

VEGETATIVE STATE

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Raúl

Yes. What? Yes. Where? Here? No, I don't have a problem with being recorded, go ahead. Yes, but before I answer your question, I want to say thanks for the opportunity given to me on this occasion, for it allows me to be able... let's say, to clarify the proper responsibility such as it concerns me, OR DOES NOT concern me according to the facts.

We had already received several complaints on the matter of the tree when it took place... The event of unfortunate consequences of which we have all had news.

As a matter of fact, this lady from the neighborhood committee, no, women's center, community center which is not the same but is similar ... Hmm, what was the lady's name? ... At this moment, I remember her name, let's say, slightly, not to say barely. Look, it escapes me now, but once it comes back to me I will let you know. She always complained to me about the matter of the

tree, because I am the person in charge of green spaces for this emblematic and beautiful borough, of which I am a native... yes, on my mother's and grandmother's side....

Let's see, so, where do I want to go with this? Because, of course, you are going to say, Don Raúl, you are beating around the bush, but it turns out that ... We are talking about the, how can I say this, UNRESTRAINED growth of this tree, "a growth that does not restrain itself"... do you understand me? Because a tree does not restrain itself; they follow the light without stopping and in every direction and at the same time! Just like say, al major cities do, as to establish some sort of paragon for your better understanding. They are... how to put it... EXCESSIVE.

Now, the fact that the branch was bound to touch the electrical cabling, we can clearly say that "we could have seen this coming". I know, you don't have to tell me. Of course, the branch was going straight to the power line... a line that is... why not say it? - LYING there. Just like, if you'll allow me, the young rider, victim of the event, was LYING there on the asphalt.

Of course, we could say that it was a just matter of looking up and one would have been able to see it coming, but the thing is, you don't see a tree move. Because what happens? A tree moves so slowly that it seems still. A tree lives for... how long? Hundreds of years! So then, of course, imagine your life, your very own life, stretched out to hundreds of years ... SLOW.

So then, of course ... you could say "you should have seen it coming, Don Raúl", "the storm was approaching, Don Raúl", but I would have to answer: "Yes, officer, but YOU COULD NOT SEE IT". That's the central issue in all of this: This is a COMING, that CANNOT BE SEEN.

So, what am I trying to get at with all this? Because, of course, you're going to say, Don Raúl, you're beating around the bush, but it turns out that... Sure, listen, the tree was there before the streetlights were installed. I'd even dare to say that all the people currently living here in the borough came... let's say, after the tree. You need to get that in order to understand it. God first made the

plants, the forests, the seaweed, and then he divided the seas and made the light, and then he created man in, like “the cherry on top”, and later, from that man he extracted the woman. Like “the cherry on top of the cherry” if you want to comprehend it in a more contemporary, more modern, feminist, fashion. And the woman ate the fruit from the forbidden tree of the Garden of Eden. She barely ate from it, not to say very little, but eat she did, and as soon as she ate they felt such great shame that... what did they do? ... they covered themselves with a LEAF. The cherries covered themselves with the cake.

Eva! ... Eva is the name of the lady from the neighborhood committee, no, women's center, community center, which is not the same but is similar. A participative lady but, God, is she insistent. Do you know that saying, "the stormy neighbor"? When people want to fool around and say inversely, that "there's a neighboring storm", well this is not inversely anything, because this neighbor is really... boy, is she stormy! She created such a big storm that they finally gave us the green light, not the traffic light, but for the project itself. And what does the Borough have to do? Just cut the tree. Carry out what is known as a “severe pruning”, which means leaving it as one would say amputated, so as to establish some sort of paragon for your better understanding. But we could never carry out the municipal operation because it always turned out the girl was on the tree; because there is a girl that lives in the house right on the corner, next to the tree. She had to be brought down from the tree on several occasions. And she cried and kicked because she has some kind of “intellectual deficiency”, or “different ability” if one wants to put it in a more contemporary, more modern fashion; so it becomes quite difficult to talk to her. Initially, I would ask her: "Maria Soledad" - Maria Soledad is the girl's name - “do you realize that your shenanigans are hindering the municipal operation?" To which she answered... if you allow me and with all due respect: "Yes."

Hard to get to safe harbour in terms of communication. Without going any further, the very night of the event of unfortunate consequences, of which by

the way, she became a key witness, I personally tried to establish some sort of dialogue again, I asked her several questions directly:

-Did you see anything?

-Yes?

-How?

-But, who?

Girl.

Did you see anything?

Yes.

Yes?

Yes. He had fallen asleep.

What?

Yes. Sleeping. Yes! He was sleeping.

But, Who?

Not the motorcyclist. The tree.

Did you see anything?

He was sleeping.

Yes?

Yes, the tree had fallen asleep.

How?

Trees sleep.

But, Who?

I don't know about the motorcyclist. But the tree was asleep.

Did you see anything?

Yes, in the ceiling. Black leaves.

Yes?

No, not green. Black. They moved.

How?

Like this.

But, Who?

The wind.

Did you see anything?

The tree screamed.

Yes?

Yes. He speaks. He screams.

How?

Like a stadium. Like this.

Haaaaa, haaaa.

The tree is not one, it is many. The tree speaks with all its voices, like an audience, like a stadium, like this:

"Haaa, haaa!"

"One more song" "One more song"

"Oh no, we wont go" "Oh no, we wont go"

"He who doesn't jump is a faggot, he who doesn't jump is a mummy, he who doesn't jump is a mummy, he who doesn't jump is a mummy!"

Where are your legs?

I can't move. I can't move. I can't move.

Eva

"Iii cant moov!!!" screamed and screamed that girl perched on top of the tree while the firemen tried to bring her down. What is that girl saying?!

"Icantmoov!!!" With that strange face she has. Of course, she is far from being a child, she is a grown woman! How old is she? About forty?! Much older than me! And I was trying to concentrate, to explain to the police, because I was the first to arrive. So I said: Look officer, I was perfectly still, lying on my bed around 3:15 in the morning -I have problems falling asleep - when suddenly the power was cut off. And I was shocked!

Then, before I'm able to put on my slippers: boom! Because it sounded just like a bomb. It tormented me! It made me jump.

So then I leave my room and begin to knock on the door next to mine: "Carlos, please! Carlos, please!" - Carlos is my ex-husband, but we still live together - "Carlos, please!" And he stays there looking at me and goes: "Please you!". He doesn't understand a thing! So I just went out. I open the door, go out to the street and it was all black, but I sensed a smell - it just happens that I have very delicate nostrils - and I began to follow the smell.

When I turn around the avenue corner, I open my field of vision and start seeing pieces, chunks, parts of the motorbike. And then I open my field of vision again, and a few meters away I can see the guy's body lying in the middle of the street. "My God! My God!" I was talking to myself. Crying out.

When I got close to him I realized: "hey, there is nothing but broken pieces here!" "Where are your legs?" And the guy barely mumbled: "I can't move, I can't move".

Look, someone once told me: "Eva, if you ever see someone who has suffered an accident, you have to pay attention to the shoes, if the victim has both shoes one it's because he is alive, if both shoes flew off it's because the guy went on to the other side, but this kid still had one shoe on, so I thought: "he's fighting! He's fighting for his life!"

I'm thinking about this when I open my field of vision again and I see, a few meters away, the tree. It was also wounded. Geez! The leaves weren't green, they were black! Of course! The tree's branches finally touched the wires on the power line, a spark was ignited, and since it was windy the tree burst in flames - that image seems so biblical to me - and then it hit me! Of course! This kid was on his bike, the lights went out and, bam! He crashed into the tree. Then I realized that this kid was Manuel. Of course I know him because this kid lives near here, he lives with his mom, a really good lady, like super nice, like really quiet, like just really ordinary people!

He bought that bike not long ago, he pimped it and everything. He'd ride with his girlfriend. He went fast with that bike. I say, hey "No mother ever wants their child to buy a motorcycle." Look, have you heard that saying, "First have a plant, then an animal and then a child"? I have no problem with plants, I've got my plants, my hibiscus. I love plants! I have no problem with animals, I've got my two cats and my two dogs, but when it comes to children! No!...it's one of the reasons Carlos, my EX, and I started to drift apart.

Ok, but the issue is the tree. Let me say, that tree was an ongoing subject, I'm telling you, that just, every day ... I mean ... Ahhhh! I complained! I complained until I got tired! I swear! With Don Raúl, this person who is "in charge of the green spaces", supposedly. I'm telling you, I have waged an all-out war with him. He should have seen this coming!

This tree was a problem, it's a giant tree. The branches had grown monstrously. But I swear it was a giant trunk, it was eating up the pedestrians' space. Stinking of pee! Because I swear, it was a public bathroom. Every time I went by I'd see the ass of some fool who was peeing. Because, oh my God, Men! Men can have a lamp post, a wall, their own bathroom too, but they choose the tree. Hey! Homo sapiens! You're not in the jungle! A stench that, I swear to you, fatal.

It was also a bulletin board, so tacky! It was all lined with ads. 'I need this thing', 'I sell this other thing', 'the music teacher this', photos of lost dogs, of cats. I'm telling you, I am an animal lover, but hey... if you've lost an animal, you've lost it and that's it! It wanted to leave, I don't know... it was run over, done!

Audio: I say, let's cut that tree. I tell you right here, that if this kid Manuel happens to pass over to the other side- may God forbid- right there they'll place the shrine! They'll paint the tree white, glue plastic flowers on to it and, boy, any day the tree is going to just walk away on it own.

So, I say, regarding the matter of the tree, Don Raúl, do your job, please take charge of the green spaces. Remove that tree from there, apply an electric saw.

I mean the matter of the tree is one thing. But its not just that, there's the ghost house, as they call it, is a property that has been in a deplorable state for more than twenty years. You're going to say, ok but, what has Don Raúl to do with this? Well he's in charge of green spaces, right? And this house, I swear, I give you my word, was, it just was ... it was ... a jungle! The plants had swallowed it. I'm telling you, it's... It's just... That's how I imagine things when human beings are long gone from the face of the earth ... No, I don't imagine it, I saw it on TV, when human beings are no longer on the face of the earth, it will take plants only three months to cover everything. The planet is going to be just like a big green ball.

PAUSE.

By the way, the firemen arrived. But the Fire Department had to take care of the girl perched on the tree, screaming, I swear, like a hog, like a pig being killed with a blunt axe.

They asked me if I was a relative, since I was one of the first ones there. "No! I'm a neighbour, I don't have children" It just happens that I'm very attentive, not a leaf falls here without me knowing. And then I realized: hey, but of course! This kid has a mom and his mom is not here! I said: "You know officer, I don't know why I have the feeling this kid's mom hasn't heard and might be still sleeping like a log". So I went over!

I arrive at her house, I ring the bell. Then the lady comes out.

I tell her... I tell her. And she tells me... she tells me. And I tell her... I tell her. And she says, "the police station", she says. So I went over there.

I arrive at the police station, I swear I'm just arriving to the police station, when who do I run into? DON RAUL. I could not utter a word, the only thing I said was: "Don Raul ... the tree." His eyes filled with tears. I let him go, I said "let go, Eva. This matter is not yours". I go into the police station, all is quiet, barely any movement. Suddenly Major Soto comes out - a pretty hunky guy - he comes out of his office and then I saw that the mother was there! She was inside the office, sitting down, in what I imagine to be a sort interrogation room. And hey, it really caught my attention because I saw her, I saw her so undaunted, so immovable, just like... planted there. I don't have any children, you see, so I can't tell you what it feels like when one is about to lose a child, but I would imagine that one would at least cry! Right? I don't know! You despair! But not her, she was there, there so... so...

Mother

No

Yes.

But I don't see him much, because of his studies and because of his girlfriend and because of work. Because of all those things I no don't ...

What?

He told me: "the bike is because of time mum" "because I don't have time mum" he was always running against time, Manuel. Until he ran into a tree.

No mother ever wants their child to buy a motorcycle.

No, I don't want the bike, why would I...

They gave me a mirror that the police picked up. The one you use to look backwards. Why would I want to look back?

He was happy with the bike. He "pimped" it. He said he had "pimped" it. Manuel always loved speed, he could never stay still anywhere.

Since he was young I felt that he had too much energy, that he needed to move. So I enrolled him in several workshops offered by the borough.

He was in basketball, swimming, karate, cooking, he even participated in a theatre workshop.

Once he was very worried because they had given him a character that couldn't move. Imagine that.

He must have been about 6 or 7 years old.

He cried, "I can't play this, Mum, I can't move. "I can't move!"

We rehearsed together. Because it was hard for him. We even made his costume together.

At first he moved a lot, I remember I'd say 'stay still, Manuel'. "But the wind is blowing! There's a lot of wind, mum! "

All the other children played people and entered and exited the stage. They had lines. Some even sang. And Manuel was there, standing still, dressed as ... a TREE.

Sees plant

Sorry. You were asking me... yes, even this thing about being a fireman was because of this issue of speed. He loved speed. I have already told you Manuel is a firefighter, right? ... Well, of course, because of all that coming and going, he would forget things. Every day his wallet, the keys, the alarm clock, every day I'd end up waking him, I had to shake him because he slept like a LOG...

Plant.

No, Manuel is a good kid. The thing with speed is an issue for all kids now days. They have this thing for always wanting to be somewhere else. It's more of a root problem.

What? No. I'm sorry; I have to go outside for a moment.

Plant. She brings plants from outside.

Mother choreography with plants.

Nora

You're very pale, you need more light my sweetie, I'm going to put you here. Do you feel better there hon? Great. And you, my dear, are too big, I'm going to have to do something about you, you're drinking too much water. Hey! Look at you. You keep getting blonder. You're in your prime, love. You know I'm going to have to move you to another pot. This flowerpot doesn't suit you anymore ... No. Of course, a bigger flowerpot, that's what I was telling you. What? No, I am not running off. Of course, love, I can get closer... tell me... What? Are you threatening me? What do you mean I'm not understanding your problem? ... of space. That's what I'm saying. No! Don't shout at me, darling, I have my device turned on.

Now what, my love? But, all of you? ... On the floor? How? Yes, my sweetie, but you see the problem is that the earth is under the floor... What do you mean lift? The floor? You want me to lift the floor so I can bury you? Forgive me for laughing my love but it seems to me like "the cherry on top". But, why would you want me to tear up the floor of my house? What do you mean it's not my house? What do you mean you were here before me? What's that smell? Love, what's that smell?

Okay then, let's get the job done But I don't know if I can do it alone. Who? Joselino? Yes, yes the boy who comes and helps me take care of you. But he doesn't get here until later.

What ..? A pen and a piece of paper? Of course I must have a pen and paper, my love.

Who? Me? Of course I know how to write, my love.

Don't call me any more names, please.

Ok, who is going to tell me what to write first?

What? What a beautiful image, that image seems so biblical to me... What? Okay, I'll shut up.

Joselino

Audio: “Joselino! Joselino!” I heard someone say, barely, like a... when... I was just coming in the house and there was the mam’ calling “Joselino! Joselino!” Her voice was worn out, she had but a hint of voice, who knows how long, how long she was there with the... crying out... you can feel it when words get tired.

The lady was like... How can I explain, she was like, because she stayed, literally ... how can I say... literally the lady was... planted. She had her legs buried in the ground, like this, up to the height of her thigh, more or less. She was buried like... right there in the earth sir! She had raised all the floorboards like ... she had taken all the plants of the house, and I am talking about a huge amount of plants, sir!

I remember that in the room inside she had taken out the whole floor and had buried them in the ground below. She had taken them out of all their pots, which were pff! There was a tower of flowerpots, in a corner. I remember clearly that I thought the plants had kind of rebelled against the pots. You see... flowerpots were an invention of humans to do what they will, and move ... how could I say ... the immovable, you see; there’s a reason plants grow roots, you know.

It couldn’t fit inside my mind... how on Earth had the lady raised the floor alone? She was more than eighty years old.

She had all her clothes, like, they were broken, they were ripped. She had ... all of... all of her parts exposed. It made me nervous because I was a kid, and at that time she was like... like my mother. I went over and I wanted to take her like... She had her hands, where there was... in order to pull the... she had her hands with her fingernails pulled back because of all of the force she

had... Her knees were all scratched, and when the firemen came and they had to uproot her, you could even see the bones, because, you see, she had very thin skin.

Her hair was all tangled. She cried, she looked like... She cried like a little animal, the lady cried.

Me, I never went back to that house... I don't dare to pass by, it scares me. It's just ... you can feel something there. The property is still there. The house is there but no one ever pimped it. The plants ate up the house, it's all covered up. The vines covered the doors, you can't enter or leave anymore. The house is barely visible. The thing looks like the Garden of Eden, that thing... It's been over twenty years already. That day the lady said to me in a voice like a whisper: "Joselino, they say they want to reclaim the territory". I remember clearly that she asked me to take a wrinkled piece of paper she had in her hand, stained with blood. A letter, what do I know, that I later took for a poem ... well, I took that paper, and I saved it.

When I heard about the accident of this kid with the tree - the fireman that crashed with his bike and everything, against the tree... Ironic right? Having been in so many fires, saving so many trees, to end up crashing into one - Look, I know I have nothing to do with all of this, but I wanted to bring the paper because I think it can be of use to you. You are interrogating the wrong people, sir. Look, officer, you could see this coming, but this is such a slow coming, that you don't see it, do you understand me? They are up to something, Maybe in 500 years the world will be nothing but a green ball, pure vegetation, just like the lady's house, like the Garden of Eden... do you understand me?

It's written in the poem left by the lady, I brought the paper so you can understand.

Well... this wasn't the piece of paper, this is like going back in the life time of the paper, but I'll read it to you anyway, and we go back in time.

Manuel

Forgive me. Forgive me. Good Heavens forgive me. Stubborn are the times in which I try to make do with this. Injured I am, by the times in which I open my eyes to find this landscape. I am an animal. I am novice in the practice of inhabiting, novice in surviving. Thou wert all here before I was, nevertheless it is me who survives with limited understanding, guilty reverse of a mystery, that you understand, however, better than I do. Because you live within time, not against it.

I am animal. My response to the world was to flee, my condemnation then, was movement. When you stay, I move forward. Where you settle, I evade. In the face of difficulty, I avoid. Where you establish, I invade. I am animal. I hold my head with my two hands because in it wallows the question I ask of myself. Because my will is distributed in the absurd hierarchy of animal anatomy, in which the brain makes decisions for the hands, for the legs, for the kidneys.

Oh, noble vegetal dispersion! Noble and marvelous branched democracy. God, I beg of you: absolve me of the animal kingdom's forms! Give me something of theirs! May my lungs beat instead. May the tips of my fingers breathe, may my stomach think! May I feed with my skin, so that eating is more like touching than devouring. May the ever-changing forms of my body be my only language, so I become incapable of lying. May death be something that occurs in my chest, while my back, in turn, is born, so I never get the absurd idea that we are moving forward. May the passage of time be nothing more than a new ring in my trunk, every memory a layer of bark that covers me, so that I may touch my rugged memory.

Teach me this day, here, now, with what is left of you and what is left of me, how to speak in chemicals. Open for me your chemical recitation. Teach me how to speak in combinations of bromine and water, rather than in highs and lows. I want to use signifiers that taste of iodine. Signs that can only be deciphered with touch. Sentences that if exposed to the sun, refract into mineral spectrums of

blues and greens. I want to deliver speeches of poison. Let us recite poems whose lines only rhyme their levels of acidity.

What would it be like to grow without returning to the center, without ever regrouping, always moving outwards? Never being able to close oneself upon oneself, never reaching the full circle of "This is I". To be, to grow, always, further out. So that, that thing called I is only the memory of a seed. To be oneself, to be just one-self, is only a seasonal event. They tried to tell us all this, to cover the whole world with their varied words, but all they managed to say was: leaf. Always the same leaf. It's not possible to escape planthood by means of plants. Nor to escape humanity by human means.

I am the last animal. Sitting at the site of the final catastrophe.

This forest was Hell, ladies and gentlemen, even before the flames. This forest was made up of only pine trees. Imagine a city made up only of shoemakers. Only bakers, only nurses. All the pine trees planted in this forest were the same age - because this is how humans found it more efficient to plant. Imagine, if you will, a city of only children. Children alone. Here, ladies and gentlemen, it's as if a kindergarten had been burnt down. "The wind is blowing, the wind is blowing hard, mom!" The wind sounds of beauty in the forest until there's a spark. Until the earth dries up so much that he who softly whistled his friction with the vertices of the leaves, suddenly no longer whistles, but screams in a voice that is not his own, but the voice of fire.

There are not four elements, there are three: water, air and earth. Fire is not an element. Fire is a force that transforms one element into another. It transforms water into steam and wood into ash. By way of fire, we can all become other.

Hear me Zeus: I know we can be other. How much other can we be? Must we burn to come to see? To God I ask: is there something in me that could become them? Given the green in my eyes perhaps? Or if when I speak I always use the same words as if the words themselves were leaves, citations of other leaves, my words like foliage of alternate repetitions, perhaps?

And if those words were only flavors? Not an accumulation of signs that represent ideas... And if memory, then, was only body that is added onto body and not a series of images that represent events... We could then argue: No more representation! May nothing represent anything. May no one speak on behalf of anyone.

The hand thinks for itself, breathes for itself. Every limb has its own brain, its own lungs, its own eyes, its own ambitions, its own deities. Autonomy. The hand is not represented by ideas of the brain, nor by the needs of the eyes. No! It is only from political animal physiologies that tyrants could arise, or representative democracy which is the same. Let us no longer continue down the immature route of the animal.

May the world once more become one big green ball. A sovereign vegetal state. Make landscape painters of those who in some near future wish to paint it.

I am the last animal. Come. Let me do what animals do and what plants do not: let me die.

Plants applaud. They ask for another one.

“Oh no we wont go! One more, one more!”

The girl takes a bow. Takes off the fireman suit and is now dressed as a tree. Ballet.

Girl: When you shed a leaf, how do you stop yourself from crying?

When it rains, how do you manage not to stick your tongue out?

When the sun is burning how do you manage not to move?

Raul: When you're changing your position, how do manage so that no one sees it?

Eva: When I ask you questions, how do you manage not to answer? When are you going to answer? Something?

Nora: Sweeties, do you remember the names you gave to your children this year?

Joselino: How many children did you have this year? And how many did you lose?

Eva: Because you know that we are made of flesh and that we eat meat? Would you like to try a salad?

Girl: Where is your heart?

Raul: If we were to sing the national anthem now, where would you put your hand?

Girl: And where is your brain?

Raul: If we were to decapitate you now, where would we cut?

Nora: Because, sweeties, you know that for us everything that lives, eventually has to die?

Mother: But if you never die, then how can we say you're alive?

- **They failed to identify any culprits**
- What do you mean there are no culprits?
- **The judge, the judges determined that no one is guilty ...**
- No one is guilty?
- **Ma'am ... please ...**
- They can't just tell me no one is guilty ...
- **He crashed against a tree ...**
- But, how about the people that made the bike... huh?
- **The bike was working perfectly.**
- And the people from the municipality? Those in charge of...
- **They're not guilty.**
- Why so much moving here and there?
- **Work is like that these days, ma'am.**
- Work is like that?

- **Things are a little bit everywhere ...**
- No, everything has its place.
- **Yes, but humans beings I mean, they can move to different places and that's good ...**
- Good? For whom?
- **I don't know, for their careers ...**
- Which career, the race against the tree? Do you know why the tree could have killed Manuel and not Manuel the tree ... because the tree was still! It's that simple! Because it knew its place and it didn't move from its place. The stiller something is, the more it survives.
- **You have to sign the resolution ma'am, you can do it anytime ...**
- It will take me two thousand years to sign that resolution.
- **Whenever you want.**
- I'm going to sign it with my branches.
- **Sign it with whatever you want.**

- But do you understand that I now have a son in a ... in a vegetative state?
- **Yes.**
- And what do I do with a son in a vegetative state? Do I water him?! What do I do? If he can't move, he can't move. How does something that can't move live? The tree is the culprit.
- Yes.**
- It cut the power off and in that moment my son became a vegetable.
- **Yes.**
- The tree brought him to his kingdom.
- **Yes.**
- In that moment, in the dark, they took my son away to another kingdom. That's what they're plotting. Someone has to stand in the other's shoes. I understand.