

The night falls deep: I sense the moonlight with my heart. Once more, I cannot sleep. What troubles me are these pearls, these little devils: *memories*. Though taking many forms, like ill-intended water, a face, a name, a man always appears. His eyes are a thousand eyes, his face is a thousand faces, his soul is a thousand souls. Violence and love, tranquility and vengeance, obscurity and silence, weariness and hope: these are his avatars.

No memory, however much we strive to exile it, is ever fully cast into oblivion. I now recall, for instance, dark waters in a summer night, sands claggy and disagreeable to the feet. Now it is day: L and I are swimming. We head back to my house and find that we have no electricity. A familiar dilemma is faced: Open the windows and allow the nightly breeze to flow, but with it the innumerable mosquitoes; keep the windows closed, the plague at bay, and bare the heat. My father calls us in from his room: in the little terrace, he has lined up three mattresses next to one another. We are far from the city, no artificial light disturbs the voided air, a myriad of stars of every color blaze. The breeze is strong enough to keep the mosquitoes away. As we all lie there, in the terrace, without blankets or pillows, my father begins to speak: *Those are the Tres Marías, that is Orión...* And so we fall asleep.

§ My sister and I are lying in bed with mom and dad. We play a game called *syllables*: My father will speak a word, we will split it into syllables, and when the syllables form a bad word he will tickle us. The room is dark but I can hear my mother laughing and feel the silk of her pyjamas. My sister and I tremble when a word contains a bad word, as we know the faith awaiting us.

§ My father is driving my siblings and I around the city. I'm maybe nine years old. He explains that he's divorcing my mother. I cannot recollect exactly what happened in-between, but now I have his phone in my hand and I am calling my mother. When I hear her voice I start to cry, and when she asks what's the matter, I can only mumble: *Es que vos y papá....* And I hear that she cries too.

§ My siblings, my grandmother and I are in the car with my father. She already shows the symptoms of dementia. We drive her to her nursing home. My father walks her in as we wait in the car. When he gets back he puts his arms on the wheel and sinks his face in them. It is the first time that I hear him cry. He says: *Perdón, chicos, es que su mamá... y mi mamá...* My sister and I, who are in the back seats, rush to comfort him; we pad and caress his back and say that everything will be fine. My brother, in the front seat, rolls his eyes and bites his lips, displaying anger or frustration.

§ It is Sunday morning, which means my father will pick us up. As usual, my brother and sister are either asleep or pretending to be asleep so as not to go. Now I am with my father in *Puente Pexoa*, our usual fishing spot. He is in a good mood. I almost catch a large *Yarú Itacuá* (*Plecostomus commersonii*) but the beast is able to free itself. We see, in a small islet, a group of men celebrating: They caught a *yacaré* and will have it for dinner. The alligator seems to have accepted his faith.

§ A few weeks ago I hurt one of my toes playing with T. I have complained repeatedly to my mother but she keeps telling me it will pass. It's late at night, after midnight, and a lot of people are in my home—I don't know who they are—. I'm sitting in what used to be my father's studio and I feel complete desolation. I call my father and ask him to come pick me up. After perhaps twenty minutes he arrives at the corner. I pick up my guitar—I had begun my studies already—and limp to his car. He asks why is it that I'm limping and I tell him of the accident. He shows frustration: Why didn't my mother take me to the doctor? I explain to him my feelings—these were complex and real, though I was only twelve years old—I speak of desolation, of anguish, and despair. He understands what I'm suggesting and makes the first move, asking if I've considered moving in with him. I told him that was what I wanted. And so the most divisive and important decision in my life was made—one whose repercussions I never even began to fathom.

§ It is the day after to the preceding memory. I ask my father to notify my mother of my decision to live with him, under the condition that he does so in front of me. When he tells my mother that I'm going to live with him from then on, she simply asks how will the arrangements be for picking me up from school. (The coldness of my mother's reply haunted me for years and, at the moment, I took them as a confirmation of the indifference with which she seemed to live the crisis. Many years later, I learned that after that call she spent days without leaving her bed and without ceasing to cry.)

§ I have started to show an inclination for poetry. I'm writing and reading everyday. My father knocks on my door and comes with an immense tower of books. Garcilaso, Lezama Lima, Borges, Shelley... He's gifting me all his poetry books.

§ I have a falling-out with my mother: I am angry and confused. (These are the constant epithets of all my adolescence.) I speak to my father obscure and foolish words. He's quiet, sitting, statuary and grim: and I see that he is rejoicing.

§ The day after a significant fight, in which all family members were involved, I wake up. I go to my father's room and the first thing he does is scream to me that

my mother is a whore.