

"PAFI, THE VIRUS AND I"

Jorge Holguín Uribe

Kobenhavn

Introduction

There aren't words fine enough to introduce the reader to the courageous approach to illness and death the author gives us in this book full of love, imagination and humour. We who picked up, ordered and copied his manuscripts, broke our souls but Jorge himself restored them with the powerful presence of his spirit.

Jorge Holguín started writing this book in the middle of 1989 when he had been sick already one year and a half. The book was finished a week before his last entry to the Hospital, the one without return.

Some incongruence in the order due to the difficulty of adding the handwritten part to the printed one, doesn't affect the force of the story, but shows respect for the writer and to the way he saw his last days and the end of his life.

Jorge Holguín was a wanderer and an adventurer of the spirit. Nothing in his life could be banal. Born in Bogotá, Colombia in 1953, as a little boy he began to write, to paint colored birds, to remain quiet and observe. At sixteen after finishing school, he took up residence in Israel and pursued unusual occupations in a kibbutz.

He returned to Colombia to get his degree in Mathematics and teach at the Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá. He hung out in the theatre and hippie communes, made abstract paintings and took unexpected photographs.

In 1976, he went to Canada, where he received degrees in Statistics and in Performance Arts from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C. He began teaching at this University, wrote controversial articles for the newspaper "The Peak", and worked in film as a screenwriter and actor.

Jorge created in Vancouver a Dance Theatre Group with his friend, the Canadian choreographer and dancer Kathryn Ricketts. Eight years later, he went to Europe, visited Germany and took up residence in Denmark where

he continued with the Dance Theatre Group. With the Group, he traveled throughout Scandinavia, France, Egypt, Canada and Colombia.

He produced works for Danish Television and for the Radio, newspapers, and magazines, and published in Danish his book GIORGIO I, the comic strip on the misadventures of daily life.

In the summer when Copenhagen theatres close, Jorge traveled to Spain. He delighted in the Gothic Section of Barcelona, the inspiration of many of his stories. He traveled in Egypt where he shared his life with "Jews, Moors and Christians", dressing according to the customs of the region. There he wrote his yet unpublished book on Egypt and its enchantment.

In addition to his fine Spanish, he spoke English, French and some Danish and Hebrew. He lived in exile for fifteen years, but with Colombia fixed in his heart.

He was concerned with life and the well-being of others, at times even at the expense of his own. In the country, which gave him asylum and fame, however, he became seriously ill and died paralyzed in the Hvidovre Hospital, Denmark, in November 1989.

He was tall and slim. In the last years, he shaved his head, which emphasized his thick Basque eyebrows and the depth of his eyes. He had another self, GIORGIO, the character of his comic strip, and a close companion Pafi, a stuffed monkey the other hero in the odyssey of his way to the encounter with death.

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Prologue by Kathryn Ricketts

I stood in Jorge's hallway after a 12 hour flight and was immediately greeted eye to eye with a small stuffed monkey. Jorge timidly introduced me to this creature and I can assure you I was in no mood to have a conversation with a "toy". The first thing I thought was that Jorge had definitely gone nuts.

But there was something about those little dark glass eyes that kept me from disregarding this furry guy who nestled comfortably in Jorge's arms. I was surprised to observe that those eyes had a sad knowingness, not unlike his owner, and somehow, they seemed to penetrate my heart ever so gently.

How can a man take us on a journey of his struggle for life, the frightening violence and the confusing tenderness involved, without bringing with it the dark profundities we would just rather not hear right now (nor tomorrow etc). And how can he tell about his sufferings and his life and death realities without provoking a nagging sympathy or a weighted pity which keeps providing excuses for us to make an exit to the kitchen for another cookie.

When the movements of the day have stopped and the safety of noisy distractions are scarce, one would expect, in this circumstance, a contemplative state would settle in the soul like a big dark hibernating bear. Not so with Jorge, these were especially the most festive times for Pafi and him. I could always hear their animated conversations carrying on through the night. Sometimes these conversations were nothing more than mango songs and jungle recipes but as I learned more about Pafi, I could clearly understand that there was always much more behind the chatter than any of us will ever know.

I must say, it took a while to get accustomed to the fact that this little creature not only had a voice, but a history, a sense of humour, a soul and yes a very important mission. Then I learned that this voice belonged not only to Jorge, but to those who could or rather would, speak it, creating a new and very important form of communication between Jorge and his friends and family. It seemed that Pafi had more courage to say what Jorge couldn't, and so this voice, this language, became the key to my dear friend's heart and his very quiet fears.

It was with this language that Jorge has achieved the difficult task of documenting a terminal illness with poetic humour, sensitivity and thoughtfulness.

Pafi and Jorge made a brilliant team, and this collaboration stands as both richly imaginative fiction, as well as an informing document of the realities of a person with the virus. But also importantly it teaches us to find comfort from, and answers to the sometimes cruel injustices of the world, by looking inside and finding our own Pafi.

I take great honour in introducing "PAFI, THE VIRUS AND I".

Warning

Lady Death: please stick your fingers into the wall socket.

PAFI ARRIVED IN SUCH GOOD MOMENT... HE WAS ALL NAKED

I only had to look inside the plastic bag that had just been given to me, to know that the stuffed monkey there was called PAFI.

It was love at first sight. I run to the kitchen so I could welcome and greet him properly, kiss him and allow my tears to run without anybody seeing. Pafi arrived at such a good moment that sometimes I ask myself if it was not a kind of arrangement they fixed for me up in heaven. He is hairy, with big ears, and he has a sad smile. He arrived naked just like all other monkeys in the jungle.

It was summer, beautiful and warm, very warm.

-Pafi, are you not very hot in all that polyester skin? -I asked.

-No -he answered with a little voice that started to develop very slowly -we the furry monkeys, we don't feel heat nor cold.

It was not that Pafi would pretend he did not feel. On the contrary. I watched him staring in front of him, with his smart wicked brown eyes and I knew he could imagine many things on the air:

The palm trees from Africa, the mango tree where he had grown up in a huge family. His brothers whom he had abandoned that day when he got into the cardboard box to leave for a new life. He would miss all that, and sometimes not even a whole bunch of bananas could change his mood .

-Why did you get into that cardboard box, if you were so happy up on the mango tree?

- We, the little furry monkeys have the duty of taking care of human beings. You needed me and I came here to caress you with my woollen hands, to listen to you and to give you company. That makes me happy.

Pafi used to sleep on the blue sofa in the drawing room, he also liked to sit upon the cushions and quietly observe things around him. Sometimes I allowed him to climb on my bed and he would install himself over my pillows.

He didn't say much at the beginning. He just watched the time go by as though he was waiting for something. At breakfast time we chatted. He told me about all the naughty things he used to do with his brothers. The day when they peed on a group of tourists. The day they laid banana peels on the elephant's path.

-Uh, uh,- Pafi exclaimed, laughing and jumping on his soft bottom.

- Careful Pafi, you are going to undo your seams!

-Uh, uh,- he answered.

It was September 1987, my Dance Theatre Company and I had just finished a row of shows at the Tivoli Park. Sweating, tired and hot we would leave the theatre but the dancers would like to go eating and chatting. It was then when I started to feel sick, but I thought it was just the influenza that was so common in that time of the year.

Pafi did not say anything when I started to cough and had a very high fever every day. He sat on my pillow and looked at me very worried, but he never stopped smiling to cheer me up. We spent terrible nights putting cold towels on my forehead and drinking water from a small bottle, or sucking on ice cubes and running to the sink to vomit, as it is common in Denmark, there was no bathroom in our house.

When we started to guess what kind of illness I could have, Pafi stared at me with his sad brown eyes. He looked very elegant though, with the clothes I had ordered made for him: striped pants and a purple jacket which matched well with my berry juice vomit.

I don't know if it was on his own initiative, but one day the ambulance picked me up early in the morning. I could imagine Pafi jumping from chair to chair to reach the telephone, dial the zero, zero, zero, wait for the answer and call:- Uh! Uh! Uh!

It is very difficult to decide what to pack for a stay at the hospital that can become an eternity or a trip to another world.

A tooth brush, an interesting book and a boring one, underpants, a pyjama, and so on. I don't know. At the last minute when Pafi thought I was not paying attention, he jumped into the bag and hid under the clothes.

The ambulance men, very gently, carried me downstairs the five floors of the narrow staircase of my Mysundegade apartment, in the Turkish neighbourhood. They pulled me into a Mercedes Benz wagon, orange colour, with whitened windows and lots of medical equipment hanging from the ceiling. Mi sister was with me, she was sad and worried, assuming all responsibility. She had just come from California where she lives, and because of me she had left there her husband and little kids with her parents in law, who came from Colombia to help with the children.

The ambulance guys put over and under me seven blankets, like for the princess and the pea story, I kept two of them as a souvenir, or just in case... It was so cold. Thanks God at the hospital they had a system of oven-heated blankets, that they kept changing every time I got cold and started to shiver and quiver.

Pafi climbed very fast to a hanging pole for hats and coats, and he began to observe just as he used to do from the palm trees in Africa. He was scared that I was going to scold him because he had come without me knowing.

-I already saw you Pafi, come down and we can start talking, I might even have some raisins in the depth of a pocket.

I was pinched, turned from one side to the other, looked at and examined by different eyes and with various instruments. I was given an oxygen mask, an intravenous with cortisone, plus sulpha, water, salt, potassium and such, and I felt like an old cloth thrown on the floor.

Two days later, after several dozens of tests, -included the very feared bronchoscope for the which I was left for hours (or days?) without a single drop of water- we got the news. A doctor came into my room with several nurses who appeared to be taking notes, but in fact I think they were there just not to miss the show when the doctor would announce to me that what I had was the famous new virus.

- Would I jump through the window?
- Would I start screaming?
- Would I cry without end?

No, they had to keep themselves waiting. I started to laugh and laugh. They got frightened and ran to bring some bottle of ether or similar stuff and they put it to my nose. It was one of the first objects they would hook to different parts of my body.

Later the psychologist explained that laughing was my way of handling fear and anxiety.

WE WOULD SPEND THE WHOLE EVENING HOLDING EACH OTHER,
CRYING UNDER THE BLANKETS

At the beginning Pafi and I took the matter lightly, and started to play with everything in the room.

- You put your finger into that hole where it says Vacuum, I switch it on and we can see what happens. (I learned it afterwards).

- No, rather let us stick some toilet paper in the Suction device. (I also learned what this one was for).

-And look, here is a small radio with headphones, and here is a reading light, and another soft one so as not to break your head if you get up during the night (with the passing of time I could not get up at night nor during the day).

- The bathroom is so neat, it has a shower and everything. (Until when was I going to be able to go by myself? Or to go at all?).

-And what about all those bottles under the bed, they are full of small plastic tubes. (I got to know them well also).

-And how do you like that curtain on the window that can be opened with an electrical switch?

-But look at this cute red bell to call the nurse!

Pafi continued jumping from one thing to the other showing and inspecting every detail in the room.

-We are going to have fun here -he said finally.

But between laughs and jokes we were both very sad and spent many hours crying under the blankets.

Little furry monkeys don't have tears, so when they cry their bodies quiver and they had to embrace somebody or something.

We spent evenings holding each other and sometimes I told him Jungle Stories so he would not get bored. Like why the giraffes were decorated with brown painting and so on. Some times we would even laugh a little.

Every time there was a nurses' shift, the leaving would write something in a copybook named MAP. I could then read and write anything that would come to my mind. The first time I grabbed the book I read:

14:00, He had three cookies with butter for lunch.

16:00, He threw up the lunch.

17:00, According to the last blood test he needs another transfusion.

20:00, He has pain in his throat after the bronchoscope.

21:00, He vomited blood.

8:00, He got up at midnight and went by himself through the corridors. (I remember having found a man of whom I could see only the feet, he was so bent).

10:00, Size of the stomach, 83 cm. (My belly's size had to be taken with a certain frequency because it tended to inflate).

- Do you remember Pafi that stomach business, it was then that I was left ten days without eating, ten days drinking only water, because my belly was sort of paralyzed. I felt as if I was hanging from a trapeze,

as I had different bags connected with needles to my arms and I could not move. Dr. Kirsten made me change rooms, so I would have more peace and quiet, she wrote on a big paper and glued it to my door: IKKE BESOEGT: No visitors.

- Ugh, and you had that tube from your stomach to your nose, through which some kind of spinach soup would come out, but I think it was your shit going the wrong way. You were trapped in your bed, with an idiot's face and smelling like the tail of a mandril. But I cannot remember any trapeze, I think that you liked to imagine things to please yourself.

- Maybe, Pafi, for me reality was that I was hanging from a tree full of monkeys just like you, asking for peanuts from the tourists.

HE HAS DEVELOPED INTERESTING TRICKS ON THE BED

On the following days the nurse wrote on the MAP, which I have been keeping among my souvenirs:

18:00 Size of the stomach 82 cm. This is his sixth day without eating. He has developed some very interesting tricks on the bed.

He must call the nurse every time he goes to the bathroom. (I was very scared of not being able to go to the bathroom by myself, and having to depend so much, but I got to learn. In the beginning what I needed was only someone to push the metal "trees" from the which the different bags hanged).

Diarrhoea: Amount.... (I could not use the W.C. directly, I had to use a bucket installed over it, because they usually had to check the amount or analyze the stools).

Aspiration: Amount.... (This was what came through the nose).

Drink: Amount...(In any case the quantity of drink couldn't surpass the quantity of urine).

Urine: Amount...(I had to use a plastic bottle that someone would receive with gloves, I was very happy when I noticed that some

people, like my family, would take it without fuss, I told them that I wished everything could be so simple.

Intravenous: Well injected, not painful. (I had a plastic tube going up inside my arm towards my heart, through which I got proteins, lipids, sugars, salts and so on, different colours and textures).

Midnight: He went swimming. (That is what I told them, and I really thought I had gone):

-Do you remember Pafi the wonderful pool I thought they had put under my bed that night? Fresh blue water, Greek columns on the sides, plants and very well placed lights. It was exactly what I needed after those many fevers, pills and injections that made me so hot.

-Yes, I remember, you asked me to wear my swimming trunks but since I didn't have them, I had to wear one of those little towels you use to clean up when you spill your pee. You were on the buff with the exception of a few tubes that came out from you here and there.

-Oh Pafi, the trouble was that those tubes were hanging from the so called trees, that for me were real trees, and I was hooked to them and I couldn't walk alone.

-When you started to get out from your bed without giving notice, your mother heard you and she got frightened and rang the bell to call the nurses, though you didn't want her to, she also brought a kind doctor, but it was very hard for them all to bring you back to your bed because you wanted to swim.

-Yes Pafi, I can remember that we had quite a tough night, I guess I was half awake and half asleep.

-I think you were totally asleep! When we finally went to bed, you managed to pull out that plastic vein inserted through your own vein, which went all the way up to your heart carrying milk and some kind of goodies to feed you a little. And that was it.

-What was it Pafi?

-The nurse got as mad as one of those bad green monkeys in the jungle, because he couldn't insert the vein back as he was scared of damaging your heart...You started to scream and shout saying that the

trouble was that the vein had a bad shape design and that was why it wouldn't work.

-I heard Doctor Kirsten asking if I was joking or if I was serious about that. I wanted paper and pen to make a better design.

-You said you were very serious, so she brought you the paper and pen and you started to draw something like an upside down comb. How dumb!

-Yes Pafi I know I have been making a lot of dumb things, but do not criticize me, the point of view is absolutely different when you are bedridden.

-It must be, because after all that, you started to say there were a lot of miniature dancers dancing in the glass of water near your bed.

-I can remember that perfectly well, it was such an awful choreography, they all danced around, enveloped in laces, I think and hope they sank and drowned in one of my spitting trays.

-No, they didn't, the nurse took away the glass when he came to write.

This is what was written on the MAP on that day:

8:00 Restless and confuse. A large dose of Apozepam is given. He should sleep now and hopefully for a long time.

12:00..... Hard to understand... Sometimes they write in English and sometimes in Danish, which I have learned to some extent, I can understand most of the hospital terminology.

20:00 Black diarrhoea continues with +++ of blood. (Ugh, -Pafi said when he heard that, but as with everything, we got used to see many crosses in many places).

22:00 We took him down from what he calls the trapeze (connecting needles and bags) so he can have a rest. He recognized the people around him and seemed very contented.

23:00 Size of the stomach is 77 cm. Temperature is 39.6. Pulse: 100, Blood pressure: 7-11. Very fast breathing.

-You sounded like a tired dog -was Pafi's comment.

HE WOULD PULL OUT HIS HAND TO CARESS ME AND TO DRY MY TEARS
IF THINGS WERE GETTING TOUGH

I can recall that until a few years ago, the only known source of cold light was the one emitted by those insects that shine at night to call their mates.

It was very easy to demonstrate such principle. One encloses a few of those insects in a jar with a raw egg, to discover that the egg won't cook, (but the insects ate it).

With time things have changed. The Japanese invented a device, Sony I believe, that can produce a cold light through a plastic tube apt to be swallowed thanks to its supposedly reduced diameter of 2 cm.

As if this was nothing it comes with a video camera on the tip, and if this still was nothing it has some small scissors to cut bits of your stomach lining, called biopsies.

In order to be prepared for this outstanding experiment called gastroscopia they left me without eating nor drinking for 24 hours, -this is one of their favourite treats- though I am supposed to gain weight!

On the morning of the selected day, the nurse called two bed transporters, sturdy men on white, so they would drive me on my own bed through the non ending kilometric corridors of the hospital. At first these guys would wear gloves to push our beds, but lately they found out it was not necessary, people seem to be learning the real facts about the illness.

I left my room and went among the other patients that sat in the corridors waiting for something to happen or someone to pass by, to start wondering what would be the matter with that patient. I used to scare them covering my face with a sheet so they would think I was a dead body, only Pafi would alertly emerge from under the covers.

Sometimes my friend Kathryn or my sister Luli would go with me to the exam, but though I appreciated them doing this, I didn't like it very much because they'd be more scared than me.

This time, to look into my stomach, I was left, to my surprise, in the middle of a TV studio with walls covered with TV sets, but instead of a famous rock music group, the studio was inhabited by a doctor and a nurse.

Pafi was now hiding under my pillow, he had his hand ready to caress my head, and if things got tough to wipe my tears.

A nurse handed me the mentioned gastroscopia device and with a very natural voice told me that I should swallow it. -A little glass of water -I managed to ask. And as if it were the most simple thing in the world she made me swallow the electronic cable while I drank sips of water and dreamt about Colombian meat and pastry pies full of hot pepper sauce.

The six T.V. sets were suddenly on and I had an apocalyptic vision. The stomach was not pink and soft as I had imagined it, but brown and full of mountains and valleys on which there were pieces of toast and of a green stuff I don't remember having ever eaten.

Black caves would hide thousand of secrets in various tones, ready to scare the watchers. And if this were not enough, on the walls there were follicles ready to hang and kill the food before digestion started.

We left that place after two hours, but nothing was found that could retain the interest of the medical group. This happened very often. They would search and search and none of the expected was found. In the Lab tests I could read very often the word Negative and the results of my tests would be very close to the expected Normal. So everything was more difficult.

My illness on this trip to the hospital, one of my many trips to the hospital, was a non ending diarrhoea. So the next day they examined me from "behind", also with the video camera and the rest of the paraphernalia I already considered familiar and essential, the cold light, the small scissors and so on.

All this bruised and scratched me inside, so I bled for some time and had great pain when going to the toilet.

It is outstanding how you develop endurance as soon as you discover you have to face different realities every day. Things that would look worst than horror movies are confronted daily with great courage.

I started to wonder which would be the next instrument that they would fit inside me, a blender? a toaster? one of those electric knives? Or maybe they'll graduate me to transport items like pieces of taxi or bits of airplane engines, perhaps an Avianca Jumbo Jet or such.

But all this is plain fun, the really feared exam is the bronchoscope, in which you have to aspire the tube through the nose, with video, cold light and all the stuff included. For this exam they take advantage of your nostrils and make the device go into your lungs, then they inject some water, wash, and get some samples for the Lab.

I have seen patients bumping their heads to the wall when they are told that on the next day their lungs are to be examined. But even if it is really disgusting this test is very important, as it seems to be the only way of finding out if you have the famous and infamous Pneumocystis Carini, a virus discovered by a Brazilian doctor.

This virus is supposed to induce a pneumonia that can kill you in a very short time as it grows and spreads very fast, eating your lungs, making you cough blood and cutting your oxygen intake.

I have been wondering if a pain I have had for a long time in the lower part of my right lung, could have been already this guy looking for a home, or if it was just too much cigarette smoking. I went through many things, even acupuncture to stop smoking, I wanted to breathe well, have white teeth, not depend on anything, but it is very difficult with the many people smoking around and in front of me.

It is specially striking that here at the hospital most people smoke, doctors, nurses and patients. It seems they won't ask sick people to stop smoking because they'd become more nervous. Besides in this country cigarettes appear to be a symbol of status as they are quite expensive.

-If you want -Pafi told me -next time they want to look into your lungs I can bring some banana peels hidden under my plum shirt and I'll throw them to the floor when nurses and doctors come in, so they will fall down and leave you in peace.

- Oh no Pafi, thank you for your good intentions, but they are doing their job so that I can get better. Perhaps it is a good idea if you throw some peels to the nurse that wakes me up at seven every morning, to take my temperature when I have just gone to sleep, especially to the perverted one that insists that I stick the thermometer into my rear end.

When the temperature fanatic woman leaves smiling with her expanded mercury, I can get some sleep until breakfast comes.

HOW IS THAT THE DOCTOR STUCK HIS FINGER IN YOUR ASS WITHOUT WARNING?

There is a system in the Hospital Computer with every patient's diet. It functions quite well every day, and I can't complain.

But I am not surprised when I get spaghetti bolognaise with strawberry sauce for breakfast. And even though I insist and fill new cards with the dietician, to this day when I have not been able to get a wonderful clear soup with pork and dough balls. But they have managed to bring me potato soup, potatoes, and a dessert made with potato flour and berries. I think this country really is a potato producer.

Between 8 and 10 a.m. there is a complete parade of people that come into my room or pass by. First comes the lady that sells newspapers and candies: KIOSK, she announces, as this is how they call here the establishments where this stuff is sold.

Some days I buy a chocolate tablet so I can have some reserves and I hide it in the small drawer of my high bedside table. I might also buy, when I have a lot of energy and a few crowns left, a couple of newspapers, Berlingske or Politiken, sometimes they have articles about my Theatre Company, or they might discuss the latest discovery regarding strange new illnesses produced on account of certain viruses, HTLVI, HTLVII, HTLVIII, HTLVIIII...

Then there comes the woman from the Library, she lends books and magazines. My GIORGIO book, in English and Danish is already there.

If I can translate some of the other books, like this one, I might send them copies also. There are not many Spanish speaking people here that I know, except for a doctor and a nurse who have been in South America, and a man from Chile who works at the Blood Bank and came to say hello once.

I also gave GIORGIO books to some of the doctors and a few other persons, and I would like to give the whole edition to the HIV Foundation in Denmark; it costs a lot of money to print (41.000 crowns) and I have not seen it in the Bookstores.

I usually ask the lady from the Library to lend me some MATCH magazines from Paris, which nobody cares for, but I like to read and look at. Last week they had a very interesting article on the new Theology and Jesus Christ. Of course sometimes I can't focus my eyes well enough to read, the doctor told me that it could be muscular fatigue, but later I found out I had an eye infection that for unknown reasons stopped by itself.

No wonder the light bothered me so much I had to use those eye masks they give you in the planes. So for the moment I know I am not going blind, and I can go on reading and writing.

-Don't worry -Pafi said -if you become blind I can always guide you.

-Thank you Pafi, I know I can count on you, it is only I don't want to miss the leaves falling in autumn, the little yellow flowers blooming on the grass at the beginning of the spring, those that I don't want to be cut because they must live. Even if the neighbours call and say we must destroy the yellow flowers when they start to spread and get into their patios or their noses, I don't know. I have to talk to my friend Carlos Estrada about that, he takes care of the garden.

Between 8 and 10 a.m. also come the people who fix the lamps, bring nice towels, clean under the furniture, and change sheets with me up on the bed, -they are good to that-. Also the girls who offer tea, juices or protein drink.

And the people bringing white hospital clothes that smell quite good, long or short pants, open shirts so they don't have to be cut when there is some accident, like when I had my most beloved grey sweat shirt cut, because I spilled something and they could not take it off, as I had both arms stuck with needles and tubes.

One day I wanted very badly to get some sleep, so I wrote in a big piece of paper : CAREFUL, VERY ILL PATIENT INSIDE, MIGHT BE CONTAGIOUS, but this didn't stop them. There are at least 40 patients as sick as I am in this floor.

And also Pafi boycotted my idea as he wrote another note saying that the candy lady was welcome at any time, night and day.

The doctor makes his daily visit around 11 o'clock. He looks at me very carefully and reads the test results even more carefully. When he listens to my lungs with the stethoscope, Pafi keeps his mouth shut, so the doctor can hear any small noise that my bronchi might produce and that usually signifies a big infection. He also pops me from one side to the other, upside-down, down and up and from one end to the other.

-How is it that the doctor stuck a finger on your ass without even a little cream?- Pafi asked very disgusted.

- Puff, Pafi, he got me by surprise, though he first put on his gloves with big display.

-Maybe he thought you had swallowed his watch and he was looking for it!

- Pafi, don't make me laugh because I would have to pee and you know how complicated it is.

- Uh, uh, it was a Cartier watch, very nice with small screws. And you know when a patient comes here with one of those little watches he is given a room for himself because they think he is a cousin to the queen, a Romanoff or something of the kind.

A little later comes the Needle Woman with her car full of tubes, napkins, syringes, gloves, cotton, tape, flasks and bottles, and a thousand small things ideal to play with Pafi a whole evening.

He stares with his little brown eyes full of naughty joy, but when they pinch me in the arm to find antibodies or haemoglobin, or in the wrist to find the oxygen amount in my blood, or in the ear perhaps to find the sugar level or in any other place they can manage, to find any other thing they can think of, Pafi starts to feel sick and he turns toward the wall.

Sometimes they draw up to 12 flasks from my vein. I am sure they are measuring even my shirts' size. Though now they are supposed to economize in the amount of tests done to the patients, but as for me, I think they are doing a complete study. I only hope it will help me and the rest of humanity. They draw much blood, and maybe there goes part of the transfusions, I get it in from one side, and out from the other side.

-Every thing would be much easier if you just had wool instead of that strawberry juice! Pafi observed very seriously.

'MY GOD!' SAID PAFI WHO ALREADY KNEW WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT

Sometimes I am sent downstairs for some type of experiment. My floor is the second one and the hospital has three, it is three kilometres long and is surrounded by gardens with grass, bushes, trees and paths. It is really beautiful. Corridors with benches to sit down, pictures and sculptures. Library and chapel. Restaurants, Beauty Saloons, tiny shops, mail and phones...

Downstairs one of their favourite experiments is the scan. I like this one because it is not painful, but it is very tiring. They lift you and put you inside a big tube, where they can see everything, even if your ears are clean or not. But you cannot move, one day I got out with pain in my tooth because I couldn't move my jaw.

Another day a doctor had the splendid idea of getting some bone marrow from my hip bone to see how was the blood cell production, he asked for hammer, screwdriver and some other carpenter tools, but it was not so bad, and now I don't even have the hole nor the scar. Everything sounds worst when it is being planned, then you get to see you can stand it.

-

-I think we need some Polaroids taken of the inside of his eyes, we don't want him to get a cytomegalovirus or a toxoplasmosis infection - said a lady doctor. (It took me some time, but I learned these two words). For this interesting procedure they had to open my pupil with several drops, so I spent the whole afternoon looking into the emptiness.

-He has to be checked by the neurologist, his feet are not obeying him.

This was right, since my trip to London for Christmas 1988 I started to feel my feet dancing away from my ankles, and when I came back to Copenhagen it was difficult for me to walk over the small stones there are on some streets. I also felt very unsure driving a car. Afterwards my plants became so sensitive that nobody, nor anything could touch them and it was very difficult to find shoes that fit.

Then I started to walk like a duck, maybe this was when I began to enjoy contemplating the ducks, the real ones, walking around the pond in Frederiksberg Park.

The neurologist whose name was Thorvaldsen, like the artist, examined me carefully, with a special device to prove my sensitivity.

He discovered that my legs weren't well at all and that my abdomen was not to good either, then he asked many things about my skin getting thinner, loosing hair in the legs, if my hands had always been so slender, if sometimes I had trouble finding words... and to all these questions I had to answer yes.

I asked him what could I expect and he said he didn't know because all neuropathies were different, but he assured me I wouldn't go crazy, and that meant some relief. I wondered if the illness could be Spastic Paraparesia from the Pacific and the tropics where I come from.

-How about taking out all his blood and putting it again with the dialyses apparatus? -But for this I should have gone to another hospital. Nevertheless it was a possibility because with the cleansing, the viruses might get bored in my extremities and leave me in peace.

The message brain-muscle was damaged, I would give order to my legs to walk, and they would not pay attention.

When I went to bed I had to check with my eyes if the feet were in or out of the bed, and if they were out I had to lift them with my hands. One evening on the corridor one of the nurses handled me a pair of crutches, in a very simple and straightforward way and I started to walk with them instead of the walker for old people I had been using. The wheel chair came final.

-For me the lumbar puncture is absolutely the most necessary, - would said another specialist.

-A needle was installed on my spine and 15 small flasks were filled with the dripping stuff, but it was not painful at all and the results were Negative, I was very happy to know that, because without an infection in the cephalorachidean liquid I was able to go on thinking.

-Another bronchoscope scheduled for next week, to see if the Pentamidine inhalations are doing their job, or if we go back to the Sulfatrim - the lung specialist would say.

-X Ray from head to toe would advise the Roentgen specialist. This of course was not painful at all, but it was always very boring to wait in a line of rolled beds where very declining patients kept me company.

-Magnetic sound, should give the best information.-This was the latest trend and my favourite one, it wouldn't hurt and they wouldn't stick anything on me. On the contrary I could see very interesting scenes on my own special TV show.

Something that bothers me a lot about being sick, besides the illness of course, which is the latest, and very much in vogue, is the time it makes me waste waiting to have something done. Sometimes they even forget I have an appointment and I am very shy to tell them that I am sitting there waiting for the doctor to see me, or for the blood bag to arrive from the blood bank.

AFTER THE THIRD TIME I FELL TO THE FLOOR I GOT SCARED

At the hospital, evenings are slow and long. It is difficult to read or to work in something like a project for my Dance Theatre Company, so I usually look at the ceiling and I can say that I don't get bored. I was asked if I wanted to listen to cassettes, but music changes my emotions and I want to keep them. To live what I have to live, to face destiny. And to feel every moment consciously. Of course when I say this, Pafi gets very mad at me and says I shouldn't make cheap philosophy, but keep my mouth shut or eat a huge banana.

About 4 o'clock comes the woman with the tea car offering little soothing drinks to keep us busy and feeling very cared for. Then all I have to do is wait for dinner to come at 5.30, with many little covered unexpected dishes.

I don't watch TV because it is very noisy, I always ask to be in a room far away from it. I heard someone who died left some money to have a T.V. installed in every room. If I could do that I'd give a telephone for each room, sometimes it is so difficult to talk, especially when I receive a call from Colombia and I don't feel like getting up from bed and the only movable, carry out phone is not working.

At night I go out to take a walk along the non ending corridors. I need someone to help me with the crutches or to push my wheel chair if that day I don't have much energy. I used to go by myself, but after falling for the third time I got scared.

Of course I am having physiotherapy almost every day, and Jesper is a good teacher, I can do really good things during the class, but the exercises don't seem to help when I want to walk.

I don't have my balance, and I have to look down to the floor to see where I am placing my feet because I don't feel them.

So we move very slowly down the corridors, watching the different paintings that hang on the walls, as there is always an exhibition. Sometimes we sit down in very comfortable big green chairs. We pass the hairdresser's, the bank, several kiosks, two cafeterias; a well

hidden chapel, the office of the minister which is a woman, Dr. Runa; a flower shop which I don't like, I think flowers must not be cut, they should live.

During the walk I chat with some people like the Italian ragazzo, who is lonely and far away from home, or the engineer who got the virus while working in Africa, he is an old man, but at least his wife and children come to visit him. The Iranian woman whose family sings for her, and who is now in isolation; the addict girl who always asks for a cigarette, the Turkish man with the big moustache, and some very young boys that don't dare to talk.

Of course Pafi comes along when I take him with me to walks and he gets to know everybody, once when I was hugging him a nurse thought he was a baby. I know I have dark eyes like him, but I am not that hairy.

Sometimes I make phone calls, though most of my friends must be very occupied because their phones sound busy all the time. If I feel very strong I can go downstairs to send a letter, there is a mail box. Once I had 2 letters for my mother but I couldn't send them because I needed someone to get me envelopes and also to place the letters inside the envelopes, this is becoming very difficult for my fingers.

After coming back into my room and climbing on the bed I try to go to sleep, I don't like to take sleeping pills, because they make me very drowsy and I don't like to do dumb things like peeing outside the pot. But if I don't take them I am very tired on the next day because of the lack of sleep, so I try several to see which one suits me best. Pacisyn, Pazoson...and so on.

I THANK HER FOR THE FREEDOM SHE GAVE ME, AND FOR THE PERMISSION I HAVE TO DO AS I PLEASE

-What is the medicine they inject to your neighbour every night?-
Pafi asked once, when I was sharing the room with a man that had come from Sweden and who worked on ceramics.

-I think it is morphine, he has a bad pain on his back because he has an infection,- I answered Pafi, who was getting to know everything about this illness and was very concerned.

-For the hot banana! -Pafi said -that guy with morphine and you with 12 cortisone tablets that make you laugh like an idiot all the time, do you think I am going to be in good hands tonight?

-Yes Pafi, I don't sleep much, so we can spend the night chatting, you can get into my bed if you like.

-Yes, yes I love to get in there and talk, besides there are a lot of things I still don't know about you, and I want to ask.

-That's fine, what is it that you want to know Pafi?

-Many things, for instance tell me if it is true you used to dance in a theatre with spotlights, limelights and all the works.

-Yes Pafi, I was the best dancer, the best in the world, and I did very funny things. People came to see me, not very many, but they would laugh and some times cry a little, and I loved it. It was a time full of very good happenings.

-That doesn't sound very modest but it sounds great, and what else? -Insisted Pafi apparently very interested.

-I could never place my leg on the same level of my nose, like most dancers do, but the trouble is that my nose is quite far away from the floor, 1.75 meters. But I could do some other interesting movements, and I could even stand on one foot without falling. Very different from what I can do now, which is nothing, very sad for a dancer.

-Uh, Uh, and how were the dances, were they little tales a monkey can understand, like that one where you dance a waltz with chair or the one about the language confusion at the beach I heard about?

-Of course Pafi. There was for example a dance about a school boy going to school for the first time.

-And?

-And the was very scared of his first day of class, even though he had an apple for the teacher. For the dance to come out well I had to feel

as sad as that boy. So I would hide behind the curtains and pull my ears until I shed some tears. Then the music started, it was an Aria from the opera Norma, sang by Maria Callas, I entered the stage and started my dance. People really liked it.

-I would like to see it.

-Oh Pafi these last months I become easily tired, my dances have been mostly walking, standing and even seating. When I was dancing The Schoolboy memories from my school days came to me.

-Like what?

-In my school bus there was a bad boy who pulled my ears and laughed because the sleeves on my sweater were pulled up. My arms are very long and there were no sweaters with the sleeves long enough, so I thought that if I pulled them up nobody would notice they were short or that the wrists were damaged for much pulling. And the bad boy said that those were girl's sleeves, imagine Pafi. It was a spinach colour woollen sweater with V neck, very ugly. Very.

-Your mother told me that you never had spinach green sweaters, that they were all red because that was the uniform at your Swiss school.

-No Pafi, the uniform was to be worn only one day of the week, and I am sure I had many, many spinach sweaters, all exactly alike and flannel grey pants. I was dressed in the same way every day during many years.

-Your mother said it was better not to show off.

-My mother used to exaggerate a lot, I even wrote a small piece for a children's movie, inspired on her exaggerations, it is called "Let the Earth Swallow us", and it is about the way I saw things she said, like if they were happening for real, very funny. I wish this movie could be made.

-All she said were bad things?

-No Pafi, she said also very good ones. Like she used to tell me that everything I did was O.K., my drawings when I was a small kid, (she still keeps some), and then the stories I wrote, paintings, photographs, boxes I made and so on.

-Good!

-I received that message from her and that gave me inspiration to achieve many things in life. My shows, my books. I was lucky because I could do most of the things I wanted.

-I am glad for you.

-Thank you Pafi, but you too, you do everything you like.

-Oh yes and I thank you for that.

WOMEN WITH TUTU VEILS AND SLIPPERS, BOYS WITH TIGHT PANTS

I want you to tell me what happened to the bad boy.

-I don't know Pafi, but I am sure he didn't learn nor produced as much in his whole life as I have done since I got the virus. I even thank him for having pulled my ears, because from that I learned some things and I could create a beautiful dance people would enjoy and understand. You know, everything I do is based on some experience I have had. And I have had many, so I don't think I will ever run out of ideas.

-That I know, but I would like to meet that bad boy and play some nasty tricks on him.

-Let us not waste our time Pafi. But of course I always wished that every morning at breakfast time his toast would fall on the floor, with the butter and honey face down, just at the exact moment when he was about to take the bus.

-Was it a bus with many kids?

-Oh yes, and it was beautiful, painted red on white and with yellow and black stripes on the back. When I grew up and they didn't pull my ears anymore, I started to smoke hiding under the sit.

-That's a bad thing, you went on smoking and you got sick in your lungs.

-That is true Pafi, but you have seen that even here at the hospital everybody smokes, starting with the visitors.

-That is really very strange - answered the monkey - puffing smoke has never crossed my mind.

-Good thing Pafi, it is very silly to smoke, but it is like with the drugs, once you become hooked you cannot leave it.

-I want to know from where else you found ideas for your pieces.

-From many places, from my trips, from things that happened to me and even from things that I wished had happened. My dances were a bit strange sometimes, but they were my truth and they made me cry and laugh from deep inside.

-At the theatre?

-Not exactly, most of the time it was when I was rehearsing at the Studio. I spent many hours, many months, just by myself in a room trying to create a dance and I suffered a lot because I felt very lonely and I didn't have many ideas.

-That is very sad.

-Yes it was. Once I spent three days wrapped in a blanket near the heating stove, crying because I couldn't dance in a more expressive way. It was very cold there, if I moved I felt the wind in my face as if I were outside, and steam came out in my breathing. But I knew I had to give the gift of my dances to people and to little God.

-That sounds very beautiful.

-The ideas came slowly, and the dances developed by themselves. It was even strange, Pafi, I would start a dance, and then what I had done showed what should follow, and if I wanted to introduce a new idea, everything went wrong. I had to listen to what I was doing and follow my own instincts. If not my dances would be like lies and would look on stage like pieces of raw meat.

-Uh, uh, how awful.

-And I felt very bad dancing pieces that were like dead cows. Very famous dancers perform "steak tartare" all through their lives, but they are paid for that, because there are several old ballets that cannot be forgotten.

-Why?

-Because as time went by when they were created they contained truths, but with the time they started to get rotten like stale Stroganoff. Many of those old ideas are just that, old. But they have to be kept. Veils and slippers, and boys with tight clothes showing their balls and penis. But we have to know how they danced in those times. Also many books with pictures were made, and one could display them on a coffee table and Visitors would try to lift these books and realize that they were really heavy.

ANIMALS DON'T KNOW THEY ARE GOING TO DIE, BUT I KNOW, PAFI SAID.

-Don't become too autobiographical with your writing because people might get bored and they will think you are boasting about your childhood, and I understand you were really very dumb when you were a kid. You did not even learn to play soccer.

-I tried once, but I broke my leg and had to stay three months at the hospital. I started my training by then.

-That was too bad, but yes you were very dumb and like fallen from the attic. But don't you write your biography now. In my family, we write our biographies when we are born, so we always know what is going to happen and we don't worry too much, of course we won't use letters like you do, we use drawings.

-Maybe we should hire a "ghost writer", Pafi, it should be some kind of a ghost who knows how to type and who can come every morning to frighten us by pulling our feet and screaming boo boo all around the house, she or he would then immerse us into a foam bath up to our noses and we'd tell him or her everything that has happened to us, and the ghost would write to make it sound nice and interesting.

-Like that woman, famous Alexis... ?

-Exactly, I think she had a whole bunch of people from the other world, with vampires and everything, working for her with pencils and erasers, trying to fix the life she was dictating, but it did not come out very good. And the poor woman got many wrinkles sitting all day long into that tub soaking in Oil of Ulay foam. That's the method. She was not allowed out so her inspiration would not stop. She painted her nails several times and put lots of creams and make up, but she was terribly bored.

-We don't have a tub at home.

-Well, maybe a foot bath will be enough.

-That's the way it sounds when you talk all that nonsense about the dance, and give opinions just like that. For the holy banana you are going to sound dumb. This book won't go through.

-Oh Pafi, you are terrible today. You are usually so sweet, but now you are mean.

-Uh, uh, maybe it is because I am hungry, it is almost 12 and we still have not had breakfast, I am feeling sick.

-Today we are on a diet until I have a scan taken, but you might have something from the wonder-drawer, a little piece of halva without messing up the sheets. Like look at this spot, is it chocolate or just plain shit?

-Well, it is half and half as far as I can see, when you eat chocolate, your shit comes out from everywhere, it is as simple as that.

-Let us not talk about my stomach's movements.

-Movements? It is not movements, it is the Apocalypse now. How about the day when you could not get to the bathroom on time and a black ball the size of a tennis ball fell into your underpants!

-It was not that bad, I could put it away with my hands, and my shorts were safe.

-We have to ask for a "guga-guga", medicine.

-Yes Pafi, we can, but they have tried so many medicines on me and nothing seems to work. Shall I make a list? Retrovir, Sulfatrim, Nizoral...

-Don't get dramatic now. Instead, tell your mother that when she prepares this for the publisher, she can take out all the silly things she finds, all the awkward phrases and all the shitty dirty things we talk about.

-Yes, this is for her to read.

-Does she have one of those red crayons, I hear writers hate?

-We can send some for her to Colombia.

-And please tell her that she must not forget to put my name, PAFI, on the cover, in green characters. I can sign the books.

-All right Pafi, I am writing it down, though I don't know if everybody in the world of my readers, knows who you are.

-Well, they shall know.

-Yes, you might become famous for having paid me such good company.

-I also have some ideas for drawings, could you make them?

-Maybe my friend Marta Elena might have some pictures with monkeys on them. Or perhaps Frida Kahlo could lend us one. My hands are very shaky Pafi, and I don't know any more if it is the cortisone or the advancing illness.

-It is true, some times I am surprised that you are able to get the food into the right place.

-It is also very difficult for me to write, I have to use a special gadget to grab the pencil.

-The people who are going to work on this book will have hard time.

-Do you think this book will be O.K. for kids Pafi?

-Uga, you are always talking about that, but for me it is a really difficult question. Kids, let's see, aren't they like furless monkeys with mouths full of sweets?

-Yes, but maybe for kids twelve years old. I have been thinking that if this book could be for them and their parents.

-Well, I don't know, I have seen they are often scared of hospitals and needles.

-Yes but it is not fear to something real. It is that they have been told so many wrong things they are very frightened. So I think it is fine if they read this, so they can see in a way it is O.K. to be here at the hospital because nothing bad is done to you, on the contrary, they try to get you well. Doctors and nurses are all very nice. Food and bed are nice like in a five star hotel.

-I am sure, but when people talk about your famous virus it becomes very complicated and I don't understand.

-Imagine Pafi, that the virus is like a veryy small animal. It can be seen only through microscopes, and it can also hide very well and change its shape, so it escapes and scientists can't manipulate it. **THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND A VACCINE NOR A MEDICINE.**

-Is that possible that a VIRUS guy is so clever?

-Yes, it gets into the blood an eats some white cells people have, that are intended to defend the body from infections. But this guy lives in the white cells that are called "helpers" and then people are not able to fight illnesses like pneumonia and others, so they often get sick like I do.

-You get sick very often, but the doctors, nurses and I, are here to help you get better.

-You are right Pafi, but with all this coming and going the virus continues invading the whole body and eating everything it likes, and it is very greedy and we the patients become very weak and start to wilt.

-Do they die? - asked Pafi very sad.

-Yes, some get very thin and wasted, they feel like doing nothing and not fighting anymore and they die. But some can live a long life also, as Magazines say HIV has become a chronic illness.

-That is better.

-You have seen how I get terribly sick, very often, and this has happened to me several times, and doctors work out some magical decisions and give me several concoctions, and I get better again and this has happened to me many times. As you can imagine I am very grateful to them, although sometimes they make me suffer a lot with the many tests they ordered. One day that I had many tests done that I was really tired of suffering and I wanted to feel spoiled, I wanted only sweets for dinner, to soothe and feel spoiled.

-How has it been with your exams today? - asked Pafi.

-I have had the magnetic scan, where the condition of the brain is showed but I have not heard the results yet. I also had a lumbar needle puncture, other patients complain a lot about but I have not had any problems with it.

-What is it like?

-A needle is inserted on the spinal cord and they draw out some liquid to search for the different things one might have, as I told you once. Still I don't have anything bad there, but a friend who is also at the hospital has an infection and he is not feeling very well, his head falls to the sides, but nevertheless when he goes out from the hospital, he is able to do his job at an Airline Company.

-So you are not going to run crazy?

-No, I am fine. And I am very happy in my bed, they usually give me a beautiful room just for me, painted with very happy colours and with a huge window through which I can look at the trees. Besides if I open the door I can watch the many things that happen on the corridor, sometimes it is tragic but other times it is very comic.

-So you are able to be happy even being sick?

-

-Yes, one can get used to everything. I am happy here writing. What really bothers me, what has been the worst for me was the

idea of not being capable of going to the toilet by myself, but it is over, today I had to go with help and it was not that bad.

-Well I don't have that problem, -said Pafi.

-Of course, you stuffed monkeys can escape from many things. But us the humans, we can have many problems, for example you know my feet are insensitive and paralyzed, I cannot walk by myself, I have to wait for help, to lean on someone, and when I take a trip to the corridor I must use the wheel chair and ask to be pushed because I have no strength.

-I am sorry that I cannot push you, that is one of my limitations, we all have some.

-Yes Pafi, but even with those many handicaps I have good luck, remember once when there was that beautiful apple at the bedside table, you wanted to grab it for me and it slipped and was going to fall to the floor, but it stopped on the drawer where I keep the pencils and I could eat it without waiting for a nurse or a friend to pick it up for me.

-You said you have made many friends, but sometimes nobody visits you.

-The friends I have made in the hospital's corridor are sicker than myself, I like to go out and see them because I can make them laugh with my conversations. They don't get as many visitors as I do. Until now many people come to visit me, I might get tired, but if they don't come I feel very sad.

-I have seen that. I am very proud you always want me by you, and you never leave me at home alone anymore, you bring me here even for your shortest stays, like when you come to get your blood, or for a consultation, or a Lab test.

-Yes Pafi, I must say you are good company. But now I would like to eat something and I don't see my bag of peanuts, who ate them?

-I did, of course. You said you couldn't peel the peanuts because your fingers were not functioning well, I ate them so you would not suffer watching them without being able to eat.

-You are right, I am still angry when I remember I could not peel them because my fingers don't help me. Nevertheless I have developed

some tricks to do on the trapeze that hangs over my bed, as I can use my hands and pull myself to change position.

-Good job, you don't become tired of being on one side of your body all the time.

-You know Pafi, John Wayne a movie actor who played a cowboy in his movies, created a huge prize to be given to the person who could perform a fourfold somersault in the air. What do you think if I start training for that?

-Great, it is very easy, the only thing is to run a little and jump over any huge fruit peel.

-No Pafi, we humans are much heavier and to jump in the air is much more difficult for us. That is why I love acrobats, they are the artists that really can make me cry, more than the dancers or musicians.

-I remember the day we went to the Tivoli Park to see them, you were crying while seeing them jumping in the air and risking their lives with the monkey-like job they were doing.

-They fascinate me Pafi, and to cry when I see them is a sort of HOMAGE I pay to them. They are the most alert and alive artists.

-You said that many of them where from Spain, or at least Latinos.

-Yes, do you remember "The Flying Spain"? They are so good!

-Oh, those were from Texas!

-And what about "The Tijuana Aces", or "The Ramirez Brothers". Weren't they those who had a small plane from which they would hang from one foot without falling down?

-Of course, and then there were the Ramirez sisters that would smile and shake their bottoms up there.

-Shut up Pafi, you are going to make me cry again, all that was pure beauty.

-And which one was the artist that became ill like you?

-You are thinking about the movie actor, Huddson.

-He also had a woollen monkey, that looked a little like me.

-Someone gave it to him when he was working on a film, and he hung the monkey with a string from the trapeze over the bed, and he kept him company during his illness.

-What is it the nurses keep on writing in that book near your bed?

-They write everything about me, I told you, they give me a lot of attention.

-Can you read some for me?

-I am going to try, but sometimes it is still hard for me to focus, you know I had that infection in the eyes that stopped by itself, don't you think I am lucky?

-What if it had continued?

-If it had continued I would not be able to see any more . It was very scary the day when I started to see just white spots, I was writing and I went to bed because I thought I was kind of dizzy, but it was my eyes. I went to the eye doctor and she explained to me what had happened.

-Don't tell me anymore of those awful things, because I see I can't help you, the only thing I can do is listen, and you don't even complain, of course I know that's why the doctors say they appreciate you very much, because you don't bother them. I would drive them crazy or at least I would write many bad words in the book.

-I am going to read for you the latest they wrote:

Diarrhoea, 1360 ml.

Aspiration with vacuum, 350 ml.

Liquid swallowed, 900 ml.

Urine, 1350 ml..

Intravenous, 3700 ml.

Swollen feet.

Swollen stomach.

Last night he was delirious, he got up from the bed and disconnected the intravenous.

-Very interesting, many millilitres but there you are like hanging from a tree and connected to a bag with a needle.

-Yes Pafi, but I got used to it, the needle is not painful because it is made of plastic and it is tied well to the wrist, they leave it there even if it is not connected to anything, because sometimes it is very difficult to insert it.

-Awful bracelet.

-These are ways of living, all the patients who come to this ward have a tube connected to some part of their bodies. The only thing is when you are hanging from those bags of serum or blood, you have to call someone to walk with you and pull the tubes with the tubes after you.

-And how was that story that your blood changed its sign?

-That was very strange Pafi, my blood had always been Rh negative in Colombia as it is stated in my driving license. But here when I received my first transfusion they found out I was Rh positive. I got very upset, but it seems that their tests were very carefully done. Once when there was no positive blood available they gave me negative.

-Very confusing

-I must tell you Pafi, the name of the donor always appears in the bags... It is really amazing to think from how many people I have blood. Once I read Jorgen the nurse was a donor, lately I don't even look, also I understand it is forbidden. I have blood from many people, sometimes I wonder if my ways of being and thinking have changed on account of this.

-And what else did they write in your book?

-Restlessness, and with... -I don't understand - He was given Diazepam and must sleep now as long as possible. He is sent to a room with double door and must not receive visitors.

-Again they put a sign written on the door in one of those languages I don't understand because they are not monkey language.

-Nevertheless my mother worked it out to stay inside and she lied down in a chair near the open balcony. It was summer and it was

very warm; the wild garden in front of the terrace was very beautiful and we both could walk a little around it, there was no one else, we walked and sat and relaxed on the benches for a long while. I was happy she was here. I have been ill already one year and a half, my time is running short and you know Pafi, it is a long way from Colombia to Denmark, for her to come back again.

-I know, it is also a long way from Africa.

-Here goes the bedside MAP book: The black diarrhoea continues with three crosses of blood, -which means internal haemorrhage. -He vomits all the food. He recognizes the people around.

-I peed on the flower vase, -Pafi interrupted -I knew you didn't like the flowers. They cost a lot of money and the next day they are dead. They are supposed to give a nice look to the room but here I am to take care of that.

-Size of the stomach, 79. Temperature 39.6. Fast breathing.

-I always say you sound like a dog who has run many miles.

-That's how I feel Pafi, very tired. I hate it when my mother asks me to get up and do some work on my comic strip. Bed is the kindest place on earth.

-And there is not yet a medicine that will cure you completely and get you up from that nest?

-No I'm still waiting for that miracle cure and sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night to think and talk about whether I should wait for the miraculous drug or just write my last will.

-You said last wills were not common in your country and they might even complicate things. Anyway the only treasure you have is that tiny house which you told me about.

-That house should go to my godchild Miguel.

-And is that all you have?

-I have my intelligence, my wit, my books, my theatre pieces, and of course my monkeys and toys and other animals; it is very

important to decide to whom are all these going, but we have to think about it carefully.

-And how is it that you got that killing virus in your system?

-There are two ways, one is thorough the blood, you have to be very careful that the blood of an infected person doesn't touch you at all, because you might have a small cut in your skin and the virus can get in, besides for example, you cannot put your hands inside a waste basket because there might be a soiled needle used by a sick drug addict or other people that use needles.

-And is that all?

-Of course not, you can be infected also if you make love with a sick person that you don't even know is sick, because the illness doesn't show when it is in the first stages and that is when it is more virulent.

-And how is it that "to make love"?

- IT IS WHEN YOU GO TO BED TOGETHER WITH SOMEONE YOU LOVE, THEN YOU HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL, BECAUSE THIS PERSON MIGHT HAVE THE VIRUS EVEN WITHOUT KNOWING IT, PEOPLE DON'T SHOW NOR FEEL ANYTHING BAD DURING THE FIRST STAGES OF THE ILLNESS. AND THIS IS THE BIGGEST DANGER.

-I will be very careful,- Pafi answered.

-Mmm, yes there is a lot of panic about this illness, but I think it is an illness like any other. And if the children get to know about it, they won't be just scared, but instead they will learn to be aware of doing what is necessary not to get infected so they can have long lives and be free of illness.

-And what are the kids going to do with all the idiotic thoughts you add sometimes?

-Well, they can jump over the philosophy.

-And what about the dirty words we use, though sometimes times they are funny?

-They can jump over that also if it is not allowed in their houses, parents can just cover them with black ink, very dramatic.

-And what shall we do about that Death business?

-I don't think they will be bothered if we talk about Death. Most kids see television shows and there everybody kills everybody all the time. Dying for them has become a game, they act it very well!

-What do you know about Death?

-Nothing, I don't know anything, nobody does. And they can see that what I write about Death is pure invention, fiction, like when I'll talk about sitting on stairs and all that jazz. Maybe in schools they should ask children to write how they imagine Death is. The essential of course is to die when it is time, it is not important if it is in a way or the other.

-How is that?

-I mean it is not important if you go through colours, or paths of light, with the knowledge of the truth, or in the astral plane, karma, reincarnation or Nirvana which by the way must be very boring because there you don't feel you are your own person and you don't crave nor desire anything.

-No, no, the important thing is that when you have to die you just do and do it in the best way.

-Grown ups are more frightened than small people, and that's why they are all the time inventing, working on explanations and making out stories. What I really don't like is that it is said that when you die it is forever. Per secula seculorum, amen.

-A propos...

-What, Pafi ?

-Yesterday I was reading some French so as to become very smart. I think it is great idea to do some advertising in the same book for it to be bought for children, because with all these talk they might be allowed to read it, and we can sell more.

-Pafi, how awful, you shouldn't talk about that.

-Yes, but I bet you thought about it.

-Ugly monkey. Eat all the halva and stop bothering me, but if you get a stomach ache I hang you from this lamp so you can throw up at your pleasure all night long.

-Uh, uh, uh, you wise guy.

THEY KEEP ASKING IF MY BOOKS ARE FOR CHILDREN OR FOR ADULTS,
AS IF THERE REALLY WERE A DIFFERENCE

-Pafi we must remember not to put the jam they bring for breakfast over the cheese because it glides, we have to remember to pick up the cheese and put the jam on the bread so it won't spill over the sheets and make them a mess.

-Mess last night, you took your sleeping pill and when you woke up you were full of shit around and under.

-Umpf, yes, but let me tell you that when you wake up covered with that stuff you must call it "excrements". To the doctor you talk referring to "the stomach", Or you might explain if you "went to the bathroom or not", (even if you can't move). The doctor will use words like "faeces", "defecate" or "deposition".

-Ugh! - said Pafi covering his nose.

-With the family you talk about plain poo, but with the nurses you might use "samples", or even stools.

-For me when it falls from a tree it is just pure shit and if it falls over my head it is really bad, but it happens.

-Bad things happen Pafi, but now we are used to that.

-Well, I suppose.

-Us, the human animals we have so many words, that one could think they would be useful to say many nice things, but I know that the monkey language is enough and fine to talk with.

-Of course, but so many people talk in such way, that I don't understand a word, like the Doctor today, he told you "punga, tatunga, plin, plin, mastif", and some other strange words that were not clear for me.

-He is Danish.

-Very special country, but we forgive them everything because they make marvellous cakes, with marzipan and other wonders that can make the stitches in my back burst!

-Don' t talk to me about food Pafi, you know I have this taste perversion, which means that food for me tastes differently from what is expected.

-Too bad.

-Yes sometimes a friend works a lot cooking very special food for me and I can't eat it, because it might taste like rusted nails.

-Now tell me what was it that the doctor told you today.

-Good news Pafi. Every news that is not bad is good. Do you remember the needle they stuck in my spine to draw some liquid that is like the brain's juice. That puncture was supposed to be very painful and they brought a special nurse to hold my hand and help me with the pain, but I didn't feel any pain.

-And you didn't know if you had to make faces or start to cry so she wouldn't feel she was wasting her time?

-I don't know if I didn't feel anything at all because I am loosing sensitivity or because it was done very carefully, and I want to believe this second possibility. Anyway that juice was looked at through the microscope and they didn't find any virus in it, this means that I don't have the infection in my Central Nervous System, so I am not going to start to make silly things.

-Silly things you have always made.

-Yes but these would be worst, they would be called DEMENTIA, and anyone can get it. It is not that awful and I think one doesn't suffer, the only bad thing is that visitors get frightened if you

decide to throw the flowers they bring you on their heads and things like that.

-Nobody brings flowers to you.

-No, first of all there is no place to put them, and if they bring that special vase for the bedside table, it finally falls down in the middle of the night when I just have gone to sleep. Besides flowers are always like dying.

-And what if you die?

-If I do and they bring flowers I will sit down in the coffin and scare everybody. And please my last wish is that my monkeys, the stuffed bear and all the toys be well arranged around the coffin, and please don't bother me with flowers that smell like death.

-So all the monkeys and toys around him?

-Yes that is my last will.

-And what do you want the visitors to do now?

-For example they can bring me a bunch of flowers, let me look at it, and then bring it to their homes. Visitors could even bring the same bouquet every time they come. I wouldn't know that it was the same one, and they could save some money, flowers are too expensive here, I guess they come from my country where they are very beautiful and cheap. Also bouquets could be hired at the Hospital's entrance, that should be a good business if we ever run out of ideas.

-But they can leave the fruits, can't they? - Asked Pafi, very worried.

-Of course, all food is welcome, but not the flowers. Remember how bad it was for the patient in room 23, as soon as he accepted some flowers, he got worse.

-Yes, all nurses started to run. Are you are not going to write down the song we created for the Room 23 patient?

-It is very funny, black humour, but never mind because this is not a colouring book for kids, though it is for kids and their parents, for them all to know how things are.

-But, is it for children, the furless monkeys with sweets in their mouths, or not?

-Pafi, I have been asked that many times about my books, if they are for children or for adults, as if there were really a difference. Of course they are not dirty nor political, if that's what they mean by adult stuff.

The only trick is TO USE VERY SIMPLE WORDS AND TO TELL THINGS LIKE THEY ARE, WITHOUT LYING, and that is good enough for everybody.

-Don't tell me those things, I know that you write for monkeys like me, and that is it. And now I want you to sing for me the Song of Room 23.

-"Alarm, alarm, alarm": like in Alci Acosta's song:

- Three nurses a' running
one did not see a chair
she jumped on the air
and undid her hair.

egg

-Two nurses a' running
one stepped on an

two jumps on the air
and broke her leg

-One nurse a' running
she hit a bed
three jumps in the air
and broke her head

tree

-And in very bad shape
they untied from the

dying

the guy who was

three.

on room twenty

-You have to be careful - Pafi said, -sometimes you start looking at the ceiling and you get some ideas that are going to make people think you are cuckoo.

-Oh Pafi, I tell you, when one is lying in a hospital bed you think very differently from what you think when you are free and healthy outside. Only the persons who are under the same circumstances can understand this.

-That story you told me about beds and magazines sounds quite odd.

-I believe it can be a good idea Pafi, because they have to create places to keep people like me: Imagine a simple, grey, misty lieu, where all they have is very cosy, soft and gentle beds. Every Monday you are given a good magazine to read, light but interesting; for Christmas you get a golden orange. You can spend the time watching the change of seasons by the window.

-What is that?

-Spring, summer, autumn and winter with all the changes in the trees and leaves, the blooming and flowering, the fruiting and wilting, like us.

-And would the beds have a special design or shape?

-They would not be high hospital beds like these, but just plain common beds with wrinkled sheets like in normal life. There wouldn't be doctors sinking things on you and turning you upside down, only the people in charge of the magazines. And you shouldn't need go to the bathroom and inform about your movements, and you wouldn't need to eat either; only to wait for the famous Christmas orange, and this Orange you don't eat immediately, you keep it for a day when you will be specially hungry and would appreciate it.

-And what about me? -asked Pafi.

-Oh, you would have your own tiny bed, and we could use thoughts to communicate, and you even might receive something to colour and cut instead of the magazine.

-Yes I think you have gone nuts, but it doesn't surprise me, I might have seen worst. Anyway, where would that be?

-I don't know, we have to find out, maybe in the middle of Russia, or perhaps in one of those new mysterious small countries they mention sometimes in the Newspapers.

-And what else? I am getting interested.

-There they won't use fluorescent irritating lights, but soft lamp bulbs hanging from old cables, perhaps dirty with dead flies, in broken old lamps, leftovers of the last war...

-I don't know, but you remind me of my uncle the one who spent his whole life sitting on a stylish coconut.

-Pafi I am thinking about one of those beautiful lamps that look like upside-down flowers, Tiffany, perhaps, that they don't make anymore, they give a fine light.

-And what is the other little project you have stored in your brain cells in case you have any left?

-I won't tell you, at least not now, because you are going to repeat I am flying over the cuckoo's nest. But let me explain I have ideas for the which the world is not yet prepared.

-This I told Pafi. In fact I have several things written elsewhere, I hope they will be found and published at the given time.

-

I WAS SUFFERING A LOT WHILE WAITING FOR HER TO WASH MY PARTS UNDER THE SHOWER

One day they took off my oxygen mask and made me take a shower. How disgraceful to get me up from my bed, the kindest place to live! Inconsiderate. But that's what they do to find out if you can breathe at least, some fresh air, or if on the contrary you are about to die because you are unable to grab some Oxygen.

A very nice nurse came to wash me and massaged soap all over, I was very worried to think how was she going to wash my genitals.

But finally we were all very happy with the results of the shower, and even Pafi came down from the tree to smell the delicious soap though he is allergic to soaps, and to water by the way, and he started to sneeze until the stitches on his bottom tore apart.

He was taken to surgery and given back to me in perfect shape and with a woollen catheter.

As I used to spend most of my day in bed, when I was not in the mood for writing with my special thick rubber pencil for insensitive fingers, I read many of the magazines and newspapers offered by the Kiosk's lady or the girl from the library.

In an American magazine there was the advertising of a book in these words:

"Is it a virus created by men? Why the government has hidden the truth? What is going on? How about if the virus has been developed in a Laboratory to be used in a biological war? THE VIRUS AND THE DOCTORS OF DEATH, reveals everything the government doesn't want to be known about this new illness. Experiments with cancer in animals, and the bioengineering of elements designed to destroy the immune system. The author tells the fascinating story of an experiment led in New York, in the which a new vaccine against Hepatitis B was administered to 1083 young men and how the new virus appeared some months after. This experiment was repeated in Los Angeles and San Francisco with the same results. Why does the medical community insists that the virus comes from Africa? Which is the connection with the CIA? What other secret experiments have been already performed?"

-What does it mean experiments with cancer in animals? -asked Pafi immediately.

-Oh Pafi, that is something terrible. Can you imagine, they hang a rabbit or a monkey from the hind legs, and inject him all sorts of viruses and chemicals until he gets very sick and dies, so the researchers can conclude something.

But this didn't seem so awful to Pafi, he replied that was one of the jobs monkeys had to do and that was fine. Others would work in circuses or at the zoos and he was working as caretaker, sir of company, lord monkey in my house. But there were some that had to help in finding cures and such.

-But it doesn't hurt them? -I asked.

-Of course they hurt and they suffer a lot. But they all go to the Monkey's Heaven, which has a pureed banana floor and when it rains it pours raisins. -And Pafi turned his head to my table where there was a bag of chocolate covered raisins.

-O.K. you can have four of them since it is Sunday.

Pafi is not a cheater but he doesn't know how to count so he went through all the bag and got a stomach-ache.

Another day we saw in the newspaper the picture of the first couple of monkeys who had been injected with the virus. The Lab retired them with a pension of mangoes and oranges and housed them in a nice place for life.

-Did you see? - Pafi asked.

-Yes Pafi, I hope they will live many years.

Other theories I found as days went by were the following: The story about the CIA is just pure lies: Everybody knows the virus originated in Vietnam. The Vietnamese girls would make love with the American soldiers in exchange for little silly things they lacked. That means they would go shopping in a house delivery system. A cocoa powder can, filter cigarettes, milk for the kids, batteries for the radio and so on; on account of these needs they would jump in bed with Joe, Dick and Harry. Poor girls. The nice American guys left them with syphilis and other infections of the kind, and the girls could not afford enough penicillin, so those viruses started to strengthen themselves, swallowing the little amounts of penicillin they became immune to it. So they developed tremendous hungry mouths to munch on everything they got their paws on.

All that is a lie, the virus is a monster that came from outer space, it was brought to life on earth because of the Challenger explosion.

It is God's punishment, according to the Old Testament (but not the New).

No, it is the African vengeance towards the European colonizers, something like Montezuma's diarrhoea that visitors get in Mexico. But that one you can stop with a cork and this one is a non ending story.

In Central Africa it is called "slims", and apparently 60% of the population has already lost weight, even doctors and nurses at the hospitals have to spend part of the day lying in beds or hammocks in the Infectious Medicine Wards.

-Do you think -Pafi worried- my cousins in the mango tree are already sick?

-No they live much more to the south. Besides there is already a vaccine for the simian.

-Simian?

-Oh, that is the name we give to monkeys, mandrills, gorillas, chimpanzees and so on.

-Oh!

-It is just a case of guilt. The patient has not yet resolved some childhood trauma and he gets sick to punish himself. This is another theory. The problem is that the planet is ill. It is something spiritual and ecological that has nothing to do with medicine. What is needed is to form a connection of chocolate Ozone between Macchu Picchu, Stonehenge and the Keops pyramid. We have to cure the earth before it goes to nothing under our own feet. It is the eight plague named in the Apocalypse, - others concluded,- it is the signal of the end of the world.

SOME ARE SCARED THEY WILL GET ILL JUST FROM SHAKING HANDS OR DRINKING A CUP OF COFFEE

At the hospital's wide corridor there is a little corner with chairs, tables and a T.V. set, patients gather there to smoke and cough at their leisure. It is nice, when it is not very cold you can open windows and see the gardens, you can chat and drink something. Anyone can go there at any time, make friends with others, share experiences, and even watch one of the two TV channels, from 5 to 10.

-"Is there something good on T.V.?"

- "Sports again?"

- "A program on AIDS?"

- "That is really funny!"

- "The film that woman made here?"

- "I am the only foreigner on the movie, and a friend told her to delete me from it!"

- "My white cells are in five, but my doctor says some people might have zero and continue living."

- "Well I have nine, but the thrombocytes dropped down to the ground, and I am not allowed to leave the hospital until they climb at least to forty because I might bleed to death. The normal cipher is about 140 I think."

- "Nobody comes to visit me anymore, friends have a limit of tolerance I guess,- ends another guy, one of those who can still sit in the corridor between a test and a treatment."

- Pafi, don't take all the cookies because you are going to be sick also. Of course I know those are the ones you like best, with raisins and everything, but you must leave some for other people, for me for example.

- O.K. I will be nice.

For Pafi to be good is not to do naughty things while I am looking. The cookie platter was emptied very quickly and Pafi's pockets in his purple coat were suddenly full.

- How come that boy in the corner is so lonely, nobody visits him at all, - Pafi commented.

- I can imagine it is because some people are frightened, they think this is as contagious as catching a cold, and really it is not. But there have been so many pictures of very thin patients that friends might be scared of finding only a sack of bones.

- Maybe we can bring one of my cousins and give it to him.

-That sounds like a wonderful idea, why don't you write a letter to Africa, I can help you, and ask if one of your brothers wants to come. Are there many people in your family?

-Uh, uh, uh, Rocco, Bacardi, Higgins, Humphrey, Soufflé, Suppo, Flofi, Handel, Monti and so on.

-Well that really is a huge mango tree!

-But you do get some visitors, don't you?

-Yes, when I am allowed, and not very often.

-What about Torben the guy with the funny hair, he brought you some blue daisies, and Kathryn brings you little dishes of nice food, and when your mother or your sister are here they stay all day and night taking care of you.

-That is true Pafi, and I am very grateful to them. I am not very good at expressing my feelings, but the other day I could finally tell my mother if there was anything I could do to make her happier. But she said no, she was fine and the only thing I could do was to get better!

-I think I heard that when you were walking very slowly on the jungle and sitting in those benches covered with leaves.

-You are right Pafi, on the jungle. The no end garden where you can get stepping down from your room balcony . There the horizon is the sky, no buildings.

-And what about Marianne the girl that takes care of you, she is so nice, she cooks the way you like and never leaves you alone, and I do like her very much because when she fixes your bed she sits me over your pillow with my straw hat and the glasses Torben brought for me from Italy.

-Sure Pafi, but have you seen that some days even having you and all my friends and family I feel very lonely?

-I can swear it for a basket full of fruit! Like this morning, here at home, I was very scared when you were crying and screaming lying on the floor. And there was nobody home.

-Nobody Pafi.

-And it took me a long time to arrive by your side, my woollen legs are very short as you have seen, beautiful and hairy but short!

-Yes it was really scary, frightening and sad.

-And then suddenly you started that kind of attack, quivering and shivering, trembling and your eyes moving like crazy from one side to the other, and after every one of those epileptic...

-Epileptic.

-Yes, after one of those attacks you started to scream and make a real hassle, like in the wilderness.

-You can't imagine Pafi in how much panic I was.

-I saw you.

-I didn't know what was happening to me and I was imagining the worse and even worst for the future, I am not taking any medications because they don't suit me at all, it scares me that the virus might be making his way into my brain and that I am going to start doing silly things and not being able to do many others. I can't tell if it is my paranoia, but when I talk I believe I am saying the words upside down.

-That I can't notice. Words should not have order.

-But you remember the day I peed on the orange juice glass without knowing.

-Oh yes, but we monkeys do that all the time.

-Maybe, but you don't spill it and you don't need to have your sheets and mattress changed.

-Uh, uh, you said that as long as you could walk to the bathroom by yourself you would be O.K.

-Yes the worst is to depend so much. Sometimes I might be sitting very comfortable, and suddenly I need for example a pencil, I see it two meters away and I can't reach it, and it is not a matter of calling someone for that. Other times I need someone to empty my pee bottle. Or to please pick up that little fleck of garbage that bothers me, or I

might need a clean glass of water, or something to spit on, or I want my feet to be covered, or perhaps on the contrary I want my blankets taken away, and this and that and...

-Like a small dictator.

-Unfortunately yes.

THEY HAVE THE ARMS COVERED WITH TATTOOS FROM THE WRIST TO THE NECK

Nobody gets along with the drug addicts, and hopefully they are quite spaced out with the Methadone they give them at the Hospital.

They drink non ending cups of coffee and smoke hand rolled cigarettes. I have never been able to take a look at their famous black needle scars because they have the arms covered with tattoos from the wrists up to the neck and they exhibit them night and day.

They refuse to use the hospital white clothes and wander up and down in blue jeans in pieces and T shirts with the faces of the rock kings printed. Their socks are wide and deformed and stay clinging to the big toe when they try to walk fast.

Some of them cheat and escape in a bus to get another dose of Methadone downtown at the Distribution Centre, or maybe some of the "Real Stuff". They can just pick up a small syringe from one of the hospital carts, or buy it very cheap at the Automatic behind the door at St. Luke's Church (the one with the non stop ding dong bells, I wrote the queen about).

When they come back to the hospital at night they are so "stoned" that the nurses have to scold them as if they were small kids:

-"You escaped again, didn't you? Well, tomorrow you are not going to receive your dose."

Once I heard a nurse telling a girl that it was forbidden to mix the Methadone with soda drinks. The girl swore and swore many times she hadn't done such thing, and if she could please get a pain killer, she

had that awful soreness between her legs. This seems to be already an old joke because the nurse started to laugh.

- "To sell it afterwards, no way!" - she answered.

- "Who is going to buy that bullshit? No, no, this time it is the plain truth, ouchi, ouchi, it really hurts!"

- "You know you shouldn't inject yourself in there."

- "Yes, but I don't have other place that doesn't show. If you don't give me the pills I want, I pack and leave for home."

And that was it, she packed her things, and left just like that. No one has to stay if he or she doesn't want to.

- How sad, - Pafi observed - their lives must be terrible.

- Yes Pafi, consider they must think about the virus and besides everyday they have to find out a way of getting their fix. Some of them don't have any friends nor family members left. And no money, sometimes they try to enter your room to steal something.

- I have seen they are very lonely. Can't they stop using that ?

- No, I think they are as hooked as you are to peanuts and raisins.

THAT IS WHEN YOU GET A WRONG PLEASURE LOOKING AT CERTAIN PICTURES AND THINGS LIKE THAT

One evening Pafi was going through a LIFE magazine, the pages are larger than him, but he likes to look at the pictures, specially when there are lions and giraffes; suddenly he asked:

- Why do they show these pictures of dying people, I have never seen anyone like that here at the hospital, so thin, in rags and without washing, shaving or combing.

- You are right Pafi, once I read that was the "pornography of death", which is much more appealing than the pornography of sex. People like to look at those pictures thinking unconsciously: "That is happening to THEM, not to ME".

-Porno... what?

-Oh that is when people experiment some sort of perverted pleasure watching pictures and things.

-Like me with my giraffes?

-No, they enjoy looking at disgusting scenes, like concentration camps, and war, and crimes, or at people who have no money to buy clothes and allow journalists to take pictures of them naked. And these appear to be images good to sell newspapers, magazines and movies.

-How odd.

-Some horror seekers used to come to the hospital to take pictures of the sick people, sneaking through the windows. But I think they got tired of searching because they couldn't find really dramatic cases. Though of course with a little retouching they can still cause impact.

-Ugh, Ugh, Pafi ended.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT NOT TO SMILE, BECAUSE DEATH LOVES HAPPY PEOPLE

When I learned I had the virus, I started reading many books on how to be cured and such. I began with the thickest of them all. It brought a life-saving diet which suggested rice and boiled vegetables, with magical herb teas. Also different kinds of meditations and visualizations to get rid of the virus.

I spent a whole year thinking, night and day, about white submarines diving through my veins and destroying those hungry viruses with sophisticated canons that I designed during a whole delirious night's

work . We killed so many viruses with my Navy, that I started to worry about what to do with those many corpses.

The book also brought some instructions on how to avoid stress, which vitamins to take, like 100 daily milligrams of C, and so on. It gave a whole program, so complete, I thought I wouldn't be in any danger if I followed the instructions one by one, to the letter. With some alterations here and there of course.

It is very important to sleep with the head to the North. Tooth paste with fluorine should be banned. Cheese, mushrooms, wine, and all fermented foods are forbidden, they are inducers of yeast and other fungus growths in the tongue and the digestive tract, etc.

Unfortunately on arriving to the last page there was a note by the editor announcing the author's death two weeks after finishing the book. But he had enjoyed every minute of his life and had died with a smile on his lips.

I started to realize that this kind of notations were common in several books on "how to cure yourself" and others of the like, authors would drop dead in the last page. How they would know until when they were going to live? Were all the books being left unfinished?

-Are you not scared on writing this book? -Pafi asked very surprised.

-No Pafi, the trick is never to write the last page, and finish the book one page before.

-And leaving the last one BLANK?

-Yes. And it is very important not to smile because Lady Death likes to cut on happy people.

-The best would be to make a sour face if she comes to get you.

-And to insult her.

-I'd love that.

-To scare her.

-"Killer, coward".

- "Dirty bitch".

- "Come on let us fight!"

- "Disgusting witch!"

- "Smiling hyena".

- Is it some... someone coming on the corridor?

- Won't it be the dumb silly bonny woman?

- Worst, it is the old man with the famous bottle!

- Oh shit!

- Silence Pafi, bring me the mints' bag to see if I can survive this one.

- I hide under the bed. -And Pafi tumbled down and glided fast.

IMAGINE, AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH GOD! -NOT EVEN HIS FATHER HAD HAD ONE

It happens that around 1920 a little boy was born in a small town of Norway. Since very young he exhibited all the signs normal to his age. Nothing special. His ears were pulled when he went to school and one day a class mate put a frog inside his satchel.

He was brought up near the fjords where the water is so cold he never learned how to swim and his father would laugh at him. The young lad suffered so much with this, that one day looking at himself on the mirror, while taking care of a pimple, he said:
"I am going to do something important with my life".

By fifteen he was smart enough to buy a "Clearasil" tube, and by sixteen he became a tailor's apprentice, he committed all the errors common to these students, buttons that don't match their holes, pockets down the knees and the famous three sleeved jacket.

But eventually he learned his job and opened his own shop: SKRAEDDER, in a nice street near a bakery, or BAGERI.

He had a good clientele and he didn't have to work too much because in these northern countries the Government helps if you are in a Union, with unemployment extra money when you run out of work.

But here we come to the important point: In 1940 while he was sleeping God appeared to him:

- "Thou shalt take paper and pencil and write what I say!"

The tailor trembling with emotion told himself this was going to be what would make him famous, an exclusive meeting with God, not even his father had had one!

- "Yes your Godship!" - He answered.

- "Write it down and with good spelling: Three pieces of minced garlic, one large onion chopped, one glass of sour milk, three spoonfuls of... (secret herb) a branch of you know what... (another supersecret herb). Mix everything with love and energy and let it rest for three days; then thou shalt buy one hundred plastic cups and spread the word and this liquid all over the world to cure cancer, AIDS and a lot of other small ailments. Off."

The vision disappeared, but a few minutes later came back: - "Wouldn't you have a good piece of woollen cloth you don't need anymore? This should be a give and take business."

Our tailor couldn't believe he had been chosen for the Great Secret. After spreading a few throws of heavenly tissues in greys and blues, he began to follow God's instructions and a week later he was ready to start his mission.

With the cups, he picked a huge plastic bottle, the kind the bicycle riders use, and a fine bag to keep everything. In forty years he could cure a few people in his country, three or four, and now he was here in Denmark to see if things would go better, at least the climate was milder than in Norway.

Well this is more or less the story of the concoction Pafi and I hate so much.

The old man entered my room as he had done every evening during the last two months. As he only spoke Norwegian we didn't have to talk, which was quite relaxing.

He pulled out his plastic cup and filled it with the famous and infamous liquid. At the beginning I had tried to drink it fast so it won't taste that bad; if there is something I can't stand is garlic, and now I was offered this drink with more garlic than hope.

Unfortunately the old man said that the slower I'd drink it, the strongest the healing power would be. So here come the mints. I swallowed half a package to start, and I handled Pafi a few while he kept laughing under the bed.

I finished my glass and gave it to the tailor, he wouldn't throw the glasses in the garbage can, so no one could steal his recipe, he'd take the used cups home with him. I don't know why he was so mysterious about it, since for example he never charged any money for his visits nor the drink. Well, anyway who would have paid him for that disgusting beverage?

- "Frisk?" - He asked me every evening.

- "Yes, very frisk, absolutely and totally frisk." - I answered but this was something I couldn't understand as I always thought frisk was fresh, and it was meant for ice creams or juices, malted milks and sodas.

Interrupting my philosophic thoughts the man handed me another glass, and we had to repeat the whole ceremony:

- "Frisk?"

- "Hum, yes, if this is not frisk I don't know what frisk is!"

The only curse is that we have been conducting this ceremony for two months, the taste is awful, I am still in bed feeling very sick, and the little pieces of garlic and onion, plus the herb straws and leaves, stay between my teeth and I can't brush, because with my low platelet count doctors think I can bleed to death if I harm my gums.

Nobody visits me anymore. But it seems the old man didn't see the written sign on the door: "Delicate patient, enter carefully" or something of the like. Also a nurse comes in very often, looks at me and

sprays some air freshener called "Fragrance from the Woods", that smells for me like the nauseating Oil of Ulay.

- "Frisk, frisk" -the guy repeated when leaving the room. I always wondered how he managed to pass through the nurse's door with the suspicious bag.

Pafi jumped from under the bed when he saw him leave: -Ugh, you do smell real bad today, mama mia, I am going to wear your oxygen mask.

-Why were you laughing so much under the bed?

-Only thing I could see were his feet, he had one sock and was missing the other one. Uh, uh, uh.

Once the tailor brought a dictionary, an addition to his well-known bag. He sat and started looking for words he carefully wrote with a chalk. Afterwards he handed me a brown paper which had seen better times around a ham and cheese sandwich.

- "Good drink, you finish with hospital pills. Only drink." -He said.

- "Listen Mr. Frisk " -I answered, - "You might be a great cook of recipes from the other world and even farther, but let me tell you that the hospital pills I am going to go on taking them, even if you and your Lordship Cooking Teacher get outrageously mad. This means in short terms: No more drink, kaput, finito, the end, jamais. No frisk, not ever again, absolutely no frisk!"

The old man very composed packed his things and left with dignity with one sock yes and the other no. He never came back. Pafi and I celebrated with a chocolate popsicle with red jelly in the middle.

SICKENING COCKTAIL

That outstandingly sickening cocktail was only one of the many miraculous cures that friends and acquaintances wanted ME to try, and would offer or prescribe on the phone or personally.

-This is the best.

-This has cured more than one.

-Did you already go to Philippines? That's the right place.

-No, China, the best is the root of the Chinese cucumber, even my grandmother is taking it and she is not dead.

-Oh!

-Don't inject it because it might kill you, but make a tea and drink 42 cups daily instead of food.

(Later I learned that the root of the said cucumber was being used in "The Q compound" in the U.S.)

-I am sending you magical vibrating crystals to put on your chest. (I put the crystal on the window and it gives beautiful reflections with the sun, when there is sun).

-Some cassettes to relax the different parts of the body, there is one for the ears and another for the pancreas, I will be sending more.

-The algae from the Tokaido Bay.

-Blue water, you put pure water in a blue container under the sun and then to the cool of the night. Drink it seven moons.

-Some fresh branches under the mattress with a pan under the bed, but make sure the branches have no spines.

-The sweat of the Saint from the Holy Cove.

-A no food diet, so the viruses got bored and left in the search for greener pastures, or pastures. (And I was in 55 kilos)

-Only special pills from London, some ANA in the morning and some CATA in the evening; besides all known and unknown vitamins, minerals, etc.

Several pills were suggested by a deep rolfers masseur and others by an ORTHOPATIC doctor in California, where I went times ago when I had the feeling that something was going wrong because I was tired

most of the time. That day I arrived to my sisters house with a huge box full of flasks which my family looked with big eyes.

It would be a non ending list. Some fanatics called back to check if I was doing the right recommended thing. Sometimes I would even stop answering the phone.

-Did you see the homeopath in Berlin?

I had been there once to have the One Drop Blood Test about the which I will speak soon, but now I had no energy to take 2 planes. (You can't get to Berlin in only one flight, unless you fly with Russian Aeroflot and arrive to the other side of the Wall).

Once, when I had just left the hospital for the first time I was as dumb as to take a short flight to a small town in Denmark.

There the Woman Healer was very nice and gave me a cup of tea with no sugar, besides she recommended three different injections: Crotalus Terrificus, Iguana Mortis, and Latinus Cascabelis.

The Homeopathic principle is that the patient should be injected, or given in pills, different poisons that should produce the same symptoms as the illness itself, maybe to alert the defence system and put it to work, but what if you don't have any defence system or it is exhausted.

Also one of the latest trends was to drink your first pee of the day, it should work as a vaccine against your own poisons.

Something very boring was the amount of time dedicated to all this speculations, which added to the hours spent at the hospital in a treatment or just waiting for a test or for a chat with the doctor, all this would fill your entire life not leaving extra time for the many things you still want to do and enjoy.

Anyway to follow the Woman Healer instructions I had to inject myself in the leg every night. Pafi and I tried several methods:

-"You can close the eyes, -he suggested, - and I clean the spot with cotton and alcohol and you push the needle without fear."

Pafi tried to be very helpful but it was not very good for him, he ended up with two needles in his ass: -Ouch, I don't think the Croficus Territalus you talk about is very good for me, -he complained.

Finally we arrived to a good solution. We switched a Tango Cassette in my Sound Machine and I'd shot myself following the rhythm of the music. For the best results we used to play "Farewell boys" in orchestra arrangement.

ONE EVENING WE HEARD WOOLLEN HANDS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

One evening we heard woollen hands knocking at the door!

Pafi got up to open. I had never seen anything so funny. It was Pafi's cousins and friends who had come as soon as they received the letter. In front came Rocco, Pafi's twin brother, he was the guide who brought the rest from Africa following a little map drawn in a Kodak envelope that a tourist had left under their mango tree.

We couldn't guess through which roads had Rocco brought them because the floor became a filthy path of mud and they all seemed very tired and couldn't understand well where they were.

After Rocco came the gorillas, Handel, Monti, Bacardi, Suppo, Humphrey, Higgins, and a baby gorilla called Flofi who was the group's pet.

In the back came the older monkeys, Pinky, very short and from the fifties, Curious George wearing a red shirt with his printed name and a hat also red sewed to this head, and finally Monkey, very old and with a terrible skin illness that would allow all the straw to come out from his body.

We made immigrant Visas for them all. Very difficult because they wanted to play train in my bed, and a new game for the which they would hide all under my pillow to tickle one another and guess, by the laughs, to whom the foot belonged.

We started to teach them how to use the W.C. and to talk like humans, I couldn't understand much of the language they brought from the wilderness.

But, for example Pinky never developed a voice and this is the moment when he hasn't said a single word.

We had a meeting to decide which monkeys would go to take care of lonely people. We argued a lot. -What if the oldies, -or a gorilla, -yes, -but which one? -Flofi is only a baby, -George the Curious is so naughty, and one has to keep an eye permanently on him. We couldn't agree on a decision.

-Why don't we stay altogether and constitute a big family - suggested Rocco.

-Is that allowed?

-Of course, and so when Pafi is resting and sleeping we can play with you and when you are tired we can play among us.

We decided Handel could open a Monkey School where all of them could learn to talk, to sing and play and even to read and write.

Rocco suggested the daily program. The hour they all liked most was ten o'clock in the morning when they had the assignment FOOD, there they had to learn how to pull out raisins and peanuts from paper bags or to climb to the kitchen stands to get mangoes and bananas.

Monti said he would teach sports, baseball specially. This we had to cancel as Flofi got a black eye in the first training session. Finally we put the older monkeys to bed and we were all very happy.

IT IS TASTE PERVERSION THE DOCTOR SAID AND IT IS SOMETHING EXPECTED

-Pafi, you can have my broccoli soup.

-Let me see.

-Do you want the spoon?

-No, I will drink it from the plate, but listen this is not broccoli but a succulent chocolate pudding!

-Let me try...No, this is plain broccoli and without salt.

The day before I had given Pafi some potatoes that tasted like lead, and eventually most foods had a metal flavour.

-That is taste perversion, - the doctor declared.

This doesn't mean you are going to wear your pants with a shirt that doesn't match, it is symptom produced by the virus.

-Or the medicines that install themselves in the tongue's nervous terminations, -Golgi ends!

As if all this was nothing I got the Oil of Ulay syndrome. With this new illness I could detect via my nostrils all soaps, shampoos, creams et al, which might have as ingredient such oil.

You can never imagine the huge number of people who use those products. Pafi and I invented a game, how many oils of Ulay we could smell in one single day

-Fifteen, Pafi said once.

-O.K. Pafi, I counted 45.

-You are a liar, don't cheat.

-I swear Pafi, the nurse I had today had poured a litter on her head and that torture counts for 20.

-Oh, if that is like that you are right, you win.

MOTHER, GIVE ME THE SUN, THE SUN, THE SUN

Today I had another blood transfusion. I usually spend this time looking at the ceiling and waiting, for a change I decided to count how many bags I have had, since I might take as many as three or four each time and that can be about every three weeks.

My sum went up to 115 bags of blood, (if we don't count the thrombocyte's small ones). Maybe from one hundred and fifteen different persons.

As I said it is possible, but also forbidden, to lift up the etiquette on the bag and find out to whom the blood belonged, it includes the date of birth and the place of residence. But it was quite depressing when I started to imagine the faces, bodies, brains and hearts of all these people and I stopped doing it.

I should be as fat as a the stuffed turkey we ordered from the Italians last Christmas at Hostrupsvej apartment, the total of the bags might run up to 35 litters, the equivalent of what is needed for 35 human beings.

But the blood seems to hide, I always need some more, nevertheless I am glad because my body accepts it , other persons might be allergic and react badly.

Pafi and I read a Magazine, "Muy interesante", in Spanish, they say that during the second war it was discovered that the green coconut water can replace the blood plasma in emergency cases. Since then vampires are fooled with piña colada I guess.

The nurse insists in inserting the intravenous needle herself, instead of calling a doctor. We both suffer a lot when she can't find the eluding vein and has to pinch me several times. Pafi hates this.

Occasionally the vein brakes, the liquid goes somewhere else, the arm swells and it is no great fun. But I am already so well trained, like now I can absorb as many as four bags in some five hours without any allergic reaction. I wonder if I am not going to get new illnesses with this system, though the blood is supposed to be carefully screened. I would hate dumb ailments like athlete's foot.

I am very grateful to all the nice people that allow me to go on living. My sister and my mother wanted to give blood to the Bank but my sister has had hepatitis and my mother artheritis, so it might not be a good idea.

Some donors though, I don' t like very much, those are the ones whose globules came to my legs and don't allow me to walk anymore so I must hold to the walls or use the crutches.

Of course Pafi wants me to buy for him a small pair of crutches so we can walk together to the park and watch the ducks which is a sport we like very much.

One evening while Kathryn was away visiting her family in Canada, I went to Frederiksberg's Haven with my mother to watch the newborn ducks learning to swim in the pond. I was so thin by then that my pants fell to the ground and my mother started to laugh while she picked them up. I asked her how could she laugh but it seems she couldn't help it.

Sometimes I go out in the street with the crutches, walking very but very slowly, because my muscles seem to be on strike.

Like the first day I decided to go by myself for the first time after one stay at the hospital, and it was quite an ordeal. I needed to go out and buy some urgent things, which by the way were very difficult for me to carry back, cars stopped and people asked me what was wrong with my legs.

-Was it an accident or an illness? they would ask.

-Well kind of an accident, the parachute didn't open.

-My shoes are very small.

-The crutches are a prop for a theatre presentation.

-I am a biologist and I am studying the turtles speed.

Also to my fingers arrived the red cells of some paralyzed guy, so my sensitivity is not good and it is hard for me to grab a pencil, or even the spoon or fork, and I can't dream of a needle and thread business.

To my tongue came the cells of some unknown very well read intellectual who forces me to recite special texts from Ibsen. Thank God they are always short; for some reason most of the time I have to repeat the final words from GHOSTS, when Oswald, the hero, comes back home to his mother's house after a rotten life in France.

I must impersonate Oswald who comes back with a terrible illness that is slowly killing his brain cells and he knows the next attack will convert him into a vegetable.

In his pocket he carries a bottle of morphine pills and he wants his mother to give them to him at the proper time to finally put an end to his sufferings. But she refuses. Oswald is sitting tied in a long chair in front of the window and chants:

-Mother, give me the sun
the sun, the sun,
the sun, the sun...

THE NEW SHOW

-Good evening ladies and gentlemen, today we have for you a new show by the well-known humorist Dark Eyes, the guy who has killed with laughs part of his audience. We are sorry to tell you now that several patients, I mean spectators, have died ... listening to our fabulous humour selections:

-Do you know what did the Diplomatic Leukocyte tell the virus? "Don't bother me, you are destroying my immunity."

-And this is only the beginning. Here I have some statistics in my right pocket and some others in my left pocket. You can believe me, I am a graduated in Statistics at the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and I read the revealing book on the subject: " Uses and Misuses of Statistics".

-Let's start with the old ones: Did you know that only 20% of the people infected with the virus develop the full blown illness? Not bad, eh? You might be the exception as the Magic Thinking makes you believe.

-But the funniest part is in my other pocket, and it is a clipping from last week, here it says that 95% develop the illness. Funny isn't it, when we thought there was really no danger.

-Oh, but here is another little clipping, the mean life span for the ill persons is 22 months. The guy who signs the article has been alive already 26 months fighting. Some hope eh?

-Now here goes my hat, to get some coin from your generosity. I like coin, there is a friend of mine, the jeweller, who doesn't, what a

shame, he might miss it some day. My economical means are not very good now, I have had extraordinary expenses to keep on living, an apartment without stairs and with a shower. Expensive luxuries in these countries.

-This illness is not fashionable anymore, it came to be considered as chronic like Time magazine says and not many researchers and laboratories pay much attention to vaccines and medicines, we are still taking the same old stuff which is not very kind to the bone marrow and has several other pathetic side effects. I feel I am wasting my time.

-How come you have been joking most of the day ? Pafi asked.

-Yes Pafi I have been laughing a lot, that is how it is.

-But how come other days you are so sad?

-Well, that is a good question, when I come to think all the bad things that can happen to me I get very sad and in a very bad mood, like the day I splashed the lunch against the wall.

-Wow!

-But some other days I can enjoy everything that happens and I find very comic situations. The shots, the nurses, the crazy ideas that go to my head and so on.

-I know a few.

-Besides I feel like the luckiest among all and I thank God for every minute of the day. Also I can profit of some secondary advantages, like if I am sick I am not obliged to go to certain meetings and dull parties and not even to receive people I don't want to see. I am able and allowed to say: "I am tired and I am going to take a nap, excuse me".

-I like that one I am going to use it..

-It is as if I was given a second life better than the first one. I tried to explain this in a piece I choreographed, UNA VIDA MÁS, the only really autobiographical work I have done.

-Uh, uh, uh, I smelled it. When you show the blind men conducting the young boy...

- And haven't you noticed Pafi that since we started to change the names of things, everything became much easier? It seems as if most objects and situations were happier with their new names.

-Yes, using the monkey language and a few words we worked out together we already have a three pages book with all the terms necessary for good communication.

-O. K. Pafi, what is uga-uga?

-Uga-uga is food, and puga-puga would be sleep. Pilis are pills. Violet-zap-little-wheel; is your wheel chair. Poopi is to go to the bathroom. The big feather is the pillow. Waterofila is water. Fat Albert are the blood bags. Henry and Edward are your feet. Unga-unga is to be happy, and... I don't remember the others.

-Take it easy Pafi, we might have another day to go through the book.

-And add some more stuff.

- Yes. Now, do you remember the prayer we say together every night?

-Of course. "Beautiful lady dressed in blue teach me how to pray..."

-No, no, the other one, the one I made out.

-Yes, yes. "Dear God of mine, the day today was very short. From the day of yesterday only the good things you wrote about me in heaven are left. I thank you for everything I have, and I ask you to keep them for me, and to give what they need to those who don't have anything. I thank you for not being ill and I beg you not to let me get sick and please I pray you for those who are ill, get them well and don't let them become sick again".

-Very well Pafi. I invented that prayer when I was eight and I have been reciting it every day since then, including the last part about not being sick and all. I thank God for not having I don't know which illness which could be worst than this one.

-Like what?

-Carrot feet for example, elephant ears, or perhaps a very intense cockade or permanent goose skin or even green vomit through the ears.

YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T GET INTO THE COFFIN WITH YOU WHEN THE BONNY WOMAN GETS YOU

Some evenings, not very often, there is a small commotion in front of one of the rooms. Low talk, crying and sobbing, nurses in tips, a doctor coming and going, family and friends.

Pafi and I know that night we have to watch from our room to see a passenger leaving in a narrow bed, wrapped in a white sheet with black edges and with flowers on the chest.

Pafi wanted to know where they were being taken and a sunny morning we went for a ride through the hospital intestines.

But we couldn't arrive to the expected freezers, all the doors had keys and a "do not enter" sign: INDGANG FORBUDT.

-You know that I can't get into the coffin with you, Pafi observed suddenly

-What do you mean by that Pafi?

-Well that is written in my stuffed furry monkey contract. If you die I don't get into the coffin. My polyester would smell awful with all the fire they are going to set on you. You have to ask for a drink, you might get thirsty. And of course start practicing blowing matches with the fingers.

-Then if you are not going with me, what shall I do with you?

-Someone has to inherit me.

-Oh yes? Like who?

-Your cousin Santiago the one who is a lemon in Tibet.

-Ha, ha, Pafi, he is not a lemon, but a lama. Lamas are monks in orange clothes, like the Dalai who won the Nobel Prize for Peace. He sacred Santiago.

-That is it, like we are going to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. I hope those monks have fruit and cookies in their pantries?

-Of course, monks don't eat meat, only green vegetables, and they might teach you how to levitate.

-And how is that?

-It is like going up and down without elevator and without stairs, very useful if you are paralyzed like me, and very practical for you to steal bananas. You are going to look funny with your orange gown.

-I am going to ask to the Dalai Lemon to lend me his camera to send you a very nice picture of myself in my new house.

-And you are not going to miss me?

-NO, I AM GOING TO PUT YOU IN MY WOOLLEN HEART AND EVERY TIME I GET LONELY ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TO LOOK INSIDE ME AND BE VERY HAPPY BECAUSE WE CONTINUE TO BE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS, AND I KNOW THE ONES YOU LOVE STAY FOREVER WITH YOU.

-That is a fine thought, and we can send each other letters and drawings.

-Are you going to be able to have paper and pencil?

-I don't know Pafi.

-How is to be dead?

-I don't know Pafi, I think that when that bonny lady picks you up, puts you in a bag and throws you on a stair where the sun never enters.

-And what are you going to do there?

-What can I do? To sit on the steps.

-To do what?

-To wait.. I don't know maybe I won't even be able to think, but I would love to be able to think of you from my stair.

-Please do.

-Do you remember how we used to play before I got so sick?

-Of course, it was a joy.

-And when we went to the movies and you would scream because the bad guys arrived and I had to give you peanuts to shut your mouth?

-Uh, uh, uh.

-Wasn't that a trick to eat all my peanut bag?

-Uh, uh, uh, there you have something to think about when you will sit on the steps.

PAFI, DON 'T YOU HEAR LIKE SOME SLOW STEPS ON THE CORRIDOR?

One of these last mornings seeing me naked Pafi asked:

-Have you noticed you are growing wings under your arms?

-Wings?

-Yes, in your back, of course they still don't have feathers like those of the Angel you talk about in your book of instructions to play Football on the Clouds.

-No Pafi I don't think I am going to grow feathers at all, not even with the time, what you see are the effects of the cortisone drug I am taking, it gives you fat where you don't need it and takes it off where you do need it; so now I have arms and legs that look like thin and salt free cheese sticks.

-Ugh! But I was thinking that I don't want you to go and sit in a stair without light for the rest of your life. I think it would be better if you become an angel of the Great Big Papaya Heaven.

-Heavens, Pafi!

-I made a few drawings last night. These are your clothes, a beautiful tunic in pastel greens with wide sleeves, one sleeve is to chase birds and the other one is to keep the food for the birds, so they stay with you and keep you company. The sleeves are like pockets, but you can't rise your hands very high because you might loose everything.

-I'll be careful!

-The collar is in a melon shape with embroidery of orange seeds. You will notice that the gown goes only to the ankles so you won't fall and hit your head against a cloud. If you want it to look longer just flex your knees a little.

-That sounds fine Pafi, I hope it will work.

-Of course it will. And besides there is something else. A small crown of golden cardboard that you can stick to your head with one of those band aids they have at the hospital, don't forget to pick one. And here are some other few things that might be useful to you. It is very difficult to live in a cloud without falling, though I hope there you will find your balance.

-I hope so. You are supposed to be very well up there.

-You can't seat in a chair because you'll make a hole on your cloud, you need a great big feather pillow, for this you just have to pick up every feather that falls when it is windy and you put it in a good pillow case you must take with you, and fill it until it is fat and comfortable.

-That sounds good, but what else am I going to do in my cloud the whole day?

-No problem like we say in Africa. You are going to practice the harp. Here I drew a very nice one, and here is the book with the instructions to learn how to play.

-But Pafi, this book has only one page.

-Oh, that is because the harp has only one cord, but you can add some others with the time as you will become more expert... It is not a matter of stopping work.

-No, of course not, I have to take care of many things.

-You can also rehearse some poses, so when the airplanes pass the passengers can take your picture, especially the passengers of the planes that are going to have an accident. You can stand in one foot with one hand pointing to heaven and the harp under the other arm. You can even try to lie in your big pillow and try to hold the harp with your feet, you will see there are several nice possibilities to keep you busy.

-Yes I see, only I will have to practice a lot. It is going to be like with dance, in order to be good you have to work a lot.

-Well yes, but like that you will never be bored. Of course you can take a thick book in case you have time to read. And here is a basket where you can arrange everything because the clouds should be well kept in good order. And some grapes in case you still get hungry.

-Pafi, don't you hear a little noise like crawling pieces of dry wood in the corridor...?

-Yes, but they sound more like dry old bones. Do you think it is...?

-Of course that is her, she comes to get me, ha, ha I must laugh. You start to call her names and make a dreadful face. I am trying to hide in the bathroom to camouflage this laughs, it is the best way to handle this.

-Awful woman!

-Yes you, there in the corridor!

-Woman without name!

-Rotten!

-Thin!

-Flavourless fruit...

-Lady death, please stick your fingers into the wall socket.

Unfinished.

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Copy Mariluz Holguín.

JORGE HOLGUIN'S LAST WORDS ON THIS BOOK WERE HAND WRITTEN ON THE 29 OF OCTOBER 1989, ONE DAY BEFORE ENTERING THE HOSPITAL WHERE HE DIED VERY QUIETLY IN THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER THE THIRD.

ALL HIS LAST WISHES EXPRESSED IN THIS BOOK WERE FILLED IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY.

This book has been possible on account of Jorge's mother patience to pick up the handwritten material. Thanks to Kathryn for the beautiful work in the English version. To Raúl, Luli, Miguel and Ricardo for their help. And thanks to Jorge for having left us his books to work in and read, so we know he is always with us.

THE NO END

Copenhagen (Denmark) 1989. Davis (California), 1989-90. Bogota (Colombia), 1990