

Noah's Bunker

A novel by

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I'm not pretty sure if sometime someone will listen to these notes. And, if so, I cannot imagine what kind of person will be the one who does it. If something motivates me to record this, it is the hope that nobody is going to find this mp3 soon (as they would immediately destroy it), but it is also the hope that the content comes to light some day, in several generations. When all people, that directly or indirectly helped to defeat the world in the misery in which it will presumably sink, have disappeared. I wish that all the witnesses of the change are already gone when someone discovers this recording. My intention is that men and women of the future know how the world, their world, was before they were born. Probably all History books, all images and any type of document that allows the reconstruction of the past, will be destroyed. There will only remain technical manuals: how to make more bombs, how not to die because of ancient diseases and how to proceed to face those which, inevitably, will arise in a new form; how to synthesize medicines and fuels; how to produce computers and telephones... Anyway, only some books that prevent the disappearance of the newborn New Man, or what is the same, books that guarantee the continuity of the chosen ones and that assure that their stay in the planet is as comfortable and viable as possible.

So, I will try to tell everything from the beginning. Though it does not have any importance any more, I will try to keep up appearances and will introduce myself. My name is León Poiccard (my father was French, but I'm not) and until relatively

recently I was employed at the sports section of *The Winds of Change*, to be honest a diary of second or third league. Certainly, I never thought that it would end there. In fact, I had never been interested in sports. But this is life. I wanted to be a writer. I guess I don't have enough talent, so I had to be happy with writing chronicles of the most outstanding sports events. Maybe «writing» is not the most suitable term, since, as everybody knows, newspapers as *The Winds of Change* get most of its news from agencies that sell information packages to daily papers. So my task mainly consisted in putting the finishing touches to the text that we received. I tried to be creative in this area, but I am afraid that I did not achieve it either. «The runner X seemed like was going to break the sound barrier» or «De-construction/reconstruction of the wind shattered the ball shot by Y to pieces» were expressions that didn't convince my chief. Now that I'm thinking, and I assure you that what a moment to think about these things, I realize that they were not good enough. I was not Gay Talese exactly. And up to here the issues related to my personal life.

The story that I want to tell you, and may the uncertain listener allow me to adopt a certain literary style, it began, as almost all the important things do, with a mistake. As I already said, a news agency was sending its packages with different information. I received the block corresponding to the sports contents by email and proceeded to read it. Nothing out of the ordinary, until something that didn't look like a great thing attracted my attention. Between two news related to, one of them with I don't remember which football match and the other one rehashed on the Olympic games, I found a terse message «*Niels Oppenheimer is in*» was what I translated it in that moment, though later I would discover its real meaning. Probably it had could only be a mere anecdote if it wasn't for my curious nature. The surname Oppenheimer sounded familiar to me, but I wasn't able to place it correctly, so I googled the name.

Of course, how to forget it, it was one of the parents of the atomic bomb. Not Niels Oppenheimer, but Julius Robert Oppenheimer. I supposed that this Niels would be his son, some familiar or another Oppenheimer worthy of appearing in the internal correspondence of *The Winds of Change*, but I was wrong. Also for curiosity I introduced «Niels Oppenheimer» on Google. Very little information: the mention of an article about nuclear physics and a couple of symposiums in Armenia. It was clear that this Oppenheimer was not enjoying the same number of references on the Net that Julius Robert.

It was too hot in the office, I am sure of that. I didn't have much to do there (the truth is that I never did) and, in addition, that day, I can perfectly remember that I had a strong headache. Probably because of it, I left the notes for later on and allowed myself the luxury of verifying the sender of the e-mail. The editor chief had forwarded it to me. He would have received it from someone from the news agency. A few initials, at sign and the name of the news agency dot com. It was an anonymous personage for me. A colleague walked by my table and asked me if I was going to have a coffee with her. I looked at the clock. Midday. «Of course!», I said to her. Normally I never reject an invitation of this kind, since it involves a combination that I cannot refuse: coffee and woman, in this order. And in addition, as this case was, if the woman is absolutely beautiful, then there was no excuse.

Maribel was recently separated from her husband and, unlike other persons in her situation, she didn't lose neither her judgment nor her dignity and didn't choose for palliatives and consolations that I don't consider necessary to mention here since anyone can imagine them. She didn't have children, which considering her ex-

husband, was a great luck. To be related all her life to an individual like that, should be a torture.

I met this man one night. Several colleagues from work with our respective couples or, as in my case, companions, went out to have dinner. Maribel was with that Lucho, that was how he named himself. It looked like an enough stupid name to me, surely because he reminded me to another person definitely antipathetic that during the course of a conversation mentioned this name, speaking about other Lucho. It is known, the old free overtone makes innocents look guilty and guilty look innocents. The then husband of my colleague was dressing with some class, very informal but with style. If my memory doesn't fail –something that wouldn't surprise me in these moments– he was wearing a cotton white shirt very well ironed and with one more button undone than the habitual, which was allowing him to show a tanned and exercised torso, worm-out jeans and navy blue jacket lightly wasted. Though my sexual orientation is enough defined and not less tested, I admit that I like to look at other specimens of the same gender when I think that it is possible to learn something from them. I am also honest in this sense, I know how to tolerate the presence of a big height rival –it's not that this one was the case– and even enjoy a pulse between seducers.

Lucho was an average architect but he has very good contacts due to his undeniable personal attraction. As I could verify soon, he was also a womanizer. I was accompanied by an old friend, an art gallery owner of unique beauty and intelligence (maybe is that the reason why we never went further than a few sexual flings increasingly sporadic?). The architect, in whose defense I must say that he had very good taste to admit that he was fascinated by Hundertwasser's prototypes, it didn't take him long to notice these attributes of my companion and, while we were

emptying our bladders in unison, he asked me if we were married for too long. For an old dog like me, the estimation element of the question didn't go unnoticed. «How can you be so rough, Luchito?», I wondered.

—Next month we'll be married for twenty-five years, silver wedding anniversary
—I answered and smiled.

Lucho also smiled. He perfectly knew that I disarmed him because it was obvious, that being the case, our nuptials would had to take place in our more tender childhood. *Touché*. I always like to play at the first touch, a crochet between the septum and the eye, as my brother used to say.

—She is a beautiful and intelligent woman. Congratulations.

At least he was considerate enough to know how to lose and not to insist on the topic. «Poor Maribel —I thought on that moment— so beautiful and loyal» (friends know these things).

—Well, you already know that more than three shakes is... —I said before leaving the lavatory.

I admit that it was a vulgarity but, since he was interested so much for my newly proclaimed wife, I thought that we had the necessary confidence. It's common, between men, this kind of stuff unite. Poor Maribel.

I hate those coffee machines, or I should better say those coffee substitutes. Maribel said that she was meeting some friends that night and that I was invited if I wanted to join.

—I have a date, sorry. —The truth was that I didn't have any date, but this is something that a woman doesn't always need to know.

–You are incorrigible –she answered.

–I think I need a woman like you –I joked.

–Don't you think it would be bad for you.

–Ahhh, if I haven't tried to seduce you at this moment you are going through it's just because of my manners of a gentleman, but also because of the deep friendship that join us. I don't want to ruin it, I couldn't –I said this while I was lovingly holding her waist. She mockingly moved me away and replied:

–Who said I am vulnerable, Mr. Bond?

–You'll never change, Moneypenny –I answered and came back to my desk.

Again my headache. I looked at the screen and my mind travelled to another place once again. I tried to imagine who would had sent that e-mail. Maybe some beautiful woman, as my friend and colleague Moneypenny, I mean, Maribel Salgado? I don't know why I did such stupidity. I used the original sender address and sent a message: «Who is Niels Oppenheimer and what is he doing on the sports section?». Later I kept looking foolishly at the screen. From there the situation rushed in a dizzy way. Something that I would start to realize the following day.

While I was going to my house I thought about that message for some reason, surely because I didn't have too much to think about. This company didn't sound to me. At least it was not the regular one that was distributing the information to us. If I would have received it separated from the body of the e-mail, I would have considered it as a stupid spam and would have erased it without reading it. Rapidly my thought flew towards Maribel. I know that a man must never shows that he is

always at a woman's disposal, specially to accept an invitation in her ground. It would give the impression that he didn't have to much to do, that his friends must be reduced and that, in certain way, he was eager to obey. So declining the invitation was strategically unquestionable. But, on the other hand, the fact is that I wanted to see her. She thought that I was some kind of irresistible seducer, something not completely true. Of course that I had my moments and occasionally I could be seen with some spectacular woman, though the reality of my days was that I used to spend them alone. She would have been surprised to know how her «seducer» was when he got home and took out the mask. The daily is always vulgar: go to the supermarket, cook for one, do the laundry, sweep the house and —in some cases— put on the pajamas and watch TV when the night falls. I have never had a pajamas, I want to make this clear enough.

That night she would be surrounded by friends, with laughs, with a bit of good wine and, who knows, maybe a lot of bad sex. On the other hand, I would get a book (what was I reading back then?), I would have a glass of wine and I would smoke a few cigarettes. This plan may look ideal, but you get fed up in the end. Nevertheless, the thing I was feeling more sorry of was that everything that might come for accepting the invitation was absolutely true: I didn't have much to do and my friends' circle was limited enough. I didn't have the desire of obeying. It is something that has never happened to me. This is the way my hair looks. So, in order not to lose the habit, I got that book which name I cannot remember, I drank half a bottle of wine and smoked more than half a package of cigarettes.

The following morning I asked Maribel about the party.

—We had a good time —she said to me—. You might have met my friend Ana. I'm sure that you would have liked her.

—Probably you can introduce us in another occasion. And you, what's up? Any nice bloke for you? —I shouldn't have asked that. Beginner's mistake. Dammit, I was really starting liking this woman. She laughed.

—Are you jealous, *mon ami*?

—No. But I don't like anyone else to be around my harem. —I also smiled.

—Your harem? You get worse every day.

—I might need a woman. A woman like you. —*Merde!* I said it again.

She shake her head smiling and went to her table. I open my mail. Another junk news package, but no reply from this unknown company —concretely *bunk.com*—. I supposed that they didn't care about my e-mail. I got up the chair and went directly to my chief's office, the good... chief.

—Does *bunk.com* ring a bell to you? Are they providing us with news?

—Bunk.com? What's that? It doesn't sound familiar at all to me.

—Well, in the package you sent to me yesterday there was a slipped message from A.E@bunk.com.

—Dude, I don't know what to say. Wasn't it spam?

—No, no. The firewall would have detected it. —It was clear that my chief knew so little about computers like me.

—We could comment it to the IT department. But, well, was it something important? What did it say?

—It must be something stupid. It said: «*Niels Oppenheimer is in*». —My chief arched his eyebrows disconcerted.

—Viagra's advertisement, for sure. Don't bother the boys.

I returned to my work with a coffee substitute in my hand. Viagra's advertisement?

The morning went by without incidents until half after twelve, as I barely remember. My chief requested me at his office, where he was escorted by two really huge guys, two authentic gorillas.

—These gentlemen want to ask you a few questions.

—Me? —He nodded—. Well, what is it? —I asked them.

—It seems that you have had problems with your e-mail —one of them said.

—No. I haven't had any problem.

—Didn't you receive an e-mail from A.E@bunk.com?

—That's right, why? Is that a problem?

—By no means —I observed that one of them, the biggest one, did not speak—. But we are afraid that we have to take your computer with us.

—What? —I exclaimed disconcerted—. What's happening? —I asked my chief—. Are you policemen? —I asked them.

—No, sir. We are not policemen.

—Then, what the hell is happening here?

—Don't worry; we will give it back to you in a few days. Meanwhile you can have a courtesy computer.

—A courtesy computer? What are you talking about?! Can someone explain me what is happening here? Seriously, I don't understand a thing.

Without even saying the least hint, both men went out of the room. I stayed alone with my chief, who looked at me slightly worried.

—Which kind of trouble are you in? —he asked me.

— Which kind of trouble I will get into! Who are these guys?

—They are from the Interpol.

—What the hell are you saying to me?

—Look, León, they haven't said much more to me. Simply that they had to confiscate your computer a few days because there were signs of an «irregular» operation carried thought it. That was the term they used, «irregular». They showed me a badge and that was all.

—This is crazy. —My chief didn't say a thing.

I run to my table. The giant who didn't speak was dismantling my computer. I was feeling rather reduced. Some colleagues were looking surprised. Maybe my shouts were audible out of the office.

—Would you be so kind and say to me what happens exactly? —I asked. As I imagined there was no reply. The man who told me they had to take the computer with them went away. I remained there seeing how this gorilla stuffed in a navy blue suit was deactivating my work tool. After a while the other agent came with a tower and left it on the floor. I guessed that thing was my «courtesy computer».

—If you receive another e-mail from bunk.com this week, do not hesitate to contact us —he said offering his card.

I had the impression, in any case, that it wasn't going to happen. Such man or woman called A.E. whoever it was, was in big trouble and I was sure that I wouldn't receive another e-mail regarding neither Niels Oppenheimer nor anything else. «Shit» I thought and I also thought that the best thing would be to go downstairs to have a cigarette. I don't think my chief would had care.

Maribel was looking at me from her table. I didn't make the minor gesture and went away leaving this two with their things, I mean, with mine. I was sure that all that had something to do with A.E's damned e-mail, since, as far as I knew, no remotely irregular action —except distributing informative garbage— had been realized from my computer. I could have searched in any of my colleagues' computer what the company bunk.com did, but, if just for receiving an e-mail from them, these gentlemen had come to «make a few questions to me», it didn't seem as a brilliant idea. I would do it some days later several miles away, in some Internet *café* without security cameras.

I smoked two cigarettes before Maribel was coming down, which happened a few minutes later.

–What happens, León? Who are these guys?

–They are from the Interpol.

–What are you saying? –she did a pause to absorb my comment–, and why are taking your equipment?

–I suppose that they must put it in quarantine. These modern viruses...

Maribel perceived the seriousness in my face. I was unable to hide the pain and the worry. She put her hand in my shoulder trying to encourage me.

–Hey, are you OK?

–I guess so –I said without enough conviction.

In that moment I had a really bad feeling. I was suspect of a pseudo-crime that I hadn't committed. It was even probable that Maribel was getting in trouble if she were seeing with me. I was fitting the possibility that the whole matter was nothing more than a misunderstanding. But my masculine intuition said the opposite to myself. Something big was happening. Other way, it was unthinkable that two guys from the Interpol went to a lousy newspaper looking for a PC.

–Let's have a coffee after work –Maribel proposed.

I doubted for an instant, worrying for her safety, but I finally agreed. It didn't make any sense denying that I needed to, at least, unburden myself a bit and to explain some things to her. She didn't deserve me leaving her without an answer and that I, from one day to the next, changed my attitude and became cold and distant without explaining my reasons to her. Maribel went back to the office and I stayed

there. I looked at the pack of cigarettes. I still had two left. While these gentlemen in a suit install my new computer I will approach the corner store and will buy two packs. «The night is promising», I told myself. In the end, it wouldn't make any difference for me. If this keeps like that, sooner or later, they would end firing me or advising me to take permanent vacations. «Until this matter is solved», my chief would say. I could see it.

At half after seven I approached Maribel's table.

—Well, finally is the time of our date —I said to her.

—Excuse me, but this is not a date —she said smiling to me.

—Yes, it is.

—No, is not.

—Perfect. If that makes you feel more comfortable...

She gathered her purse and we walked to my car. I promised that I would bring her back later to pick her car. The idea was to have a coffee, but since I always wanted to have dinner with her, I suggested to have a quick drink in the Café d'Orsay (no, we were not in Paris) and later go to have dinner to a small bistro that I knew she would like. Every man has his secret weapons and that was one of mine. I had taken several women there with reasonably high success. In addition, it was near my house and the owners knew me. The manner was personal, which helped to take away from me that air of «stuck-up» personage. But, mainly, I repeat, I was near my house. Maribel was dressing a delicate white linen blouse that fitted her sensationally.

—We make a very nice couple —I confessed while I was driving.

—No, we don't. And if you keep like that, I'll get out this car —she funnily replied.

—Are you angry with me in our first date?

—There you go again! I only want to speak with an old friend, with a colleague from work.

—How thoughtful of you.

Maribel lighted one of my cigarettes and offered another one to me. She did not even bother to ask me if smoking inside the car displeased me. Even if I was a compulsive smoker, I did not use to do it. Anyway, I did not say anything to her.

—Well, Mr. Trouble, are you finally going to tell me what happened in the office today? —she asked me. She smoked on a way that fascinated me. Her look got lost, as if it was getting mixed up with who knows what kind of thoughts, as if she was not really there.

—I thought you would last till we had a couple of drinks —I said.

—You were wrong.

—Do you know I like blondes? —I added. She was brunette.

—So do I —she answered. I smiled.

—Hey, why did you divorce Lucho?

—He was definitely stupid.

—And besides that?

She had another drag of her cigarette and did not answer. Suddenly, all my worries had disappeared. Maribel rolled down the window and the hot air began to make her hair move freely. I craftily switched the air conditioning off. She kept in silence. Till that moment I didn't noticed how sexy she was. I always saw her attractive, but a bit prudish. Then I perfectly understood that Lucho, in effect, had to be completely stupid to let a woman like that escape.

«Much better for me», I thought.

The Café d'Orsay had a magnificent selection of coffees. The decoration, despite its name, was typically Mediterranean. The walls covered by a rough whitewash, made with mortar of poor lime, painted in white, at Ibiza's style; the old wood tables painted in basic blue; the dark wood floor, areas with mud slabs and some rustic carpets. I never understood why they picked a French name for that place. They should have called it «Santa Eulalia», «Mikonos» or something like that. Probably it had something to do with the coffee, I have no idea. The first time someone visited the place, was normally surprised. Maribel, at least, did. She ordered a black coffee, I had Campari with a slice of orange. I offered her a cigarette that she happily accepted. I told her that she could not sleep if she drank coffee that late. «Maybe I don't want to sleep», she answered and for me was acceptable enough. She asked me again about the Interpol men, but I begged her to wait a bit longer. I wanted to calmly enjoy my Campari and I asked her about her friend Ana. She shook her head.

—I didn't know you were so dumb —she answered back.

—Probably, there are many things about me that you still don't know.

—Mysterious man...

It made me happy to hear this comment, however, it was by no means close to the reality. That Maribel really had a great sense of the humor.

—I'm afraid you'll have to have dinner with me tonight if you want me to tell you about these guys —I said.

—If you have the same taste for restaurants as for the cafés, I think I won't say no.
—she smiled.

Things were doing well. If she thought that I had taste, I had enough gained ground. I could not rush, but, that was something good without a doubt. We spoke about many things: my French origin, how I finished in a second league newspaper (I lied). She asked me why I was not married (another good indication. I lied again) and that kind of things. From my side I asked her how she was living her new single state, about her dreams and aspirations (I was a total vulture). I contained my desire for asking her about her lovers, if she had them, and invited her to a crazy trip to Egypt. I told her that I had some friends who had a house in Cairo with crocodiles in their back yard and who would happily lend us the house just if we fed them during that week (the crocodiles). I promised her we would not have to clean the giant tub they were living in. I felt she was having fun. I esteemed that girl. It may seem that men are indifferent to the elegance and the intelligence of a woman. But it is not my case. I detest vulgar women. I admired the way in which Maribel was trying to rebuilt her life, in a mature way and without bad excuses. I remember that, at a given moment, my hand slightly brushed hers, in an innocent way, but I immediately moved it away. She noticed it, but she said nothing. I felt how the time paralyzed for an instant. It was a spontaneous act. Damn Campari. Before nine o'clock I suggested that we should had something to eat.

—Have you booked a table? —she asked.

—There is always a table for me, I answered. —She gave me a mocking look, behind which was an evident but hidden attraction.

We were walking because *El Figón de Lola*¹, a place with an ironic name, was close to there. Tommasi, the owner, received me with a hug. Teresa, one of the waitresses, waved me from the other end of the room. There were lots of people, but, luckily, there was also a table for us. Tommasi seated us in a marvelous table, quite intimate. How is Lola?, I asked him. You should say hi later, she is around in her «laboratory». He had a soft Italian accent, softened by many years of distance from his native Cesena. Apart from a *pannacotta* that left everyone breathless, there was no other Italian dish in the whole menu. Lola should have got real guts. I let Maribel had a look to the menu and I directly ordered fished. I knew Tommasi would bring me the best he had in the kitchen. The ex-wife of the architect chose comfit vegetables and the house starters. I asked the owner to choose the wine himself. I trust you. It is a way to get out of trouble when someone understand absolutely nothing about wine or does not want to give the impression that he is an expert (as my case was). He served white wine, which I normally detest but it was not bad at all.

—I see you know how to do it well —Maribel commented.

—I have my moments.

I offered a cigarette to my companion and, as it is supposed to be, I lighted one for me too. I thought that was the moment to inform Maribel about the incident with

¹ In Spanish “figón” is a house where you can eat, similar but inferior than a Tavern - “Figa” is fig in

the e-mail coming from the employee of bunk.com, explaining this way the presence of both Interpol agents («We are not policemen»). She kept silent for an instant.

–That company does not sound familiar to me, I do not know who is that Oppenheimer either –she finally said.

–Neither do I.

–Have you tried checking about the subject?

–It did not seem very prudent to me, don't you believe? At least not at the office nor in a place to close in case they could relate me to the search –she agreed in silent.

–What do you believe this is about?

–Pfff, I don't have the faintest idea.

Tommasi came with the starters, briefly interrupting our conversation. Enough time in order to think about the relevancy of commenting my worries to Maribel about her safety. There was nothing between her and I, but even being like that, I was not able to keep calm. They might confiscate her computer or send us a private detective, in case they had not done it already. I simply did not want to involve her in all that.

–Well, and what are you going to do?

–For the time being, nothing. I believe it is the most reasonable thing to do.

I did not tell her that I was thinking about going to a cybercafé hundreds of miles away to look for more information neither that I had a premonition, who knows?: I was fucked up.

I tried to change the subject of our conversation, not to worry her anymore and to make her forget a bit about the matter. I proved to be calm and resorted, like in many occasions, to humor.

—This wine is not too bad, but if you'd like to prove a magnificent one indeed, I'll invite you to my house. I have a fabulous Alsatian. A cousin gave it to me.

—A cousin? Hahahaha. I believe you want to take me to bed.

—That too, but you must try the wine first —I made an effort to smile naturally.

We had already given good account of the dinner and the bottle of wine was about to say its last good-bye.

—Ain't you curious about knowing how is the life of a seducer when he is not seducing? —she looked directly to my eyes. I think my smile seemed a bit stupid, though she did not seem to attach too much importance to it. If I have to be honest, despite my look of Antonio Banderas, my neo-dandy philosophy and my *übersexual* attitude, the role of professional seducer was too big for me.

My house was close to *El Figón*, since I have already said. After tasting Lola's wonderful pannacotta and greeting her, we went there. The house was very tidied. Maribel asked me if I personally dealt with the cleaning. I said yes, which pleasingly surprised her. She carefully examined my extensive library, my small treasure. I, meanwhile, opened the Alsatian's bottle and served her a bit.

—Ain't you putting some music on?

—I doubt that you find my collection of garage punk very nice.

She took a glance at my CD collection and sat down in the sofa.

—So garage punk then...

It was certain that I liked this kind of music. Though I also liked free jazz, bebop and other things. I sat down next to her. I guess that some listeners will be waiting for a passage of wild sex or something like that. I'm sorry to upset them (I begin to understand why I never had succeeded as a writer). Maribel slept with me, but we did not have sex. In any case, that is another story.

In some place of Dresden, Germany

Klaus Zimmermann extended the asphalt fabric in the ground. He was teaching little Brandeis how to construct a solar wafer with domestic materials. His daughter Erika and his wife Dagna were in the back yard gathering vegetables.

They moved to that little wood house in the middle of the forest five years ago. We could say that they were a family of radical ecologists. Klaus left his position as biology professor in the Technical University of Berlin –where he was concretely teaching Edaphology and Hydrology– to dedicate himself completely to parallel and more personal researches that might be qualified of «*anarcoidi*»² by many. Among some of his interests there was the development of the theories of Masanobu Fukuoka and the systems that allowed saving water. In the same way he was devoted to the study of the educations contained in the *Walden* of Henry David Thoreau. It was exquisitely shaved.

Dagna kept giving lessons to children, now in a small semi rural school. They had decided to personally deal with the education of their own children. Evidently they were also concerned about socializing them. The neighbors, limited, use to visit them

² “Anarchist” in Italian (Tr. Note).

frequently. She cooked the best *eierschecke* of the whole Dresden. The children had occasion to be in contact with others. Technically, Brandeis was the highly gifted one as it is usually called and Erika showed high capacities in the artistic area. Apart from that, the boy had a passion for climbing and the rest of the lads were green with envy seeing Erika playing football. The adults deeply estimated the couple and since the family arrived, thanks to Klaus's advice, the crops of the farmers of the area experienced a spectacular improvement, bearing better fruits and vegetables: less water needed, more quality, more flavor and major size.

Klaus and Brandeis dug a few ditches in the ground. They put a few impermeable sheets at the bottom and left a few holes in both ends. The idea was that the rain filled the cavities. The asphalt fabric would act as a solar wafer. In a previous experiment, they placed the asphalt fabric at the bottom, replaced the ditches with a few metallic pipelines assembled in «S» form on the fabric. Klaus wanted his son to verify for himself what system was more efficient: to bury the pipeline, or the ditch, under a cap of asphalt fabric or to place it over it. The biologist maintained that the same system could be used, with some modifications, to assemble a natural heating system, adding an allocation mechanism for running water in case it ran out of rainwater. The system would also include a rainwater storage system. A few pipelines would carry warm water thanks to the sun to the bath and this way they could have a warm shower at a minimal energy and water consumption. You have to help me improve it, he said to Brandeis.

—Do you think it would be enough to supply a house with warm water? —
Brandeis asked.

—I think people should shower less —was the answer his father gave to him. As any child would have done, the son absolutely and happily agreed with that opinion.

Water storage systems in optimal conditions and water tables' studies were the main points of Klaus's researches in Berlin. To these, he added his personal passion for agriculture, like an ideal complement. Without a doubt, he was a savage in classroom. His aggressive, rebellious attitude, and his short academic style made the rest of the teachers look at it with certain suspicion. In addition, he published in prestigious magazines, foreign to the endogamic narrow circle of the faculty. Fact that added envy to their suspicions. Nevertheless, among the students he was quite popular. They were disappointed when Klaus announced he was moving to Dresden to take care of his garden and forget the email.

Throughout ten years, Klaus was constructing his house during his vacations. He was proud to do it with his own hands, though the truth is that he did big alterations, turning a small house he bought from a farmer who was drinking too much and wanted to move with his family to the city into a nice construction of hundred and fifty meters high, following the rules of the so called bioclimatic architecture. When it was finished, he got his family and took it there. That was five years ago. He used to go fishing with them, but he rarely used neither rod nor other fishing stuff. And, by the way, he didn't catch anything. He was enjoying a calm life. Some days he led his children to spread seeds buried in little clay balls in the surroundings. Sometimes, Dagna accompanied them.

An hour later, Dagna called them from the house.

—Let's lay the table, please. Roast will be ready in a few minutes.

Klaus and Brandeis left what they were doing and obeyed their mother's call. They were eating outside. There was no television in house, which promoted the permanent communication between family members.

That day they spoke about little Erika's two art pieces that were selected for the controversial Biennial in Paris. Dagna had sent some photographs and maybe the detail of the paintings coming from a nine-year-old girl s shook the committee. The exhibition would be opened in October. Bearing in mind the disastrous artistic panorama, it was more than probable that Erika's fresh and authentic offers were the great revelation of that edition. Someway, they meant not a return to an art allegedly primitive, something impossible and false, but to a Hegelian pre-art not subject to the growing weight of philosophy and to the need of «book of instructions» (with the consequent gratuitousness and the unnecessary nature of the own work). For sure, this operation did not suppose a conscious theorization exercise. It was just an original art created by a small girl that was blessed by the gods. Others would take care of putting labels and a whole series of cultural affiliations. After all, they were there for it and they also had to eat. Which resists to theorization automatically supposes a succulent challenge for intellectual masochists.

Part of the captivation of Erika's work was that it was made exclusively using natural and not manufactured pigments, continuing, without knowing it, Hundertwasser's trail and instructed by her father. Her style presented the vivacious color of the Austrian painter and evoked the poetry of Marc Chagall's works. Pure expression of life. Children's game that was destabilizing and delivering a hard blow to the elaborated esthetic theories, as sterile as the works that were illustrating them.

After receiving the photographs, three Parisian emissaries arrived to Dresden to contemplate Erika's work with their own eyes. They were two really slim women and a little man dressed in black and quite effeminate. If the photographs and the biographical details of the young artist captivated them, when they got there they thought they were in paradise. They could not simply believe what they saw. It was as if they already had in mind the headline: «Wild girl reinvents painting». Everything seemed cool to them. They thought that the whole family, including the «environmental» frame, was artwork itself. Only one of the women was speaking German. The rest were chattering in Frenchman or were trying to express in English with some success. Klaus would have established English as «official language» of the group if he didn't feel that some of them, the French, were not completely fluent. So, in this unintelligible language, they were invited to visit Erika's «study», by their request. The three of them reached the fever pitch. They could not believe what they saw: there was no study! The girl worked at the backyard. Wood shelving filled with cans of pigments, glues, gums, paintbrushes, and a plank with four legs –the furniture were handmade by themselves– were part of her study. The Parisians could not believe it. They took several photos of Erika. That one was saleable, very saleable. And authentic, they said to Klaus. «Authentic»... What a bunch of fools! «What are they thinking, that they are in some kind of New Atapuerca?»

He wondered with resignation.

–We have had works from very special artists -continued the French woman who was speaking German–: from very sane mad people, already out of fashion, to paralytic people that did scrawls with a paintbrush of personalized dimensions inserted in their anus and another one held to their penis, using a wheelchair specially

designed for them, going through transvestites playing the role of dressmakers and embroidering Twin Towers in full demolition. But this... God, this is totally different. They make several questions to the girl, and also to her parents. The fewer answers Erika gave, the more pleased the critics seemed to be. With extreme dissimulation, one of the women asked Klaus if his other son was also an artist.

–No, lady. He only makes things as mentally calculate square roots of numbers of more than twenty figures in a few seconds and design complex plans for engineering projects –Klaus answered.

–Only? –the French woman asked with a mixture of incredulity and astonishment.

–Well, he does more things. But that is the most appealing –he smiled—. Another beer?

The French people were there for two days. They did not accept to lodge at the Zimmermann's house but on the second day, they came early. After fixing some aspects of the exhibition and making a few interesting purchase offers, the group left very pleased, on the move as mad teenagers. The Zimmermann family looked each other and smiled. Klaus was leaning his hands on little Erika's shoulders.

The temperature was perfect. The sun warmed without boiling. Erika was playing with her golden curls. The smell of the roast was coming from the distance. Klaus served *weißbier* to his wife and filled another big glass for him. In that moment a car parked near his house. Klaus saw how two guys in suits were going down the vehicle. Both guys approached.

–Are you Klaus Zimmermann? –the tallest one asked.

–That’s right. Can I help you?

–We came to personally deliver a letter to you. Since you no longer have e-mail address... –they gave him a close envelope. It had a printed logo. The letter came from the United States.

–Would you like something to drink?

–No, thank you very much.

–Are you on duty? –Klaus laughed. Both men reluctantly smiled and did not answer.

The biologist opened the envelope and rapidly read the note. He put it back inside, left it on the wood table and remained silence for an instant.

–You should not worry about anything, the Hydrological Department of the United States will cover all travelling and accommodation expenses.

–I cannot leave my garden.

–It would be convenient for you to join us.

–Convenient? –Klaus's face suddenly overshadowed—, what do you mean with «convenient»?

–We would feel very pleased if you agreed to come with us. Probably we have not expressed ourselves correctly, forgive us. –Those gentlemen had to be part of a team. They were speaking in plural—. We would like that you accompanied us. Our boss wishes you to inspect our facilities in Nebraska. You are the best.

–I already know what they want –Klaus did a pause—. I’ve read the letter.
–OK. If you change your mind, do not hesitate to call us. It will be a pleasure to come to pick you up –the tallest guy gave him a business card. Klaus put it with the envelope without looking at it.

Both men said goodbye and moved away. Once the car had disappeared, Dagna approached her husband, who remained pensive, and asked him:

–They were from the Hydrological Department of the United States.

–They again? –his wife seemed to be worried.

–They again.

The children sat down at the table. Dagna put her arm over her husband’s shoulder of and kissed in the head. Klaus took the business card and kept it in front of his eyes during for a long time. Of course, that name was familiar to him: Bunk.