off, dashing, to the sides of the Orient underground station.

-J.J., he's on the run, we have to...

Jesse James looked towards a horizon not far away, and then he saw them. They had various colours, they spoke loudly, in short: they were the usual ones.

- Pessuel, bazareco. And I'm on it!

And he was right to be afraid. Because cops don't usually go easy around here.

An end - LVIII

- Excuse me, can you tell me what time is the next one, for Alameda station?
- At 11:50 p.m., young man.
- Thank you.

Two minutes. I have two minutes.

A young man in his twenties was patiently waiting for the right moment. It was 11.48 p.m. and he would only have a single chance to suddenly, the rumble of the carriage

made itself felt, still a good quarter of a mile away.

Now.

- Hey! Where are you going, you? Hey, boy?

The guard jumped almost at the same time as him the ticket validation booth. They were both shot down the gallery, first on the escalators and then, at the end, already on the stairs, in 4 by 4. The guard was about to reach the boy, but he felt him grabbing his jacket, and made a manoeuvre... risky.

It's all or... nothing.

Metro users at Oriente station only saw someone turn sharply, to the right, but leave the legs of a falling body in the path of Ribeiro, who stumbled immediately. The boy

was the first to get up, and caught the metro at the very last moment, forcing the door, which opened again. And when Ribeiro got up, he missed the reopened door by a split second.

The boy rested, for a few moments, on his feet: he was too dirty to sit down.

- Lam!

- Huh?

An end - LIX

- What's up with you? It's me, Paz; Julio Paz, from the university, man!
- Ah, yes... how are you? All right? Have you managed to finish the course?
- No, I'm missing the chairs of...
- Let me guess: Professor Dinis and Professor Manuel dos Santos...
- C... how do you know?
- It's a long story... and I've got to get out of here! Bye!
- But... Lam!

Júlio watched him run inside the gallery of the Cabo Ruivo station. A few hurried steps quickly descended the staircase: there were five policemen.

In the tunnel, Lam understood immediately.

The cavalry has arrived. Too bad it's always the Indians who are right...

An end - LX

- Where did you escape, driver?
- Through the tunnel, that way!
- Ok!

The carriage was still stopped at the station, but the driver received the order from the central office to move quickly from the station. He let the policemen disappear into the tunnel, warned the metro traffic controller, but got the same answer: - *Go on, and it's now!* After about twenty seconds, he executed the order. *Let the next train worry about that, I've already done my part...* The

carriage seemed half asleep, but finally it left.

And when the doors closed, Julio smiled.

- I knew you'd come back.

- Here we are, Julio, because nobody listens to us: this thing about the criminal always returning to the scene of the crime is a fine piece of crap...

An end - LXI

The driver didn't even notice, with such agitation, his right rear-view mirror. Because, if he had noticed the figure that hid under the end of the carriage, and climbed back up the emergency stairs to the metro after five policemen had passed him, he would never have started up again.

- Lam, you sleep at my place tonight. I insist. You're a mess, boy. You need to make yourself look good eheheh...

- I don't even think twice! I'm in need of a good bath, in fact.

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- You look like you come from a war, man!
What happened?

- It's a long story...

- Ah, but we'll have time to talk, back home,
you'll rest, and... but look here, why did you
say that about the subjects I'm missing...?

- My dear Julio... I never thought this course
would be so difficult to take...

An end - LXII

- Now that you've had your bath, come here. Here are your clothes for tomorrow, you're about my size, and I'd be happy to give you these trousers.

Lam was already sleeping soundly, in the improvised bed in the second bedroom of that room. Julio left him alone and quietly went out to the living room.

And when he turned on the television, something strange was going on. A rather nervous correspondent journalist in Washington was reporting on a masterstroke on the Internet, carried out by

strangers. Apparently, the NASA website had been attacked by hackers.

- Tell us, Medeiro Antunes, how does this attack differ from previous ones on the Internet?

- I'm hearing you wrong, Pacheco, we're having interference... ah, now say it, I didn't hear you.

- I was asking you how this attack differs from others, on other sites, Medeiro?

- Well, this attack... the experts here in Washington tell us that the Internet itself would have to be shut down, so that the message on the hacked site would disappear.

- And is there any clue yet as to who did this attack? Because the message that's currently there... well, I...

- Yes, yes, yes, Pacheco, I know, she's quite extravagant. But the best, for the viewers to understand what we're talking about, is really...

- Accessing NASA's website? Absolutely. I remind you, dear viewers, that the site can be accessed through this address: www.Nasa.gov. I advise everyone who wants to find out more about this subject to go directly to the site, and...

I wonder what these guys are talking about. Well, I've turned off my PC, I'll look at it tomorrow. Go to sleep.

Julio Paz decided to peek into Lam's sleep. He was a good friend. Loyal; he had always been so, with all his colleagues. But something wasn't right. Those rushes in the underground... the police, after him, it seemed... I'll ask him about all that later.

Sweet dreams, Lam. You, perhaps more than anyone else in that university, deserve them.

An end - LXIII

- Ah, you're finally up, Lam! I put some money in your trousers, just in case... Do you know what time it is?

- Oh, what a headache... Júlio, keep it down, I...

- 4pm! 4!!!

- What?! It's true, I have to... oh, my God!

Lam stumbled over the coffee table in the living room, knocking some magazines to the floor. He picked them up clumsily, in his haste, while he surprised a ham and cheese sandwich that Júlio had on a stool, half-eaten, next to the sofa. And while Júlio watched this scene in amazement, he had already reached the stairs of the second floor

of a boarding house like this, in Rua do Século, in the heart of Bairro Alto. Júlio ran to the door, too, and asked him a rhetorical question. But the answer he heard was anything but the traditional one. Or maybe not...

- Hey! Where are you going?! Have some breakfast at least!

- I can't! I'm going to save a princess!!!

An end - LXIV

This time I didn't have to evade the guard: the money was enough. And now it was about finding a taxi and a very... special taxi driver. He'd been walking back and forth for over two minutes in caís do sodré, looking inside the taxis; he looked like a madman. And then, in the middle of the queue, he saw him. *This is a real taxi...* he stormed into the vehicle, startling Mário, who was sleeping.

- Hey, what's this? A burgl...?
- It's me, man. The client from the other night, don't you remember...?
- There are so many...
- The one at Quincho, the campsite...

- But I... I can't go ahead of the other taxi drivers! Why don't you go to the first in line?

- Mario, Mario... I'm not going there for two reasons...

- Yes?

- Yes. First reason: T-U-R-B-O - GTI.

- Ehehe... it seems to me that we are finally understanding each other, boy... and the second one...?

- The second one is: grab the wheel and put on the fastest one, because Playstation never hurt anyone!

- My dear friend, I have been misunderstood all my life... hold on tight, this is not going to be pretty to watch...

An end - LXV

- Thank you, Mario, thank you for... everything!

- Where are you going, my friend? Do you want some help? Anyone who likes Playstation must be a good person!

- Look, actually... I could use some help... there's a damsel in distress here, and...

- What? And you wouldn't tell me anything? Let me see my little Tre...

- Terezinha?

- No! Thirteen! A thirteen-shooter, made in America, special model, here for the boy, euh... to, to defend myself from muggers, of course, there are so many of them around... many taxi drivers carry these, cheaper models of course, but I always bet on safety!

- Of course! Drive safely, Mario! Always!

- My dear friend, you understand so deeply this poor soul... I have found my soul mate...

- Now it's exactly my soul mate who's in trouble. Bring little Trey over here, we're gonna need her.

An end - LXVI

Lam approached slowly. It was almost night. The ideal kingdom of shadows. Mario went around behind the trailer, and when Lam suddenly opened the door, he immediately aimed his pistol at the front. The two of them collected themselves, and changed position. Mario then entered slowly, heading for the bathroom door.

- Come on! There's blood here! Hurry up!

Lam rose quickly too, his heart in his hands. There was a door between him and the truth. And this blood could only be from...

- Step back. I'm going to open the door...

- No. Don't do this, man. Don't do this to me.

- Huh? You don't want me to open the... the...
- You've helped me enough. Leave me here, alone, now. Please do as I tell you.
- Okay, buddy. I understand that...
- Go. Now, now, now. Thanks for everything, Mario. But I'd prefer a more... leisurely ride back.

- All right. See you sometime. And give me a hug. No crying, because a man's a man and a cat's a bug, eh?
- Yeah, yeah, I...
- I'm going, boss. Take care of yourself.

Lam was now facing a door, under which a thin thread of red liquid was oozing. There were signs of a struggle, and signs of blood too, in some places in the trailer. And when he finally opened the door, nothing would ever be the same again.

- Oh! Catherine! Damn you!

- L... Lam...? My love? Is... is that you??

Lam turned and then saw her, nestled in the top drawer of the trailer. She let herself fall into his arms, and the two of them cried for some time, over the corpse of Rui, who had seconds before fallen to the floor at their feet.

- Swear to me that you will never leave me again, Lam, swear to me now!!!

- Catarina, my love. The world is so big, in your eyes

An end - LXVII

- May I ask what the hell is going on, Larry?

- Damn... you must not speak for this line...

- This is the No.1 line! If I don't talk this way, then it's all crazy, Really!!!! And don't give me that Doctor this, Doctor that, Larry, you hear me?!?

- I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

- What the fuck is going on with that bloody server, eh? Why wasn't I warned? And why does NASA give me evasive answers, hm? Actually, you're right about one thing: I should be in charge! But now some teenage clowns are putting the whole thing into turmoil? You better explain to me what's going on...

- A computer virus, T.P. A virus that we... had never heard of. Symantec, McFee, even the poor devils at AVG tried to help us, for

God's sake! The power really went out the window...

- But how is that possible, you don't say? All those things are merely the inventions of crazy teenagers, who...

- Hhmmm!

- What now? Why are you interrupting me?

- All that, that's there, online, on the website, you know...

- Síimm???

- All that is... true.

An end - LXVIII

- WHAT?!?!?!?!? But NASA... hundreds of scientists... are you crazy? Has everything gone crazy for good? Larry, you've been our advisor for decades!!!! And you tell me that...

- Yes, I have a duty to tell you... "The Truth and Nothing but the... Truth". Now, yes, I have that duty.

- Let me breathe, I'm starting to go crazy, this way... baby, get me some water... now!

- Breathe a little, I'll tell you the rest.

- There's more?!?!?!?

- Have you drunk the water...?

- Okay. Shoot.

- This started with a stupid Masse game in Lisbon.

- Masse? Who's that? Are you talking to me in Morse code, or what, man?

VERBA VOLANT SCRIPTA MANENT

- Oh, that's right, you didn't know that... well, he was part of a secret committee, created still in the wake of the Cimka project, but with very specific powers to... silence certain scientific minds. He's dying now, T.P. ...best to leave him alone, terminal cancer...

- Agh. Well, carry on.

- The universe is indeed tiny, as these young people say, T.P.

- Excuse me?!???? You've got to be kidding me... so NASA, what do you serve...

- NASA is very important indeed.

- Ah, well...

- But not for what people think...

- Huh? What do you mean?!

- Gosh, G, even now, I still can't tell you everything... it serves to... look, to give people

hope! That there is a way out in this endless universe... it's very useful, I tell you...

- Look Larry, is it just me, or are you not making any sense today? Come on, come on, I got other people here...

- But this is important, don't you think?!?
G... all our power in today's world rests on this, and in Jerusalem they know it all... the great geniuses all came from there, since the post war period our hands are tied, and... and, you know... this virus... it's not going away any time soon, it multiplies index.html files every 15 seconds, through several servers, and we've already noticed that it's not enough to change the access passwords quickly...

- What? You're not gonna tell me that that message is gonna... is gonna stay there...

- At least a week, my dear...

- One week?????????!!!!!!!

Larry heard a groan on the other end of the line, and then a crash. It sounded just like the noise of a person falling off a wooden chair.

- Hello? Hello? ...

- Larry, this is the wife.

- What happened?

- My dear Larry... *Time out, time out...*

An end - LXIX

One person came to the room where the official announcement would take place. She was a little nervous, that person. This person, it is said all over the world, is the most important person in our world. His staff had worked hard all day to make him presentable to the public. That day it was exactly 72 hours since he had been unable to sleep, despite the heavy dose of tranquillisers he was taking. His conscience should be clear, but it wasn't. For various reasons. A variety of reasons, in fact.

It was a November day, an ordinary day like all the other days. In Portugal, Dona Alzira was crocheting, Rui was sleeping peacefully in the São Domingos de Rana cemetery, Zé Manel was preparing another fishing trip, and Lam was making love to Catarina. All the hours and minutes and seconds were in the same place, in all the clocks of the civilized world. But there was something not quite right. A website, which had refused to go offline, for too many weeks now, was annoying several people,

from that small number of important people. And when that very important person looked at his watch, a television camera would look at him, in ricochet, dismantling his false wisdom. And when that person began to speak, she knew that nothing would stay the same.

- People of the World, it seems to me that it's time for you to tell the Whole Truth...

*(And if you, reader, want to imagine
what has been said, then maybe reality
will finally start to change)*

. QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM .

- ECHOEM ARAOHRE

SHAMAN

TUMHBRES MATER -

S
T H E
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N

