VOL.1

SHORT STORIES

TATTOO • OUIJA • 4K

VICTOR EL BIZARRO

SHORT STORIES VOL. 1

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Original title
Relatos cortos. Volumen 1

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Design, layout, texts, english translation and illustrations
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TATTOO

Carmen, my girlfriend, has been very insistent for several days: she wants us to get a tattoo for our anniversary. "A token of eternal commitment", or so she tries to sell it to me.

I hate tattoos, I dread needles. I imagine the ink puddling on my skin... poisoning it!

"Dinner instead?" I snap at her, trying to get her to stop this one-off fever. "Our first tattoo... Wouldn't that be nice?" she repeats, obsessively, every now and then.

Finally I agree: I love her.

She has it all figured out. A friend of hers is a tattoo artist, he gives us a price: 2 for 1. We get to the studio, she goes in first. I hear the tattoo machine in the distance, the "Relax! Don't move," that infernal buzzing sound!... I get the hot flashes, I pick up a magazine to distract myself. Fuck, it's full of piercings and nipple piercings and earrings!

"What do you think?"

I look at her in fright: she's got my name tattooed all over her clavicular area. I start to panic... the letters snake across her breasts wrapped in cling film. He looks at me, smiles.

"I want it the same size. Here we're even!"

"She's crazy!" She brought me Trankimazin: she knows I'm terrified of needles. I take three: all for love.

Rich in ornamentation, *Carmen* in gothic typography dresses my chest after the session. At the sight of the tattoo she starts to laugh. Nervous laughter.

"I don't know what's wrong with her. It's her name..."

We barely make it home: the effect of the alprazolam still lingers. I open the door. Two friends are waiting for us in the living room, surrounded by suitcases. "They're having a *pyjama party* and I'm the last to know?"

"Fuck you, Gonzalo!" I hear from behind me.

Our friends look at me with contempt.

"Did you think you could fool me, you bastard? Look at me, now you'll remember all your life *who* I am. You've got me etched on your skin..."

"What?" I stammer with saliva between the corners of my mouth. "And you've got me on yours..."

"Ha," he says as he removes the protective plastic. "Ha!" he emphasises as he runs his hand over my name, blurring it. "2 for 1 my ovaries! *You*'re the only one who got a tattoo here."

"It's fake!" I'm completely petrified. Her friends take the opportunity to take my girlfriend's belongings. The switch goes off: "It's her *backup*. In case the pills wear off, in case I do something crazy."

"What? Why?"

"Pili saw you making out with one in Chacotero. So don't even bother..." she says as she closes the door, combing my hair with her ink-soaked fingers.

I sit down on the sofa. The pills wear off; my neurons regain power.

I look at myself in the mirror. "I hate her. How could she do this to me? La Pili... Lying bitch..."

There's a knock at the door. I open the door. It's... Carmen?

Start my film! Does she spit on my chest? She passes her hand: the tattoo smudges.

"Happy anniversary! *Happy 28th December*," she lifts up her jacket, a small tattoo peeking out. "Do you see it? This *is* the real thing."

I hate her fucking jokes! I hate her, but I love her.

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We have our tasks divided: two bring beers; one brings candles; one, if he shows up, it's already an achievement... What do I bring? A *Ouija board*.

We meet near an abandoned hospital. We drink, we laugh, we avoid showing our nervousness. We encourage each other, we blame our shaking hands on the cold. As dusk falls, the ash rises, the fog hides us from prying eyes: we become blurred silhouettes of those who perished from tuberculosis. Spectres!

I look at my watch: "It's time." We walk with hesitant steps. We no longer make jokes. The flash of our mobiles shines, splitting the mist in two; luminous stabs of light clearing our way.

As we cross the threshold of the hospital, the atmosphere changes: the air is thick, heavy on our shoulders. We feel we are being watched: hairs stand on end...

Walls with peeling paint, vegetation merging with furniture blackened and rotten by humidity; mould spores rise with every step. We cross the hall until we enter one of the rooms. I *choose* which one.

A latticed window, rickety bedsteads and a wardrobe with unglued doors become our "playroom". We light the candles, I take the Ouija board out of the backpack and we sit around it. I place a glass on the board. We all rest a finger on it. Dead silence, we look at each other.

"Is anyone here?" I ask aloud.

We look around. The candles cast our stylised shadows on the walls. Distrust and fear in equal parts...

"If anyone is here, answer me!"

"Pleeease," adds another in a whisper.

We notice how the glass slides smoothly... It runs across the board, our eyes attest to it: "My son," the letters form.

"And my son?"

"Ha!" I exclaim excitedly. "Very funny... *Who's* pushing the glass?"

A gust of wind extinguishes almost all the flames. The cabinet hinges creak, we all turn around. A guttural sound comes from inside; a hand slides along the ridge.

"Oh shit, bro!" exclaims one.

"Don't... Don't take your finger off the glass! Don't break the bond!"

"The bollocks!" another one mumbles.

They shout, they make faces pale, their faces pale. They flee in terror, their shadows accompanying them... There is only one finger left in the glass: mine.

I hold on for a few seconds. I laugh out loud: "It turned out *better* than I expected."

"You can come out now! What a bunch of wimps... I told you, they were going to piss themselves."

Instantly my mobile rings. I answer it:

"Why are you calling me? What are you doing?"

"What are *you* doing? I've been freezing for twenty minutes in this wardrobe that smells like death and you don't show up. And suddenly I hear shouting."

"Stop messing around. Come on, come out, Nestor, we're leaving."

"What are you saying? If I'm with these, out."

The wood creaks. I glance at the cupboard. A silhouette glides straight towards me. It levitates, the candles don't cast its shadow. The glass begins to move: "And my son? My son..."

My pupils dilate, my face deforms with dread, the candles go out. The glass explodes.

"My son! Come."

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Dizziness, eye pain, throbbing in my temples... My pupils constrict and dilate, I feel like I'm about to lose my balance. Disoriented, I lean against the wall.

"It's normal. It's a process, you'll get used to it... The brain has to readjust."

I look around me. Suddenly my hands have texture, pores... golden hair covers their phalanges. Startled, I turn them up to my face. Behind them, my mother looks *twenty* years older. The walls bulge, the colours fade into each other... perfectly defined lines emerge everywhere. "But there are no straight lines in nature! — I reflect in confusion — Or so my art teacher says..."

My dog ceases to be a brown blob and gains expression and sharpness. "He's happy! Now confused by my scrutinising gaze." He looks at my mother, she smiles: two *old men* in sync.

"What a change! From five dioptres of hypermetropic astigmatism to zero is a world of difference," says the optician. "Now you won't lose any detail."

My eyesight in *4K*: two lenses that turn my eyes into buttons make it possible. My nose bridge supports its full weight.

"The *Bartolo* of the class, the *eye-lens* of the second row... I can see it coming," I think ruefully as I scratch my arm compulsively: my anxiety burrowing until it gushes 'human oil'.

"It's €890 for glass, plus the frame... €1980"

My mother's face tightens, deforms. Her jaw drops, her dark circles under her eyes spread and fine purplish veins emerge between the cracked make-up. "I want to be aware of *everything* around me? my previous 'cloud' was more satisfying. At least it gave room for imagination..."

"Would you like to pay by cash or card? We also accept Bizum."

Suddenly, *twenty* years more are added to her: side effects of belonging to the lower-middle class. Bruno's nose — our *shar pei* — looks like a completely smooth canvas in comparison.

"But weren't the glasses on sale?" asks my mother hesitantly as she unfolds the advertising leaflet hidden in her pocket. "It says here. It says..."

Her expression changes completely as she takes a quick glance at the small print. A cold sweat breaks out on her forehead, the leaf slips from her hands... She delights us with a flesh-and-blood recreation of the protagonist of Munch's painting *The Scream* after being scalded by the optician.

I am a witness. "Blessed ultra high definition!"

"Darling," he says in a voice that betrays his regret, "give the glasses back to the gentleman, maybe later..."

I take two steps back. Fear takes hold of me. "Would anyone refuse such a superpower once it has been given to them?"

I look at her in terror. Her eyes, glazed over, break my soul. Tears stream down her face: my *kryptonite*.

I take off my glasses. The tears disappear, her face rejuvenates, the brown spot barks at me.

"I guess, sometimes, not seeing with our eyes allows us to see with our hearts," the optician tells me when, on the third attempt, I manage to hand over the glasses.

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Short Stories Volume 1 contains three stories of different kinds but with a common link: **first experiences**.

Let yourself be seduced by the imagination of the author of *Historia de un condón* (illustrated book), and get involved in these short stories with twists and turns, varied plots and unexpected endings by the writer and illustrator Víctor el Bizarro.

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