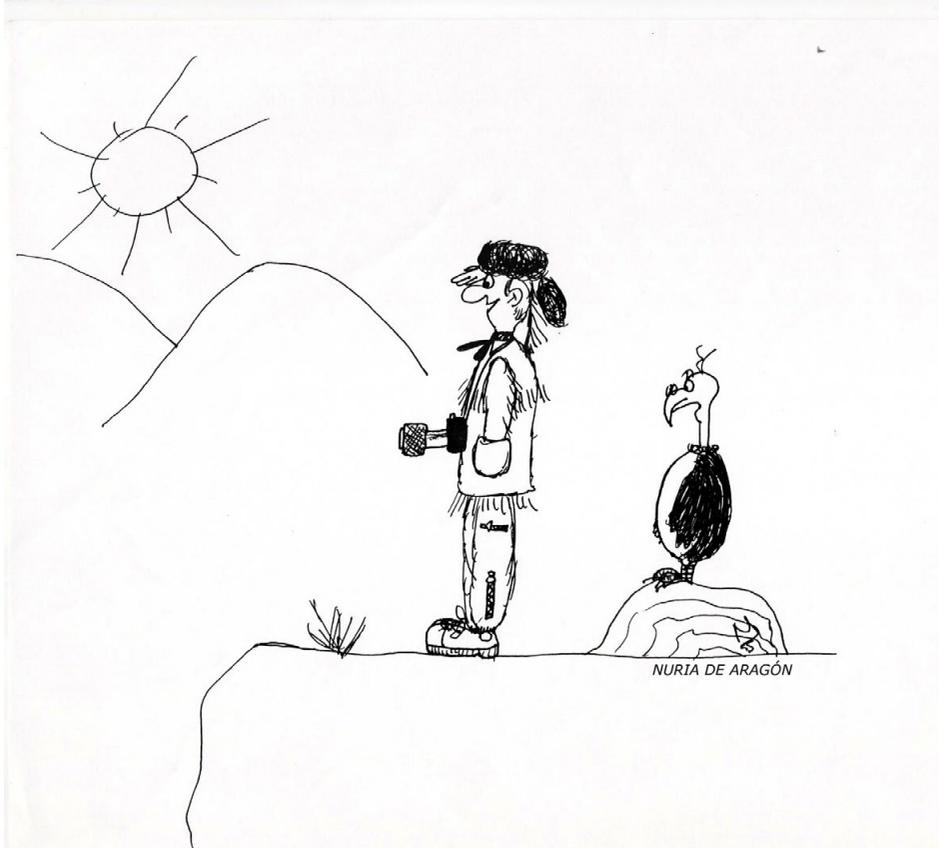


TALE: ADVENTURE ACROSS THE SOUTH OF SORIA

Text: Esther de Aragón

Illustrations: Nuria de Aragón





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Well, friend, this was one of those urbanites persons resigned to daily crowds, noise, asphalt and smoke; he was an ugly person because the urbanite syndrome that distorts our natural part is ugly. But his appearance and resignation were limited to the days that he had to be in town necessarily; when coming the weekend, he changed his outfit for one of “brave explorer” in search of nature, peace and the gratifying silence of the chosen solitude.

We can't know what kind of hidden forces compelled him to set foot in an unknown land; maybe it was fate, or the comment made by a friend or, far more likely, his stupidity and ignorance made him lost in a road and inadvertently appear in Soria.

Whatever it was, our explorer, sensations-hungry, went into the South of the province and began to feel his wishes filled, while crossing the territory concerned. What a pleasure was to be among canyons, accompanied by curious vultures, hares, foxes and roe deer! Then, he decided to give a name to each of these animals, for what he said to himself, squeezing his memory: “*I think I had seen that animal on TV and it is called hornless deer!, Ah, that must be some kind of big rabbit with long ears!*”; fox did not get confused him because the creature's tale was like those seen in department stores and he solved any doubt about vulture, the most difficult, when he heard how a local inhabitant talked about it.

Really he did not know very well what that gentleman said, because he began to know the man was speaking in other language. It happened when crossing a river gorge, when a village appears before his eyes and seems to be hanging over the ravine. The place was impressive and he opened in a display of deduction, presumably congenital: “*Such a curious province*

this one that makes it possible to maintain these places and people who inhabit”.

And that was how he made the first contact with a person of Soria. The conversation focused on... God knows about what!, because our hero did not understand anything. He finally came to the conclusion that, or the language was different or the way of speaking in Spanish was different there. Even he thought (nothing puts ahead on an urbanite person) to do some questions in french or english languages, but he decided not when he had understood that the unintelligible being was asking him if he was passing through. He nodded, armed with a circumstantial smile and a false aplomb. Then, the opponent begun a succinct dissertation of which he only managed to extract words as “canyon and vulture”. Anyway, taking advantage of a speaker’s parenthesis, our explorer thanked and told something about an awful hurry.

Then he crossed another part of the canyon and his admiration was growing more for momments: the beauty of such a natural place, so quiet, so lonely... “How strange that very close to my city there is a place like this and I do not know!”, he was meditating. He can’t believe his eyes, so he took a touristic guide out of his belongings, as any self-respecting urbanite ought to take one that indicates the places somebody should know and visit. Here he was a little unoriginal to say aloud:”*¡...That isn’t in my book; clearly, as I forgot to ask the name of the previous small village, I don’t know if it will be referred or not, but I could swear that my guide does not speak about these places at all!*”.

Nothing was mattering very much apart from the discovery of the “new world” and self-absorbed by everything around him, he continued

walking without noticing the passage of time, until he felt hungry and tired; soon, he watched the trace of a path and encouraged by the proximity of civilization, he intensified the step up to reaching another small village, as beautiful as the previous one or more, nestled in huge rock walls. Indisputably, our brave explorer carried the essential camera, so he adopted that silly position, without which the pictures do not seem to be well, and he started to shoot once, twice, three... ten times, anyway, as usual.

Satisfied with the achievements, he decided to walk through the ancient streets, thinking not attract much attention, accustomed as he was



NURIA DE ARAGÓN

to the anonymity of the city. You must excuse the ignorance of our friend, some time later he would realize that people from Soria are so few that everyone seems to know. But we mustn't forget our explorer, because he has just found a villager. Happily, he verified he understood his language; that time the other person spoke more slowly and expressed a very natural kindness. After appropriate regards, our man asked for the name of the previous and present village and that was how he knew their names: Torrevicente y Lumías, respectively. The worst was when he asked where he could find a restaurant to eat something and the answer referred to uncertain thousands of kilometers north, there for Berlanga.

Do not believe, dear friend, that our hero didn't face a strong dilemma then: he did not know if he must sit down in the middle of the street, to become food for vultures, or just keep walking. But you must think that his inner pride of traveler, joined the outfit of "brave explorer", were going to produce the logical effect: he could not show what was going on, because he didn't want the villager think he was a typical tourist city. While he was struggling between thoughts and needs, he heard that in the next village, Arenillas, there was a bar where he could obtain something to eat, nothing much, though. Steeled to travel the last 5 km., he rifled through his belongings to find a famished chocolate bar, of those that claim to be energetic on Tv while people make a stop on their activities and jump for joy savoring the article in question. "I'm not to jump for joy!" our brave told him and, with the courage that hunger produces, he started walking again.

Road ahead, and step by step, he went on the canyon while he reasoned amazedly about the lack of foresight of so obvious needs like the appetite of travelers (we have finally realized that our explorer hated the

word tourist), something very curious and inappropriate in such a well preserved land.

We must beg your pardon again, because our adventurer doesn't know, at that moment, that most of the Soria villages live like in the 15th century, so if a "soriano" wants to buy one kg. of steaks, he has to move a few kilometres and arrive at any village which were market in Middle Ages. The reader must excuse our protagonist's lack of preparation, but you should understand that any urbanite goes down in elevator and he is hold up, from the moment he steps on the street, by thousands of store signs that sale from meat to articles of "the Euro Shop".

And while we were getting into the maddening world of metaphysics, our brave had begun to climb the last hill to reach Arenillas. He had just get out of the canyon and the village seemed to be located on a high place; indeed he could see the tower of the Church and, soon, the stone houses.

Breathlessly, he went into the village and began to go around the streets on the lookout for the desired bar; when he did not find it, he thought how odd it was that a public business would be so hidden; only he got to see a building that he supposed to be the City Council because its flag (nothing was going unnoticed to our clever traveler) and under which there was a sign with these words: "Social Centre".

It was lucky to stumble upon a passerby (race to extinguish in Soria), whom he asked for the location of that blessed bar, being gently lead to the aforementioned "Social Centre". He felt exhausted and his pride of brave explorer had yielded before the imperious primary need to eat, so

he did not hesitate to tell the good man his misadventures. If he was surprised by what he had seen along his walk, he felt even more astonished by the “soriana” hospitality: the referred villager not only did what he could to alleviate his food deficiencies playing the role of a waiter on the other side of the bar, but he offered himself to bring our friend up to his car, situated over the canyons.

On the way back he came to several conclusions about people from Soria: the first one: they speak very fast; the second one: they are very reserved; the third: instead, they are very hospitable. Our explorer was delighted with the discovered land, so he was telling everyone who would



listen to him during the next five days. He thought the South of Soria was a replica of “Paradise”, despite having so few places to eat and sleep.

From that moment, he began to regularly visit the land that had captivated him and to expand gradually his exploration horizons. Autumn came and color of the land seemed amazing: yellow, red, the whole spectrum of browns and many more. He crossed the eternal plains, the gorges, the mountains and the villages, loaded with history and invaluable monuments. Winter came and he felt very impressed by the snowy landscape; the so called “Sierra de Pela” seems great and it had a special attraction for him. Spring came and he didn’t believe there was a zone where nature could blossom in that way.

He learned to love this land; he also learned to understand the inhabitants and to feel good with them. He got back his former books by Machado and he identified with his words, as he noticed in his poems the same sensations as he felt. He managed to extend his vocabulary acquiring new expressions for him. So, when he found an acquaintance he asked in the purest “soriano” style: “How do you live?; or he parted from there, up to a new visit, saying: “Met me at the bar and we have some cacharros (=Drinks)”.

You have understood with me, dear friend, that our hero was bursting with joy. Unfortunately, happiness is such a transient state that, like me, you would be waiting to see how it ended. Yes, it ended. As time passed, our explorer saw how his “paradise” was destroying (so true that his “paradise” had lost the initial capital letter). One day, stokpiling strength, he faced the truth and he managed to place the following sentences in the correct way:

Every day, there are less people in Soria, mainly young people; the alleged policy of concentration in cities is destroying life in villages; the access roads to populations are mostly a disaster; the shortage of trains and buses produces a lack of logical mobility for inhabitants and visitors.... and so on.

At that moment he felt anger and shame: he loved his country and thought that nobody took care of the province, out of the borders of Soria. He had the impression that there was a big fence in the middle of his country, with signed posters: "You are going to get into the Third World". And he felt more anger and shame, even more when he wanted to speak with his friends of Soria and he noticed it was impossible, as telephony seemed to be more an anecdote than a real thing in the South of Soria.

But we should not worry, dear friend, because our indestructible protagonist is those who do not give up easily. At that moment, he got up and decided to hoist the flag of Soria as his own: "There is no time to be wasted" he thought. What he could do was little, but he was sure that he would have to fight and disclose what he knew. He took a pen and started to write, feeling himself like a combination between Fernán González and Antonio Machado. He distributed documents about Soria left and right: sometimes a kind of touristic guides, other, hopeful laments. He even considered the possibility of doing something with the morbid curiosity of the press. He also tried to open the door to others who help tourist revenues. Everywhere he spread what Soria offered, even he helped playing the role of a guide.

We know only a little of this period of our explorer's life; we know he fought for what he believed right and good, but we don't know the means

used. We have been informed that he came to move his residence to somewhere in the south of the province and to build a museum "Things of Soria" in which you can see more or less ancient objects, including a case where there is a human skull and two or three photographs of beings, also human, with a plaque on one side that specifies: "Skull belonging to a man of Soria, recently extinct race".



THE END