

Requiem for the Passing Moon

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[editors introduction from "War on Society"] Hans Niemeyer was arrested on November 30, 2011 near a BCI Bank after an explosive attack. Held in preventive prison under the terrible Anti-terrorist Law, he was charged for another 3 attacks. After a year in prison, Hans was granted house arrest and went underground on December 7, 2012 after his legal process was skillfully paralyzed. On April 26, 2013, he was arrested by the Investigative Police (PDI). Hans was sentenced in July 2013 to 5 years in prison, and since then has carried out multiple hunger strikes, the latest (es) in solidarity with Monica Caballero, Francisco Solar, Sebastian Oversluij, and Matias Catrileo.

"I write so as not to explode, out of fear of a slow death and the gangrene of amnesia, in which a whole generation rots" - Jean Marc Roullian

"Without chains on my feet, I began walking" - Los Pericos

I. The Arrest

It was 7:30 in the morning when we noticed the movement of strangers in the street below, on both sides of the building. People who looked like students, the neighborhood's usual pedestrians, but who were looking insistently at the apartment in which we had sought refuge. Could it be a misperception, the feeling of persecution that prevents one from clearly seeing the real from the imaginary? This time, without a doubt, we knew we were wrong, we knew we had made a mistake. It had happened other times as well, we had walked the thin line of what we should not do, but at times there was no other option, we had to take the chance and gamble that the enemy would show up late. The dynamics of flight, with the two types of police¹ behind us, with a small child, with money being tight, was filled with these little gambles, leaps into nothingness. Should we open the door? Will they ask us to leave? Have we been recognized? The bus is stopped, pigs are below..? Will they get on? Will they ask for ID's? Are they going to look over the cameras for this ATM? Let's just get money out and leave... there isn't any... What do we do now? There are things we can't go without: diapers, milk for the small hummingbird, as we say with care. How much food do we have left?

Today we eat noodles, tomorrow just soup and bread, whatever, as long as the "little one" is well we can continue on. There were days when we couldn't eat, we improvised bread with a bit of flour we found, which went very well with salt and oil, even better the only ripe avocado we rescued from this branch overflowing with avocados hard as sticks. I don't care, it's us three, this keeps us going, the tent is our refuge, our home...put another sleeping bag inside, so we don't get cold. We stay outside a bit, look at the hills, the forest so dark, the sky, never had I seen a sky with so many stars, more beautiful with both of you. Did you know that for this moment everything was worth it? Remember the verse we made up? *"There are things we will never forget and for this alone it is worth it to experience them."* Tomorrow we will see what we'll do, how we'll solve our problems. We continue on down the road, improvising.

Clearly those who opine behind a computer don't understand this, those whose vocation is to be unpaid judges, those who always know what ought to be done, ready to judge and pontificate. *"He had to leave the country, he had to go alone, that guy can't be with his girl."* What moves them² to express their opinions? What do they know about us? They coincide with the enemy planning to destroy us. On the other hand the evening La Segunda cries the alarm. The police and prosecutors speak through its mouth like always, *"He is in Greece, Spain, or Italy"*, *"He doesn't have a grasp, doesn't have a homeland, he won't come back to see his family, doesn't want them to know where he lives."* The tie-wearing terrorists opine, threaten, methodically construct the public enemy. *"I don't know how someone who only thinks about destruction can have a family,"* a citizen-fascist commentator on EMOL³ says about me. They don't see the contradiction in accepting the

¹ In Chile there are two national police organizations: The investigative police (PDI) and the military police, the *carabineros de Chile*. Both have special units dedicated to political intelligence.

² "Pana": Valor, Coraje

³ EMOL: internet "news" portal owned by the Edwards group, owner of half of the newspapers in Chile.

dead students, the repression, the Mapuche children shot down, the people the bank kicks out of their home. No, these people applaud before the mirror, the advocates of “*A bullet to the head, let them rot in prison, just ‘disappear’ them. How we miss Pinochet! Everyone tells me so. With him this terrorist would’ve been shot on sight. We want to live in peace—how long do we have to put up with these criminals, and on top of it we have to feed them with our taxes, these scum of society—an island in the south, forced labor so they learn how to work.*” The factories of public opinion, of producing a common feeling, are summarily effective, and when they don’t work there are the pistols of the democratic police.

But usually they do work! This is hegemony: gaining a common feeling, automatic discipline, internalized, without the need for coercion... “*The ideas of the ruling class are in every society the ruling ideas,*” claims old Marx, “*Whoever fears freedom feels pride in being a slave,*” murmurs Bakunin as he pours a vodka and remembers the years spent with chains around his waist. Who cares!? The matinée will begin, the last Caguin of the Fiera, what will the purple-haired fascist say, Raquel is a lady (identifies as one). Who cares... the matinée will begin, the prisoners will watch it too.

This time I think it’s them. Let’s get out of here. We get dressed quickly.

“What if I go out to buy bread and use the opportunity to check it out?”

“Okay, go.”

But I already feel the trap is beginning to close in, I see them again from the window, there’s no doubt it’s them. They talk on their phones, coordinating the final blow, asking instructions, “Yes sir, he’s here, his wife just left, we’re going in, sir.”

You return. It’s full of them, you say.

I’m going to leave, try to make a break for it (I think but don’t say).

“No!” You fall to the floor, you cry, “It’s all my fault, I’m so stupid, the only thing I wanted was to see you, I’m sorry!”

“My love, quiet, don’t let them see you cry, be calm, I’m going to be alright, everything just moved forward a few days. Always dignified, calm, don’t give them the pleasure of seeing you cry.”

They enter in droves, the trap closes with a snap. They’re here now, they take me, calm now, it’s over. The police: Are we clear? Are we clear? Check him, check him! He’s unarmed, sir. Bring handcuffs, they yell. They laugh, they embrace and congratulate each other.

“Don’t cry, remember the moments we spent together, they were worth it... Don’t cry.”

They take me down the stairs, hands cuffed in front of me, before the curious eyes of university students and neighbors. Later one would exercise her poisonous forked tongue with the police-reporters from *La Tercera*. One cop tells me, “*Pull your sleeves down so you can’t see the handcuffs.*” I respond, “*I have nothing to be ashamed of, quite the opposite in fact.*”

All the police film the stellar time on their cell phones, just like the time I was handcuffed behind my back to a post in the barracks of the Bicrim-Macul. There is also a mysterious professional camera operated by police officers, apparently from *Rati TV*⁴, because they went with us through the whole process until the Bicrim La Reina station, and later the sadly celebrated Cuartel Borgoño, the former lair of the C.N.I (Pinochet’s political police), now rebaptised as Cuartel

⁴ *Rati*: Agent of the civil investigation police of Chile.

Independencia in order to erase the dictatorial reminiscences, the people hung in *Pau de arara*⁵ and the screams of torture, especially now that the accomplices of that state terrorism are in the government and parliament. The ones who still applaud the horror are the same good citizens who demand hellish punishment for “*the terrorists*.” But sometimes it seems the echoes of the past come back on their own accord, as was recently demonstrated when Brigada de Robos Oriente agents kidnapped and tortured a secondary school student in their barracks. Back to their old tricks again. Among prisoners, this unit of the PDI is known for its penchant for the *parrilla*⁶ and torture. This incident with the secondary student even provoked a judge of the security court to speak of “methods typical of a dictatorship,” which provoked the fury of the Ministry of the Interior, the fascist from Chacarillas⁷ Andres Chadwick Piñera, who harshly criticized the judge. Have you ever seen such insolence, that a judge would be allowed to criticize the criminals at Chadwick’s service and to defend a tortured adolescent!? Clearly, there is no limit to this government’s impudence in intervening in the decisions and even commentaries of judges they don’t like. Now they don’t even care how they go about it, like when they used to say “*the government does not comment on judicial decisions*.” No, that’s over now, today the intervention is open and unmasked. And it passes right through... Nobody says anything!

They put me in a PDI police car and check me again. They handcuff me behind the back and we speed away in an entourage down General Velasquez and then Costanera Norte on the way to the Bicrim la Reina station. There are various telephone calls to coordinate. Earlier I heard urgent calls to the PDI headquarters. I imagine Chadwick receiving the news in his office, a smile drawing itself between the buttocks of the General Director’s happy face. But there’s no time to lose, he has a lot to do and he quickly puts on his suit as Colonel of the UDI⁸: he has to defend Golborne for the numskull he is and put in a man with the UDI’s DNA. Pablo is the one chosen, a politician in the end, not a chain store merchant, Don Andres thinks. He remembers the torches and sees himself climbing the hill, at the top is the General delivering a speech that Jaime wrote... what times those were. But in the end, things change, there’s no time to lose, the nation calls us. There’s an action to defend! And he excitedly orders his chauffeur, “To Suecia street, fast!”

We continue down Costanera Norte at full speed down toward the barracks. Meanwhile, the “strange” personnel from the PDI disappear and I never see them again. In the station, I’m kept in the commissar’s office and, apart from my guard, the only ones who come see me are the chief, the deputy chief of La Unidad, and the deputy who led the operation. I keep calm and silent, trying to save my energy for what’s to come. Soon they transfer me to a dining hall, take off my belt and shoelaces, and again *Rati* TV films me from various angles. I have the dubious privilege

⁵ *Pau de Arara*: Torture systematically implemented by the distinct police and soldiers during the dictatorship and continuation of the regime. It consists of hanging the detained person by their feet and hands on a pole in the air during long hours, whilst being beaten.

⁶ *Parrilla*: Police torture that consists of tying the arrested person to a bed spring while running electric current through it.

⁷ Chacarillas: The hill of Santiago, adjacent to the San Cristobal hill towards the East. This place was the scene of a ceremony of the dictatorship of civil and military character towards the end of the 70s, where “delegates” of the Chilean youth participated, amongst them Chadwick. The event, with a clearly nazi aesthetic, was accompanied with lit torches and has a fundamental character of the historical project and economic social model that lives on today.

⁸ (Translator’s note:) UDI is the Independent Democratic Union- a right-wing, conservative Chilean political party, founded in 1983. Its main inspirer was the lawyer, politician and law professor Jaime Guzmán, who collaborated with Augusto Pinochet. Sebastián Piñera was elected president in 2010 largely due to backing from the UDI.

of being a trophy of war. A series of old *ratis* enter to watch me. This had already happened during my first arrest in November 2011, when things like this happen, chiefs both active and retired come to watch the captured prey. They leave.

The door opens again. The deputy says I will be allowed to see my mother for five minutes. My mother comes in; I haven't seen her in five months. She brings a mixture of sadness and happiness with her. We embrace.

"Don't worry mom, everything's fine."

"How have they been treating you?"

"Fine mom, don't you worry. How's the little one? Is he at your house?"

We chat for five minutes. They take off my handcuffs so I can take my mother's hands in mine. The deputy comes in: "Hans, we have to go."

Again the handcuffs are put on and I tell my mother: "You don't need to go to court. Why expose yourself? The vultures will be there waiting."

"No, son, I'm going anyway." A kiss, and we part.

The entourage of *professionals of the shackles* leave again. On the radio one can hear: "Without sirens and maximum security measures," something I will hear again in the coming Kafkaesque prison journey. For the moment, we move along *Costanera Norte* again in the direction of Poniente until reaching Borgoño's lair. We enter through Santa María, north shore of the Mapocho river. We get out of the vehicle, the TV cameras are far off, but there are still some photographers inside the station. That evening *La Segunda* would have a photo taken from a meter away. Who said anything about the press and police working together?!

In the station it's the same as always: photos from frontal view and profile shots, paperwork, bureaucratic procedures and rigorous medical exams. I enter without clothing, I feel sorry for the doctor- last night I went on a long walk along a mountain near Santiago and my aroma isn't the greatest-I didn't have enough time to take a shower. The doctor tries to describe the redness on my wrists due to the several hours handcuffed. She asks the police officer what the exact term for handcuffs is. The police officer responds, "We prefer to call them bracelets." The doctor looks at him for a few seconds, seriously. Finally she writes on the paperwork, "Redness on both wrists from the use of handcuffs." A dignified dialogue between Maxwell Smart and Super Agent 86. I sign a few more papers and I see Rodrigo and Julio enter-my lawyers. A brief altercation between Rodrigo and the deputy to let us speak alone. The *Rati* will look on from a distance, but he says it's impossible for us to speak alone. We hug each other, lots of greetings and smiles. I ask about my wife, my son and my mother. I ask them to send them tranquility. We agree on two things out of three and they explain to me what will happen in the tribunal.

Now the Show comes into play. They handcuff me by the back and parade me in front of the press. It's a grey day and all the reporters, camera people and photographers wear dark, heavy clothing. Up on top of their vehicles they really do look like vultures. We go in a caravan of two vehicles, again the *Rati* in charge orders "maximum security measures." In the vehicle I'm in, the police seem enthusiastic about how much press there is, and say, "Now we'll be immortalized"... life gives small joys to these small functionaries. They want to share their miniscule moment of glory with me: "you're like a movie star" the chief tells me. I look at them. In a certain way I feel kind of sorry for them.

This time we go hastily, with sirens screaming and at full speed. The chief continually makes and receives phone calls and messages. They are all crazy for the latest generation cell phones-one of the many tastes they share with criminals. In one of these calls they tell him that the

deputy Valenzuela who led the capture will call to congratulate him. They advise him that the deputy will say “Vásquez speaking”⁹ so as to be on alert and not think that they’re pulling his leg.

We arrive at the “justice” center at Pedro Montt and Panamericana, inconveniently at lunch time when they’re not accepting arrestees. Gesturing, phone calls and finally they open the door, but we don’t have to wait- a Major of the gendarmerie¹⁰ arrives.

“Is this him?” he asks.

“Yes, it’s him,” they answer.

I hear that the officials are in recess but will attend to us a little before 2 pm, “so he’ll be the first one to undergo controls.” The prosecutors and plaintiffs can now be found in the “Justice” center with cutlery and napkins tucked into their collars, ready to be served their catch. They’ll send me to prison and be able to sleep peacefully.

The detention control hearing was predictable. Full of vultures looking for discouragement and defeat which they won’t find. They love those gestures of shame; the bowed heads, the defeated and the ones who think they’ve done something wrong. In one word: regret. They need it to reaffirm their order. They need to be able to say: “*We, the good guys, are the ones who finally triumph. Let everyone take note.*” They need the bad guys, the porters of the pathological, the transgressors of the Normal, be they “the other,” the enemy, or criminals. Criminality operates in such a powerful way in the reaffirmation of the prevailing social order as the only possible society, that it can’t be considered simply as the flip side of the coin of “normal” people, of “good and honorable” citizens’ way of life. It isn’t just an innate evil tendency within some deviant human beings, or the quota of anomaly that all social systems possess. The system needs to generate and augment delinquency, to raise the phantom of criminality. Delinquency and the shaping of the various public enemies are, in situations of social crisis such as we see in Chile, of vital importance for the construction of discourses around legitimation and order and in the nullification of subversive, dissident discourse. The system needs those public enemies, those threats, to be able to call for unity in the face of chaos, violence and barbarity, where criminals, *encapuchados*, anarchists, agitators, and pro-violence Mapuche join together. And this is without even considering the immense quantities of money that move the businesses of security, guards, security cameras, etc.

A good example of the construction of a public enemy is the speech by Sabestian Piñera Echeñique on May 21st, in which he advised the country that terrorism exists in Chile. What’s more, he alluded directly to the Mapuche people and demanded the approval of the *Anti-encapuchados* law. Fear has always served to unify and that is exactly what the system is trying to do now: create social cohesion.

Let’s make a small parenthetical here. Wide sectors of the Chilean ruling class consider the situation to be no joking matter. What’s on the table is important; it is the continuity of the historical project and social economic order begun by the dictatorship and deepened throughout the consultation governments, as well as winning democratic legitimacy, which was the missing

⁹ Marcos Vásquez Meza: General Director of the Investigative Police.

¹⁰ (Translator’s note:) *Gendarmería de Chile* is a national organization of prison guards which evolved from army units that were historically given police and prison duties in Chile. Though no longer a formal military organization, they are organized in a para-military fashion and “actively” maintain ties with the military. The current grey-green uniforms were adopted under Pinochet who was inspired by the uniform of German troops in WWII. Gendarmie and guards are both used for *Gendarmería* in the text.

ingredient. They feel there is a rupture of consensus with respect to the system of domination, or at least with respect to a type of capitalism that has been predominate until today. There are also certain concerning symptoms on the table. Lets name just a few: the paralysis and obstruction (in some cases due to judicial decisions) of important foreign investment projects, be they in the sphere of energy or of mining; a fall in the international price of copper; the increase of the production costs of Codelco deposits; the fragility of the energy system, principally the generation and transmission of energy; signs of deceleration in the Chinese economy. All of these ingredients have sounded the alarms for the ruling class. And it is in this context of crisis that the two structural failures of the Chilean system of domination are developing: the crisis of the system of political representation on one hand, and the distribution of revenue and concentration of wealth on the other. All of the social protests: the uprising in Magallanes, Aysén, Freirina and, in the last few days, Quellon in Chiloé; the dissatisfaction with the so-called “abuses,” the education problem, the environmental problems that fit in one way or another into these two aforementioned structural fissures. The wager of the ruling class and political classes is that the way out of this conflictual situation lies in a reform along the lines proposed by the defenders of the status quo. Let’s remember that from Bachelet to Longueira, they propose reforms.

The Chilean ruling class knows that plutocracy with restricted political representation can’t maintain itself the way it is, that the paradise with extremely high profit rates and concentration of wealth they’re accustomed to cannot be maintained. They know they have to let go, risking opening spaces of uncertainty and the possibility of social upheavals. This is why the political class in its diverse variants repeats the refrain “*Chile changed!*”

Even when the most probable situation is that there will be ways out through the system’s framework, the situation is evolving, “the situation is fluid,” say the analysts. This is why Piñera’s gesture on May 21st, raising the specter of terrorism and social chaos, makes the most sense politically. This has precedents, to be sure, in the discourse and action of Rodrigo Hinzpeter as interior minister, but the most important recent events are the ones surrounding the deadly attack on the Luchsinger-Mackay couple and the repressive onslaught it entailed.¹¹ The resurgence and strengthening of the discourse of the specter of terrorism will be the backdrop on which the judicial processes develop, with clear political trimmings, in which the State finds itself involving the controversial anti-terrorist law. In all of these cases, apart from developing judicial processes that in practice go against due process, the law attacks the right to defense and the assumption of innocence that the system so lacks, it will occupy itself with media lynching and the exacerbation of punitive populism in order to gain political capital in an election year. The outlook, to be honest, doesn’t look good at all. The proof can be seen in the amount of lies and false accusations that the official press echoes, with the Public Ministry and the police as its source. “Truth” and direct proof in this context become secondary, and what starts to gain preeminence is State reasoning and the need to achieve sentences under the Anti-terrorist Law that let the State justify itself in the new situations of social conflict.

But let’s return to the story. Trial date: Monday June 17th. Place of detention? The gendarmerie will decide that, says the head of the prison’s Seventh Oral Court. And so begins a curious and surrealist journey through different parts of the prison institution.

¹¹ On the 4th of January 2013, an old latifundist and landowner couple, Luchsinger-Mackay, died in result of an incendiary attack against their estate. After these events, the State and its ministries launched communicational campaigns, police congresses, and intelligence gatherings to create special units to militarise Mapuche territory and construct a true anti-terrorist frenzy.

II. Journey to Santiago 1

The TAR (high-risk transfer) section of the *gendarmerie* take me through underground tunnels to Santiago 1 prison. On the way, I remember it is supposed to be a franchise prison, the grand work of the Concertation, we see the efficiency of private business make an incursion in prison material. I am put into a solitary cell, they do not want this one with other prisoners. As it was shown on television (and for prisoners “sounds” in the press is important), some prisoners greet me and give me their hand behind bars. I walk for hours in the cell (*running pointlessly in circles*) which is in front of the Booking and administrative offices of these people. Then a series of strange situations begins, prison officials talk amongst themselves and look at me. The prisoners continue on and I stay in the cells, alone. A pig comes over to me and asks me the typical questions, I answer in monosyllables and shrugs of my shoulders; he informs me that there are calls coming in from the Regional Director of Gendarmerie, which confirms to me that something is happening. I am called to Booking, here the system functions and demands a submissive attitude from prisoners with their hands behind their back. In fact keeping prisoners’ hands behind their back is a true obsession of the guards and I think almost the existential motive of the guards. I enter Booking, stop there, put your hands behind your back. I don’t comply, my hands by my side, nor do I look down, I look calmly at all of them. The pig takes my respective prints and photos, they say that I am going to begin admittance, but that it is a formality because they think I am going to the CAS (high security prison). It does not bother me, it was to be expected. The telephone calls continue; “Yes commander, yes, he is in front of me right now.” I return to the cells, and see now that I am the only prisoner. I am just about to think, “*I am alone*,” when I remember my brother the hermit, who magically travels here, accompanies me, looks at me and smiles at me, says to me again, “*brother, remember that you are never alone*.” A happiness overwhelms me as I lay down, a renewed pride, I laugh. Here we go..

Very tired, laying on the metal bench of the cell, I sleep a little bit at a time. It is already night time when they take me to the inside of the jail, all of this is new to me, I am joined by other prisoners. Hands behind your back! I am called to the internal Gendarmerie and the pigs there ask me their own *paco* questions. I notice that there are far less *pacos* (*in between pig and cop*) than in maximum and than in the CAS. Some cases I would say without exaggeration are frankly “*picao a choro*”—wanna be bad asses, very contaminated by the criminal environment. Stay there, put your hands behind your back, I continue with my hands by my sides. A prisoner converses with me, says to me “You’re here because of the bombings, it was on TV,” a curt “Yes,” and I am already bored. I am punished, he says to me, I am able to catch a chance to talk to my sweetheart. Typical young prisoner, thinks he alone knows everything. I smile as I look to around the top of a desk, bottles of artisan *chicha* and razors, not very large. In Santiago 1 there are only short razors. Prisoners measure razors by floor tiles: two and a half tiles, four tiles, seven tiles—must be a brave heart! But that’s only in other prisons—I have never seen anything like that. These are only two tiles long...what a relief.

The young prisoner continues talking: “I don’t take shit from anyone, man. I was the one who attacked Big John, I hit the old man with some iron.” He alone claims it.¹ He is proud. Poor old man, I think. “Yes, I saw it on TV,” he tells me. They take me outside, a line of prisoners, I am at the end. Hands behind your back!

We head down the first hallway, which runs parallel to the fire line at the CAS, towards Poniente. We are a group of 20 prisoners that the *paco* distributes throughout the units. They call a group and shut us in a “fishbowl”; a space with bars around it while they put the prisoners in the units. A prisoner who is about to get out is left with us. Logically, he is happy. He gives us his view of the prison: “There are assholes, guys who think they are badass, who live by the knife and don’t respect age, don’t respect rank, don’t respect anyone or anything.”²³ The *paco* comes back and takes us to the next unit the one we have been assigned to: Module 4, Transfer. We enter, the scene is unreal, with the lights of the bulbs illuminating behind us creates a ghostly image. The floor is full of trash. The architecture reminds me of the departments of Paz Fraimovich. Immediately upon entering prisoners are yelling from their cells: “The washer uh, uh, uh, uh...the washer uh, uh, uh, uh,” we hear, “Welcome to hell,” last, laughter, screams, a surreal scene, the true horde of barbarians. Anti-prisoner prisoners, ideal for the system. They put the prisoners in their cells, 2 or 3 live in each. We reach the one that I am assigned, one prisoner comes out who is to be released (to freedom) and two enter. My cell mate is a kid from La Pintana, El Castillo, who did freelance work downtown and stole a cellphone that belonged to some asshole that worked at the Ministry of Justice. That makes two of us with bad luck then. The cell is a pile of shit, a dump. Two foam mattresses full of bugs, doesn’t matter which one you choose, they are both mite’s nests. The floor is wet, the blanket is an dirty piece of cloth 30 x 50cm and moist. The window is gone, the cold cuts through everything, surely it was broken out to make blades, you do not have to be a genius to see that. I read a few sections of the *La Cuarta y Las ultimas Noticias* newspaper, opium distributed by the Edward and Saieh groups which the poor smoke with pleasure. I look out the window and see Unit J of the high-security prison (CAS) where I was from August to November after being in Maximum security for 8 months. What became of my hermit brother? I remember the mates we drank on the patio thinking about what would become of our lives, the conversations with Mario, of when we went to recreation, how we laughed at the roast made by prisoners on the 18th of September... happy prisoners celebrating the country that keeps them imprisoned. We don’t want anything to do with this country. The rage that passed through Timochenko when we casually rendered his glasses useless to play a joke. Did you eat a cake? I ate all of them... Was there only one? A sea of smiles. The anecdotes of Krotsty, the lunch stories of the cowboy... Stop smoking on my patio damn Krosty! and now I am here on the other side of the fire line and the marquee, so close I might be able to call to you, but prisoners’ continual shouting is beginning to weigh on me.

I am exhausted. I go to sleep on the mat completely dressed, and cover myself as best I can with the filthy blanket. I try to sleep in the fetal position, frozen stiff by cold and am woken up constantly from the bedbugs’ bites as they walk over my face. The bed bugs stay with me for weeks. I shake the mat to try and get rid of them, but it’s no use, the same mat is a giant nest of them. I get little bits of sleep. The freezing dawn arrives and to ward off the cold I take

¹ *Achaba, achabarse*: to assume responsibility, to claim an act.

² *Pelo e’ choco*: idiots, crazy kids.

³ *Ficha*: a species in a prisoner or delinquent’s curriculum. A *ficha* prisoner is a prisoner high up the hierarchy and demands respect

a cold shower (you didn't think there would be hot water). If you think that I was depressed or that this was terrible you are mistaken; with high spirits and optimism always. As Johnny Cash says in "I Won't Back Down", "*You can stand me up at the gates of hell but I won't back down.*" I get ready to go out to the courtyard and face this new reality, including that of prisoners that stupidly accept the role of exercising dominance over other weaker prisoners. The night is filled with shouts, insults, boastful conversations, "*I hit what I stab,*" treat the rest as *perkins* (sexual slaves in prison), who they are going to put through the wash, and all of the other jail banter. Prison, extreme poverty, and razors, prison meat, the lives of the poor youth in this country are going down the drain. Dog eat dog as Hobbes said, here is the origin of the State where human beings exercise domination with weapons against other humans, the war of all against all where the fear of violent death exists. All prisoners are political prisoners!?! Who came up with that stupidity! 90% of prisoners support the system.

I leave my cell and go into the courtyard, we are 100 prisoners or more. I see some very young prisoners moving timidly and fearfully, maybe its their first time being prisoners, in this country people are imprisoned for idiotic things: a drunken fight, because an old lady sees someone doing whatever, etc. My slogan for the period is: "*Manolo walks alone*" Excuse me! and I begin to walk to the middle of the courtyard, almost from one side to the other. One is never alone.

Some prisoners, all of them very young, greet each other and gather to talk, it is the power of the TV. The sound of the TV is very important for the prisoner because it breaks for a split second the automation and the life of incarceration and misery they have been sentenced to since birth and which they consider to be natural, an inevitable destiny.

I quickly make a friend, he tells me his story, the time flies, he gives me a Jodorowski book, a manual of psychomagic. The book makes sense in this place. One is never alone.

The story is told on the patio- Hands behind your back! the call comes for visitation for the entire first floor. The pigs say your first name and you have to say your last name. The *paco* is entirely a bully. They do not call me because it was my turn for a visit in the afternoon which never actually happened. Later my family told me that the attempt to visit was extremely vile (they were able to get in) people walking with kids in their arms, the worst treatment from the guards, incredible acts of disrespect towards my loved ones, to the point that they couldn't take it anymore and left before the visit.

Breakfast. I don't have a cup but I rescue some bread. There is a clamoring to receive breakfast and an environment similar to juvenile prison. It is a childish quality. It is not good news that the prisoners are very young "*aunty sent me a pastry, sit down, fuck off, give me the cinnamon, yes, what the fuck..*" Threats to fight in line. I return to the patio, walk, and take two bites of bread alone. Some prisoners continue to come up to me and talk, curious. My responses are respectful, but serious and short. This is not a place to make friends, this is a prison, everything is a relation of force, your corporal language, attitude, everything is observed. I continue walking alone to the middle of the patio, my cell mate comes up to me, brings me a cup of coffee, he is with the *Pintana carreta*⁴. I worked in this community, I know it well, I worked with its children and adolescents, I know their parents and loved ones, I know their schools, no one told me stories about the "opportunities" and the choices in life. There no one chooses anything. A single mother in charge of her family, works for Mr. Paulmann in Cencosud or Mr. Ibañez in the Lider, leaves her

⁴ Carreta: Group of prisoners who share, food, conversation and mate. Prisoners gather in carreta to commune, because of shared interests, and bonds of friendship or family.

house at 6:30 am and returns at 11:30pm, hardly able to see her kids; this is modern slavery. Her sons and daughters become hardened, grow up faster than the rest from the shock of shootings, crack, and extreme poverty. It is the Chilean capitalist paradise. Slowly life closes in around them: construction, a retail job for 350 lucas, or jail. To live for the prosperity of others, life goes down the drain. But just a moment! They tell me on the inside that we have reached 15,000 dollars per capita. Chile is on the road to development, I think, alright!

Two gendarmerie enter, one is a lieutenant. They tell me to get my things, you are going to be leaving. I don't have anything, as I came to Module 4 from transport. The pig asks me stupid questions that reveal to me that he does not read anything, nor does it seem like he wants to watch the news on TV. He asks me if we are against the pigs on the street and if I have anything to do with the demonstrations and protests. I don't answer. Later he moves away and comments to another pig loud enough for me to hear, "*If one of these motherfuckers touches a hair on my woman's head*" (I deduce that his wife is a cop) "*ill have them killed with a perro*". A *perro* is prison slang for a prisoner of low standing in service to other prisoners higher up the hierarchy or volunteered for the gendarmerie's instrumentation, who fight and carry out *antedatados* on other prisoners (attacks with knives, shanks, and other weapons.) Without looking, the pig leaves and talks with the head guards of Module 1 and 2.

Another parentheses. I have been hearing that in Santiago 1 there is a pig who beats and threatens youth who are imprisoned for street protests. I think it is highly likely this is the miserable one I have been hearing about. There is a lieutenant of the gendarmerie who threatens to order the murder of whoever he considers to have affected his policewoman wife. He is so cowardly he will not even do it himself, he will orchestrate the killing with a *perro*. This is nothing new, anyone who has done jail time knows of these plots orchestrated by gendarmerie which include getting enjoyment from and betting on armed fights, as in roman gladiator rings. In Santiago 1 there are blades awaiting the youth who are imprisoned in street protests and they are driven by a lieutenant of the gendarmerie.

My destination is Module 1 in High Security. The pig tells me: there are only famous ones and people who have been on television, well known criminals. I don't say anything to him and enter. Immediately I see half of the prisoners that were in module 4 and I notice more adult prisoners, this is better, but I also walk with lead feet, I have had problems having genuine interactions with prisoners or because I thought prisoners were cool (like all prisoners are political prisoners). Immediately a prisoner approaches me and gives the following discourse: "*Hans we have been waiting for you, look there is the world, there is everyone inside the barretin⁵, God is here, here is the savior saying he will give you an opportunity.*" It's an evangelical prisoner inviting me to go with god. Respectfully I tell him thanks but I am not interested. I begin to walk on the patio, a prisoner approaches me and invites me to his *carreta* to have mate. I greet them and enter the mate circle, there are only assailants and thieves. We eat lunch and I spend the afternoon visiting with various prisoners, walking around the patio, watching a soccer game and partaking in another circle of mate. A brief threat of a fight. A good reception and what's more I find that the visits are in an open room but contact is allowed and few people go to visitation. A few prisoners from maximum security (Module 2) call out to me, greet me, and offer me a radio, they have to return them tomorrow, great. I spend 40 minutes shut in my cell and then the door opens, it's two

⁵ *Barretin*: The *Barretin*, to be *barretined*. Its a part of prison culture. (Translator's note: prison slang, translates literally into crowbar, fantasy as in a strong desire, or an illusion.)

pigs. “Niemeyer, get your things, you’re leaving.” I don’t have anything, I am only accompanied by Jodorowsky, dubious company but at least its something to read. And where am I going? “I don’t know,” they say. We leave the module and walk from the first hall almost until the last. They put me into a couple cells and offer me two Kapo juices. I accept them because it is glucose and I don’t know what’s coming.

I pass through the cell, I read the slogans “a cordovan was here”, a circle A, an anarchist symbol, “fernet with cola because it hits harder”, “chiqui is a thief. whaaaaaaat?”, “La victoria”, “Santa Olga”, “Jose Maria Caro”.

The minutes pass by, it begins to get dark. I remember the first time I was a prisoner, September ’92, brutally beaten by the cops, my busted head, my mother’s suffering... I continue looking back into the past like a flashback in a movie...Where did everything begin? Was there one point or was it only the combination of a bunch of risky situations? I don’t like to be self-referential, but I talk with myself about my life as an introspection, I remember so many different things, so many different situations. It’s 1988 and we are confronting the dictatorship in the street and not with a pencil as Ricardo Lagos Escobar said. We marched downtown, the “Hauscar” shoots its water cannon, all of us duck under the walls of the University of Chile metro exit, an artisan handkerchief around our faces, we counter-attack with rocks. On the yellow wall of University of Chile a youth spray paints in red: NATIONAL UPRISING. A barricade on 18th and Alameda, molotovs burst on the pavement, traffic is stopped, pamphlets of Not Until Victory. Paintings of greetings on the front of Irarrázaval and Vicuña Mackenna. Meetings in the CEI of Ingeniería, in Arquitectura, take the Paulo Lavrí center for a meeting in Santa Rosa, make giant wood letters wrapped in the daily paper with and bags of trash to burn at Carmen and Alameda. A sadness, a bitterness takes over my spirit.

Are we talking about old stories? November 1988. I am 15 years old. After the plebiscite (end of Pinochet’s rule), instead of happiness I have seen a river of rebel blood. We converse at Lord Cochrane and Alameda, with two *compas* from school. One, two grades above me, who recruited me to the *Jota* and another *compañero* with his own point of view. Pablo Vergara and Aracely Romo had been murdered in Temuco. A *compañero* tells us that in his poblacion there were barricades this morning. The funerals are the following day.....Should we go? Yes of course, let’s go! Another day we ditch school and meet in the same place we talked the day before. On bus or by foot? We walk and talk, our trip is short to the little plaza in front of the general cemetery where Avenida La Paz ends. Everything seems so pristine, we are so pure, to the point that the colors seem more vibrant. I am very skinny, with fairly long hair. I see a school shirt, blue jeans, shoes. What are the hell are they waiting for says the vagabond. Another guy interjects “*The only thing I am worried about is wether they are going to come in here or through Recoleta.*” The environment is tense, patrols of pigs and civilian cars pass with sinister characters inside. Now: here they come. We look down Avenida La Paz and far away we see the funeral procession and further behind buses, packed to the roof with people and black and red MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) banners.

Leaving through the windows, we make a roundabout turn towards Recoleta. Quickly we stop, Lets go inside! We enter through the front door, we walk quickly inside the cemetery and reach the grave column of people who have already begun their march to bury Pablo. The voices all become one and sounds shocking, it gives me goose bumps: Consciooooouuus Pueeeeblo, Rifle shot, MIR, MIR.... Consciooooouuus Pueeeeblo, Rifle shot, MIR, MIR....Faces covered with handkerchiefs, fists in the air. A tremendous explosion is heard in the cemetery, a noise bomb. The crowd

erupts in applause and cheers: Cardinal Maroto, church of the people! Cardinal Maroto, church of the people! Fists pump rhythmically, there are armed pigs with rifles and battle helmets on acting nervously, aiming at the people. Mrs. Luisa and Don Manuel ask for silence, talk, are decimated, bury their third dead son after losing Rafael and Eduardo in 1985. They ask for respect of their beliefs, ask everyone to kneel, take each other and recite an "Our Father". The multitude respectfully kneels and prays, whether they are believers or not. At least I did. In the following four or five years hundreds of youth paid with blood and prison for their intent to turn their noses up at history, escape the institutional solution of the dictatorship and insist on the distant possibility of a subversive rupture. They called their battle Insurrectionary War of the Masses. Do you remember these times, little hermit, when I told you about finding the pamphlets wasted at the Manuel Plaza Gymnasium and throwing them around downtown in this city? Of those times when you stayed in your house while life was robbed of its normality? Night falls in a cell in Santiago 1.

III. Back to Maximum

The gendarmerie's TAR group shows up, there are three guards, I already know quite a few of them. An exhaustive inspection of all my clothes: genitals up, soles of the feet, socks, shoes, legs, torso, open the mouth, palms of the hands, behind the ears. Restraints on feet and hands, "lengthy measures" in police terms. Pass the chain through the trouser and close the restraint on the ankle. *"I'm only going to put it on one leg so that you can walk, alright?"* Alright. Yellow vest and handcuffs on the hands. We walk along the first passageway. A paramedic takes the standard documentation. We leave. They talk on the radio *"on the way with two-six Niemeyer, direction Beta, maximum security measures"*. A long walk along the underground passageways until the transfer zone. A brief stay in a cell, they arm themselves with a Famae submachine gun and a shotgun, and we move to take another police truck. We go out to Pedro Montt, it is Saturday the 27th of April, around 9pm, I look through the narrow barred window and there is almost nobody in the streets. An armed functionary gets out and stops the traffic, the vehicle begins to reverse and I'm surprised to see the functionaries filming the proceedings. We are back at the special high security unit, maximum-security section – our little Guantánamo.

There is a labyrinth-like entrance to "the maximum," the functionaries speak through the intercom: "an entry," and the electronic door opens. A sergeant receives me, he revises the paperwork, again they order me to take off my clothes, an inspection of all my clothing and then the paramedic again "Do you have any chronic illnesses?" Yeah sure, putting my head down the toilet. "Do you smoke, consume alcohol, drugs, take any medications? What is your height? How much do you weigh?" Again the sergeant: *"Listen, you have already been here, you know how the system works; respect to be respected."*

They place me on the second floor, special vigilance corridor. I know this place, it is a human experiment. They open the cell, I enter, they close it. At least the cell is clean. There are three blankets (I won't freeze to death) and the mattress is decent, so I won't die devoured by mites. As soon as the cops leave, the prisoners begin to call out, *"Hey, the guy that just arrived," "What's up?", "What are you here for?", "Where from, what happened, oh the time flies, tomorrow you'll get out to the patio", "Are you hungry brother?"* known bank robbers ask me. *"Yeah, actually"* *"Relax, I'm going to send you some mail"*¹. This is really classic, solidarity between prisoners. They throw me a package and two sandwiches of tomato, avocado and half a bottle of juice arrive. I say thanks, I'll see you tomorrow. I'm hungry and really tired, it has been practically 48 hours since I've slept. I sit on the mattress on top of a surface of concrete and I eat the sandwiches. I toast with the peach juice and I dedicate it to internet fascists... "Let him rot in prison," I say, and can't help but laugh.

I make the bed and look at the bars that cover the whole prison, the turret with its windows and powerful spotlights. I remember when I told you, *"Whatever happens, we'll look up at the sky, the constellation of Orion and the moon, and we'll remember this moment."* I think I may have

¹ Mail: a package sent by prisoners from one cell to the next, or to the next floor, tied to a string.

lied to you. From here the spotlights impede the view of the moon and the stars. I close my eyes from fatigue. Sleep enters softly, pleasantly, it surrounds me, until finally I'm in the forests and mountains again, you both look at me and laugh, the little hummingbird points his finger at me, "ile nuna" (look, moon) and I say to him, "Yes son, the moon," and we escape again, and I no longer belong to the prison.

Hans Felipe Niemeyer Salinas
Late May, 2013.
Maximum Security Prison.
Santiago, Chile.

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Hans Niemeyer
Requiem for the Passing Moon
Late May, 2013

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