

Short Stories – “A Letter to God” – Gregorio Lopez Fuentes

The house – the only one in the entire valley – sat on the crest of a low hill. From this height one could see the river and, next to the corral, the field of ripe corn dotted with the kidney bean flowers that always promised a good harvest.

The only thing the earth needed was a rainfall, or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho – who knew his fields intimately – had done nothing else but scan the sky toward the northeast.

“Now we’re really going to get some water, woman.”

The woman, who was preparing supper, replied: “Yes, God willing.”

The oldest boys were working in the field, while the smaller ones were playing near the house, until the woman called to them all: “Come for dinner...”

It was during the meal that, just as Lencho had predicted, big drips of rain began to fall. In the northeast huge mountains of clouds could be seen approaching. The air was fresh and sweet.

The man went out to look for something in the corral for no other reason than to allow himself the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body, and when he returned he exclaimed: “those aren’t raindrops falling from the sky, they’re new coins. The big drops are ten-centavo pieces and the little ones are fives...”

With a satisfied expression he regarded the field of ripe corn with its kidney bean flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. But suddenly a strong wind began to fall. These truly did resemble new silver coins. The boys, exposing themselves to the rain, ran out to collect the frozen pearls.

“It’s really getting bad now,” exclaimed the man, mortified. “I hope it passes quickly.”

It did not pass quickly. For an hour the hail rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield, on the whole valley. The field was white, as if covered with salt. Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the kidney bean plants. Lencho’s soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons: “A plague of locusts would have left more than this... the hail has left nothing: this year we will have no corn or beans...”

That night was a sorrowful one: “All our work, for nothing!”

“There’s no one who can help us!”

But in the minds of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope: help from God.

“Don’t be so upset, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember, no one dies of hunger!”

“That’s what they say: no one dies of hunger....”

All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one’s conscience.

Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write. The following Sunday, at day break, after having convinced himself that there is a protecting spirit he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail.

It was nothing less than a letter to God.

“God,” he wrote, “if you don’t help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos in order to re-sow the field and to live until the crop comes, because the hailstorm...”

He wrote “To God” on the envelope, put the letter inside and - still troubled - went to town. At the post office he placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox. One of the employees, who was a postman and also helped at the post officer, went to his boss, laughing heartily and showed him the letter to God. Never in his career as a postman had he known that address. The postmaster – a fat amiable fellow – also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter on his desk, commented: “What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. To believe the way he believes. To hope with the confidence that he knows how to hope with. Starting up a correspondence with God!”

So, in order not to discourage the farmer’s faith, revealed by a letter that could not be delivered, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter. But when he opened it, it was evident that to answer it he needed something more than good will, ink and paper. But he stuck to his resolution: he asked for money from his employee, he himself gave part of his salary, and several friends of his were obliged to give something “for an act of charity”.

It was impossible for him to gather together the hundred pesos requested by Lencho, so he was able to send the farmer only a little more than half. He put the bills in an envelope addressed to Lencho and with them a letter containing only a signature:  
GOD.

The following Sunday Lencho came a bit earlier than usual to ask if there was a letter for him. It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster - experiencing the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed - looked on from the doorway of his office.

Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the bills – such was his confidence – but he became angry when he counted the money. God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested!

Immediately, Lencho went up to the window to ask for paper and ink. On the public writing table, he started to write with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas. When he finished, he went to the window to buy a stamp which he licked and then affixed to the envelope with a blow of his fist.

The moment that the letter fell into the mailbox the postmaster went to open it. It said;  
“God: Of the money that I asked for only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don’t send it to me through the mail, because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks. Lencho.”