

# ARIKI

and other short stories  
of an uncertain future

Antonio Castro

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# ARIKI

A wishful thinking that turns into a dream and vice-versa.

Since he could first think, he remembers no day in his life in which he hadn't thought, although it might be only for a fleeting moment, of those stone statues, of their bearing, their impassive countenances, and especially that one, he still being very much a child, which he had seen in that photo, buried up to the chest, leaning on its left side, with that mocking half-smile that had nothing to envy from that one of the Mona Lisa; or perhaps it was laughing at him, so unique, his childish innocence, and from its expressive countenance was telling him, almost in shouts, "Come! We have been spending so much time waiting for you."

And now, at five miles altitude, within a Chilean Airlines plane, when the sunset rays indeed scarcely allowed him to see anything more than a light-blue tone dyed into the planet's last clean waters, he turned his head toward the huge screen, located in the center of the row of seats, where the map of the tiny island mingled with the comparatively enormous pattern of the plane preceded by a red line indicating the course covered, with the dull data about the flight characteristics such as altitude, distance covered since takeoff, wind speed and external temperature, along with that roguish and defiant smile in a mingling of surfaces that perhaps he, so unique, was capable of seeing.

And thus, lost in his dreams, overflying the Pacific Ocean, he let the darkness take possession of everything.

Ariki didn't have much time.

He knew undoubtedly that, when death was brought about, the living evil that had already put an end to his partners, and had now reached the last of them, abandoned the defenseless and without substance body to seek refuge in a living entity; that precisely had been the doom of others while he was getting rid of it thanks to a breakdown in one of the outer engines of the spacecraft.

It was precisely the collision of another starship against his own one which damaged the Nuclear Waste Leak Cover; as officer commanding maintenance, he was forced to go outside to repair the damage, undergoing a discharge of neutrons so high that, after making the necessary adjustments so that the ship could even straighten its trajectory to a low-power one, he had to be confined to the infirmary's Isolated Lock to avoid contaminating his companions; the long stay there had made him spectator of all events that happened one after another.

An insignificant piece of rock, from the foreign ship, was brought on board while the mother-ship was coming off. Hardly a few moments later, half crew had curious stains all over their bodies, similar to the transported rock material. What follows, so unique, just could be appreciated in fragments across the isolation cell's transparent wall. Dead corpses, autopsies setting free strange mortal beings, desolation and death. The physician, whose knowledge had made him the only one to take proper precautions, became his last friend but, seeing as all precaution is always meager, he followed the road of all the rest, not without beforehand keeping awake in him the knowledge about what the strange rock had brought about.

It was a matter of a latent form of life, the embers of a form of superior life that perhaps had to abandon its own planet of diminutive being; who really knows, it was a matter of a form of conquest, escape or, as a tradition of all the beings with the capacity of self-knowledge, a type of spectacular and effective weapon. The fact is the chances had been so unique against Ariki's brothers and he, after seeing the physician's last breath, used from his Isolated cell's interior adequate means so that all the ship could be purged of any form of living or dead life, waited for a suitably sensible time until the ship's computer informed him he could leave his isolation and he prepared himself to fight for his survival.

The external darkness was absolute and made one lose the idea of up, down, forward and back. The purring of the engine so unique, that endless emission of decibels to which you get used to scarcely a few moments after takeoff and that accompanies you until almost the end, combined with the broken black cloak by the ruddy intermittencies of a red light set in the plane's side and which allow it to be visible to airplanes and which on fastening your vision upon from across the side window illuminated the five-pointed star set in the rotund rectangle serving as an insignia of LAN-Chile, adulterating its white color with flashes of crimson glimmers.

The adrenaline, nevertheless, fires up upon your vision fastening onto the video screen inasmuch as the information broadcast on the public-address system after takeoff is about to be surpassed; the five hour flight comes to an end and in that magical moment which sharpens the physical senses, when upon the blackness that must be the sea you see some pale light, yellow with reminiscences, in the distance, the decibels change their frequency announcing another power in the engines, different from the monotonous one maintained during crushing speed, and in the pit of your stomach the descent that had been accompanied by a half-spiral encircling that must be the island is perceived, aiming at the bluish parallel lines bordering the landing strip turn into a pathway toward Paradise.

The brightness increases, now allowing one to discern certain formations of a marked human character; a house here, a road there, and as a whole a urban project that was not allowed to be devised for the greater happiness of those inhabiting it. A dull jolt, followed without delay by a roaring of engines counteracting the function they had performed until that moment, with brakes on instead of pushing, and the movements inside the passenger compartment turn anxious from discomfort. Three hundred people stand up in unison, taking hold of the personal items they left off in the hand luggage compartments scarcely a few hours before and, with polite impatience, expecting the people constraining us from starting our walk of descent, stop grabbing their gear and, in most cases, give away with that universal norm of politeness which, for sure, if non existing would make it more laborious for us to stand in line inasmuch as existing a narrow airplane squashing human bodies would be a truly uncomfortable act.

And so, as descending the steps, video camera in hand to immortalize the occasion, and she knowing his wish, she did not fail to record him while advancing with steadily walking toward the booth saying "Mataverí", with a question for all remarks:

— Where are you? —

And his reply, as he could see on returning home and viewing the recording, had been accompanied with the greatest smile ever:

— On Easter Island. —

The first memory, and the most vivid, was nevertheless the smell that would later accompany them for a lifetime and they associated as, in description most resembling, that one remaining in a kitchen during and after boiling greens to make broth. A singular smell, cloying but pleasant, and at the same time almost familiar, a blend of banana trees, fig, red sand and volcanic stone, humus and saltpeter, seasoned with a pinch of newly burned kerosene, remnant of the four landings per week brought about in the Easter Island Airport, “The eyes that look to the sky”, Mataverí.

With that smell stuck in their clothes, they headed toward collecting baggage, not without first making sure that was actually Easter Island, thanks to the fake Moai figure greeting tourists halfway between the airplane and the airport booth. Only after entering the baggage room they started to perceive the reality surrounding them: people of Polynesian profile, menacing perhaps from their solemn appearance and from the skin browned by the sun which warrants so much deference from those of pale face, and surely for the countless film references of low-brow, grave aspect and martial intentions. And in case it might not be much, that sensation of chaos which, since no baggage conveyor belt exists, it is rather from calmness, nor does it fail to produce it, inasmuch as the suitcases are placed facing the tourists and each one grabs their own.

But the sense of abandonment had -other reasons; many of those who had got off the plane are greeted with flower garlands by family members since these people are returning home after being on the continent, while the tourists are approached by people on the island who try to convince them that their house is the best to spend the night and the following nights and, as a fundamental element, nobody carries a placard with their names. After collecting the bags, which are almost the last as it is de rigueur and to increase the nervousness, a little fragile-looking subject approaches them to ensure their identity and, after putting a garland of yellow flowers ungraceful way, invites them to get onto a van along with an Australian tourist who seems to be more gobsmacked than them.

When the door of the van was closed they really began to run, although briefly, the paths of the island. And to help calm their nerves they could see several people who were roaming little illuminated paths with such amazing tranquility and with such great carefree joy that they

thought, just a few hours later, at dawn, that they would feel that same lack of safety.

The first stop was at the hotel of the Australian woman who, being the first one to go onto the van, made them have to get off to let her get off and which produced the first comic situation. The face of the driver of the van, the only companion, reflected a certain doubt on how to refer to him and, as illuminated by a light of linguistic internationalism, told him in a perfect Spanish:

—*Usted esperar*. —And it was because of his Saxon features that he had been confused with an English-speaking person.

Fixed the mess, they arrived at their hotel and already at the reception they were assigned a room, number 139. After this, and with the sense of organization that had always characterized them, they asked about the plans for the near future.

—So, which excursion are we going to take tomorrow?

—Let me see it —answered the concierge looking at some papers. Three men, sitting on a bench in the reception were laughing and speaking among them. —You don't have any programmed excursion, but if you want to check out this list of activities...

—Needless to. —said one of the men sitting on the bench, judging from its appearance he should be the owner of the hotel—. Have a peaceful sleep and don't be in a hurry to get up. Although here it's ten in the evening, due to the change of time for you it's midnight and the journey from Santiago is very tiring. Tomorrow morning we can talk about the issue. He took them to their room and said good night.

And so it was as it happened.

During the tour through the halls a "Barata", Chilean cockroach, also welcomed them and doing that, once the concierge had closed the door and after putting on the lightweight pajama, they put a towel on the bottom of the door and blocked up the bathroom's drain grille with the bath mat, just in case.

The darkness of Morfeo, which did not hesitate to take ownership of them, put the point end to that day of transition.

The inside of the ship was an empty mausoleum. No sound could be heard through the wide corridors when Ariki left the isolation lock; only the dim red emergency light, which was connected when he decided to thoroughly clean the ship, intermittently lighted his way to the control room. Despite everything, he felt no sense of panic cause he was sure he was the only living thing inside the ship.

As auxiliary systems were activated, he had no difficulty in opening the door of the room, approaching the captain's terminal of the computer and restoring navigation conditions. The circulating red lights gave way to a cold but at the same time more welcoming fluorescent light. Only then he began to raise his survival seriously.

Thanks to his work he knew each and every one of the ins and outs of the operation systems of the ship, but not deeply or, of course, fluently enough to engage in cases like this one; he was able, however, of scanning, first of all, the vital support resources he could bear in mind. Food, stretched up to minimum levels of survival, could last between six and seven of his days; air, stored before disinfecting the ship, could keep him alive more than fifteen days, but its quality, both compositional and bacteriological levels, would be lost with the time passing by. At the end, he might be infected by the virus with just that one cell that had escaped the control of the central computer; initially the air vents were very selective but as supply was running out, smaller elements would escape.

The available fuel also showed serious difficulties; due to the accident with the alien ship, it had been reduced to just the right amount to stop in the vicinity of a planet having to use, in addition, any celestial object as aid.

His situation was not, certainly, a flattering one. His options, therefore, resided on finding a habitable planet possible to approach with minimum consumption of energy, in the shortest amount of time.

His luck- turned on spectacularly when he tracked out the space. He was closer to a yellow star with a long expected life that, according to the computer data, was his last chance for living. In its interior area, bordered by an asteroid belt from a planet that could not be born, were four tiny planets. The closest to the star had no atmosphere and its surface temperatures were extremely hot in the face one to the star and terribly cold on the opposite side. The fourth planet, with a tenuous atmosphere, was very cold, while the second one had such a corrosive atmosphere that had not permitted to reach its surface before being melted by the effect of the acid. The third one was what they say good looking. Breathable atmosphere, plenty of water, extreme temperatures



unseasonably mild in its almost entire surface and glimpses of life, although very primitive. A barren satellite, with a proportional size that would make you consider both together as a double planet, would help him in his braking.

The rest of the planets, huge balls of gas that could be considered protostars, would facilitate the sufficient wave effect thrust to shorten the approach to the third one.

Without hesitating even one second Arika put hands on work with the clumsiness of the one who didn't use to do something; he inputted all data on the computer which outputted the plan to follow: two approaches to the protostars to correct the path and to gain speed, an orbit to the fourth planet to start braking and a last orbit to the barren satellite to increase the power of the engines in its difficult task of slow cruising speed. That would let him orbit- the planet in a short time and with enough fuel to locate the place which would be his last home.

The awakening brought better feelings than those experienced last night. Through the window, provided with a mosquito net, they were now able to really appreciate the exotic nature of the island; a few banana trees in the area surrounding the hotel were giving welcome. A quick shower, with the concern of not knowing what was the plan of the day, a moment of photographic immortality with the garlands of yellow flowers that had given them the night before and which already were not too good looking although the good smell, the forced semi-order of the luggage and its contents in an act of physical possession of the room and they went promptly to the reception desk of the hotel.

—Good morning.

—Good morning.

With Polynesian appearance, a dark-skinned with mirror sunglasses man was friendly but with taciturn words.

—We would like to know where to have breakfast and the excursion scheduled for today, please.

—Yes, of course. Breakfast is a self-service counter at the end of the corridor where your room is located. Regarding the trip, one moment please, I'll ask my dad.

“Dad” was, of course, the owner of the establishment as they had guessed last night and it took him a little while to inform them.

—Good morning. The agency have told me the first half-day excursion is scheduled for this afternoon at about four, after lunch. Go for breakfast and then return to the reception desk and my son will instruct you on what can you do this morning.

—Thank you so much.

And without any further word they went to have breakfast.

The corridor, indeed, led to the lunch room; as soon as they set foot in the room a solicitous waiter showed them a table allowing to save them those moments of doubt they always had when accessing a site with people. A small German flag was quickly replaced by the Spanish one as they began a dialogue with the waiter about his culinary desires, giving to understand that at each table of four there was a banner of the country of the guests and they could identify their nationalities among them and, probably, the idiomatic affinities. They could appreciate, thanks to it, that the other tenants were reduced, at least in that hour of breakfast, to two pairs of British and French old people.

The breakfast, although scarce variety, was abundant; bananas, slices of passion fruit, coffee and toasts with butter and jam. After finishing off breakfast, they returned to the room to be provided of all the essential video-photographic material and of the book which would allow

them to investigate on their own if the recommendations of the concierge-son did not convince themselves.

—Well —he began to indicate by giving them a map of Hanga Roa with clear indications and marked with circles of ink. As they would later check, the paucity in words decreased greatly when he started explaining things about the island. —We are here. If you go down this street you will reach the Centre of the village and I have marked with a pen points which I consider most important to visit on it: the Church, the handicraft market and the fruits one, the Englehart Museum, a restaurant where you can take lunch and where you will receive special treatment if you say you come on behalf of me, and already out of the village, the Ahu Tahai Ceremonial Complex.

They spent the morning with the joy of any new discovery together with that bit of semi-improvisation that gives wander aimlessly but with the invaluable help of a map. They first toured the distance separating them from the main street until they reached the corner where the Lan Chile airline's offices were. The compacted red soil, as of tennis court, was soon replaced by a few curious paving of stones of the same ochre color but paler, with very curious geometric shapes that linked in a tapestry of rhomboid or rectangular pleasant view; such was the ground composition of the street where just a few vehicles were circulating. On both sides of the street there were wide and deep ditches as watercourses towards the sea, for what should be strong tropical storms, as they would check later; a few but intense.

They continued down the street until reaching the edge of the ocean to descry their first authentic Moai, beside which one crane and four workers seemed to want to lodge it definitively; fishermen's Bay surprised them by its resemblance to the hundreds the same that can be seen on the shores of almost anywhere in the world, with statue of Catholic Saint included. A casual surfer of Germanic traits also surprised them by his boldness, though not less hardener that one whose wake they could see in the distance. The German, seeing the difficult evolution of its companion's adventure in the raging sea, withdrew his attempt even before touching the water.

In the distance, but within the island, they could see a curious weather phenomenon that occurs in this small piece of land surrounded by three thousand kilometers of sea in any direction you want to look at; in the mountains that cut against the horizon, a storm dumping with such force that the mantle of falling water was visible from the distance, giving the paradox that the sun was shining brightly in the area where they were. The sky over the sea also remained clean, prompting them to guess that the little piece of land that was the island concentrated

moisture of the air and fell on it with violence; hence, also, the broad ditches they saw skirting the main street.

Without stopping in excess to check out the phenomenon, they went to Ahu Tahai Ceremonial Complex after traversing a distance which initially seemed to be minor. A small look at the obituary that was halfway and the Ahu, with its four statues in a pitiful state allowed them to realise where they were; a well-preserved Mohai, rebuilt in its minutest details including the eyes of coral, highlighted its perfection on all the others. Remains of some alleged homes on an esplanade and a few stones arranged as a jetty following the theory of the inclined plane completed the ruins. A woman sitting on the esplanade, with a few blankets placed wires on the ground on which a large number of crafts were deposited, including the statue of a Moai carved in wood which with the time would decorate the lounge of his house, gave the place the appropriate tourist touch.

After appropriate photographs and video recordings, they resumed their way back toward the fishermen's bay but not before passing through the markets of crafts and of fruit; the visit to the Museum was delayed by its isolation with regard to the location of the set of curiosities of Hanga Roa, and because mealtime was close.

Restaurant Pea, located on the waters of the Bay and that had been opened just a couple of months before, was small but cozy. Large windows allowed him to see the majesty of the Pacific Ocean while hunger was satisfied. Two tuna steaks, the largest they had seen in their life, dessert, beverage and coffee, were enough to be satisfied. But not before checking out another peculiarity of Easter Island; there was a delay in the arrival of a beer and tuna because the gas and the beers were unavailable, and until the plane did not land and supplies were discharged they could not serve them properly. Their understanding of the problem eased things.

And because of the time pressure, they returned to the hotel tired but satisfied of their initial contact not only with the historical sites but also with the idiosyncrasy of the Easter island and its inhabitants.

Initially, Ariki thought that maybe it was better to orbit the planet trying to find a spot where he would be safe and comfortable, but the fuel shortage forced him to leave the planet orbit around his ship, so he stood from a safe distance away and let the surface of the planet, in his slow walk, pass- by the front of his eyes and the attentive scanners of the ship.

The dry land represented approximately thirty percent of the planet's surface, also divided into five portions of considerable size; three of them were somehow grouped in a side of the planet forming almost a whole, another one was in one of the polar ice caps while the fifth one was separated from the others but relatively close, just separated by a, in comparison, narrow Ocean.

He dismissed all them due to their size and his attention focused on the vast ocean that was in contrast to the large land masses. Thousands of small islands dotted here and there the ocean, although later, and thanks to the indications of the computer, he began to concentrate on a few of them since the distribution of land masses did not obey a quirk of nature but to the intense volcanic and seismic activity of the friction of the ground plates in that area. Some islands emerged in a few hours to be then engulfed by the waters within a few days.

Thus, his attention focused on the area between the southern part of the nearby continent and the land mass that was in the polar ice cap; one very large, the other very cold. He followed the coastline towards the other polar ice cap and then he bumped into it. That tiny triangular Island met all the features he wanted. Around it there was nothing except lots of water, its mountainous terrain secured rainy season to stock up on drinking water, and in turn, it allowed that vegetation could grow with exuberance. Its sheer cliffs, bordering the island on the whole, except in a small beach, made it almost impossible to access.

For some time now the volcanic activity had ceased in that area, while two craters, memories of past eras, could be useful as water tank and to hide the mothership in case that needed. It was, furthermore, the ideal place to retire without affecting the evolution of the planet. Perfect.

With the decision already taken Ariki began to think about the "how". He would go down to the island with a shuttle equipped with the most essential technological elements; the mothership would then be orbiting the planet for two very specific reasons: the first one to serve as an eye in space to probe both downward and upward, to know the evolution of the planet and its life and to track space just in case any of the other ships that left his home world with them, which had soon lost sight. The second reason was more aimed at the survival; if he ever had to abandon the planet, would he always have the ship parked outside. But

this last thought also had certain difficulties. Nuclear fuel had already run its course and now the ship ran on batteries that soon would end up. The solar panels deployed in its entirety, could capture the solar wind and convert it into storable energy but he calculated that so that energy levels would be in the minimum conditions for a long trip, to pick him up at the ground and the provisions that he could need, it would pass, at least, three thousand of the orbits of the planet around its star.

There's no point in complaining so he deployed the solar panels, instructed the computer to load the shuttle with what he thought he could need, especially the mother board computer portable terminal, and went to clean his body for the last time on the ship. When the computer told him that the shuttle was charged and ready to launch, he took the time left to explore the ship. And then the homesickness and the loneliness, surely because he had already covered their most urgent needs, took over it.

His memories released him until the day when, on his planet, he had been selected for splitting in the hope of finding new habitable worlds. His civilization had prospered in many ways; technological advances made out big leisure time and quasi non-existent physical vicissitudes. Fun and entertainment had occupied the planet but, on the contrary, nuclear energy had greatly contaminated surface. Prohibited areas had increased year over year, the drastic birth control had putted a curb on population growth but the population, thanks to advances in medicine and the discovery of factors producing the aging, had increased to overpopulation in increasingly restricted and lacking in resources areas. The wars, which also had long been eradicated, threatened again to return, more as a matter of survival than as a mere appropriation of a territory that was already a scarce commodity.

Thus, twenty ships were launched into space in search of hope; ten exploration ones, with a reduced crew and great technological capacity. The rest were couples of two ships with a lot of people and another one with a large amount of food. Initially, they thought that exploration ships went also in pairs to help if necessary, but when they increased their speed up to one-third of the light, all contact between them and their partner was lost. Since then, and until the time of the accidental collision, their wandering had not succeeded; just a planet with its surface covered by full by vegetables so hostile at the bacterial level that its habitability was unthinkable.

As he wandered around the corridors and the rooms, his memories came closer in time. The captain's room was where he had spent more time dreaming. A companion, features hard but equipped with a great charisma, had been the first to die due to being interested, too much perhaps, in members of his crew who first had been affected by the

virus. His great personality had made that Ariki had always wanted to look like him; the mixture of admiration and respect from everyone was very difficult to achieve. They could have a conversation with him in the cantina, enjoying playing games or weeping bitterly in his shoulder with no regret from him; but, at the same time, always maintaining the distances with everyone, as if he was on a pedestal, and when he gave an order, it was obeyed then, not only because he was the captain but because all relied on his good to do. Even his way of imparting them gave the impression of being more a suggestion than a direct mandate. None of this happened yet.

A beep from the computer as the optimal timing of the release was near and the fact that the next one would not occur until one orbit later, finally he decided to leave. "It is better for me to go, thought Ariki, or, otherwise, I will never get off." He entered the shuttle without looking back and ordered the release. Moments later, the ship was only a white point against the deep black while on the other side the blue filled the hatch.

First thing in the afternoon, as they had been announced, a van arrived to pick them up at the door of the hotel; It was already a while that looked forward, with the immortalization units, sitting on the bank of the reception. When the driver mentioned their names, they rose to their feet and walked by the entrance hallway which was flanked by four souvenir shops, they were taken to the street and were introduced through the sliding door of the van. The guide, born Italian although perfectly Eastern now, greeted them in a perfect Spanish that even so it still retained a strong transalpine accent. They were accommodated in the best seats, the front ones which allowed a better view, and undertook the motion. The tortuous paths of reddish sand penetrated in Hanga Roa to then follow the coast up to the wharf where twice a year a transatlantic unloaded mainly supplying fuel the island, then they went up to a small promontory where the other important hotel of the place was. The technical stop was brief because the other six people, a couple of newly married Chilean in full honey moon, two Spanish women on vacation and a pair of aged Americans, surely gradually spending their life's savings, that seemed to be many by judging their clothes, were ready to set off as soon as they arrived.

After the timely courteous greetings of rigor, they head to the hill which dominated the town of Hanga Roa, and on top of which was the ceremonial center of Orongo and the crater of the Rano Kao volcano; during the short trip, the guide began to give introductory explanations on the site that they were about to visit. On the island there were two volcanic craters, one almost in the center of it and the other one at one end, precisely the one they were about to visit. Both were linked to the esotericism of the inhabitants of the island. That was in the Center served as a quarry where the Moais were built for, leaving them down the slope of the mountain, moving them to their final resting places, called AHU. The Rano Kao, located in the South, gave shelter to the ceremony of the Birdman, which would be explained later.

Halfway, they stopped to contemplate a view of Hanga Roa from a high place. The nucleus was formed by a huge rectangle of low houses, since in Easter Island no building had two floors, bordered by the sea headed by fishermen's bay; in its end, a Chilean base housed a small group of men from a strategic promontory. To the North and the East two plains died in a few promontories while to the South the runway, vital for the survival of the inhabitants, framed the village. Seen from that height, it didn't seem that nearly three thousand people lived in, since the rest of the island was virtually uninhabited, except for a few nomads.

Various high-tech elements highlighted on the humility of the buildings; two huge satellite dishes served as communicative junction for



telephone networks, at the same time that surely should play a military role for the base. Nothing spectacular should be noted so, after making the customary pictures, they resumed the march.

Minutes later, a new stop and they arrived at the crater of the Rano Kao. Its appearance was impressive; a circle almost perfect, just cut a slight wound framing the set, from which a few carved hillsides down in descent to die on the shore of a lake of water of a sky blue so intense that it had damaged their eyes if being full, but the surface was spotted by hundreds of tiny plant extensions of *titora*, brought by wind from the mainland which is the same as that seen in Lake Titicaca. The surface, however much they look at it, remained with a stillness so enormous that seemed carved on marble; even the leaves of the plants moved by a wind that was unable to descend the slope down. So impressed were in contemplation that hardly they heard the explanations of the guide, except that fragment in which recounted that the Chief Hotu Matua, the colonizer of the island, had named it "Eye looking towards heaven", due to a curious dream that had just landed.

More photos and video recordings and, without having to get into the van, the guide approached them to the ceremonial center of Orongo, where some archaeologists were working on a reconstruction of what had been the homes of the heads of the tribes according to a true scientific study. The guide suggested they stopped and only said a phrase:

—Without any doubt, Galileo Galilei came until Easter to check the roundness of the Earth.

And from that point, the arc's vision was so broad that it allowed to appreciate a slight curvature in the horizon which, although they were commissioned to record a video, it could not be appreciated more than at that point. A moment of surprise, and they continued the visit.

This time the explanations were carefully listened to. The history said that once a year, when spring arrived, Easter inhabitants gathered there to recognize the new leader. Each tribe of the nine that were descendants of the nine sons of Hotu Matua, chose a representative for the competition, which consisted of descending the rugged cliff, swim to one of the three islets that are visible from Orongo, capturing an egg and returning with it, unless he broke, to give it to the chief of his tribe, which was named Birdman, that is, leader of the island. While his mandate lasted, that is for a year, anything he wanted should be addressed, including the death of someone. It was clear that it should not exceed since it could be the case that the following year, his tribe was not the winner and suffered the revenge of their opponents.

After the mini-conference, there was the time to collect memories in photos and video recordings, time for this was another surprise since the

tranquility of the island is so large and the things that you can do there once you've seen the monuments are so small, that the guide didn't set a special schedule. She just asserted that when everyone was sufficiently filled with memories, gathered in the van to leave. And they did so; first they went to the edge of the cliff from where they were able to appreciate the difficulty of the competition of the Birdman, since the descent towards the sea was so steep that one could say that it fell almost vertically. A photo from that position, and they also took the photo, but not before contemplating the place with calm, the three islets that were near the coast, Motu Nui, Motu Iti and Motu Kao-Kao, i.e., large islet, the small and the smallest, two portions of land in accordance with their description and a sharpened stake impossible to access.

Finally, they took advantage of the visit to the petroglyphs of Orongo for the first talks with those who would be his companions of excursions with the always appealed excuse of photos; "If you want, I can take a photo of you together and then you take one from us." "Yes, of course. Just click here." "As well, still. But smile a little, please." Laughter that is possible with this effect and the usual customary greetings and presentations of names, civil status and the reasons for the trip. Back, the conversation is more fluid and focuses on more specific topics.

Arriving at the hotel that had been second stop, farewells until the following day and, after skirting the coast again, back to the hotel starting marveled by the light of the sunset which at that point is, due to its location, special; reddish tones are dispersed by the wide ocean, mixing with the blue of the sea but slipping down its just broken surface by the white of the foam that was generated by the almost imperceptible wind blows. Therefore the ocean is called Pacific.

Before getting off, they are reminded, as it had been done with other tourists, that for the next day the full day excursion was scheduled so they had to ask the hotel, since they didn't have it included in the visit, to prepare them a packed lunch, a simple but hearty picnic.

After leaving the video-photographic elements, and not forgetting the video camera batteries to be charged, they walked toward the living room for dinner, since emotions and body fatigue were so high that the appetite of an evening strolled to the restaurant was null and safe time they would have the day off which corresponded to them to do it calmly. Just dinner finished, a quick shower and to sleep, thinking that the next day the stage would be surely exhausting.

But, once under the sheets, he didn't get to sleep; what he had seen so far amply deserved more than invested money and time, but the only memory of the statue of his childhood made his head think over. At the same time was near and far; close by the proximity to both physically as temporary, and far into the memory, a memory that strongly worried him

now. Where did they come from? Who had left them there? And, above all, why did that exerted upon him make so powerful magnetism from so long? He would have given gladly half life for the moment that was so close and, seeing its proximity, streams of adrenaline ran frantic in his veins trying to push him into not sleeping.

Morfeo however, as it happens daily with nearly all of the animals, triumphed above all.

He took the elliptical orbit that described the shuttle to check everything that the main computer had put inside of it for his survival. Above all, sufficient tooling to improvise a ceiling to shield him from the weather that very occasionally punished the island, such as torrential rains and temperatures below the levels where he was comfortable, all the essential elements to treat mostly plant foods, and who knows if, over time, underwater animals, heating elements, a set of batteries with their corresponding solar charger and, the most important of all, a terminal to be able to connect to the central computer of the ship which was orbiting the planet.

He had barely checked all the utensils, and, after checking that the terminal answered, a flashing red light warned him that the landing was very close and that he should sit in the seat of command. So he did and, a few seconds later, the last drops of liquid fuel, all oxygen and hydrogen, mixed to stop the ship, which landed as a feather is placed on a table. The heart of Ariki then began to go frantic faced to the many doubts posed to him by his new situation. What if the atmosphere was not entirely breathable? What if he had chosen the wrong place and would perish of hunger? He sighed deeply, let go the straps that kept him firmly in the seat and, since nothing of what went through his head could already have solution, opened the hatch by tightening his fists vigorously.

At first, the blinding light of the sun, which he saw after a long time, forced him to close his eyes. Still he did not allow that the new atmosphere air filled up his lungs; but that situation could not be extended in excess, so he opened again his eyes slowly, and his own smile blew air into his lungs. Not being used to that air, a strong cough shook his body, filled him with terror and forced him to move back a few steps inside the shuttle; but life always strives to dominate and promptly he returned to his previous position, completely filling his lungs and stretched as if he had awakened from a long sleep.

His joy was so high that he missed the shuttle since time would largely have to devote the required time; he jumped off the hatch rolling over himself when touching the ground and lied with his arms outstretched, looking toward the star that shone now over him and laughing out loud on his excellent choice. A strong vegetable smell permeated his nose, surely the cause of his coughing fit, while background sounds of the waves of the sea breaking with violence on the steep cliffs filled the atmosphere; and above all a great sense of life, to feel alive, memories of bygone eras that were now very distant in time and space and thousands of promises of peace, tranquility and life, that

life that had so recently seen in danger and almost slipped out of his fingers.

It was no longer time of things past or memories or experiences, everything pointed forward towards that star that warmed his body with its rays in a way that had never dreamed of feeling again. The blood flowed through his veins with force, pumped by that great heart that housed his chest and felt now beat with strength, which almost resounded in his head giving back what always had, but which remained hidden or, rather, lethargic.

He felt then that he should unburden that new vital energy and, as a child for the first time sees clearances, he stood up with a jump and he ran despite the numbness of limbs and joints, deoxidizing fluids not circulating for a long time through his veins, his cartilage and his revitalized heart. He barely set- his sight on a specific point, but it was rather a frenzied race of freedom, of life; he went up and down hills with a facility worthy of a madman, just stopping atop a promontory to gasp smiling, with an expression that threatened to break his face.

And he shouted. He shouted to the wind in an act of expression and taking possession, sinking his fingers into the ground without taking into consideration the scratches that already covered much of his phalanges, and throwing huge chunks of mud and dry grass outdoor before bringing his fingers to the nose to be filled with the perfume of the hundreds of tiny creatures that were moving from place to place, and the wet earth that sullied his nails and his body, revealing him that in a distant day something or someone emerged from it to end up becoming that exultant being.

His career was braking in the small beach that had been detected in the North of the island. He Just saw the smoothness with which sand penetrated into the sea, he didn't stop his career until the saltwater wrapped him completely, removing sand from his skin and filling him with endless drops of power; he could feel the force of the ocean pressing against his epidermis, a force that in those circumstances he could give amplified by his newfound life force.

Cold water calmed things down and gave him back to the immediate reality. Firstly, as the water temperature could affect him badly since he was too accustomed to the heat; secondly, he should deploy all the elements that were in the shuttle to avoid that, with the sundown, the heat decreased suddenly and caused him irreparable harm. He also began to notice the effects of rational diet which had followed during the last days, which had not then been focus of his attention, but now that his vital situation seemed to be safeguarded, it started to occupy a prior place in his mind and in his stomach.

Under all these premises, he returned up to the place that occupied the shuttle, withdrew the home-shack-tent and, after pressing the corresponding buttons, extracted all the provisions that he had while his house was self-unfolding. The food that was left, without having to ration it, would feed him all the next days, so his immediate priority would be to search supplies as soon as the sun had dawned on the horizon. Batteries, on the other hand, were charged enough to exhaust almost all resources of the Mothership, except the auxiliary elements, and it would be enough to heat the meal, spend the night and leave that throughout the next day they would be recharged up to an optimal level. After six days since his arrival he shouldn't worry more about the batteries since they would have reached their highest level and the autoloading was eternally assured.

Time should have passed more quickly than expected, or certainly still had not adapted to the cycle of that planet around the sun and its rotation on itself, with what just completed setup, the sun gave way to night. Ariki went into his home, cooked - abundant food and with satisfaction in his mind, he fell asleep soon to spend his first night on Earth.

"Keep on sleeping; the day hasn't come yet".

The sentence came as a blow directly to his head when he even was in his latest daydreams. The heart was beating frantically as he imagined the great statue by opening the mouth, not to devour him, but to throw out, in an unknown language, phrases that made sense while they hammered into his skull. Ignoring the indication, he opened his eyes with hubris and joined knowing that in the room there was just her and that had been a dream. He took air and exhaled it profusely, after which he consulted the clock, turned sheets and stood up to go to the bathroom. He just made the first physiological needs, and after a good soaking in cold water in the face, he decided to take a shower before waking her up.

Hot water swept his body with renewed energy, mitigating the light freshness of the morning air of the island; despite being close the summer, the mornings remained a temperature below the warmth. He dried himself quickly, already passed the uneasiness of the awakening and opened the curtains before approaching her. Just a few light movements and comments and she headed towards the bathroom to perform the same operations, while he got dressed, he kept everything he had to keep and took out what had to be taken out, i.e., the memory taker elements. When they were ready, they headed towards the dining room, where fruit and toast with freshly brewed coffee irrigated. There, and with an indication, picnics were also given and promptly they made their way to the reception.

The day had raised gray, rainy grey that although threatened with falling, seemed to be in a rather latent situation. The van arrived at the time that they had announced the day before and after appropriate greetings and comments on how they had spent the night, more specifically as he had passed his dream, near-universal education formula, went through the familiar road of the coast, along the city-town to the second hotel. And as it is often the case in the majority of occasions, just when someone commented that the day was grey and it was threatening rain, it started to fall with all its virulence.

They arrived at the second hotel on - time to just see all the other hikers leaned against the wall of the reception, waving hand and indicating with their hands and heads skyward, shrugging his shoulders before the inevitable. They descended to greet while beyond the eaves, the water fell as a waterfall. Given that the previous day they had already had the first meeting, greetings were more effusive and would give way to the game of "who says the funniest recurring sentence about what is happening".

After these first moments of relaxation, the group opinion about what should be done was formed, with the Italian guide as the center of the debate. Continuing with the preconceived idea was extremely difficult because of the weather conditions. The water was already among the trees and a large lake was being formed in front of the hotel, threatening even the van the possibility of departing. It was agreed, therefore, to take the full day tour next day and dedicate this one to perform the half day tour scheduled for the next day. So after taking a series of snapshots of the event and video-recording the situation, they went back to the van, but not before saying goodbye, and retook the way back to the hotel.

The morning, after the events occurred, had already elapsed to a large extent, so they spent the rest of it visiting the souvenir shops located at the hotel's entrance hall. They acquired a series of personal souvenirs and were branding from the list all those relatives who were gifted as they acquired one thing or another. In particular they paid attention on one of the shops that they had already seen the first day open. There were, apart from wood carvings that abounded in the island and cassettes of native music, t-shirts the design of which, in addition to being really original and pleasing to the eye, they hadn't seen in any other shop.

This gave a reason to comment with the concierge-son, who told them that the store was owned by his sister-in-law, that the store was open very occasionally and the original designs of t-shirts were the work of his brother, who lived in Santiago de Chile where he ran a travel agency that was responsible for linking the mainland with the hotel. The brother, apart of being a designer, had written and interpreted several of the native music cassettes that were on sale and had designed the logo of the hotel whose beauty surprised him. T-shirts, also explained the concierge could only be purchased at that store and, given the interest shown by them, he promised to talk with his sister so that if the shop was not open on the days ahead, she would give him the key to be able to sell them t-shirts. They asked about the price of a large banner which displayed the logo of the hotel in extra size, they were surprised by the manager of the hotel, who although so far he had not been very communicative, was kind enough to give them the banner as a present.

In the wake of all this conversation, he continued with his inquiries about the island. The environment was peaceful and very relaxing, but once all the monuments, which were not few, had been seen, nothing remained to be done except living; on the island there was no television, no radio, no newspapers, cinemas or anything to hang out leisure. Many of the inhabitants of the island moved away from it for some time each year, to the continent, to miss that environment and return to it with



renewed hopes. If it is not known what you have and it is not compared with other things, the good properties are not appreciated.

And so the hours passed, after returning to their room to deposit the newly acquired souvenirs, take the picnic that had been prepared for them, they aimed at the reception when the time of embarking was close again. The van, as always, arrived in time and as the water had stopped falling because of a leak, even in the Hall of access to rooms, it returned to pick up other hikers and went the path of Ahu Akivi, one of the best restored, where some drops of rain threatened to boycott the visit. Later, the cave of bananas, where they could witness its archaeological interest which was higher than its claustrophobia, and Tepeu, base of a well-preserved Ahu whose only interest lays in the fact that the stone lace and the curvature of the same, matched in its construction of the Incas on the continent, and whose main exponent was Machu Pichu; If it was a mere coincidence or a possible continental population no one, so far, could prove it beyond a few stones embedded in others and with the same shape in both places.

The sun began to peek through the clouds, whose color had already given black to grey, and from it to white, when they arrived at the quarry of Puna Pau. There, thanks to its reddish ground, they could appreciate how the inhabitants of this island had been using color change to make what seemed hats in the Moais and that in reality it was hair, knotted at the top of the head to celebrate rituals, and whose land was also used as human hair dye in these celebrations. Already in the van, they decided, along with the women from Extremadura, to stay- for dinner at a small restaurant in fishermen's bay where they tested Italian pasta mixed with seafood from the area, and the "Pisco Sour" a typical drink of Chile, with a high alcohol content and for this good reason it was known as "bajativo" in the restaurants.

A walk to the hotel, looking at that part of the sky which from their usual place of residence cannot be seen, marveling at the deep clarity of starry night despite being at sea level, and without consuming too much time due to fatigue that, at that time, seems to come once all the planned activities have been done, got them into bed.

The great day was about to arrive; just a few more hours and finally he would meet Ariki, a name that came to him without even knowing what it meant, but that seemed inevitably associated with the statue.

The warmth from the mother ship came to him when he was about to leave for the beach. No more distraction than going where the intermittent beep was, he connected the console and waited to receive the news. From the sea a large canoe was approaching towards the island loaded with large amount of semi-intelligent animals. Ariki had been enjoying his solitude for so long, that the affairs of that planet had ceased to matter. But, apparently, the bipedal beings that seemed doomed to intelligence, and that years ago were scanned on a distant continent, were approaching now into his domains. And then, like a lightning, knew how, due to exposure to nuclear radiation during the accident and subsequent repair, he had come into contact with the mother computer by telepathic means. To the disbelief of the fact, he had denied to think that it was an echo of what he had read in the screen of the terminal when it was put- in contact with the computer, also believing that the voices he had heard for years, were due to his loneliness and a pinch of madness.

But no; the computer messages were not dreams of breeds to evolve, but the most stark reality. And, on the other hand, telepathic messages that the ship had replied had also been captured by those creatures, developing their intelligence and technology; he was, therefore, responsible for what was going to happen. They had always taught him he should not interfere in the evolution of the species, but it was already too late to rectify. Those who were about to disembark at "his" island, not only had been attracted by his desire to give up the loneliness, but even his language was nothing more than a deformation of the maternal language of Ariki itself.

And, in particular the leader of the expedition, as he called the computer already without technological elements, had more strongly felt its call. Given the evidence, he established telepathic contact with Hotu Matua?, to try to discern what his most coveted intentions and desires were. Life in his place of origin was not pleasant so he felt the need to take his people and go out of their lands, challenging the currents that seemed difficult to overcome, to arrive at a point that was now ready to disembark in.

What he expected to find there was his God, his great Ariki, the one he would revere up to - death. Thus, Ariki didn't think it twice before making the plan of action. And as he thought, and due to his newly recognized telepathic powers, was as it happened. He got in touch with them just to let them show him, and later having a first encounter with Hotu Matua. He, surprised and simultaneously exultant with his discovery, had no problem doing what that giant, who communicated with him without separating the lips, ordered.

He never had to worry about obtaining food, they had carved for him large statues without legs that deposited in large platforms thanks to the help of his technology and what he taught them; the collaboration of his physical strength and his size was necessary to place the statues at the points where he wanted to. This won their admiration, their respect and his glorification by altars seeing the exploits that were amazing for them and a simple children's game for him.

He also designed the aesthetics of the island at his leisure; more and more resembled large green spaces that he left on his planet, with the same type of decoration and which served, in addition, as a place for meeting and worshipping of the inhabitants of the island, which had submitted without forcing them.

Now, finally, he could also remember his captain, and thought about how proud he would feel, not only of the recreation of his world, but also of the influence that he had on those beings. If its captain had been a being of charisma, he had been now, at last, an Ariki Mau, the great Supreme God.

The morning rose radiant. Now that the big day had really arrived, even the sun looked splendid in the sky; the strong smell of the island came over all thanks to the rains of the previous day that had wet land and now, while evaporating, carried the fragrance to every single corner.

After the shower, quick breakfast, the provision of photographic and video material and the van which also arrived on time. As the road should be better they started from their hotel, in the vehicle they already found their usual companions of all the tours and, after the appropriate greetings, commented on the incidents of the previous day, welcomed the prevailing weather and still had time to offer one of their picnics to the newly married Chilean couple who forgot theirs in the hotel. What can be eaten by two, can be eaten by four.

Ahu Akahanga was at the edge of the sea. Its moais were ashore, towards the other side of the coast, almost touching the circle of stones where the chiefs of the clans, as the guide explained, gathered to celebrate their island State boards. Its greater particularity was the fact that from there you could see on the side of a mountain a group of stones which, according to tradition, was the cave where Hotu Matua, tired of the war between the tribes of his sons, had retired to rest before he died. After the corresponding photos and footage, they returned to the van and left the road; the day promised to be long and time, exceptionally this time, pressed, especially at the beginning.

Ahu Tongariki was his preferred one. Its fifteen reconstructed Moais, of different sizes, its situation close to the coast and the great plain that had in front, gave it a majestic appearance. Its great colouring, with reddish tones and polished stones, stood above the surrounding landscape. From there you could also see a huge Moai almost at the end of the plain, lying on the ground, and another solitary Moai that seemed to mark the way to the Ahu, and volcano Rano Raraku, the quarry where the Moais were manufactured. After the explanations the dispersion of the group took place to take original photos and most curious drawings and, once done, they took advantage to approach the guide for information while the rest continued with the panoramic; especially the lying Moai was the point of attention to the rest of the group.

After telling them something of her own history, the guide surprised them with some comments. According to its findings, the explanations given on the various parts of the island were the comments of scientists and scholars, but she firmly believed that they were nothing else than a hoax to rationally explain the unexplainable; under her point of view, the island was a part, the only one that was left on the sea, of a great continent she called Lemuria, whose inhabitants were well endowed with

great intelligence and technology and which, as time goes by, disappeared under the waters. Answers to questions about Easter Island were at the bottom of the nearby sea.

After the assertion by their part of the reviews of the guide, an idea that hadn't seemed so far-fetched, the fact that the other tourists would rise to the lying Moai to take a few more pictures, allowed them to talk about the future of the island, nothing encouraging from the arrival of tourists en masse. They served as a source of wealth but, with the passing of the years, they would destroy everything they came to see.

And then it was the moment of truth. To his question, the guide answered the reclining Moai was on the volcano they were about to visit, just at the end of the trail marked for the tour, which included the ascent to the crater and the decline where large amount of Moais were buried in the ground by the passage of time and floods.

Seeing the rest of the group was still sullyng the sacred for her Moai, the guide reminded them that they could go to see the solitary Moai while she was meeting the herd and, after getting into the van, they lined up toward their destination.

A few hundred meters further forward, a short motorized ride, and Rano Raraku welcomed them.

Ariki was concerned. Since- some time ago, the computer had sent him messages informing that other bipedal beings, who called themselves men, had improved their technology and some new of them were approaching dangerously to his island.

However, his cause for concern was more serious. The dark stain which had appeared some time ago in the thigh of his right leg could have been attributed to the prevailing conditions, but the size now, having almost the width of his hand palm, gave out of concern. He placed the almost rusty medical scanner on it and waited for the computer to make the relevant checks.

While he was waiting for the results, fact which could occur at any time but that could get beyond where it was, due to his telepathic connection with the computer, he dedicated himself to contemplate the curious construction of a new statue, which the men called "Moai". The sculptors, lowest-class tribesmen on the island, were already finishing polishing its surface so his intervention would be soon again necessary to hoist and transport it to its final siting.

Nor he was surprised with the social relationships that men had established at their own risk. As soon as they had disembarked, they had classified themselves in classes; the dominant ones, the long ears, suggested as better serve God with the construction of the Moais and the short ears were in charge of its preparation to make Ariki be happy. Disputes between clans were constant and it was at that point where his intervention was needed to calm tempers. The island was small, with limited resources, and overpopulation constantly threatened to break the balance of classes.

Ariki saw the way they were doomed, just as a computer transmitting now news that was rather generic in the world and with those beings in particular.

But when he began to receive the news from the computer he forgot those things. The stain of the leg was formed by stone of the volcano where he had his home; but a thorough analysis told him the pure and raw truth. Also due to exposure to radiation, mixed with the environmental conditions of the planet, had produced his body cells migrate toward the floor, exchanging with the stone; while he lost part of his cells that were changed by stone molecules, the ground of the volcano, the quarry from where the statues were sculpted, won his body cells that remained latent. Only nuclear radiation could give life to atoms of his body and almost all the side of the mountain.

Without further loss of time he took one of the biggest decisions of his life. Summoned urgently to the Tribal Council and ordered them to build as many more statues as they were able to, but not the short ears

only, but everyone, and they were not going to be deposited in Ahus, but since they were simply to be at the base of the mountain, namely that one once built was just devoted to build more. And they should make them with legs.

For what he had been able to find, the development of nuclear energy was not too far away, and when they increased radiation at the surface, not just him, but all built statues, they would rise again as a race even capable of reproduce itself.

As the process went more quickly as the days went by, and both percentages of his body, which became stone effect increased, he was already standing until he had lost consciousness a few years before three lost Dutch boats landed on the island April 5, 1722 and gave it the name of the day: Easter.

Godforsaken, the inhabitants didn't take so long to face each other, knocking down the symbols of their former past, but without touching the very sacred figures of the volcano, before self-destruction a few years later.

They stopped a few meters from the entrance, two huge red stones that contained the inscription "Rano Raraku"; the access to the place was between the two stones. They began to ascend watching the enormous mountain gained height as they approached. Already almost at the point where the inclination was towards whirlwind, they skirt to his right and took a path that led them to the dwarf moai. The statue was very worn and just details that in the past had been able to be seen. Even so, it was visible that it was a kneeling child, characteristic which afforded it as unique; no other moai was kneeling. After the relevant explanations they retook the tourist trail until reaching an area where a few moais that seemed in construction were embedded in the wall. Their appearance recounted a history of sudden abandonment for any reason, perhaps cruel; among them highlighted one which, in the opinion of the experts, was the largest that was being built and whose weight is estimated at about three hundred tons.

They were then informed that there was a no return point; once the ascent had started they could not go back and the road was steep and narrow, being a danger to those who suffer vertigo or think that the forces could weaken them. Only the American aged couple, he of his own accord and she after being convinced by the guide, resumed their way back along the path had been followed before. His doubts, because of his vertigo, were great but surely he would not see his dream if he didn't ascent; a few comments from the Chilean boyfriend persuaded him to go ahead under the watchful eye of others.

The ascent was not as difficult as they had prevented them, and in a few minutes they were on the side of the volcano's caldera, where they took the opportunity to relax and to enjoy the beautiful landscape that drew between the caldera filled with water as the Rano Kao and the corresponding *titora*, the sea in the distance and the sky; the photo, as they discovered later, deserved the second not necessary ascension up to the highest part of the caldera.

Later, the photos and the video went down from the left side of the mountain and then it happened. Knowing what there was waiting for him, he had lagged enough to keep a few meters away with the rest of the group under the guise of filming them on video as they were advancing. To set the target he saw him; so clear and so strong, as in the strongest of his dreams, there was Ariki, just one more moai out of the hundreds that are on the slopes of the volcano, but as emerged from his brain and with that smile that he would never forget nevemore. The adrenaline ran then as a stream, pumping his blood up to the temples, beating hard in the chest that threatened to break before the impetus of the heart. "Yes";



and as accompanying the word it seemed to him that he nodded with that non-existent mouth with a smile from ear to ear.

He came closer without realizing what he was doing, video camera in hand but not focusing on more than the ground and eyes riveted on the face. In a few seconds he stopped in front of him.

"I'm not going to explain to you my/our story because now you're here and you already know about it, after having dreamed of it every day of your life. You may not believe it, but it's true."

"You only need to complete it with what is going to happen. Explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki returned us awareness and the subsequent nuclear tests in the world had revitalized us. When the last nuclear test in Mururoa take place, we will wake up from our long sleep and the chaos that they will produce will eliminate much of your race, but this is something to what you are doomed anyway. This is not our world but yours so, after that happens, you must help us to leave this place and go back to our home; now we know how."

"We have the knowledge and resources to fix what once flawed and, at the same time, we want you to fix, starting almost from scratch, what you are going to do with your/our stupidity. Just let go and we'll show you the way."

"But, why? I mean, why don't you let us destroy ourselves and from our ashes reconstruct your world?"

"As I have already told you, this world is not ours. Perhaps my/our contact with you had made us to be more benevolent. Also, does a bee matter about a flower when it has already taken away its pollen and goes on in search of new ones?"

"These bees do."

When he regained consciousness he was lying on the ground and she was holding his head on her hands, and the guide was worried about her fainting. They attributed it to heat, dizziness and fatigue.

None of them knew the truth.

When he stood up, and after assure them everything was well, he was not sure either of what had happened until a bee, animal which he had always panic, alighted on the back of his hand.

And it is that in Easter Island there are no bees.

# D O G

## I

It wasn't a good night, although he was lucky to find that out-of-the-way place, behind the curve that gave entrance to the village, where some clueless neighbor of the town had left a frayed woolen blanket. The rain was drumming in the aluminum tube, which served as shelter, from dusk until late into the night, subsiding slightly a couple of hours before the sunrise, ceasing entirely after the sun rising.

All this was more than had been expected when he left behind (how should those people be called?) to run once again towards the green pastures, besieged by conspecifics, expelled and wounded to avoid losing custom.

However, it was not time to lose in depressive musings and memories that mattered nothing. The only thing he knew was that he was alive and had some physical needs to placate. He urinated there, leaving a dirty, smelly, steaming puddle, killed snacks a clumsy home rabbit that its owner had lost the previous evening and went his way. A long, slow, repetitive way, tired at times; a long way upholstered in green and sand, his domains, his world, his loneliness.

## II

He even hadn't seen her approaching. The rat came out from the straw of the barn where he was dozing tiresome and bit him, stabbing with the teeth to the bone. It was the last act of the rodent, who died a few seconds after crushed against the wall of wood, product of the violent reflection of nerve to be pinched with force.

The bloody wound still showed the deep red of the living flesh despite he wallowed in the straw and the subsequent washing with cold water from the watering hole; a serious insult against the almost perfect aesthetics of his agile body.

And now, after more than three hours of straying wandering by the side of the mountain, he began to feel the first effects of the tiny reflex act; eye clouded, limbs weighed him greatly and his mood became violent by leaps and bounds.

A chicken coop was the victim of his misfortunes, quenching its hunger and alerting residents of a little town who knew how to put an end to such kind of acts. Death and his white Scythe descended upon him at a higher rate than the Norns, cold women who decide the fate of each one, had planned for his already short existence.

Or perhaps it was written that living too much was not his fate.

### III

The day he was going to die there was such as grey and gloomy air as required for the occasion; the clouds that caused the night storm had broken over some of their content but still maintained enough reserves to dye with gray the morning, while clay stuck at every step, hampering his advance, making his movements awkward and heavy.

But as he didn't hurry up and, on the other hand, he was already accustomed to wander through slippery and dangerous roads, he forgot the state of the track he was traversing and worried more about getting sustenance.

Fortune knocked on his door as an open window on the side of a small house; coincidence that it was the kitchen window. He penetrated without care, worrying nothing about the product of his act, taking a thick loaf of bread as well as a tender hard pork sausage that a delicate palate had left to cure in the cupboard. He was so fast that heard the voice of the woman in the house when he dodged with great skill the fence surrounding the garden of roses and carnations and tulips and...

Blessed are those who can surround with beauty their life, because they will be beautiful.

### IV

Hens filled his stomach but didn't calm the other storm that was excessively growing up inside him with every second that passed. Blind violence was taking control the same way a flood covers with mud a peaceful village, being a victim of the elements, neither a purpose sought nor a deserved one.

Now, through his veins, a unique idea ran: destroy. Killing was his obsession and every living being that crossed his path was putted ahead in the path that we were following, decided by dark divine designs without taking full account on our opinion.

However, he still retained enough lucidity to move away from the settlements of his worst enemy. Skirted the village with all the speed that

his extremities allowed him to, and penetrated in the woods with such decision that he wouldn't be able to discern the exact moment in which the green mantle of grass was replaced by trunks and branches and vegetation. The thickness would be his ally until the precise instant that his heart stopped beating, time that wasn't far away despite his lack of knowledge.

## V

It's hard to imagine a mountain village in which news, it doesn't matter the kind of, late beyond a heartbeat would be in public domain. The advantages of this fact can be seen especially on occasions such as those that occurred at that time. Its disadvantages tend to be, unfortunately, of a similar nature.

The meeting in the main square took seconds to occur after the outbreak of the two neighbors in the quiet meal time of the day. Their shouts attracted the popular attention to the point that almost immediately the hunting party was organized; fifteen men, accompanied almost all of them by their first born sons, reloaded their shotguns, wrapped their waterproof due to the resumption of the rain and came out ready to withdraw from the world of the living the author of the misfortunes of their neighbors.

Such issues never cross municipal boundaries; on the other hand, the limits of reason and law do.

## VI

He was on the habit of following the routine of his life. The time and space had ceased to have any significance for him, wandering from one side to another and without more will than that dictated by its own whim.

Some things, however, had a certain importance and a certain logic at the same time. Of all the landscapes that surround a village, the grouping trees usually are the safest, most comfortable and protective of all known. And, furthermore, the digestive drowsiness required to adopt a more horizontal position.

Rain surprised him a few meters from the first tree, by wetting the little bread that was still in sight, so he had to save it quickly before entering a recent discovered cave to get protected from the inclement weather.

He shook his body, thus moving out the water that covered him, and lied himself on the ground pressing his body to better retain heat. Nap time had arrived, as a prelude to a longer sleep.

## VII

A dog, and more than this, a rabid dog, is unable to distinguish almost nothing of what surrounds him. Although he is likely capable of realizing that the water falling from the sky is annoying, especially if the weather is cold. And it is also, quite likely, that a rabid dog hates rain not as such but by his watery character.

Running aimlessly a second idea occupied his mind; running away from the water, finding shelter and a warm site or, at least, less cold, was a priority.

## VIII

The caves are often common in mountain forests. That was one more, one among hundreds wounding strong rock due to erosion of some clueless creek. Its most remarkable feature was that it was going to be the final resting place of two poor beings chosen by the misfortune.

## IX

Legs noise sounds different to the patter of the water falling on the ground.

When he heard him enter, he awoke startled, unbending on legs that drove him back towards security that didn't exist. His first and only reaction was to remove the crust of wet bread off his frayed and dirty coat pocket, in the vain hope that the piece of bread was a more appetizing than his own emaciated body piece.

Beyond the bloodshot eyes of the animal, the beggar could see the glimmer of a smiling skull tenths of a second before the powerful jaw ever skewed him the jugular.

## X

The expert rural hunters don't have a high culture, knowing barely interpret written lines. But they know, for generational tradition, how to follow a trail despite the most adverse weather.

Some twenty rifles spat their deadly cargo on the sick animal that came with precipitation out of the cave. His soul left him before his body touched the wet rocky ground.

No one among those present gave him too much importance to the fresh blood mixing with the foam from his mouth.

## XI

Normality had returned to the village, solved quickly and effectively the small problem that had troubled them that day.

For peace of mind of all its inhabitants, the dog had died.

# TO OUR DEAR PLANET

—Why?— The voice of the representative of the Galactic Sector of Sirius sounded strong, vigorous. —Why the hell do we have to celebrate this damn ritual once a year?

—And why do we continue in war?— The voice of the representative of the Galactic Sector of Orion sounded softer and more relaxed than the one of his Sirian namesake. —I think that when we find the answers to these and other questions, we can have a United Human Galaxy. Meanwhile, things continue to be equal; our peoples will continue in war and we will continue celebrating this "damn" ritual annually. I suggest we make haste. The other representatives are waiting for us from a while ago and I do not want to be untimely.

The two representatives finished adjusting their anti-radiation spacesuits, entered in the pressurize lock and went out into outer space by grabbing the side handles of the interstellar ship. After a short walk along the fine wire of Duralumin, to which both were already accustomed, they arrived at the orbital station. Their only luggage was the annual tribute, a bouquet of flowers carefully chosen from each of the planets that were within their respective Galactic Sectors.

The orbital station, whose construction was lost in memory of men, orbited the blue planet with a periodicity of 24 hours, so it was always on the vertical of a point in the surface, the Monolith's Hill.

It was as if someone had wanted to, as designated point, remain indicated for all eternity.

There were no handshakes or greetings in the meeting between the twelve men, only a cold and almost derogatory "let's go" from the representative of the Galactic Sector of Arcturus, acting Captain of the present expedition.

Once the Representatives had accommodated, the Arcturian powered shuttle controls and initiated the vertical descent to the planet. After more than 2 hours of quiet rest, the shuttle landed gently to sparsely 50 yards from the monolith. Without exchanging glances, nor a phrase, the twelve went down the ship and slowly approached the monolith. Their walk was slow and laborious due to the strong winds that dragged with them all the radiation, pollution and heat from past ages of the planet.



The twelve ritually approached the monolith, deposited their bouquet, knelt ... and prayed.

The monolith looked undaunted at the twelve men, who kneeling before it prayed a prayer for a dead planet. His only message was in a gold plate embedded in its center, which read a phrase in an ancient language lost in time:

"To our dear planet Earth"

# GRAVITY

The park vibrated with the sound of the crowd that huddled around the stage. On the tables a silent man finished up adjusting his spacesuit and the latest checks in his belt and in his parachute. The city was a party, as the occasion demanded it; not every day a man got to overcome the gravity just using an anti-gravity belt.

Dan was happy. After many years of experimentation the dream of his life would be soon fulfilled; overcoming gravity thanks to a device about the size of a fist.

Dan raised his arms and the crowd became in an expectant silence. Dan sighed, dropped the arms, and connected his belt. In less than a second his field of vision changed from colored and picturesque streets to the most absolute vacuum; too late he realized his mistake. He had overcome the Earth's gravitational field, but the Solar field, the Galactic one which affects the entire universe had also been disconnected. While he remained still, moving throughout the universe, he was left alone with his thoughts and illusions.

Without thinking it twice, he attached the diving helmet of his space suit, turned it around and raised it.

Somewhere in nowhere a point remains in the most complete rest. Around it a billion of universes move in a frenetic chaos.

He is now the center of everything.

# THE MAN

The man lives in a town, sad and dilapidated; in a city destroyed by radiation. No alive being, animal or vegetable, troubles peace. A man, though, is suffering.

He is the last of a dominant species that destroyed itself. The first man to walk on the surface of Mars has not found joy or triumphal receptions; everything has been silenced by the atomic bombs.

The city boils in radiation and he, dressed in his protective suit, wandering through the streets of a dead city, the city of his birth. He can't hear the noise of the cars, the trucks, the people; everything was left behind, in a past which, if not good, is pleasant to remember.

Man is alone and his loneliness is ultimately, almost overwhelming.

Every day he cries and day after day he becomes stronger; for himself, for his city, for the world. For a lost humanity that failed to understand itself.

And laughs; he laughs about them and their ideas, their power. Everything which, at one point, lost for wanting to show who the strongest one was, wanting to demonstrate that theirs was the only truth.

Man is alone, and weeps for his loneliness.

Man is alone and his loneliness has quite simply just began.