

Costa Blanca

by Kim Atle Hansen & Kate Pendry

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
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This was such a poor place. I wanted it to stand for something, not be washed away - left to die because it was of no use any more, like some old woman no one wants to fuck. So you know what? I went to Franco! In - in freezing winds and rain, with no protection, I stuffed newspaper down my vest and climbed on my Vespa, my little wasp and drove to the capital and begged for an audience. I was covered in oil, filthy and those newspapers sticking out of my vest, and my hair on end. I looked like a peasant. No! I looked like a crazy seagull! Feathers stuck out all wrong, indignant! But I burned, it's true, you can ask anyone who is old enough to remember ... anyone still alive ... they gave two days of official mourning for me, imagine that ...

He trails off. An old man, distracted. Then, as if turning to the rising sun, he begins to glow with the memory of beautiful things. He is not a man afraid of poetry - of finding poetry in the practical, and the banal. He begins slowly:

The shoreline extends from the cliffs in the east along the arc of the sun to the west ...

I just wanted to experience the excitement that - that I had not felt in years. I know it's unusual for a woman to do this. But I *am* a normal woman.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

*This sweet middle aged lady, so
crippled with self doubt and
bluster. She's lost.*

You have to understand our
climate is really very harsh! We
ask ourselves how the hell we
ended up there. We must have
arrived in the summer - my
mother used to say; we Vikings
must have arrived in the summer,
in the south of the country,
where it is green and abundant
with water and strawberry fields.
Staked out our compounds and
said yes! let's settle here, this
looks good. God knows they must
have had the shock of their lives
when the pretty Autumn rust-
leaves fell and the darkness of
the Nordic winter descended like
a curtain, for six bloody months.
Minus twenty, nothing growing,
how did they survive, one asks.
But survive we did, and not just
that but thrived. My Father
always said:
Norwegians are very special
people.
Some mock us, for living in this
climate - especially those from
the mediteranean - pussies!
Norwegians are not the chosen
people, they are the abandoned,
but my god we survived against
all the odds. Put that in your
Sangria and drink it Pedro!
We did not have much - no we
did not, and it was important to
work hard, yes it was. I was
working already at fourteen,
knitting baby clothes for a local
boutique, I have knitted as long
as I can remember. I have always
worked. I have never taken more

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

than my fair share - never even taken my fair share. My husband is the same even when he - when he - when he had the problem with his hip he could have taken money from the state but his pride wouldn't let him - let others sponge off the state - not me! He said - he said.

Pause

Well to cut a long story short. I've always worked, first in the patent office as a clerk and then I worked for a while in the public sector. My husband didn't approve of this I can tell you! He is a very determined man. He wanted to be a dentist but it wasn't to be - still, quite successful - he -

Pause

Obviously we want tourism here. But we don't want *this* tourism. In the Summer it is hell. In the winter it is paradise.

He wasn't really our uncle, but he liked to be called Uncle. It made him feel good. Feeling good is important. It's what makes life worth living.

He grew up.
He grew up in Svolvær.

Svolvær is a town in Lofoten.

Lofoten is an island in the north of Norway.

Norway is a country in the north of Europe. It's not part of the EU. It's an independent country

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

where people like to believe that they are independent.

Of course, they are not.

They like to believe that they make their own choices.

Which, of course, they don't.

They want to decide for themselves and be responsible for their own happiness. Well, maybe not responsible, but free. Free to decide what's best for them.

This is where Uncle grew up. In the cold north.

It was very cold.

The coast line has glorious beaches! Glorious; stunning cliffs, estuaries, bays and dunes. As if ... God had played a hand of poker with the devil, but there were no stakes. A friendly game. So beautiful, so diverse. It could take your breath away. Back then. But it was not perfect. God knows that beauty only comes from perfection standing like a twin beside imperfection. Think of Marilyn Monroe's mole! Her 'beauty mark'. It served to ... highlight her beauty. This flaw. I always preferred Marilyn to Sofia. The light the dark.

He is lost in memory for a moment.

No matter. Our flaw is that the rivers are too short and they are seasonal, and the agriculture is hampered, like a dwarf with a buckled spine, a little chap who does not have long to live. Life is short. Ha!

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Fishing villages and the beauty of working mens' architecture. Ah. The rustic and the rough and the humble. Back then. But do we look through the prism of time and squeeze out the blight and pestilence? I think so.

The agricultural sector, you see, the farmers, suffered a terrible depression that affected the raising of livestock and all the major crops; you from where you sit, who do not eke out the living from the land, you will have no idea of what this must have been like. It was biblical I tell you! Imagine ... well imagine if the electricity just stopped. Right *now*. How much work would you get done? You? How could you sell your produce, if what you produce can only be made by the devil's trickery? And you can forget about any help from the state - you're on your own mate! And everyone you know is in the same boat and you all keep the little money you have in a biscuit tin under the bed with the potty. No banks will give you a bridging loan. Ha, don't make me laugh! It was biblical. And then, what truly did for us: plague. The Phylloxera epidemic obliterated cultivation of *Vitis vinifera*, yes? No? Oh come on! The grape used for the wine industry!

Slight pause.

You think it is a footnote a little agricultural footnote, all this I am saying, but it was a plague I tell you! It ate away at the vines and the farmers came out to find ... devastation. The hand of God and

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

there was absolutely nothing they could do. We would have sold our grandmothers for a violent pesticide at that time. Pah! You and your 'organic' fear of pesticides. What luxury, to get hot and bothered about pesticides. You have never tried to raise a crop and seen it fail. You ... (slightly disgusted) city folk. It was not fine. It was a dying time. It was all dying drying drying up. No crops to yield, the earth rich ... with death salt, and those tiny tiny rivers - no good to anyone. A trickle of stinging gonnoreal piss from a soldier's cock - I'm not being cruel. It was that painful.

Eventually, inevitably, some idiots said:
Let's build factories!

And we, the less idiotic said:
What the hell are we going to produce!

Think of Benidorm.
Before The Plan, our human waste was thrown into the sea!
Buckets of shit my dears, buckets of shit - such was the shitty simplicity of things. No sanitation.
Only a generation or two, ago.

We were poor so who can blame me for wanting to better myself? I will not waste time in defending myself, I am not a criminal. The thing you have to understand about Spanish women ...

I think that women in Spain, like in the rest of the world are becoming emancipated. Yes!

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

They're ... they're trying to copy men. So now women are paying us back in kind. You know man, I know, we all know, it is payback time. Spanish society is a patriarchal society. So it has a chauvinistic ... imprinting. Is this a good word?

Yes.

For historical and religious reasons of course - you want me to get into that now, here? I refuse; go to the library, that is what the library is for.

Imprinting.

Yes. There is a system and it has worked. My mother and my sisters are part of this system. My grandmother, her mother ... my daughter. They married at a good young age and became mothers. They did not question this. But I always knew as a young boy that the system was not perhaps ... optimal. Here I am at the age of eight ... I take my older sister's communion dress and I am holding it up, to see; it hangs limp against my boy-body, but I see our likeness, Rosa and me, and with a tilt of the head, just so, I am a bride of Christ!

Beat

As she enters the room my mother pales - ay ay ay! Quick as a whip my auntie Teresa - who is passing by - takes my mother by the shoulders spins her out of the room shouting:

Maria the water man is coming!

- and my mother blusters away distracted. Auntie Teresa looks at me, her head to one side. She is a powerful woman, tall and mean

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

sometimes. She truly is quick as a whip. She takes the dress and lays it down on the bed, then slaps me across the face, just once. It didn't hurt but it left it's mark. I shouted:
Auntie!

She stops in the door with a curious gaze.
Teresa I was named in baptism, a clean and short name, without addings or embellishments. Call me this or nothing at all. And leaves, leaving the door wide open.

Imprints.

Yes.

I think from ancient times there have always been women who ... are not normal. But generally speaking. Female emancipation is not reflected in what women do. It is reflected in what they can *say* they do. Auntie Teresa died as she lived, in poverty and alone.

In the winter you could throw a cup of hot water into the air and it would instantly turn to snow.

I know it's hard to imagine this cold. The kind that rips into your body. The kind that makes the hairs in your nose turn crispy. The kind that makes your skin red. The kind that makes your joints ache. The kind that at all times threatens to kill you.

You have to be creative and enduring.

Do you know how much money is spent to keep people warm?

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|----------------------|--|---|
| | | | | Almost like love. | When you are really cold it feels good to drink. Just a little sip, and you feel the warmth spread through your body. |
| | | | | Of course, it's an illusion. It's not warmth. | It almost feels like love. Normally, when you get cold the body tries to preserve heat for the vital organs, so it reduces blood flow to the limbs. Your hands and feet get cold. The inside of the torso is more important than legs and arms. It's a survival mechanism. If it goes on for too long the lack of blood to your limbs makes them go black. They die. They sacrifice themselves. Now, what happens when you drink alcohol is that this system is interrupted. The body no longer prioritises, it will spread heat to the entire body. |
| | | | | You could call it democratic. | You could, but the effect is that the whole body is put at risk, and your core temperature will start to sink. And then you will die. |
| | | | | But you'll feel good. | Svolvær is a beautiful place. Endless mountains, chiselled for maximum dramatic effect, crisp, cold water with waves whipping the shore. Peaceful. Violent and peaceful. |
| | | | I hate this. | He would walk to school through deep snow with icy wind pounding on his face. | |
| | | | I fucking hate this! | He would think to himself. Or even say out loud if he was alone. Or even scream towards the sky. | |
| | | | | The other kids would play in the snow. | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|---|--------------|--|
| | | | | Masochistic. | What do you want to be when you grow up? |
| | | | I want to be rich and live in a warm place. | | |
| | | | No. | | You don't want to be a fisherman like your father? |
| | | | Yes. | | Really? |
| | | | | | What about your father, or your father's father, or your father's father's father, who struggled to an inch of their lives in order to give you a life here? Who eventually got swallowed by the roaring sea while trying to give you a decent life? Don't you think you owe them to stay? |
| | | | I don't know. | | I think you do. |
| | | | Maybe. | | So what do you want to be when you grow up? |
| | | | A fisherman. | Masochistic. | That's good. |
| | | | | | He never became a fisherman. He was on three trips with a fishing boat, but each time he ended up vomiting his organs out and freezing to death. Not literally, of course – |
| | | | | Oh, no. | That would just be horrible. But he vomited – |
| | | | | A lot. | And froze – |
| | | | | A lot. | And no one wanted him back on a boat ever again. But he got a job at the fish landing, so it wasn't that far off. This was when fishing became more of an industry, and less of the one-man-against-the-sea-romance. |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Squish, squish.

Chunk. Squish, squish.

Squish, squish.

Chunk.

Chunk.

Squish, squish.

Squish.

Squish.

Chunk? No, not chunk, just squish.

He'd gut them.

The ones that were still alive he'd hit in the head with a thereto designed hammer.

The smell stuck to him. No matter how much he washed himself he still had an odour of fish. It buried itself deep in his skin.

Married.

Children.

House.

The going on of one's business.

The inability of communicating affection.

The indifference.

Divorce.

Man is put on this earth to work. If you take his work from him, his tribe his village his community, he himself becomes sick. It is a killer disease, unemployment. There is only one cure for it. In desperation - for necessity is the mother of invention, many residents began to consider ... other means of livelihood. Some became criminal ... but this did not last long. We may be spread over a huge vista, but there is ... was great intimacy here ... when I was younger. Everyone knew everyone and everyone's business. Criminal behaviour was

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|--|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
| | <p>... not tolerated. And even if it were, it was a dead end street! There is a limit to how many people you can steal from in a small community! Eventually that crop will dry up, too. You'll get the knock on the door and your neighbours will be outside, grimfaced and disappointed: For Christ's sake José, the donkey knows more than you! You've got to stop stealing from your neighbours, or you'll be cast out - but not before we we parade you through the town stark-bollock naked except for a handful of chicken feathers stuck to your privates with honey and tar!</p> <p><i>He shakes his head, smiling at the memory.</i></p> <p>The best of times, the worst of times. I speak of the time before the wars of course but even at this early date some of us knew what was coming. A warm wind, slightly fetid, but fertile, we could smell it and - I will not deny: it came to me clearly in a dream:</p> <p>Tourism as an alternative source of income!</p> <p>But years passed and development of the tourist sector was ... <i>(cheerfully)</i> well it was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War and World War 2!</p> <p><i>Pause.</i></p> <p><i>He remembers ... with increasing pain. Then pulls himself from this dark reverie, as if he has fast-forwarded ...</i></p> | | | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

No one knows exactly when it began, or who started it; fast forward to nineteen fifty nine and I had managed to become mayor of this town. I know! The youngest mayor ever. It was a temporary post, but I stayed for seventeen years! I had nothing to lose. It was the cusp of the nineteen sixties - although we didn't know it then. It is easy to look back from this place I find myself in and say:

Yes, we knew something exciting was happening, that we were all on the brink of a new era - but it doesn't work like that. It never works like that. At the time ... we fought for our lives, and then for our livelihood. I won't tell you which was the worst battle.

In fifty years *you* will look back and say, yes, we knew something was happening in 2016, we were on the brink of a new blah blah! But you will be wrong. It is impossible to know at the time, that revolution is in the wind. No matter what the revolutionaries say -

We have been living here for a while now, three years, and we've just bought a new apartment which is second line from the beach, so it's a nice -in a very nice spot for walking the dog!

Our little dog, Nina is a cute little cross-breed rescue, and to be honest I have had my share of boyfriends. I've never wanted in that department, but don't let my hubby hear me talk like this to

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

you an almost complete stranger
- I don't know what I'm thinking!
You have a way about you - (*she
puts her head to one side slightly,
listening*) ... do I?

Anyhow, one day as I was about
to let myself back into the
apartment block after a stroll,
and a rather attractive grey-
haired man came along with his
little dog Pieri - a white Scottish
terrier who immediately started
sniffing around Nina! It was
hilarious. Dog owners being dog
owners, the man and I started
chatting. Of course we did. He
seemed quite a nice man. We had
a chuckle because apparently
Pieri's mother was a Chihuahua,
which as you can imagine
brought quite an amusing little
scenario to mind if you get my
drift. I mean imagine Pieri's
mother a tiny little Chihuahua
being mounted by a terrier twice,
three times her size. Imagine
looking at that, imagine watching
that, what a sight that would be.
Imagine that this tiny little animal
- well her 'parts' would be small
as well, and the terrier is not a big
dog but my god it is too big for
the little - haha, but she didn't
resist and that's the incredible
thing about dogs I mean she must
have- must have accomodated
him somehow accomodated his
big ... - I told my husband and he
laughed so loudly when I told him
oh he laughed and laughed and
he said:

Stupid fucking idiots. Doesn't
surprise me though.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

So there we are two dog owners -

Of course their women are different. For historical reasons. They have no religion. So their women do not ...

I found that I was good at fucking. This did not take long. I was a curious boy I think. I watched the bugs in the dried summer grass for hours, watched their habits and their rhythms. The lazy buzz of the summer. Still we were few in the region.

The bug-swell, these days. Millions.

I became a man on the beach - *Sex On The Beach*, yes? We could all feel that we were in the middle of an important era, there was no doubt in my mind ... at the time ... every day was glorious, God was still playing that friendly game with you-know-who and they weren't in a hurry, the two of them.

Nineteen-sixty-four oh those yellow polka dot bikinis.

I did not think about it. I did not hesitate, I would go right up and present myself, I had the sleepy-eyes and yes I was in the good shape; but I can't take credit for that- I have the good peasant genes yes, even now I know I am looking good for ... a man of my age. Back then ... I had only just come to puberty when the first charter flight landed here. It came from - let me think was it Sweden or Norway. Norway I think. Yes. It must have been.

Alcohol makes you feel warm.
Makes you feel loved. Even though you're not.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>Why have the kids stopped visiting?</p> | <p>They have moved away and started their own lives.</p> | <p>Product design. Financial analysis. Marrying a dark skinned man.</p> |
| | | | <p>A neg - I'm not a racist, I just think it's a little strange.</p> | | |
| | | | <p>I'm not a racist, my son-in-law is dark. That is, he is not Norwegian. Well, he is Norwegian, but his parents are not Norwegian. Well they live here, but they were born somewhere else.</p> | | <p>Dad, you're just scared, you don't have to be scared. They are mostly good people seeking a better life.</p> |
| | | | <p>They're busy, I understand. It's expensive to travel all this way just to see an old man. With nothing new to say.</p> | | <p>Same old. Why should all these people come to Norway?</p> |
| | | | <p>I'm just saying, if you go to live in a new country you should try to be a part of the society. You should contribute, not just take what you can get your hands on. These people, most of them anyway, they just form ghettos, they don't want to be integrated, they don't even want to learn the language.</p> | | <p>Dad, have you been drinking again?</p> |
| | | | <p>Yes.</p> | | <p>You shouldn't.</p> |
| | | | <p>I know.</p> | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|---|---------------------|---|
| | | | Yes. | | Do you have pain in your joints? |
| | | | It doesn't help. | | Do you want a Voltarol? |
| | | | I don't blame them for not coming up anymore. It's so far. And many times the weather is so bad that it is impossible to get away from here. No boats, no planes, no roads. Who would want to be stuck here? | | You should try Reiki. |
| | | | The minute I retire, | Squish, squish. | |
| | | | The minute I retire, when I'm 62 or 65 or 67 or however old the government thinks I should be before they allow me to relax - here I have been working hard all my life, and now that it's my time to enjoy life, now that I have really deserved to think about myself, what does the goddamn government do? | He said to himself. | |
| | | | They say, no, you have to work two more years. | | |
| | | | But I'm old and worn out! | | We don't care! |
| | | | I don't have many good years left! | | Work until you're 67, or we'll give you far less money. |
| | | | But I've earned that money! | | We don't care, this is how it works. |
| | | | The government has a lot of expenses with the increased number of refugees, therefore they have to make some cuts. | | |
| | | | You want to force me to work until I can't stand up, and give my | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|---|----------|----------------|
| | | | money to the fucking refugees! Where's the justice in that? | | |
| | | | Oh, yes, justice. | Chunk. | |
| | | | Imagine – imagine a place where it's always warm. Where you can do what you want. Where you can decide for yourself and be free to make your own happiness! | | |
| | | | Imagine not being in pain. | Imagine! | |
| | | | Imagine not freezing. | Imagine! | |
| | | | Imagine affordable alcohol and no one judging you for enjoying life. | Imagine! | |
| | | | Oh, imagine being free to live! | Imagine! | |
| | | | Where do Norwegians go to be free - | | Not to Norway. |
| | | | Where do they find their paradise? | Oh, no. | |
| | | | Imagine a little place called Spain. | Ooh! | |
| | | | It has to be the south of Spain. | Yes. | |
| | | | By the Mediterranean. | Oh, yes. | |
| | | | Where can I go and find other Norwegians in the same situation? | | |
| | | | Where can I get Norwegian food and newspapers and aquavit? | | |
| | | | Where can I get by only speaking Norwegian to the waiters? | | |
| | | | Where can I be tended to by Norwegian doctors and dentists? | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Where can I live off my pension without having to pay tax to either Norway or Spain?

Of course.

Tore-?

Vie.

Ja.

Torevija.

Imagine Torevija.

On the Costa Blanca. Between the Mediterranean and the salt lakes.

Twenty degrees in the winter.

I shall never see snow again in my life. I shall never again feel the cold northern wind against my face. I shall never slip on ice again for as long as I live.

I shall just slip ice into my drinks.

All the pain will evaporate.

Bliss.

Sun-burned bliss.

Blistered land.

Beloved land.

Paradise on earth.

There's a little bit of tax.

But not much.

The Norwegian right-wing party *Fremskrittspartiet* proudly announces that they now have an office in Torre Vieja.

Vie-

Cha.

Torre Vieja.

Close enough.

At least fifteen.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

The dream is just an airplane ticket away.

You don't know how lucky you are.

So close.

Has it been there all along?

Yes.

Oh my god.

I was a revolutionary. In my own small way. You see, the first tourists arrived from the North ... and those women took to the beaches - wearing bikinis! Bikinis! In staunchly Catholic nineteen-fifties Spain, well *this* was not going down well with Church and State, I can tell you! It all seems so silly now but at the time it was *crazy*. The military policeman would stand on the edge of the beach looking down at the visitors, and would make a note of all those wearing bikinis - and they would slap the bikini-wearer with a hefty fine the moment she drifted off the sand! Sometimes there were scuffles. You laugh now but it was chaos, the Civil Guard sweating in their uniforms, scuffling with those Scandinavian Amazons in bikinis! You couldn't make it up, and it's true!

The visitors of course were outraged. At that time it was easier to wear a bikini in Iran than in Spain!

Times have changed. The times. They do change ...

Well, the year was nineteen fifty-nine. I was *appalled* that the tourists I had worked *so* hard to entice to the Spanish coast were

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

being treated in this manner. So, you know what I did? I simply declared a by-law: it was fine to wear bikinis! Well there was uproar. The first thing that happens the archbishop threatens me with excommunication. And in those days excommunication was a form of civil death. You cannot imagine. You became ... a leper in society. As if you were declared ... a pedophile. It was that bad. My mother nearly died because of the shame. She couldn't look at me. She begged me to reconsider, to clear the family name, to not make such scandals for the sake of these blonde tourists, these giant naked *putas* from the north!

I have been surrounded by women for the most part of my life.

What you have to understand is that we grew up under Franco and the Catholic regime. This was a strict business.

Yes, if we are talking about me ... because I think I am the real problem. I mean I do this ... because mentally I have some hatred of women. Maybe I should be psychoanalysed! I make myself available, but then...

You say: doesn't it bother you? Somehow?

You say:
You there's something wrong with you, you hate women. From a practical point of view, aren't

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

you afraid of losing clients?

Of course. But – like everybody else, I conceal certain things when I am at work. I am not the only man who hates his customers!

My husband had driven to Torremelinos he does love the golf sometimes I think he lives for it but I wouldn't say this, he deserves - he works hard. He used to work very hard. He always wanted to be a dentist ...

Pause

So he asked if I had a boyfriend and said something about how men and women weren't supposed to live alone or some such. He - let's call him José - asked if I would mind if he buzzed on my buzzer sometime to take me for a drink? I said, well yes okay, that would be pleasant, because I believe one is never too old to make new friends - make new friends - new - ... but quite honestly, I didn't really think anymore about him - about it, I really didn't!

Uncle booked a flight that would depart on the morning of his 67th birthday.

He booked the flight when he was 65.

He counted the days.

Squish, squish.

The ache.

The suffering.

He was freezing, but the cold

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|--------------|
| | | | | <p>could not touch him anymore, because in his heart the dream was burning.</p> <p>With the power of a subtropical sun.</p> <p>He only drank the cheapest beer.</p> | |
| | | | <p>Do you know how many Spanish beers I can buy for the price of one Norwegian?</p> <p>Goddamn government.</p> | | |
| | | | | <p>He counted the days.</p> <p>He bought swimming trunks and tank tops. They didn't look good on him, but who the fuck cares?</p> <p>The moustache that had been on his lip for 43 years, it had witnessed his decay. It had witnessed the passing of time through an endless number of remarkably similar days. It had gone from a proud, rich black to a sedate, apologetic grey.</p> <p>Some years ago his job had been replaced by a machine. No more squishing and chunking, just pressing the green button in the morning, staring at the machine and pressing the red button in the afternoon. Occasionally sending off barrels of guts to animal food manufacturers.</p> <p>On the very early morning of his 67th birthday he stood in front of his bathroom mirror and shaved off the moustache. The thick, grey hairs fell into the sink and for the first time since 1973 he saw the skin between his upper lip and his nose. It was red and</p> | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

sore. Hello, he said to the man in the mirror as if meeting a new acquaintance.

With his new acquaintance he boarded the plane, never to return.

So, at three one morning,
Zaragoza takes matters into his own hands. Stuffing newspapers down his jumper to keep out the cold, he sets off on the nine-hour ride to Madrid on his scooter. I was driven, I tell you, angels, devils, who knows - who cares, it was like a force, I felt it, exhilarating! Like the wind. It was so cold. But how else could I get there? Something *had* to be done.

The dream we had, we were so close, and this petty but gargantuan system was going to take the shit on our dream. Easy for the cops to 'do their duty', they didn't know hunger. That fear ... of losing everything. Those who believe in systems, the police, government ... the church ... they feel they will always be protected. Farmers of dying crops have given up on God. There is no safety net once the crop is dead. I arrived at the Prado Palace and I presented myself. Sure I was a young scruffy seagull, but dammit I was the mayor of this small town, with its little local difficulty but I wished to discuss it with the General himself!

Our town is a haven for holidaymakers.
Our town is a *haven* for

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

holidaymakers!

This is where I shall die.

And this is where I shall live.

This is bliss.

It feels like moving south also
moves the focus point in his body
further down.

Øl, he said, and sure enough, the
waiter came back with a
beautiful, dewy glass of beer.
Two euros. Oh my god.

Uncle said.

He rented an apartment just by
the bay. From his balcony on the
seventh floor he looked down at
the beach, the beautiful
promenade and the glorious
Mediterranean water gently
washing up onto the sand and
the rocks.

An old fishing village, ironically.
He swore he would never eat fish
again. Why would he? Finally, he
didn't have to think about the
future. Who cares about the
future?

Not that he's aware of this or can
put it into words, but there's a
sensation of self that lies more in
the belly-area than in the face,
and it is surprisingly liberating.

On the ground floor of his
building there is a bar called
Sunset Beach.

Are you Norwegian, a fat,
shirtless man sitting at another
table, asked him.

They laughed.

Uncle took his shirt off.

Er du norsk?

Er du norsk?
Only Norwegians drink this early
in the day.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Shame be gone.
 The decaying body in all its glory.
 Not even apologetic.
 He had just made his first friend.
 So easy.
 Everything so easy.

I don't ever want to be sober.

Why would you?

The sun brushing their skin. The
 alcohol soothing their insides.

Norwegians in Spain live far
 longer than the ones back in
 Norway. Many are over a
 hundred years old.

Really?

Yes, really. This is therapy, right
 here. When you enjoy your life
 you want to live longer. Naturally.

You have something to live for
 when you wake up every day
 with a smile on your face. If I had
 stayed in Norway I would be dead
 by now, I'm absolutely sure of it.

The sun gives life.

You look like an orange too.

I feel like an orange.

Scull!

Skål!

What?

Salud!

Uncle and his new friend decided
 not to drink before 11 am. You
 have to have some sense of
 dignity and self-control. So every
 morning at 11 they'd find
 themselves at the usual table at
 the Sunset Beach Bar and order
 the first beer of the day, just in
 time before the blood alcohol
 concentration dropped to an
 uncomfortable low.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

They read Norwegian newspapers.

Oh my god, all these refugees coming to Norway.

15 000 in one year, it's insane. Soon there will be more foreigners than Norwegians. The country is doomed. It's not because they like the country, it's only because we have money. We have worked hard for our money.

We worked hard to find oil. And so they come and want a piece of the cake.

- that's not our fault. And what do they do when they come? They rape women, they break into houses, they stab people to death. And we're not allowed to defend ourselves? Should we just let these people go free? These traumatised psychopaths. When they send 500 refugees to a town of only 150, what are they thinking? Look, here's a kindergarten that had to close because they put a refugee's house just beside it and the refugees started circling the kindergarten and behaving in a threatening manner. Is that okay? Should we just pull down our pants and let them fuck us up the arse? Because that's what's happening. These people marry children, for fucks sake. 40 year old men arriving with their 11 year old wives. Who're pregnant!

Yeah.

Yes.

Well - we did find oil...

Well, they are fleeing from really terrible places -

Oh, fuck.

I'm so glad we escaped before the whole country went to shit.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|---|-------------------------|---|
| | | | | Another round of beers. | Tell me about it. |
| | | | No. | | Did you hear about the source-tax? |
| | | | Oh my god. Fucking vultures. | | They want every Norwegian citizen living abroad who receives their pension from Norway to pay 15 % of their income back to Norway. |
| | | | Can't they just leave us alone? | | I know. We don't want anything to do with Norway, but they keep trying to take our money. |
| | | | | | Why should we give our money to the Norwegian politicians, who just waste it on housing foreign rapists and ridiculous, meaningless art? I don't want my money to go to some strange man who draws penises on cardboard boxes and says this is art, and everyone says oh, that's so deep. |
| | | | | Oh, that's so deep! | It deeply provokes me. |
| | | | That's the meaning, you're supposed to be provoked. | | Oh, fuck you. I'd rather pay someone to kick me in the groin. |
| | | | | Another round of beers. | But, thanks to <i>Fremskrittspartiet</i> , the source-tax doesn't apply to us. |
| | | | Really? | | Yes, really. |
| | | | Thank god for <i>Fremskrittspartiet</i> . | | Because there is a special tax-deal between Norway and Spain. |
| | | | So we don't have to pay? | | Nope. |
| | | | Ha ha! | | Ha ha! |
| | | | Go fuck yourselves. | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Our town is a haven for holidaymakers,
Yes, I was a frustrated town planner scootering in wind and rain to lobby the most fearsome dictator of the modern age, but so persuasive was I – I who lived to be eighty-five – and so intrigued was the dictator by this excitable, oil-stained visionary standing before him that ... that Franco granted me my wish.

Yes he did.

He asked me:
How did you come? By train or aeroplane?

I said:
Nope. On a Vespa.

My God, said Franco. Yes. That surprised him. So much so that the dictator sent his wife to the coastal backwater to see my tourist experiment for herself. And she was impressed by what she saw. That's all it took. María del Carmen Polo y Martínez-Valdés, first Lady of Meirás, Grandee of Spain was no fool. She was, in fact a smart cookie - when it came to this situation. Franco waved his hand and the Church backed off and tourists were soon free to wear bikinis wherever they liked without threat of public humiliation!

A miracle!

Because I knew, and perhaps the first lady knew that if you want people to come to your town for

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|--|--------|---|--|---|
| | <p>their holidays you have to be ready to accommodate not just them but their culture.</p> | | | <p>Uncle received 35 000 euros a year from his Norwegian pension. That's not a lot in Norway, but it is double the average Spanish wage.</p> | |
| | | | <p>Who wants to be a poor, cold bastard when you can be a rich, warm bastard?</p> | <p>He sold his Norwegian house for 300 000 euros.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>He was a rich man.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Masochists.</p> | |
| | | | <p>I'm feeling lonely.</p> | <p>Uncle was rich enough to do whatever the fuck he wanted.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>He said with a tear in his blood-shot eye.</p> | <p>Miss your wife?</p> |
| | | | <p>Oh, hell no. But I do miss having someone.</p> | <p>He looked down at the beach, with all its fleshiness. Mostly old, roasted flesh. All the wrinkles and the sun-damaged skin. So many ladies, but the ones who don't have husbands here take home young Spanish guys. Poor men, how do they stomach it?</p> | |
| | | | | <p>His new friend had an idea.</p> | <p>I have an idea.</p> |
| | | | | <p>A Norwegian woman working in the personal service industry, so to speak. Name of Verås.</p> | <p>A contact.</p> |
| | | | | <p>No, of course not.</p> | <p>Not doing the actual work herself.</p> |
| | | | | <p>Knock on the door.</p> | <p>Just facilitating.</p> |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|----------------------|
| | | | Hello? | | Mrs. Feross sent me. |
| | | | Come in. | She had a detached look in her eyes. | |
| | | | Piercing. | Detached, but at the same time piercing. | |
| | | | How old are you? | Brown skin. | 18. |
| | | | Are you sure? | | Yes. |
| | | | It was nice. | It was the first time he'd been with someone with a different ethnicity. | |
| | | | She was nice. | | He was an old pig. |
| | | | I don't want to deal with shame. So I don't. Fuck shame. Live life. | But he denied the shame. | |

I've never been in love in my life. I'm too detached from ... women fascinate me but I can't fall ... in love - you know why? Because I already feel complete. Usually you fall in love when you feel incomplete. You are trying to find the missing piece. But I ... am smooth. I have no sharp edges that need to be rounded by love. There might be some flies buzzing round your eyes but there aint no flies on me!
 I can of course make the show for these ladies, it is they who crave that their sharp edges be rounded, that their broken spokes be fixed up good. That everything works in the kitchen.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

It is barely even a metaphor.

Ladies, the knife sharpener and the umbrella man have arrived! I also fix gas stoves. So let's get married!

This is what they want to hear. All of them yes. Even if it is only so that they can ... I did get married. She was Norwegian. I lived in Norway for a while ...

He reflects for a moment ... in pain.

The problem the hotels have is not that the guests try to jump into the hotel pool, it's that they try to jump from one balcony to another. They are drunk ... they are drunk and they don't see the danger and they fall ...

1030 am.

A walk along the beach and out on the breakwater.
Just to get the body going.
It had been raining.
There, bobbing in the water, bumping against the rocks.
A body.
Floating face down.
Another one.
And a really small one.
All face down.
Bloated.
What are they doing here?
This is not acceptable.
It's supposed to be a paradise, for God's sake.

Hello?

Should I poke it with a stick?
Is there a stick?
No.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|---|--|--|
| | | | <p>What about the tip of the shoe? Scary. What if it suddenly grabs my leg and pulls me into the water? Why would it do that? Who knows. It's too slippery. Should I call someone? Does it look strange, me standing here staring into the water? Has anyone seen me? Maybe I should just walk away. It's better if someone else deals with it. Someone who knows what to do. Where do they come from?</p> | <p>And then, in the waves. A piece of wood. A woman. A child. Dark skinned.</p> <p>The woman holding the wood with one arm and the child with the other, stretching her head towards Uncle, coughing up water.</p> <p>She sees the floating bodies and turns the boy's head away, but he turns it back in fascination.</p> <p>So tired.</p> <p>She reaches her hand towards Uncle.</p> <p>In his sandals, he carefully steps down on the slippery rocks.</p> | <p>Help.</p> <p>Help.</p> <p>Help.</p> |
| | | | <p>Easy.</p> <p>You can't just float into a different country and expect people to drop everything they have in their hands to help you.</p> | <p>Uncle didn't have anything in his</p> | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

hands. So he stretched them towards her.

She grabbed his old but strong arms and with surprising force pulled herself and the boy out of the water and onto the rocks.

Thank you.

The feeling of her skin against his. Her muscles. Clutching his arms.

Thank you.

Was that a good deed?

Why did he help them? He didn't owe them anything.

Yet, watching people drown is not a pleasant way to spend a morning.

The woman cried and hugged her son firmly.

The boy still staring at the floating bodies.

She got up.

Dripping wet.

Took the boy by his hand and started walking.

Leaving a trail of water, like a slug.

Where were they going?

They walked onto the pavement.

Looked left and right. Left and right. Started walking right.

Good luck.

He whispered.

With a lump in his throat.

I didn't mention - I didn't bother mentioning this to my husband, I don't need to bother him with every drip and drop of my boring day, God knows he has enough to think about. When he was thinking of being a dentist I supported him at that time and he has never forgotten that. He reminds me of that time, when I

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

supported him. He - he reminds me often that I - he's very grateful, deep down. Deep down he's very grateful, he doesn't show his emotions - *"typisk norsk"* as we say - a typical Norwegian. It's very normal. He is, it's because of the cold you see, we keep things ... inside. Buried. Brrr! People in warmer climates are more open - I know him very well. So I know not to bother him with - just as he returns the favour and doesn't bother me with his ... golf stuff!

A few days later, I saw José on the beachfront, but he was in a hurry, rushing to the post office or some such. I didn't give it a second thought I laughed, it was hilarious. He was - was what is that film ... that children's film ... like the rabbit who was late he didn't even look me in the eye I called out:

José!

José!

- and you know when a person sees you but doesn't see you, I'm fairly sure he saw me but he was so distracted the poor thing, he just couldn't stop to chat - God knows I know the feeling, you know when you are so busy and you have so much on your mind ... you can't ... you don't have the possibility to stop.

And - and say hallo.

However. Later that same morning José came to my apartment block and buzzed and said through the buzzer:

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|---|-------|--------|--------------|
| | | I am sorry for being rude earlier today ... | | | |
| | | Oh that's nothing, think nothing of it! Haha! | | | |
| | | <i>Pause</i> | | | |
| | | May I come up for a brief chat with you? | | | |
| | | <i>Pause</i> | | | |
| | | Oh. Okay. I am a trusting soul! Haha! | | | |
| | | I am a trusting soul. | | | |
| | | We chatted for a while, I didn't offer him tea or coffee and he didn't ask for anything. But there were some sugared almonds in the bowl on the coffee table, and - and he took a few. I didn't offer them but I felt he must have felt comfortable in my - in our home - enough to take the sugared almonds. | | | |
| | | He told me: | | | |
| | | I have a son, he is a seventeen year old son, you know? | | | |
| | | Oh. Yes. | | | |
| | | I ... er "started late" in parenting he he. I am caring for him - for my son until he goes off to university ... yes. | | | |
| | | Oh. | | | |
| | | He talked about his other dog - a German Shepherd - I said: Well THAT'S a big dog if you get | | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

my drift!

He said:
 Yes, it is. But kind and very loyal. I
 am a great ... dog lover.

Oh me too me too.

Anyway he didn't stay very long
 and I didn't see him again for
 quite a while. I really didn't give
 him a second thought there was
 so much going on, there is always
 so much going on in - in ... our life
 here. I - we often visit friends or
 have friends over to visit,
 sometimes they come from
 Norway and we have a lot of
 friends here of course I mean a
lot. It can get a bit much
 sometimes - sometimes you can -
 ah - feel like a *First Lady* because
 the schedule is so full. Our
 cleaning lady is local. She is
 Spanish. We are very good
 friends also with the owner of
 Sunset Beach - the bar, you know
 it? He is Spanish but he speaks
 very good Norwegian, he
 understood long ago that would
 be an advantage - he was no fool!
 He is a good friend ... I ... well he -
 he says:
 I have lots of you to take care of.
 You are like family, family!

She apparently changed her mind
 and passed to go the other way.
 Then she just stopped.

She didn't know what to do.

Hungry?

Pointing to his mouth.
 Mimicking eating.
 She nodded.

Poor thing.

It was at this moment Uncle did a
 remarkable thing.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | An impulse. | Why he couldn't really say. | |
| | | | Come, come. Not dangerous. | Come, he said and lead the way towards his building. | |
| | | | Come, come. Food. | She followed carefully. | Not without suspicion. |
| | | | | He had bread and cheese in the apartment. He could spare some bread and cheese. Perhaps even a coffee. | |
| | | | Come, come. | Pling. | She looked around her as they walked up the narrow street. Open the door. Calling the elevator. |
| | | | | No matter how much he pointed his finger to the elevator and explained that it was to take them up to the seventh floor. | She wouldn't move. |
| | | | Like a donkey. | | |
| | | | Fine, we'll take the stairs. | | |
| | | | Oh god, the stairs. | | |
| | | | Welcome. | His face was glowing red when they finally reached his floor. | |
| | | | Were they not impressed? | He expected them to smile and be happy. | |
| | | | They're probably too tired to smile. | They just looked at his apartment. And at him. | What does he want? |
| | | | I hate it when that happens. | Their clothes still wet. They probably lost their luggage. | |
| | | | | He got them towels and searched through his own clothes to see if there was anything suitable. | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|--------------|
| | | | | There really wasn't. They'd have to make do with his shirts and shorts and underwear that probably could fit them three times over. They dried themselves off and put on his old shirts. | |
| | | | Come, sit down. | They still smelled a bit of fish. | |
| | | | Look, cheese slicer. You know cheese slicer? | He got the bread and the cheese. | |
| | | | | Lots of butter. They ate. Oh, they ate. | |
| | | | Water or juice? | | Juice. |
| | | | | They drank. Oh, they drank. Until their stomachs ached. | |
| | | | You want to lie down? | He pointed at the bed. And tried to signal that he didn't intend to join them. | Thank you. |
| | | | | He watched them get into bed and pull the blankets over themselves. So tired. So peaceful. | |
| | | | So beautiful. | | |
| | | | That's a good question. | Why was he helping them? | |
| | | | | It made him feel good. It actually made him feel good. | |
| | | | Just sleep. I will be back soon. | | |

They plunge into the void ... I do pay my taxes. Of course!

So with this *dirty* money I make, I might be paying a priests wages. Fucking priests. There I said it - ha!

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Ah.

Why are there so many murders here? There's an abundance of partner-killings you know. More than ... the national average.

Beat

Maybe it's the heat. Maybe it's people finally having time to see who their partner really is. Maybe it's a feeling of being stuck with this person forever. The unfulfilled expectation of freedom. Maybe it's the air.

For some people *free time* is the root of all evil. They come over here ... yes, they come over here

-

He smiles wryly and shakes his head ...

Look we are all trying to survive the plague aren't we? I don't want to get washed up on the fucking beach like some ... animal, strangled by plastic bags, my insides slashed to ribbons by tin cans ... the detritus of you human beings -

Beat

No. I don't consider myself human, or normal. Normal people are devious. I am ... quite see-through. It's very clear what I am up to. Some women are stupid, and some are wilfully ... ignorant. They look the other way, they ... make a trade-off: some companionship. The illusion is enough for them you know. It has never stopped amazing me

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

how little they need to feel the illusion of completeness. I look them in the eyes and they think I am looking at them deeply – really *seeing* them. As if they have been willed into existence by my gaze. Silly silly women. They are a product of a plague. It is not their fault. They choose to believe I have feelings for them ... but as soon as money is in any human equation all feelings are suspect.

Then I bumped into him on the beachfront one lunch time, chatting to another lady. I briefly said:
Hi.

- and I just continued on my way!
In fact (*airily*) I have only just remembered that encounter, it was well - I - that day - I was - was going to the book club so I was in a hurry we have a ladies book club once a month my husband calls it 'the Coven' he always says - it's so funny - he says:
Don't forget your broomstick!
- and calls me a 'fucking witch' - in Spanish! Oh when he speaks Spanish ... he can do anything he puts his mind to my husband - he is very ... gifted ... and so I was probably quite rude. To him. He was giving her directions. The, the other lady on the beach. But -

Beat

- one hour later, there was a buzz at my door again, and it was him.

He - he came up for a short visit. Spanish men ...
- do more than talk with their

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

hands, I can tell you! Ha ha!

Painful pause

This little tale finally came to the crunch last Sunday. There was a buzz on the buzzer just after 9.00 a.m. – I had barely had my second cup of coffee and hadn't even thought about breakfast yet - I, my husband - ...

Anyway, I let José in and he sat there, restless and chatting, fiddling with things on my desk and on the coffee table ...

Uncle went down to the Sunset Beach Bar, where his friend was already sitting at their table.

Good morning.

There were ambulances out by the breakwater.
Body bags.
Police.
Coastguards.
The beach, usually crowded by old skins hogging the best spots now eerily vacant.

Have you seen it? Another boat of refugees just sank out there. Dead bodies washing up on the beach. Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

We should build a big fucking wall.

Are they all dead?

This is not what I paid for, it's completely unacceptable. Damn incompetent fools.

Are they all dead?

They say some might have managed to make it alive and they are hiding in the town. We should be careful and keep our doors locked.

Yeah.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|--|
| | | | Sure. | | Beer? |
| | | | Nothing. | He drank in silence. | What's wrong with you? |
| | | | For whom? | | It's a fucking disgrace. |
| | | | | | Some of them turned up in a fishing net. Can you imagine? Fish, fish, fish, oh – African, fish, fish, fish. Let's just hope they don't end up in the paella. |
| | | | | He said he didn't feel too good and that he'd go back to bed. So he did. | |
| | | | | He wondered if they'd still be there. | |
| | | | What if they're gone? What if they've taken all my things? | | |
| | | | Shouldn't have left them alone. Ungrateful bastards. Can't trust anyone anymore. | | |
| | | | | And then - behind a garbage container sat a thin man. A thin, black, wet man. With the gaze of a frightened cat. | |
| | | | A new impulse. | | |
| | | | Come, come. Smile. Come, come. | Come, Uncle said and waved his hand. | |
| | | | | The thin, black, wet man followed him up the stairs. He carefully opened the door, breathing heavily. | |
| | | | Hello? Is anyone here? | | |
| | | | | His things were there. Just as he left them. The woman and the boy lay in his bed. | |
| | | | | He pointed the man to the couch, | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

got him a towel, clothes, bread, cheese and juice.

Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you.

The man folded his hands towards him. It felt real.

It feels real.

A climate refugee is someone who, due to a change of climate in his home country is forced to move in order to sustain a decent life. The people in the boat came from vast droughts.

They were the lucky ones. Uncle came from a deadly cold. They all had to move in order to stay alive. It's their human right. They were in the same boat.

So to speak.

He needed the sun, they needed the water. They all needed a friendly climate.

Friendly Spain.

He was surprised to feel kinship with black people. He didn't know it was possible.

The only difference was of course that he had money and they didn't.

Sharing is caring.

It didn't hurt him at all letting someone else lie in his bed and eat his food.

It just made him feel richer.

It just makes you feel richer.

Suddenly he gets up and comes over to me, tries to let my hair down from the tail I usually wear, I have quite long hair as you see, I never fell for the temptation to cut it into a practical style, a suitable style for a woman of my

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

... . age ... you are as young as you feel! I always say and starts trying to kiss me, groping me all over. I did not enjoy this one little bit and I kept pushing him away!

The funny thing is, while I was pull - pushing him a - away, I - I suddenly noticed that Pieri was doing pretty much the same thing to Nina, as he José was doing to me, trying to mount me, trying to touch me and well he wanted me it was almost like a dog he had no control over himself and I burst out laughing! It was sort of a case of man humps woman, while dog humps dog – which to me was absolutely hilarious. It really was absolutely hilarious. It was so funny. It was hilarious - I was laughing and laughing. I could hardly speak. I had tears streaming down my face.

Well for some reason *he* didn't find it so amusing; so I tried joking -

Hey, mister how about wining and dining me first? And of course this was a joke because because ... God it was hilarious.

So anyway ... basically I ... resisted his advances completely and told him

PLEASE leave!

Which he did, in a terrible huff, saying:

I'm fucking horny!
This isn't fair. You - you cold

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--|-------|--|--------------|
| | | <p>woman, cold Norwegian woman - there is something wrong with you. You are a fucking icebox! A fucking witch!</p> | | | |
| | | <p>I showed him the door, I couldn't believe it. Nina looked up at me with her big brown eyes as if to say: He is a bad man, mummy ... <i>(absently)</i> Daddy is a bad man.</p> | | | |
| | | <p>I thought that was probably the end of it.</p> | | | |
| | | <p>But no, the story got better! Oh just you wait, wait til you hear ...</p> | | <p>He didn't really know how it happened, but over the next couple of days twelve more people moved into his apartment. Men, women and children.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>He bought mattresses and covered all available floor space with them.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>He bought lots of food. The women prepared the most delicious meals.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Everyone was really nice to him and called him Uncle.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>We were nice to him.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Now there were 26 people there.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Everywhere in the apartment you could feel the warmth of someone else.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>It was a lovely climate.</p> | |
| | | | | <p>Every month when his pension</p> | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

arrived he would set aside half for food and rent and divide the rest into 26 shares that he'd hand out.

Isn't it incredible that one man's pension can support 26 people? You just have to be willing to lower your standards a bit. In order for some to raise their standard of living, others must lower theirs, it's basic maths.

He couldn't even remember what it was like to feel cold and lonely.

At the store he ran into his old Norwegian friend.

I thought you were dead.

No.

Oh my god, what's with all the food?

Just stacking up.

You're thinner.

I know.

Let me help you up with the bags.

No, that's okay.

No, really, I insist.

I said it's okay!

Christ, what the fuck has happened to you?

He knew it was a crime to house illegal immigrants. He knew he was a criminal. Every time he saw a policeman his mouth would go dry. But he wouldn't let it stop him. He was careful. Kept the noise down and took the trash out one bag at a time.

You see - you see, the Costa Blanca is actually a very small place. Unless you live here like we do - unless you are local you wouldn't know this, but it really is we all pretty much know each other, or know *of* one another - I ... I -

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

Some days later I was telling my son about the incident and he started asking me a couple of questions about the man's dog, his appearance and so on and so forth. My son then started laughing. Oh he laughed and laughed, he couldn't speak he was laughing so hard. I didn't - I couldn't quite ... I waited until he wiped the tears from his eyes. He said:

Mum, you are so fucking stupid!

You see Andreas lived up in the hills with his girlfriend a few years ago - three years - they aren't together any longer - and good riddance I say - she was one of those types, you know. So my, so Andreas often went for long walks on his own, by himself because she. Well she was Spanish, but I just don't think they were right for each other. He admitted it to me after it was over and I couldn't help but say: Darling, I told you so

And he said:

I know mum, you're always right.

He's a good boy. A good man. Eh? Oh yes! On those long walks, well he said he regularly saw a Spaniard with a German Shepherd dog and yes you've guessed it! Well Andreas found him to be quite a nice guy and they chatted. The Spaniard told Andreas about ... his *wife!*

Pause

And how she worked on the Internet the whole time, which drove him crazy! Well I can

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

imagine! Anyway, eventually, boys being boys, the Spaniard felt he had to brag about various Norwegian women who also walked their dogs in the area. He said that he regularly picked them up and even 'fucked them behind the bushes' on a regular basis. At the time, of course, my son being male and boys will be boys he thought José was a lucky guy. Andreas always says whenever he comes to visit: Damn those Spanish are lucky men. They always get the girls!

Pause. She shifts her focus.

I found out some amazing things yesterday.

You smile and say
"Oh? What?"
I say with a constant smile on my face:
Do you remember meeting a young Norwegian chap up in the hills - you know, you once showed him how to find wild asparagus?

Oh, you're pale now ...

Er, er, yes, I yes ...

He is my son
There go the sugared almonds -
He told me everything!
You like to do it to Norwegian women in the bushes. You are you are ... I am happily married. I would never do it with you. I felt sorry for you.
The dogs are yapping, you grabbing at the door handle, sweating ...

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|

You silly little man!
Sweating profusely squeezing out
of the door, mumbling -
You horrible man!
She is beginning to cry:
I just felt sorry for you that's all! I
thought you were lonely!

The door clicks, Nina looks up.
Wagging her tail. This sorry tale.

Goodbye José! Why - why don't
you stick to your - your wife in
future - your - your ... oh! ...

Long pause

Darling ... I ... no .golf today? No
... *(a look of terror on her face,
then suddenly, lifting her arms to
ward off a blow):*

- ah no!

Why are there so many murders
in Torre Vieja? There's an
abundance of partner-killings.
Maybe it's the heat. Maybe it's
people finally having time to see
who their partner really is.
Maybe it's a feeling of being
stuck with this person forever.
The unfulfilled expectation of
freedom. And all this time,
there's so much time.

When Uncle came back with the
bags one of the men lay in the
shower with his throat slit open.

He tried to rape me.

No I am not normal. Normal
people accept and tolerate
abominations in every day life.
They lie on the beach glancing
idly at corpses washed up. No
animal sits near the sun-rotting
corpse of one of its own. Glancing
idly.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|--|--|--|
| | | | Oh my god. Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god. | | |
| | | | We have to get rid of him. | He couldn't help but feel that this was his fault. | |
| | | | I don't know. | | How? |
| | | | You have to figure it out. I'm going out and when I come back I expect him to be gone. Okay? | He took a stance of authority. | |
| | | | | | Okay. |
| | | | | He needed a beer. He sat himself down at the usual table and let the delicious, foamy drink run down inside him. | |
| | | | | He kept drinking until the image of the dead man in his shower felt like a dream. After four beers it almost did. Then he had no money left. | It's good to see you're back. |
| | | | Could you buy me a beer? | | Sure. |
| | | | Do you want to know a secret? | | Sure. |
| | | | There are 26 refugees living in my apartment. Well, 25 now. | | Seriously? |
| | | | Yes. | | Shit. Why? |
| | | | I invited them. | | What? Why? |
| | | | Don't tell anyone. | | You're kidding. |
| | | | No. | | That's really out of character. |
| | | | I know. But it's good. It's a good thing. I'm doing a good thing. We're in the same boat. | | You're fucking crazy. Do you know how dangerous that is? |
| | | | | When he got home the body was gone. | |
| | | | Where did you put him? Never | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
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mind, I don't want to know.

A knock at the door.

Police! Open up!

Oh no.

Everyone quiet.
Hello, officer.

Are these illegal immigrants?

It's my family.

No, it isn't.

It was of course the old
Norwegian who tipped them off.

Bastard.
Can't trust anyone anymore.

The thing is – I support these
people and they live under my
roof. It's okay. We're all happy.

Take them away.

What if we could come to some
sort of arrangement?

What do you mean?

You know what I mean.

And so, our great Uncle sacrificed
himself for us yet again. Once a
month policemen would come to
the apartment and he'd hand
them an envelope.
800 euros.

We had to ration food and cut
down on meat and water
consumption.
We never complained.
We felt loved.

All we had was the sun. The sun,
the sea and the exceptional
beaches. The harbour was too
small to fish, agriculture
shrivelled by disease and salty
earth, there was no reason to
build factories - what could we
produce! What the hell could we
produce? The potential for
tourism was all the town could
offer and I spent years ... of my
life ... making it happen. People

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|---|--------|--|---|--|
| | <p>thought I was stupid. I know what people thought. With my crazy stunts, people thought it was cheap and crazy but they missed the point; I was trying to get - all I was trying to do was get the name of the town known all over the world. That's all. Franco ...</p> <p>I wonder ... you ask me what is my legacy. Pah!</p> <p><i>Pause</i></p> <p>It has taken on a life of its own, no?</p> <p><i>Pause</i></p> | | | | |
| | | | | | <p>We thought that he might decide to reduce the number of people.</p> <p>We grew.</p> <p>Some of us had babies.</p> <p>Sharing is caring.</p> |
| | | | | <p>But he didn't.</p> <p>More people came.</p> <p>Some of them were his.</p> <p>We all took a piece of our share and give it to him so he could buy beer. We all knew how much he wanted beer. But he refused to take it.</p> <p>He gave us everything.</p> <p>He grew thinner.</p> <p>He withered.</p> <p>But he was happy.</p> <p>He felt loved.</p> <p>The last weeks he just lay in bed. We fed him and cared for him</p> | |
| | | | <p>How can you compare one old man's wellbeing with the lives of 35 men, women and children?</p> | | |

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
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and did all we could to keep him
alive.

We sang him songs in his honour.

We held his hands.

But it was his time.

He died.

I love you all.

But, but I tell you in all humility
my - my *genius* was to realise
that

Tourists
Would
Come

- if you gave them what they
wanted.

And what they wanted was all
that was familiar from home ...
with a few additions.

Pause

A knock on the door.

Oh no.

They took us to the station.

Everyone of us.

We thought they were going to
send us back.

Oh no.

But then they smiled and said-

Welcome to Spain.

Excuse me?

His will stated that his fortune of
300 000 euros were to be used
for us to get permanent stay.

And it did.

It actually did.

Uncle saved us from his place in
heaven.

Welcome to Spain.

We were Spanish.

We were loved.

We pray to Uncle every night.

| JOSÉ | ZARAGOZA | WENCHE | UNCLE | OTHERS | OTHER OTHERS |
|------|----------|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
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Each year on the day of his death
we arrange a big celebration.

With re-enactments of the first
woman and child being rescued
from the sea.

We sing songs in his honour.

In your search for the sun you
found love.

In your search for the sun you
found love.

In your search for yourself you
found us.

In your search for yourself you
found us.

You rescued us from evil and
gave us Spain.

You rescued us from evil and
gave us Spain.

You sacrificed yourself for us.

You sacrificed yourself for us.

Oh, our Uncle.

Oh, our Uncle.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Sometimes ... I ... weep.

But there can be no doubt that I
succeeded in my ambition, ha. I
dreamed of a future for the area!
That's all. We have more hotel
rooms than all of London and
Paris. Imagine that.

Pause

People choose to live their last
days here ... yes! ... Of course it's
a great thing that they ... come
here and it's a really great thing
in lots of different ways ... but it
seems to be costing ... so much ...
to keep them here.

I am tired.

It's not what you see here.

*He casts his hand around. He
looks down at the ground, then
up ...*

It is what you don't see.

Note from the authors: This text is divided into six columns, but the columns do not require to be attached to one performer, several performers can speak text from one column and one performer (or medium) can speak text from several columns, thus accommodating the amount of performers and media available.

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