

## You and me in the future

You and me, we are in the future. There are no more cars in the city. Only people. They walk with their eyes closed, without bumping into each other. Somehow, they've figured it out. You explain how, whispering in my ear: it is something they have set in the back of their neck. And I understand completely only because you say it to me like that, sighing so close. It's a sunny day, you say, but in a minute it is going to get cloudy. Also because of a new system, you tell me: they installed it two years ago. But I don't want to know, really. The only thing I want is to hear your whispered explanation, and to imagine how the words get stuck in your skin, in your neck, in your jaw. Should we find a bar?, you ask me, as if we were tourists in this city. But, isn't this city ours?, I say to you. Yes, it is, but it has been a long time since you last came. I think you are right; the city doesn't know me anymore, nor me it. Has it?, I ask but, again, I don't want to know. I don't care about knowing. I only want to sit down with you in a bar and listen to your voice explaining closely everything that's happened during these last two years.

Here?, you ask. And I see that the bar's walls are all painted white and that the wine glasses on the tables are four-sided. The place is indifferent to me, so I don't know why I say: Yes, it's the perfect bar. Then we sit down and look outside. It's starting to get cloudy, see? I look up in the sky and notice a white flat surface moving toward us, just like a curtain. Is this what the clouds look like now?, I ask. You say yes, but you seem far away. I can't hear you, I say, and I get much closer and everything makes more sense now. Yes, you say again, they haven't figured out the texture yet, they are kind of flat, the clouds, aren't they? Kind of?, I say, and you laugh and I can't believe there is something in me with that kind of effect on this planet.

We order some wine. The bottle they bring us is different from what I remember. Didn't we used to serve from the top?, I ask. And you explain: we did, but now they've changed the design. I can't imagine why they would do that, I don't get the difference. I don't know, you say, it's a trend bartenders made up. Oh, I mumble, and close my eyes for a minute. Inside, in the darkness of my eyelids, I read some numbers, projected there in blue lights. It's like a digital watch going backwards: a countdown, but I don't know for what. I open my eyes again and look at you. You see something in my face because you immediately ask me if I'm ok. I say I'm fine but it's not true. I don't know how I'm feeling. How long do we have left?, you ask. Two hours and twenty minutes, I answer, but I don't understand what I'm saying.

I put my hand on the table. I stare at it. And now yours gets closer and you touch my fingers with your fingers. This caress seems to me the only possible form of touching. I feel your skin and notice your perfect way of being older. But, where am I?, I ask. And you come even closer to my face. You smell my neck and only then I realize that I have a scent that is or was apparently mine. Shhh, you say, take it easy. You kiss me on the cheek and move away: and that is exactly the widest sadness that you could have caused me.

Grabbing the square crystal glass and drinking my wine, I hear a sweet, sweet song coming from the back of my head. I start singing in a very quiet voice. I hadn't realized that I knew the song by heart. The pronunciation bounces in my mouth. Then, I look outside once more. People pass by in a hurry, all of them looking inside their own eyes. It seems to me that you are connected with all of them: there is a sort of community, but I don't belong anymore. With the taste of the song still on my tongue, I look at you. You are so far way, not

whispering in my ear. With your glass in your hand, you look outside and it's clear to me: you know something that I no longer know, all kinds of important things that you should tell me but you don't, and I feel thoroughly alone.

My song ends, my wine is almost gone. You stare at me as I finish my drink, your eyes stick to my fingers and my glass. What's the matter?, I ask. Nothing, you say, it's only that it has always amazed me how you grab your glass. What's wrong with it?, I don't get it, I say. And then you move your chair closer and closer and I think my fingers are about to open up and my glass just about to fall down. It's like this, you say in my ear: your delicate fingers, always perfectly organized around the glass. I see how your lips are moving while you talk: instead of listening, I look at what you are saying. At this point I get lost because I know your tongue is inside your mouth, and I imagine that it should be beside mine, or both of them side by side between your lips. How long has it been since we last kissed?, I ask. You say nothing and I really want to cry but I feel no liquids inside me.

Now you finish your glass and get up. Should we get going?, you say And I don't understand how much time went by until I close my eyes and read the blue countdown inside my eyelids: more than an hour has passed and there are only sixty minutes left to get to zero. We leave the bar and I look up. Now the cloud surface has taken over the whole sky in a darker colour: a grey fabric without any tint. Your hand is in my hand. You smile at me, and I want your smile inside my smile. I see you: you are here, in the middle of the street, among all these people, in our city. But I feel that you are not, not really. Or maybe it's me who's not. Maybe I've been removed. Are we still together?, I ask, and you smile again. Shhh, easy now, you say to me and grab me around the waist. You take your phone out of your pocket and touch something on the screen. After that I look up again and then at you once more: your mouth, your smile, your jaws on each side. I want to keep on looking at you forever, and I don't ask anything more because something inside me went loose.

Do you want to do something else?, you ask. I try to come out with an answer; an answer right out of my skin or out of my urge to be near you. But I can't articulate anything in that sense, and I say: whatever you want. Let's go for a walk, then, you say, and hold my hand. We are going down the street side by side, and you ask: Do you remember the first time we met? I do, but tell it to me again, in my ear: I say that as if someone else was talking for me. Then you hold me, and your lips get really close. It was a summer afternoon, you were so beautiful, there was something about you, something was pointing you out for me; we stared at each other and a sweet, sweet song started playing, and I knew we were going to be together. You stop talking and I look at your face. You are sad now. How come?, you say, how can it be that something so beautiful ends up so wrong, Jasmine?, you say, and I then know my name again. I don't know, Frederick, I say to you, and then I remember yours. You shake your head. Let's not talk about that, you say, and keep on telling me about our first kiss, about that first afternoon together, about a time we went to a park and laid in the grass. I smile and imagine the scenes: it's like being in an unknown place with a steam ghost.

We stand still in a corner, looking at each other. You hold my face within your hands. I feel so loose that I can't think or remember anything else. You come closer but there is something still infinitely remote in your mouth. As if you were never going to get to mine. I close my eyes and feel your lips in their temperature, your tongue in its water, your teeth in their friction. I want this to last forever, I want to stay in this corner with you until there is no more surface to cover the sky with. And while we kiss I see that the countdown inside my eyes is going faster and faster. I take a step back and open my eyes. No, I say, no, and I don't

know why: no, it's going to end. It's all right, easy, you say, and hold me. I close my eyes again. There are only twenty minutes left to hit zero.

We keep on walking and arrive at a white, glaze building. You stay foot in the entrance. Framed in the door, I see a shiny sign that reads *Sempre*. The letters are engraved in a mirror, and I get to see my eyes: I didn't remember they were light brown. This way, I hear you say while you put your open hand in my back. We ride the elevator. There are screens with shooting from all the offices and apartments. You touch one where I can see a women dressed in a white uniform. And we start to go up. Where are we going?, I ask. We are nearly there, you say, and I feel that my knees are weakening by the second and I don't get how what you answered could be a response to my question.

The elevator opens up. Behind a desk, I see the woman dressed in the white uniform. She smiles and says hello to you without even looking at me. In the wall behind her, there is another mirror that reads *Sempre*. I turn around looking for your face. There is something very important you are not telling me, isn't it?, I say. You don't answer and, instead, stroke my hair. How was it today?, the woman asks you. All fine, thank you, you say. And I feel again the thorough ways of my solitude. Shall we?, says the woman, and we start moving. I walk as if I had no legs: that's how loose I am. We enter a gleaming room. There are three little white boxes on a table, side by side. The first one has my name written on: *Jasmine*. And it is open. The other two are labeled *Anna*, *Caroline*, and are closed. I turn around and see your jaws. Your eyes are the only ones that should be allowed to exist, I manage to think. You hold my hand. Your fingers in my fingers. You come closer and kiss me in the cheek. Good bye, *Jasmine*, you say. I turn and see that the woman is getting something ready in a computer. I look at you again and something gets dismantle inside me. Don't leave me like this, I say. Stay for a little while, *Frederick*, please. And with the words I get completely diluted. You turn around and leave and I remember that one time, I don't know how long ago, I felt you as far from me as you are now, packing your bags in a house that we used to share. I close my eyes. The countdown is almost in zero and I understand that I am about to know something very important. But I hear a click, a black surface appears and, in the end, everything fades.

Published in *Hoy Día*, Córdoba, 2018.  
<http://www.hoydia.com.ar/cuentos-de-verano/vos-y-yo-en-el-futuro>

Also published in *Revista Próxima*, N° 37, Buenos Aires, 2018.  
<https://revistaproxima.blogspot.com.ar/2018/03/salio-proxima-37-verano-humores-fuego.html>

## **Moonlancholia**

There is no red.

There is a big round moon, white and grey, round as ever. Earlier today you read that the moon was going to be all red, but you don't see that color from your balcony. You only see your plants, all mixed together.

There is no red. There isn't any red.

There are no clouds in the sky, but you start to think that there is something going on. That something is wrong. You stayed up late to see the red moon, but now you are sleepy, and the moon is not changing color. You don't like this time of the night. It makes you think of a man from the past.

You look to the sky once more, but there is no red. There are no reds.

The moon's geometry is perfectly visible. A light, alone, pure, that shines. The dark plane around making a frame. You think that maybe it is better to go back inside now. You think about your bed, about the sheets and the blanket.

Not even something red. There is almost nothing that resembles red.

The moon is still round, and it couldn't take any other form. It's so round that it affects the clean stroke of every straight line in the universe. And it seems that somebody had invented that white that isn't entirely white: that is grey, that is nacre. Up there, the moon doesn't seem convincing to you. The plants move, and their leaves graze your ankles. You think again that it would be better to go back in. Your bed: you think of your bed. And of the man from the past.

There is almost nothing that resembles red. No red at all.

It's so round that it doesn't get to be real. You can't calculate its perimeter because that moon doesn't even exist, you think. But you are looking at it, all white, not like they said in the news. It stretches into another dimension, not the first nor the second nor the third or the fourth. It's another one. You touch the windowpane in the door. You are going back to sleep.

This night is useless for you because there is no red. There is no type of red.

It's three in the morning. The dimension in which you are now is bent backwards and things, here, don't happen. No movement can be completed in this place, you think, but all of the sudden someone rings your doorbell. The sound reaches you very slowly, as if it had to cross a wooden sea, and it takes some time for you to realize: someone is ringing your doorbell. Now you really have to go in. You shut the balcony door behind you and see the moon through the windowpane: as white as a minute ago. A second goes by. Now you don't see the moon anymore. Now you are inside your apartment and someone has just rung your doorbell. You leave the lights out.

There is no type of red. There are no red forms.

You walk down a hall that is too long to fit in your apartment's small space. Anyway, you think: that hall is there. You keep on walking and go to your kitchen. In the news, they had announced a red moon that's not happening, and you feel your steps belong to outer space.

There are no red forms there. There are no red tones or any light in the kitchen.

There is a figure lit up by its own iridescence. It's the man from the past. How long has it been?, you wonder, and now he glows like an hologram and rests on your refrigerator. He is eating something he must have taken from there. Food you don't remember buying. He eats with a mouth he doesn't actually have. He opens it, and you see drawings coming out through his teeth. There was nobody at the door, he says, it must had been someone who passed by and rang. You look at him, but you don't know with which eyes because the real ones shouldn't work for this.

There are no red tones, you say to yourself. Not one red.

He chews slowly, glows and says things that you don't understand. You hear word by word, separately: water, yesterday, I, when, you. But they don't make any sense all together. He repeats the words. And now you only hear the sound of each letter. Only that, lone articulations but without any sense. You want to stroke his chin, but your arm is not long enough. And you can't move.

There is not one red and he phosphoresces.

The man from the past looks at you with eyes filled with air. Once again, he repeats the same words, but once again you separate them in miniatures of sounds, y, o, u, i. You walk away through the hall, going backwards. You hear language formations, now faraway. W, a, t, e, r. One foot behind the other and again, all through the hall. You think of your bed, your room. But you don't know if you will be able to sleep in this place you ended up in.

Nothing is red. There is no red moon.

There is no geometry that admits the color red. Nor blue, nor green, nor yellow. Geometry is only in black and white. No grey, no brown, no purple. Black and white and that is it. Isn't it?, you think, and the hall is ending. You want to see again if what they announced in the news will start to happen.

There is no red moon, but you want to see it.  
There is no white moon.

You open the door and step out to the balcony. Its dark outside, and the buildings around seem empty. You look up. There is a moon that now starts to erase its own white tone. You don't know if it's the same as before or if someone replaced it while you were gone. You look down. When it's dark, the plants are not green or any other color.

There is no white moon now. No white things in the world.

You think about the hall and the kitchen and about the man from the past projected there, in the glare. You think of what he said. There was nobody at the door, it must have been someone who passed by and rang. After that you stopped understanding. A small arch begins to move forward on the moon, a darker one. It seems red to you. On the floor, all the plants seem to be one and the same. Leaf by leaf, all in a color that doesn't exist. You look up.

The small arch in the moon now seems red because there are no white things in the world. Not a touch of white.

You stroke a leaf. It seems to have stuck something to your hand, a substance so soft that you almost can't feel it at all. You look closer. There is nothing there, but you feel it: something very thin, as a cream made almost entirely with water. This exists, you think, and you also think about your bed and about the man from the past. Inside, there isn't any light coming from the kitchen. Up there, the arch in color moves forward on the moon. This is happening at last, you think.

Not a touch of white. No white over with in any tone.

You decide to go in but look to the moon first. The red is moving over the white, and now what they said in the news is becoming real. You close the balcony door behind you. This hall is too long, you think again, and keep walking. You look at your steps. You count them but the number doesn't stick to your head. The kitchen remains in the dark, and the man from the past is no longer there. He doesn't glow anymore.

The refrigerator is open and emits a yellow almost transparent reflection, with no tone of white over white. There will be no more white.

You close the refrigerator and turn up the lights. You clean the kitchen counter. There are some crumbs and you throw them in the trash. Some sounds are coming from your room: the same as before, words like bubbles, y, o, u, i. You turn the light off, walk down the hall and open your room's door. There is nobody there, but one of the drawers in your closet is open. You see it from far away, like a very distant planet, in another solar system.

There will be no more white. Not one more.

You get closer. The drawer is empty. The only thing there is a pair of socks. These aren't mine, you say to yourself. They are blue, all torn up: these are his socks, you think. But he is not there. Or now you can't see him. Or he is glowing at a different frequency. You open the bottom drawer: it's filled with your things, the ones that you always put in the other one. You close everything and leave without looking back.

Behind you there is no more white. Never white.

You check every room in the apartment. Nothing is glowing. No sounds, no dissembled sentences, no one calling. Now, there is only one dimension, and nothing more. Things, you say very low: they come and go. They beat in space. And you say it like that, but you could say it differently. You take a deep breath and go out to the balcony. The moon is entirely red. It seems that the plants reflect the color, everyone with its own leaves now, without getting mixed together. In another building someone turns on a light. Up in the sky, you see the red sphere. The moon, you think, never was completely white.

Short story included in *Los límites del control (The limits of control)*, Alto Pogo, Buenos Aires, December 2017.

## Black Box

Planes that disappear have a particular ontological quality. Some are made of atoms with weaker molecular bonds. Others, of chemical elements yet to be discovered. In any case, they all have a distinct density and another level of visibility. When they reappear, recovered in the bottom of the ocean or in a snowy mountain, their ontology changes again: once more, they look firm, concrete, and it gets to be almost the same than before.

People who travel in planes that disappear sometimes ask out loud what will happen to their cells when the plane finally vanishes. The flight attendants answer that everything will be all right, that no molecule will suffer any change, that inside the cockpit everything is in order. When planes that disappear reappear, people traveling in their seats come back to visibility and ask once again about their cells. Flight attendants don't answer and ask the same question about their arms. None of the pilots say anything even though their mouths are wide open.

In the exact moment that planes that disappear disappear, a deep sound bounds in the air. It's the squeal of molecular bonds becoming loose. When the human eye ceases to capture all planes that disappear, retinas are less loaded and visual saturation levels decrease worldwide. Passengers' eyeballs turn white and spin around, and from then on a plane that disappears can no longer be seen. Passengers' pupils don't stare at anything in particular. Flight attendant's eyes turn dull and stop blinking when a plane that disappears disappears.

A hole cuts out in the air and the plane that disappears is no longer there, suddenly: neither flying over the deepest ocean, nor almost touching the snow on the highest mountain. Or at least that is what seems to happen to the plane that disappears, if someone were looking from far away. Inside the cockpit, when the plane that disappears disappears, pilots notice that their muscles are getting weaker. Their faces blur and their skin stretches. If they were able to look into some kind of reflecting surface, they wouldn't recognize themselves. That is because Pilot Number One and Pilot Number Two cease to have any kind of gesture. Outside the cockpit, passengers want to hear something like a phrase, now that this plane that disappears is disappearing. Pilots see the transistor. It is right there, but they don't pick it up, and not a piece of information gets to the passengers: pilots don't want to or pilots just can't speak at all. In that same moment, sounds turn void in the cockpit and something very little explodes: they hear it as a last rebound in an otherwise empty space. It's the synaptic connections dissolving, now that the plane that disappears is disappearing.

After the plane that disappears has already disappeared, pilots regain something that looks like a face. It could be said that it is almost the same face, except for two details that they would notice if they were confronting something like a mirror. The eyes are now shut, still. And their necks are three centimeters longer than before. They look forward. Everything is white outside the frontal window and the main controls don't twinkle in any color. While the plane that disappears remains vanished, passengers stare with bleached eyes at the space outside the windows but don't say a word. When they verify that everything around has

turned flatly white, their eyes spin again. Fly attendants remain standing. Their arms are spread out pointing at the exits with wobbly fingers. While the plane that disappears remains disappeared, in their faces pupils stay fixed, straight.

When this particular plane that disappeared reappears, in the bottom of an ocean, an ocean so vast that no one could ever give it a name, pilots finally make the announcement. They now want to, or they now can speak as they used to. Sounds are audible again, but lower. Words come out of the mouth that is slowly opening in Pilot Number One's face; words enter the microphone, travel through the cables, reach the megaphones and then all passengers hear something that resembles a phrase. The information that this plane that disappeared has reappeared has now reached those who travel inside: up to this moment, no one could have known anything. But now things seem to be almost as always. Almost. Pilots regain their usual muscular tone and the frontal window pinkens. Pilot Number One turns his head and his neck slowly descends to its original size. He smiles to Pilot Number Two and the main controls twinkle in blue, blending with the pink water of the ocean, outside.

When the pilot's words reach the passenger's ears in a plane that disappeared and reappeared, flight attendants look down, their arms fall and the exits are now no longer pointed at. Pupils become transparent in their faces and their bodies loosen. While the plane that disappeared reappears, passengers register how all that white is pinkening outside the windows. Their eyeballs spin around once more and appear to have the usual color, though a few tones lighter. In this particular plane that disappeared and reappeared on the top of a snowy mountain, a mountain as cold as the twelve iciest mountains of any winter, passengers open their mouths and ease their lips. They stare at the flight attendants, who walk backwards, slowly approaching the cockpit. They stare at them and notice that their knuckles are loose and their knees semi-bent. Flight attendants touch the cockpit's door with their backs at the precise moment when the passengers' jaws soften up. Something like a steam sprouts through the tongues and the teeth. Pilot Number One and Pilot Number Two would be now ready to open the door and come out, except that they remain sat, staring all that pink outside, in the mountain, fusing together with the snow.

Short story included in *La frontera durante* (*During the border*). Anthology. Outsider, 2014.  
[www.eloutsider.org/producto/la-frontera-durante-2/](http://www.eloutsider.org/producto/la-frontera-durante-2/)  
From the unpublished book *Unidad de ilusión* (*Unity of Illusion*). Short stories.

**484 mm<sup>3</sup>**

He had always been afraid of those stairs, even though he only realized it when his head hit the third step during a sharp-angled afternoon which made him lost the exact amount of blood that he was going to need three years after that. He was going to need that blood but he wasn't going to have it anymore.

At the moment that his forehead met the marble rim, the empty anxiety that he was going to feel three years later became definitely sentenced. The following thirty-six months rushed by and happened all at the same time, right there, accumulated in the sole instant of

the frontal crash against the stairs. It was as if something had summoned them to converge on that February 4<sup>th</sup>, exactly at five-twenty-two in the afternoon. Something, perhaps a kind of bloody hallucination in the head of the man who, at that same moment, was leaving an impression of himself on the unshakeable, sharp marble surface. Eyelashes couldn't protect the lacrimal glands from the high salty blood content; lacrimal glands, then, burned.

The theatrical hallucination in the man's brain consisted of the presumption that there wouldn't be anything left after the crash against the step. More than a fantasy: it was horror put in images, a terror as a screen, and the pain began to project slowly over the diagonal mark that would seal his forehead from that afternoon on.

When an amount of lost blood is exact, it can never be recovered. It is then impossible to refill the empty capsule that will travel through the veins forever, like a bubble in an upside-down glass, like a breath of air in a walled swimming pool.

The amount of that February 4<sup>th</sup> had been too exact to even try to replace it with transfusions. In the operating room, they only cured the wound, a procedure that was merely peroxide, needles and surgical gauze. They didn't do anything to make the paleness go away, nor to bring back a hint of color to the chest, nor to recreate some of the old texture around the eyes. They said it would be impossible, that the amount of lost blood had been so precise that they would never be able to measure it exactly to make up for the leak.

Exactness was what defined that lost blood. And it also was going to define the patient three years from that afternoon when, searching for the cause of a trivial discomfort, the man would discover a tiny lack that seemed to be eternal, although it had been acquired on the third step of a marble staircase.

Short story included in *Natural Protocols*, Metalúcida, Buenos Aires, 2014.  
<http://metalucida.com/protocolos-naturales/>

*All texts translated from the Spanish by the author.*