

Lingering Eyes

Federico Sánchez Ruiz*

A strangled cry of agony was heard as the merciless sword of the conqueror pierced the chest of the beast. Blood spurted out of his wound as if it had never been meant to stay. He fell to his knees. Before collapsing never to see the sun rise again, the short, dark-skinned, dark-haired fiendish creature made an effort to raise his head and find the eyes of his executioner. The General held the gaze of the defeated in sepulchral silence, as someone who is used to recognizing the bravery of those who die in battle. After what seemed to be an eternal second, the creature muttered some unintelligible words and collapsed to the ground. Maybe those last words were a curse, maybe a plea, he would never know. Now everything was over.

The soldiers cheered in a wave of happiness, as the war had come to an end, and victory was theirs. The General felt a glorious relief. He knew that the triumph in this long and exhausting war would mean much more than the end of the beasts' threat. His political career would be catapulted to the top. Before the eyes of the terrified people, his face represented the edge that had subdued the menace against civilization. His achievement not only meant the end of raids on border settlements and cattle theft but also the acquisition of thousands of square kilometers of land for the State. The General was eager to go home.

The Capital City embraced its soldiers as a mother does with her child, after a long day at school. The streets were overflowing with a euphoric atmosphere. They were not just men who had fought bravely to protect their country anymore, they were heroes. At this very moment, the General knew that he would live forever, that he would be eternal. His moment of self-glorification was interrupted by a passing thought. He saw once again those beaten eyes.

What was that creature trying to say?, he wondered. No matter how much he tried to decipher those words, it was useless. He had better go home and get some rest.

That night the city chose to stay awake to keep on celebrating. Despite this, the General opted for remaining home only accompanied by a glass of top quality Scotch whisky. He helped himself to a glass and sipped it. There was nothing to worry about anymore. His thoughts began to swirl around the good old days. He refilled his glass and downed it in one burning shot. He gave himself some more. Swirling the whisky in the glass he could see his face, drunk and funny but, suddenly, it was not his own face anymore. Those eyes again were haunting him, even after death, something insanely human for a beast. He had to get rid of them. He poured out some more whisky to help him drift into oblivion.

At this time of night, the General was already drunk and drowned in his thoughts. "Oh, yes, I had to do it... I really had to", he slurred. "Y- you gave me no choice, damn monster!" Tears rolling down his flushed red face made him look even

* Originalidad – Concurso Literario USAL en Lengua Inglesa – Categoría cuento (2022).

more miserable. “You were barbaric, you k-killed my people! Why are you doing this to me now?!”

With the world spinning around, those eyes were even more dreadful. He stood up in an attempt to free himself from them but his legs surrendered, causing him to collapse onto the table, no longer conscious.

Right after the usurper had stabbed him in the chest, the Cacique’s soul began to dissipate from his body like smoke from a campfire. As blood poured out of his deadly wound, he raised his head to look death in the eyes, and whispered faintly:

“Equals we are.”