

A TRAGEDY AND AN ANGEL
(Una Tragedia y un Angel)

THE STORY OF A ZARZUELA AND A WOMAN

I

He was twenty years old; his mind was filled with dreams, and his heart was filled with hopes.

He was a poet, and he had great faith in the value of poetry.

In those days the ode was still recognized as part of lyric poetry; as for drama, he was mostly interested in tragedies and, in his moments of inspiration, he thought an epic poem might be possible.

His name was Antonio, and as my readers will have gathered from what I have said, he was still a child, a true innocent.

II

Whenever the noise of footsteps of a rare passer-by were heard in the narrow street of this isolated part of town, behind the window of the green balcony that was full of flower pots, the white curtain would shake and then slowly rise.

A blonde fifteen-year-old girl always looked out of the window and was watching with curiosity, as this person crossed the street; when her curiosity was satisfied, the curtain was lowered again so that she could continue with whatever she had been doing.

And that was the girl. Her name was Consuela, and she looked like the chrysalis of a woman, like an angel.

III

Now that the two protagonists have been mentioned, it is only necessary to say that the backdrop of this scene was the environment of a provincial town.

IV

During his solitary walks, while he was spending time trying to finalize the verses of his latest poem, Antonio had the habit of passing through the street with the balcony full of flowers.

And thinking of what girls of her age usually think about, Consuela always closed the door to the balcony, and then she carefully raised the curtain and looked out whenever Antonio was passing by.

The repetition of this wordless scene would eventually become monotonous, if it were not that some new events occurred.

In fact, a few days later, when Antonio entered the end of the street, like anemones follow the sun from the time it rises until the time it sets, he fixed his eyes on the balcony with flowers. Then turning his head as he walked by, he did not stop staring at them until he turned the corner.

As for Consuela, immediately after hearing the familiar sound of footsteps, she would lift up the bottom of the white curtain and, following her usual custom, would not lower it until Antonio had disappeared.

And now, why repeat a phrase that is so well-known by my readers, and especially by those who are female... that "actions speak louder than words."

It should be enough to say that Antonio and Consuela both understood their meaning. Besides "I like you" and "You look quite nice," which are common phrases that are used as a greeting, there are other trivialities like "Today you look more beautiful than ever," "Why didn't you come by yesterday," or "How nice these flowers are!" etc.

Anyone who has imagination can easily think of other similar remarks.

And for the person who is really enamored, how little it takes to please them!

Consuela had always wanted to set her heart on some man, and that sort of gallantry was enough for her.

Antonio wanted to find a Laura or a Beatrice, and the brief vision of a woman through the window satisfied him.

When she slept, she dreamed that she continuously heard his footsteps and that she saw him pass by, not once, but thousands of times. And on one occasion he also stopped and threw her a kiss with his fingers!

He dreamed while awake, that she followed him with her eyes and that she noticed the cut of his clothing; that when he was writing, she looked over his shoulder with curiosity, standing on her tiptoes in order to read the words as they flowed out of his pen, so that he could feel her breath and the tickle of her curls as they brushed his face. And how little it took to make both of them happy!

"Those were happy days, and happy times," etc. Here, if he likes, the reader can add those words that Don Quijote said in his speech to the goatherds about the merits of the Golden Age.

I will not try to do that, so that I can go on to describe the last scene of this romantic idyll, which was like the first cloud that appeared on the horizon of a clear blue sky...

(To be continued.)¹

⁽¹⁾ This was written nineteen days before the unexpected death of Becquer.