

Amaroncachi, the anaconda's water

Summary of the novel “Amaroncachi, el agua de la anaconda” by José-Manuel Echevarría (Editorial Meteora, Barcelona, 2007)

For information about the book (Spanish language), click the link:

http://www.editorialmeteora.com/cast/lilibre.php?id_LLIBRE=41

1st part: The Stanley Crisis

Ignacio Orbaizeta is a senior Spanish virologist who has been working for more than fifteen years for a North American scientific foundation (the Wendell M Stanley Foundation for the Progress of Microbiology) centrally located at Washington DC and owning biosafety installations at Arizona and Brazil. The Stanley works traditionally in research on tropical diseases and in vaccine design, getting Orbaizeta specialised in Hantaviruses. A change in the management of the Foundation happens in 1994, just when Orbaizeta (48 years-old at that moment) had been proposed to own a seat in the executive council. A meeting between the new director, Orbaizeta and a representative of the High Commissionate for Biological Defense of the US Army takes place soon after that change, and the virologist is asked to work on a new project involving the “Sin Nombre” virus, the hantavirus causing the outbreak of pulmonary syndrome at “Muerto Canyon” (Arizona) in 1993. Although the official objectives of the project are merely related with production of diagnostic assays and attenuated viral strains for vaccine development, Orbaizeta feels that some dangerous, highly pathogenic materials could also be obtained as a consequence of the investigation, and try to block the project by asking for an astronomic budget in equipment and reagents. The budget is immediately approved and his salary for the next three years is duplicated. He does not see the way to refuse without endangering his career into the Foundation, so he finally leaves for the biosafety level-four installations that the Foundation has built at the Pantanal do Mato Grosso, a wild, isolated area at the center of Brazil.

Three years later (1997), the work has progressed and, as Orbaizeta thought, some virus mutants with high pathogenic potential for humans have been produced. He expected one in particular to have an improved ability for person-to-person transmission by the respiratory way. Both small outbreaks and individual cases of hantavirus

pulmonary syndrome begin to be diagnosed at different South American countries, and one of the outbreaks, happening at San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina, was shown to involve person-to-person virus transmission. Concerned by that and having his official work in the project almost done, Orbaizeta pursues in secret (with no records) prior investigations he had done in the past about the entry of hantaviruses in cultured cells. Now, he discovers that such entry involves the participation of some cell membrane proteins called “ β_3 -integrins”. After that, Orbaizeta identifies the viral proteins interacting with integrins, identifies too the genome fragments encoding them, and modifies these fragments in the mutants to rendering them unable to infect cells and to multiply in cell cultures. However, he also discovers with surprise that the modified viruses are still able to infect laboratory mice and produce disease in them. Finally, he finds a small molecule, which is available in the respiratory tissue of many mammals, including both mice and humans, which may act as a bridge between the modified viral surface proteins and the integrins, so allowing the mutant particles to penetrate into the tissue cells. Productive infection of cell cultures by the mutant virus can be easily achieved by just adding such molecule to the culture medium, but that will be the Orbaizeta’s secret.

Once that work has been already achieved, an Argentinean Orbaizeta’s fellow from the Stanley (Dr Ramírez, who is also a close friend of the virologist) is sent to Brazil to updating the work and bringing samples to be tested at the Arizona laboratory. He finds Orbaizeta reluctant to speak about the results of the work and, finally, he knows by his friend that some precautions regarding the most dangerous mutants have been taken by him, but without receiving details about. Samples come to Arizona and are studied by Wilson Faraq, a young molecular virologist born in the US from a rich, accommodated family of Lebanese immigrants, who is working under the direction of a senior Swedish specialist (Dr Monica Sundqvist). He can demonstrate a particular mutant to be able to kill chimpanzees by acute respiratory distress in just a few days after spray administration, but he is unable to make the virus grow in cell cultures. When almost all the material has been spent in unsuccessful experiments, Faraq goes to a village in the north of Mexico and has a meeting with two persons. One is a member of the Libyan embassy at Mexico DF. The other one is a Spanish man, having a Basque family name (Mr Arístegui). Faraq informs both about his difficulties to grow the virus, and tells them that Orbaizeta will be asked by the Foundation to travel to Arizona to resolve

these problems. Mr Arístegui seems happy with the news and informs that the “material” has already been taken and delivered safely “at place”. He orders Faraq to move to “the place”, and ensures that his company will resolve any other problem.

Some days thereafter, Mr Fidel Martín –a former Spanish worker of the steel industry who migrated to the Ecuadorian Amazon and established a small travel agency in the city of Tena, over the Napo river- receives the visit of Mr Arístegui in a holiday tourist camp of his property installed upstream of the Napo, in the middle of the virgin forest. Arístegui asks him to collaborate with the terrorist band ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, the terrorist band operating in Spain for almost 50 years*) in a kidnapping. He tries to refuse, but he is trapped by his past militancy in the band during the late 60’s and has to accept. However, the conversation is casually listened by Gerardo, a young guide of the agency whose mother was a Huaorani Indian.

(The Huaorani is an ethnic group from the Napo River valley, and some of its communities still refuse contact with the civilisation at present. They are called “Auca” -that means “savage” in Quichua language- by the Ecuadorians, and had hard fights with the petrol companies that extract crude from the Ecuadorian Amazon since the early 70’s. In 1987, they killed the bishop of Coca when he penetrated his territory in an attempt to negotiate peace and avoid genocide. For more information about that, see “A savage injustice” at www.stanleyfdn.org, as well as the book entitled “Savages”, by Joe Kane).

Two months after that conversation, Dr Orbaizeta leaves the Pantanal for the airport of Cuiabá to move to Washington DC. However, he never reaches his plane. He is drugged by the two employees who accompanies him and is conducted in a few hours, by means of a boat and a light aircraft, to an isolated village over the Chapare River, at the East of Bolivia. Arístegui (whose war name in ETA is “Ondarra”) meets him there and tells him that samples from his hantavirus mutants and from different cell cultures have been stolen from Brazil and bring to a biosafety laboratory at a third country. His collaboration is needed to reproduce the virus, and his wife and daughter, who are at that moment at Costa Rica and are under surveillance, will be killed if he refuses. In order to avoid problems, Orbaizeta will make a long travel by the Marmoré River until being introduced again into the Brazilian territory. Once at Brazil, a light aircraft will transport him to the city of Porto Velho, and then a rented jet will bring him to the

airport of Manaus, where he will take a commercial flight to Quito using his own passport. The plan is to occult him in the Napo valley, waiting for the opportunity of a safe travel to his final destination.

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Meanwhile, the Stanley is searching Orbaizeta, and someone calls by phone to the National Park of Santa Rosa, at the north-west of Costa Rica, where his daughter (María-José, a young Biologist) is performing some research work in Entomology. Eva, the Orbaizeta's wife, is visiting her daughter by that time, and both are camping at Playa Blanca (White Beach), an isolated place in the heart of the park. The Stanley's caller asks directly for Orbaizeta to one of the rangers, and hangs the phone without leaving identification when the ranger says that the scientist is not there. However, his "gringo" accent results evident. Next morning, Eva and María José receive the visit of Daniel, a young member of the civil protection team of the park who is falling in love with the girl. He speaks them about that phone calling and Eva decides to phone to Raúl Ramírez, the best friend of her husband at the foundation. She knows from him that Orbaizeta is missing for two days, and hears also about the Raúl's suspicion that there is something dark in the work done in Brazil. Raúl thinks that Orbaizeta could have been kidnapped and suggest that Eva and María-José could be at some risk, but everything he says is just speculation. He will tray to investigate, and will phone to Eva with new data two days later. Two hours after the time agreed, the phone does not, however, come to ring and Eva phones to the foundation asking for Raúl. She is told that Dr Ramírez died suddenly the night before because of a heart stroke, but Eva realises immediately that he has been killed. That night, Eva, María-José and Daniel leave the park together, driving speedy to San José. Eva takes a plane to Washington DC, whereas her daughter goes with Daniel to Cahuita, a small and touristy village in the Caribbean coast of the country where the boy was born and conserves family and friends who will protect his girlfriend from any danger.

Once at Washington, Eva meets with Bill Harrison, the former director of the Stanley, who was a good friend of the Spanish couple. After a sincere conversation, he recognises that Raúl died because a gun shot in the head, as well as that he phoned to

him the same night he died to planning for a lunch on next day. Suicide seems so unlikely that murdering becomes evident. Finally, he admits to know that the “Sin Nombre” project included a secret agreement with a high-level member of the Pentagon for developing a biological weapon. Probably, Orbaizeta was not totally aware of that, but was likely to suspect something. However, money was big and he surely accepted in order to save his professional future. Harrison denied to sign the agreement and was fired from his charge. However, some economical irregularities happened during his time as Director obligated him to keep silence. Now, once the matter is known by others, he is prompt to help his old friends and brings Eva to see Burt Berkovsky, an old fellow from the university times who is now a relevant FBI agent. Berkovsky seems not surprised by the news, because the foundation was already under investigation. He acts quickly and obtains an order of intervention that allows him to make a register. The secret files of the “Sin Nombre” project are discovered and the Director of the foundation is arrested. The only data Berkovsky has got for beginning the search of Orbaizeta is that some people was surveying his family at Costa Rica, so he decides to go to Cahuita and wait for anybody coming. Things happen quickly and Berkovsky and Eva reach the village just after two individuals have attacked María-José. One is dead and the other is into the police office. The agent comes easily to know that the individuals are members of a small band from Quito, and that they are doing the job for just five hundred dollars. The guy does not know very much, but he mentions an Ecuadorian city called Tena and some Spanish man who lives there and might be involved.

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After coming to Quito, Orbaizeta meets three Spaniards (a man and two women) who travel with him to Tena in a rented car as if they were a group of tourists. The trip spends almost six hours, and during a short resting stop Orbaizeta trays to escape. He does not success, but during the persecution the man is bitten by a group of huge, poisonous ants (*the “congas” or bullet ants, a famous species having venom immunologically related with the toxins of wasps*). He is allergic to the venom of wasps and, therefore, also to that of the ants and begins to display symptoms of progression to anaphylaxis. When the group reaches Tena, Mr Martín is waiting for them and brings

the man to the hospital. The two women (Izaskun and Ainocha) (*pure Basque female names*) conduct Orbaizeta to the jungle camp. Once there, Gerardo has been told to bring them to a second camp, built specially for keeping Orbaizeta out of sight in an isolated place upstream the river. Night is coming and they cannot use a boat to move up on the river, so they have to walk and cross Amaroncachi, a beautiful pool in a small river that descends to the Napo. In the Quichua language, that word means “the salt of the snake”, and Gerardo tells the women that he has once seen a huge anaconda emerging from these waters. That surprises Orbaizeta, since he thinks this is not the kind of place where anacondas uses to live, and feels that the boy wants to bring fear to the women. He begins to like the young Indian. Once they are installed in the camp, Gerardo speaks in secret with Orbaizeta and gets to know the reason of the kidnapping. Realising that many persons could die, he decides to help the scientist to escape, and leaves for the jungle to search his Huaorani relatives and to request its help. Most of the Indians deny helping a white man, but the daughter of the chief (Luana), who is the girlfriend of Gerardo (named Enqueri among the Indians), convinces his father (Moi) to accept. As nobody wants to join Gerardo for that, he leaves for the camp with just Luana and a cousin. They reach the camp at night and, using intelligence and their deep knowledge of nature, neutralise the two women (none of them dies) and liberate Orbaizeta, who is immediately conducted to the Huaorani village.

Once there, Orbaizeta speaks with the chief with the help of Gerardo and listens to a frightening history. Moi was a brave hunter when the bishop of Coca came, ten years ago, to meeting the Huaorani in an attempt of stopping war. Hate and fear blinded the Moi's hearth and he instigated the killing of the Bishop by the youngest hunters speaking them about hate and revenge. The act became a ritual crime and Moi got an absolute power. War continued and the Huaorani had to escape to the upper Napo valley leaving their ancestral territory, which became a petrol-extraction field. Almost half of the community died during the war, and Moi felt as the main responsible. He declares to have accepted to help Orbaizeta and saving the life of white, unknown people as a mean of compensating his own crimes, trying to escape from his ghosts and nightmares. At the same time, the scientist realises their own faults and decides firmly to face their responsibilities. After a tender love scene between Gerardo and Luana, who become husband and wife that night, the Indian couple and Orbaizeta depart for a difficult trek

through the virgin forest that will conduct them to the Pastaza River's valley and to the road to the city of Baños.

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Two days after the attack suffered by María-José at Cahuita, Ondarra is told by the chief of the Quito's band that the Orbaizeta's wife and daughter have escaped. There has been no further news from Costa Rica, and Ondarra decides to go to Tena for heading himself an operation that seems at risk. Once at Tena, he knows by Martín that one of the members of the command had an accident and is hospitalised. During the conversation, Ondarra notices that a worker of the water supply company who smokes Dunhill cigarettes is working with others just in front of the travel agency (how and where a simple Ecuadorian worker can buy Dunhill cigarettes?). He realises that they are being observed and, therefore, that the operation has been detected by somebody and must be stopped. After going to the hospital and killing his man, he leaves to the jungle camp with Martín and finds his two colleagues "off side" (*using a soccer expression*). Both are blessed and cannot face a two or three days walking by the jungle, so that he kills both. However, before killing them he knows about the night attack. One of the women is blessed by a poisonous dart in the neck that resembles an Indian weapon. In addition, the young Indian called Gerardo disappeared the morning before the attack. He thinks that all was organised by Martín and kills him too. He feels trapped into the valley, with people coming after him from downstream, so it decides to walk up the valley and try to reach the neighbour valley of the Pastaza River and the road to Baños.

Martín was, in fact, being observed by people from the US embassy at Quito, who was noticed by the FBI. After returning from Costa Rica, Berkovsky speaks with a friend from the US Embassy at Madrid who informs him about the presence at Tena of a former member of ETA called Martín. The agent informs about that in a meeting held at the White House with the director of the FBI and the Advisor for Defence Affairs of the US President, who instructs him to avoid that the material stolen from Brazil and the Virologist could be bring at any time on a same place, no matter about the means he must use. Berkovsky leaves to Ecuador with two collaborators. Their mission is finding

Orbaizeta and bringing him to Washington, but they are allowed to killing him if that is found necessary. Once at Tena, Berkovsky receives news about the Spaniard killed at the hospital, speaks with the Martín's wife and leaves immediately to the jungle with his collaborators and with a group of Ecuadorian polices. However, they arrive late to the closest camp and cannot sail up the river, so they have to continue walking toward the second camp. All are guided by Rubén, a fellow and friend of Gerardo who knows the way. Once at Amaroncachi, the sun is falling. The group begins swimming toward the opposite shore. One of the Berkovsky's colleagues is swimming after him.... and it happens. A huge anaconda emerges from water and traps his face, twisting the long body around the pride for interrupting his breeding. In a few seconds, both hunter and pride disappear into the dark water. Berkovsky and the agent Ryan (the remainder FBI agent) cannot believe what they have seen. One of the Ecuadorian police agents falls into a hysteria attack. Finally, the FBI agents continue on the way guided by Rubén and in the company of two of the Ecuadorians, the coldest ones. The tropical storm begins and the group reaches the camp late in night. Petrol lights are on and three bodies are lying on ground. The jungle defends from the invaders....

Next morning, the agent tray to imagine what happened at that camp. The dart in the neck of one of the women suggests the participation of Huaorani Indians; and the other woman has an arm broken. However, all corpses show a gun shot. Orbaizeta is not there, as well as Gerardo, the young Indian. Could it be possible that Huaorani attacked the camp and liberated Orbaizeta? Why might they have done it? Why was Martín killed too? Were all finally killed by the other Spaniard? With so many questions and none answer, the agent decides to speak again with the Martin's wife and comes back to Tena. She tells him that Gerardo had regular contacts with the Huaorani, as well as that her husband did not like him and was thinking about firing him. That was two or three weeks after Gerardo had told her that Martín was going to get into a big problem. Berkovsky does not understand why, but he realises that the only explanation is that the boy liberated Orbaizeta with the help of his Indian friends. Then, Martín and the second man came to the camp and found the two women blessed. So, the man realised everything was lost, killed his colleagues and escaped....., but where?. It's time for learning some Geography.... .

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After speaking with the chief of the police office at Tena, the agent decides to concentrate surveillance on the Pastaza River valley and on the road to the city of Baños, where he establishes headquarters with the Ecuadorian police. The first ones to leave the Napo's jungle through that way are Orbaizeta, Gerardo and Luana. They are found by members of a police patrol who bring them to Baños, where Orbaizeta has a long speech with the FBI agents. During the conversation, he reveals a frightening detail. When he was trying to refuse the proposal of the new Director of the Stanley foundation, the telephone rang. It was a man who spoke to Orbaizeta about the transcendence of that work for the defence interests of the USA. He identified that voice; it was, indeed, the voice of the Advisor for Defence Affairs of the US President. Berkovsky feels trapped in an obscure political affair and decides to proceed with care. He will move immediately with Orbaizeta to the FBI headquarters in Washington DC, but he will not notify that. Ryan will remain at charge of the persecution of the terrorist. Next morning, Berkovsky and Orbaizeta leave Baños by car accompanied by a mobile unit of the Ecuadorian police. Shortly thereafter, Ryan is told that the terrorist has been trapped in a place of the Pastaza valley named "Devil's Gorge". Ondarra tries to escape, but he is shot by Ryan, falls to the river's stream, and dies.

Once on the road to Ambato and Quito, Berkovsky and Orbaizeta are not alone. A third car is following them, and his occupants destroy the car of the Ecuadorian police in a solitary place using a sophisticated weapon (*occupants of that car are a group of drug traffickers from Colombia who arranged to do that work with a CIA agent, as explained before in the novel*). Berkovsky leaves quickly the road and cross a stony field until reaching refuge in a great rocky formation. The car of their persecutors is not prepared for that, so four men leave it and approach slowly to the rocks. During the attack, Berkovsky is blessed after killing two of the men, so Orbaizeta has to take the rifle for defending his life. His position is fine for fighting and, finally, he achieves to kill the two remainder attackers. Then, he brings Berkovsky to the city of Ambato and phones to Baños to inform Ryan about. When the agent comes to the hospital, Orbaizeta is waiting for him. Ryan cannot understand why that man did not try to escape, and asks him about. The Orbaizeta's response is quite clear: "I'm not a criminal and I must face

my responsibilities, whatever can be the consequences. I'll travel with you to Washington and I'll explain everything".

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Three years later, at the beginning of 2001, a doctor named Joseph Mendoza comes with his wife to a small Indian village on the Chapare River, at Eastern Bolivia. They have been sent by the NGO "Médicines sans Frontières" to provide medical assistance for one year to the communities of Yurakare Indians living along the river. The village was the same where Orbaizeta had his interview with Ondarra three years ago. Dr Mendoza (the new identity of Orbaizeta) recognises the place. After a short conversation about his life during these three years, he promises his wife to come back to the Napo valley and join again the Huaorani people to help them.

Far away, in a nice and modern room of the University of Tripoli, Libya, the new Director of the Department of Molecular Biology is enjoying his first day in that position. One of their new privileges is free access to Internet, so he connects with the Pub-Med server and, just by chance, he writes the word "HANTAVIRUS" in the window of search. Few minutes later, his sight stops on the title of a paper from a research group of the NY University that announces the role played by beta-3 integrins in the entry of hantaviruses in susceptible cells (*Journal of Virology* 1999; 73:3951-3959). After reading the abstract of the article, some begins to light into his brain. The name of the scientist is Ahmed Faraq, but some years ago, when he lived at the USA, he had a Christian name: Walter.

2ndPart. Moonlight

The Stanley Crisis is mainly an adventure, so it's not difficult to make a synthesis of it in a few pages. "Moonlight" is quite different, because it's more complex and more "literary". It's just a few more than one-third of "Amaroncachi", but the most important here is not action, but people; and words are also important. In addition, action taking place along more than five years is mixed without an apparent order, so

the relate is not linear in time. My intention was to make a clear break between the two parts of the novel, offering the reader two different styles of writing in a single and coherent relate (I hope it could result interesting, furthermore than original). Therefore, it's almost impossible (or I feel unable) to make a synthesis of this second part as I've done with the first one. What I'm going to do is just an explanation of the argument that does not reflect at all the narrative rhythm.

Initial scene (place and time not given).

A man is driving by a road of a big park where some African prostitutes tray to get customers. He stops and accepts the offer of a young black girl. Once the car is parking under a small group of pines, the girl trays to beginning her work, but the man stops her. "No –he says-, I don't want that from you. Just relax and listen to". The car's music device begins to play the Beethoven's Moonlight sonata. Once the piano is playing, a magic atmosphere owns the car. The girl watches a small boat sailing the water of a lake under the moonlight. On the boat, a man holds the inert body of a woman. He is crying in silence. "Can you see him? –asks the girl's customer-. He's crying because he's lost her. He will never listen again the music of her laugh, never kiss again her beautiful lips. He's crying because he's lost her and, now, he's alone". Moonlight begins to decline and darkness comes to the lake. Meanwhile, the sad man lays slowly the woman's body on the surface of the water. Light is dying. With the sound of the last note, bass and prolonged, silence and night owned the World....

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After reading that article about integrins and hantaviruses, Ahmed Faraq feels that the key for culturing the virus stolen at Brazil could be in that discovery. He has won a good professional position and is going to marry the daughter of a high University authority, but what he really wants is to reach the glory of the true Islamic fighters. Therefore, he explains his thoughts to some high political authorities of Libya and, after reaching an agreement, comes back again to the same biosafety installation, in the

middle of the Libyan desert, where he could not succeed in his work three years ago because Dr Orbaizeta did never come. In fact, he was told that Orbaizeta died in Ecuador few months after he was coming to Libya, in 1997. After a year of work in the most complete isolation, Faraq returns to Tripoli by January 2002 to give the good news. The mystery has been resolved and several vials of virus, newly prepared by him, are waiting to be cultured for producing the weapon. Instead of getting the expected fame and glory, Faraq ingresses in a military installation and remains arrested for more than a year. The Towers have fallen at NY three months before his coming, and Afghanistan has been invaded. The Islamic world is divided and fearful. Finally, it is the winter of 2003 when a friend involved in the Libyan circles of the Islamic fundamentalism brings him the news. Things are changing and there is a powerful person ready to use his virus for attacking the US and Europe. The weapon is being tested in a limited attack over a village of the Negev, a desert region at the South of Israel. If the results are satisfactory, simultaneous attacks will be done over New York, Washington DC, San Francisco, London, Paris and Tel Aviv. In September 2003, Faraq leaves again for the desert and begins his final work.

The attack at the Negev does succeed and a sudden outbreak of acute respiratory distress syndrome declares in a village close to the city of Beer Sheva. Thinking about a terrorist attack with a chemical weapon, the Army of Israel demands the help of the US Army to investigate the incident. However, a pneumologist from the University hospital of the city suspects that the disease may be of infectious nature, and a US virologist from the Veterans Hospital of the Columbia district, Dr O'Neal, is sent to Israel. He comes there just two days before the epidemic ends almost as suddenly as it started. A few weeks after returning to Washington, laboratory tests done on necropsy tissues collected at Israel suggest the presence of a hantavirus, but all virus cultures are negative. Then, the virologist succeeds in developing a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay that demonstrates the presence of a hantavirus genome in the tissues. He has just discovered that, and is going to perform sequencing of PCR fragments to try to identify the virus, when a high official from the Pentagon visits him, asking about a million of details. Then, the official declares all the information as a military secret, with absolute prohibition for requesting any external help for the investigation or making any comment to anybody. The virologist begins to suspect that something wrong is happening.

Few weeks thereafter, the epidemic begins at Washington DC. Two days later, it starts at New York too. Surprisingly, specialists from the Centres for Disease Control (CDC) do not present at hospitals at these early moments, and O'Neal performs all the investigations alone. He demonstrates the virus to be exactly the same causing the epidemics at Israel, and gets convinced to be dealing with a bioterrorist attack. The weapon consists of a mutant strain of the "Sin Nombre" virus that shows a wide deletion in the region encoding the outer viral glycoprotein. San Francisco, London and Paris epidemics begin together two days after the New York one. However, nothing happens at Tel Aviv, because the terrorist in charge of the attack has been arrested by the Mossad before spreading the virus, and the weapon has been found by that intelligence service. The chief of the Mossad keeps all these findings for him and begins to investigate on the basis of the information got from the terrorist before he died during the interrogatory. It was not too much, just the name of a scientist called Faraq....

But it happens that the epidemic ends suddenly in all places, as happened before in Israel. However, more than eight hundred persons have died, almost five hundred in the USA. Comparing the sequences of viruses isolated from different patients at different stages of the epidemics, O'Neil concludes that passing of the mutant from person to person induced new genetic changes that accumulated in a particular zone of the genome. Such changes seem to eliminate the ability of the mutant for spreading from person to person by the respiratory route. That means that the original genetic formula could not have been naturally selected, so it is an indirect proof of a genetic manipulation. The mutant was, therefore, manufactured by man, and just a few countries in the World have the specialists and installations required for performing such a work successfully. Initially, he is prone to call the press for giving all to the public knowledge, but the epidemic ends and his daughter and wife are coming back home. Everything recovers normality and he is again at home with his family. Life is too wonderful to be spent in a dangerous fighting against the most powerful government of the World....

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The end of the epidemic leads the US politicians to action. Nobody must know that a biological weapon made by a US institution has been stolen and used to kill people in America and Europe, and it is necessary to ensure that the information about the Stanley crisis will not reach the public knowledge. A group of CIA experts on dirty war in tropical countries is sent to the Napo, where Orbaizeta and Eva are living since two years ago. His mission is coming into the jungle and killing both. Once the group is leaving to Ecuador, the agent Ryan dies in an underground car parking of Washington DC as result of an explosion. A few minutes before, he was speaking with his colleague Berkovsky about the origin of the disease. Berkovsky listens to the explosion and understands immediately. He escapes and requests help from Alistair MacLugham, a retired British agent who helped the Berkovsky's father to escape from Poland more than forty years ago and became a friend of him once he immigrated to the US. He knows Berkovsky since his birth. MacLugham hears from Berkovsky enough to realise the risks of the situation and helps him to escape to Ecuador.

Once at Tena, the agent obtains the help of Rubén, his former native guide at the Napo, and goes upstream to search Orbaizeta. When they reach the Huaorani village, they find everything destroyed and dozens of corpses, men, women and children, lying on ground. Together with the Indians, they find too the corpses of four white men, all of them dressed with military cloths. Orbaizeta and his wife are not among the dead, as well as Gerardo and Luana are not. After discovering several footprints, they come again into the jungle, going up the valley. Footprints speak quite clearly. A group of four persons is being followed by six individuals bearing hard boots, and other prints from a dozen of naked feet pursuit both groups. These latter prints belong to a Huaorani group escaping from the attack. They find Berkovsky and Rubén and success to killing the remainder of the CIA group. After reaching the highlands at the end of the forest, they find Orbaizeta, Gerardo and Luana, but Eva is not with them. She begun to feeling ill on next day after leaving the village and, later on, she fell into a serious disease. Finally, she died as result of dengue hemorrhagic fever. The road to Quito is not far away, so Berkovsky and Orbaizeta escape to the city of Guayaquil. With the help of some MacLugham's friends, Berkovsky gets false documents for the scientist and both leave clandestinely to Venezuela on a merchant boat. Once at the Caracas airport, everyone takes his own path....

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During the spring of 2004, three prostitutes are murdered in Madrid, the corpses being found at three different parks of the city. All were nude, but no signals of sexual violence, or of recent sexual intercourse, could be noted. Inspector Antonio Sanz, who is at charge of the investigation, has not made any progress when the third body is found at the “Parque del Oeste”, but this time he makes some: a red car from a particular and not very usual Renault model was seen on place. Three years ago, Sanz lost his wife and daughter in an unfortunate car accident and he is now trying to built-up again his life with the aid of a young girl, who is decided to marry him and to leave together for a nice city at the North of the country to begin a new life. Sanz needs to resolve quickly the case, so he investigates the most minimal details about all the cars of that type circulating in Spain. The investigation is tedious, but conducts him to a house occupied by an American doctor from the non governmental organisation “Médicines Sans Frontières”, who rented a car of this type and colour a few weeks ago. Once at the house, Sanz meets the doctor, who tells him to be going to leave for Ecuador on next morning. The inspector asks for the passport of the doctor, who goes upstairs to take it, leaving Sanz a few minutes to inspect the room. A photograph of a young couple staying on a tropical beach in the company of its daughter picks-up his attention. When the doctor comes back downstairs, Sanz finds the reason: the doctor’s face resembles that of the man of the photograph. He asks about that and the American tell him that he actually is a far relative of the owner of the house, who is not other than the girl of the photo, which was taken almost twenty years ago. A rapid look to the doctor’s passport informs him that the ninety-day tourist visa stamp dating his entry into the country is expiring in just two days.

The visit does not provide any reason to suspect from that man but, any way, Sanz asks a collaborator to survey him and ensure that he is really taking a plane to Ecuador on next morning. To his surprise, the man does not leave for the airport, but for a hotel in the down-town. Police surveillance pursuits and the man becomes arrested on next morning, because he is staying illegally in the country. Once at the police station, the doctor behaves as a mad man, with the sight lost far away from reality. He does not complaint, nor says a single word. Sanz trays to interrogate him about his pretended trip

to Ecuador, but he does not obtain any answer. Then, he asks him about the photograph he saw at the house. “Who’s the woman?; is she your wife?”. “May be –responds the doctor-. Her name was Eva, we went together to many places. She had a beautiful hair, a sweet voice. She loved music, we listened music together”. “Did she die?”. “Yes, she did, I buried her. I buried her into the water..., or did I, perhaps, into the Moon?. There was blood, blood and tears; her face was spotted of blood...”. “Can you tell me your name, doctor?”. “Bolivians called me Mendoza, but I’m not sure who I am. I feel as I was different men. I don’t know who I am. Could you ascertain it?; could you tell me who I am, please?. Any trace of American accent disappeared from his speech.

Sanz realises the madness of the man and requests help from a psychiatrist specialised in such cases. Thanks to hypnosis, his past begins to emerge slowly, drawing a hallucinating history lived into the heart of the Amazon. On the other hand, Sanz investigates an American member from the NGO Médicines sans Frontières called Mendoza, as well as the owners of the house where he met the man, and the U.S. passport he showed. Then, he takes his fingerprint and search into the archives of the Spanish police. The name and life of Ignacio Orbaizeta, a Spanish doctor who worked in the US for almost twenty years, comes to him. Officially, that man died in South America, under unclear circumstances, seven years ago and was buried at Washington DC. His US passport is false and belonged formerly to a Texan tradesman who lost it a year ago in the Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil. Finally, he finds the owner of the house, indeed the Orbaizeta’s daughter, who was hidden because she feared for her life. She explains him an incredible story about viruses, kidnappings, biological terrorism, FBI agents, Amazon Indians and secret services. After getting some additional information, a full report is set by Sanz on the table of the Vice-President of the Spanish Government.

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A few days later, Sanz receives an amazing phone calling. A man displaying a strong American accent declares to have important information in relation with Dr Ignacio Orbaizeta. Sanz gets astonished, because that matter has become a strict political secret and nobody but a few knows that Orbaizeta is alive, so he accepts a meeting with the

caller. Following his instructions, he comes alone to a restaurant and he meets there a man who says to belong to FBI. His name is Burt Berkovsky. The conversation begins tight, with each man trying to get information from the other. Finally, Berkovsky accepts that he needs help, so he begins to explain all he knows. After the Stanley crisis exploded and Orbaizeta came to Washington, he negotiated a new life for him and his wife. Then, after the epidemics, he escaped to Ecuador and helped Orbaizeta to obtain a false passport and to escape himself. He confirms that the Orbaizeta's wife died at the jungle of the Napo River when the couple was escaping from a command sent by the CIA to kill them. However, she was not assassinated. He contracted dengue and died as a result of dengue hemorrhagic fever, and his husband buried her corpse in the waters of a small lake at the highlands of the Cotopaxi volcano. That was a true nightmare for Orbaizeta, who resulted seriously shocked by the death of his wife. Now, the Orbaizeta's life, as well as the life of his daughter and his own life, are in danger again. However, he has collected elements enough to obligating politicians to a new negotiation. He must participate in the conversations between the Spanish and U.S. Governments. He needs Sanz to introducing him into that.

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A month has passed when the US President is speaking with his Secretary of State in a private room of the White House. The problem of "the virus" has been resolved satisfactorily, so it is time to pay attention to other urgent issues, like the last crisis at Palestine. "The government of Israel has gone too far this time –says him-. We must amend that, and I'm ready to tell it clearly to the president of Israel". A secretary announces a phone calling from Tel Aviv and the President takes the phone. He says just a few words; he listens for two or three minutes, and his face changes. Things will never be the same for him.

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In a hotel from the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, sat to a table in the middle of a tropical garden, three couples are sharing the dinner. María-José and Daniel, indeed the

new owners of the Playa Cocles Hotel, are conversing with their special guests. At left, Burt Berkovsky and wife. At right, Antonio Sanz, who has just married Carmen and was invited to spend his honeymoon at Costa Rica. Whereas coffee is coming, María-José leaves the table for a beautiful bungalow close to the dinner area. Sanz walks back of her and both come together into the building. Into a quiet room, a man stays sat on a rocking chair. For a minute, nobody tells a single word. Then, Sanz speaks, perhaps more to himself than to the others:

- It's a strange end for a strange history –he murmurs-. Who can judge Ignacio Orbaizeta?

- Nobody can –responds María José-. My mother realised that very soon and she decided to guide herself just by love. I tried to judge him unsuccessfully for years, spending a time that I can't already recover.

- And what now?

- Now I've understood. I'm guided just by love.

Pursuing the slow rocking of the chair, the lips of Ignacio Orbaizeta faintly drew the sketch of a smiling.