

NEFANDO

by

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It's impossible to write at home, she once said to her mother, not when it's full of my shit. *They would creep up to the girls from the boarding school like a two-headed snake.* Barcelona was full of shit too, but it was other people's shit, shit that had nothing to do with her. *Diego and Eduardo would become one man.* This was the good thing about living in Spain: she could write like a Mexican. *Diego's hair would be drenched in oil.* Writing like a Mexican meant being a waterfall without a river. *Eduardo would have the eyes of a vulture.* She had never been so conscious of her Mexicanness as when she arrived in Barcelona. *Diego's eyes would look through things.* Never had the chauvinistic motto of the National University of Mexico – 'The Spirit Shall Speak For My Race' – made so much sense. *Eduardo's hair would cover half an inch of his forehead with curls the colour of corn.* In Barcelona she was able to write without having to prove who she was. *Vasconcelos was a fucking idiot.*

She walked back over to the bed and slumped down onto it holding the blank page. *Circuses were dead metaphors.* The week before she had deleted everything including the most recent line of what she had submitted with her application for the grant from the National Fund for Culture and the Arts. *Circuses were childhood.* Twenty feeble pages, a .docx file with the listless sentences of a voice that wasn't hers, ended up in the wastepaper basket without a shred of regret. *She wanted to start writing from nothing.* Regret was a strange word. *She wanted to write as if nothing was something more than an empty space.* It meant biting her conscience in two, digging her teeth in to it like a stick of gum. *She wanted to write as if nothing was a point you could set off from.* The circus was an ouroboros biting its own tail. *But writing from nothing was impossible.* A novel might be an ouroboros. *Why a pornographic novel? Why Nella? Why Diego? Why Eduardo?* It had to be possible to create a language that didn't feel any self-regret. Her intention, the most honest of them all, was to explore what was troubling; to say what could not be said. *Is there anything more human than the desires and fears and the indifference to the desires and fears of others?* In the forbidden lay every creative

principle. *Literature cannot distract itself with elephants, it has to put them to one side and see the fallen acrobat, show interest in his suffering, in the grimace of pain he wears as he is carried off stage because it jars, because it disrupts the harmony, because it turns the spectacle obscene.* In the forbidden, curled up and frightened, lay social syntax. *Writing only makes sense, she said to herself once again, if it is to look beyond the elephants.* And yet, her room was a refuge-reptile-wall where her voice echoed, indifferent to thousands of other voices, where her voice silenced all the rest with a single sigh, where she was deaf and blind, but not mute, and this state made her babble into the void and bite her nails and know herself to be alone without being able to hear herself, without being able to tell if the words were coming from her mouth or speeding like trains in her imagination.

Three knocks at the door made her close up like an oyster.

“Who is it?”

Iván’s voice: a hand grabbing her by the hair.

“Come out of your Batcave, man. Cuco’s got his ass kicked.”

Translated by Rosalind Harvey