

other concert. Whether by coincidence or not, he occupies the same seat. Whether by coincidence or not, it is again the Philharmonic playing. Except that it is Beethoven this time. Halfway through the symphony known as *The Pastoral*, Leo stands up, and removes from his tote bag what later will be identified as a Molotov cocktail; after igniting the wick, he hurls the bomb onto the stage. However, aside from the fact that the musicians are thrown into a panic, there are no other consequences, for the crude artifact fails to explode.

Leo is arrested and deported. Handcuffed, he arrives in Rio. He is interrogated by the police, who ask him if he is a terrorist. Leo makes no reply. In doubt, the clerk records the answer as being in the affirmative.

### *A Job for the Angel of Death*

EVERY YEAR, ON HIS BIRTHDAY, the boss treats us to lunch. A huge marquee is set up in the courtyard of the factory, and all of us—more than six hundred workers, together with supervisors and department heads, sit down at the long tables to relish the magnificent spread: potato salad, chicken, rice, beans, pasta. A menu chosen by the boss himself, who is, as he himself insists on pointing out, a person of simple tastes. And with his feet on the ground.

The food is good, and the meal is eaten in an atmosphere of cheerful camaraderie: a few beers and we are already pelting each other with potato salad. The boss and the company directors smile at our antics. Everybody is having fun.

Then at a particular moment, a bell rings. Silence falls: The boss is about to address us.

He starts by saying that he is very happy to be with his employees, whom he considers as his own children, particularly because he is an old man, much older than what people think. Then he adds:

"I know that many of you consider me a cantankerous old man

because I am very demanding, but I am just as hard on myself as I am on you. Many of you think that I should have retired a long time ago."

"That I should have died even, to make room for a new boss, a younger man, less strict."

He pauses and then goes on:

"Let me disillusion right away those of you who entertain such thoughts. I have good reasons to believe that I'll be around for a long time."

He then proceeds to tell us the story about the Angel of Death:

The boss had just established his own company. At that time, he manufactured only small boilers. He had five workers to help him, but the bulk of the work was done by himself. One night he was working late. A boiler had to be ready for delivery on the following day, but the workmen had already gone home, leaving the work half-finished. So he decided he would finish the job himself. And there he was in his shop, all sweaty from soldering metal plates together, when all of a sudden he saw before him a strange-looking person: tall, thin, with hollowed cheeks and a sinister aspect. He asked the individual who he was. I'm the Angel of Death, he replied, I've come for you. The boss was then a young man in the pink of health, and the idea of dying had never even crossed his mind. But he knew that things like a heart attack, a stroke, could happen to anyone. Therefore, resigned, he told the Angel of Death that he would go with him. But he would like to have his permission to finish the boiler first, for he didn't want to leave his customer in the lurch. After some hesitation, the Angel of Death allowed him to finish the work. However, he said that he would wait only until daybreak. As soon as the first rays of sun entered through the fanlight, the boss would have to go with him. Under these circumstances, the boss lost no time in going back to his work. The Angel of Death stood watching. At a given moment, he drew closer; curious, he asked the boss

what he was doing. The boss gave him an explanation without, however, interrupting his work. The Angel of Death then asked if he could be of any help. At first the boss considered the offer of help with suspicion; he thought that the Angel of Death was in a hurry to take him away; however, at that moment he would accept help even from the devil himself, and so, handing the Angel of Death a monkey wrench, he told him to tighten some bolts. And together, they worked. When they realized it, it was already day, and the workmen were beginning to arrive. The Angel of Death was panic-stricken. And now, what am I going to do? He was whimpering. I've failed in my mission, I can't return to the place where I came from.

Taking pity on the Angel of Death, the boss offered him a job, with the warning that he would be paying him only the minimum wage, for he was after all just an apprentice. The offer was accepted.

"And thus," says the boss winding up, "I've gained a loyal and helpful partner. I'm sure that as long as he is satisfied—and he is indeed satisfied—I'll remain here and I'll run this company my own way. And that's it, my friends."

The air resonates with a burst of enthusiastic applause. It is true that a few, the malcontents, keep casting surreptitious glances around them; they are trying to identify which one of their fellow workers could be this Angel of Death who had failed to carry out his task. Most people, however, are intent on savoring the dessert. Guava paste with cheese. Delicious and nourishing.

### *The Right Time*

THE AIRPLANE HAD BEEN IN THE AIR for about thirty minutes when my husband suddenly realized: No, he didn't really want to walk out on me.

Everything—the rash decision, the hasty departure (he hadn't even packed a suitcase!), and then boarding the airplane—every-