

Blue—A Snippet

"Who are you? " you ask. I'm sure I look like a rather average, fawn-colored, flea-infested, crotch-scratching, servile Third World dog. But, if you look more closely, you will see that, in reality, I am blue. I have a bluish tinge to my fur, a blue tint to the white hairs of my belly, and the blue vessels near the surface, pulsing with venous blood, blend into the blue pallor of my entire suffering epidermis. Our great Garcia Marquez has written on this.

My mother was a street dog, belonging to no one. A scrawny, long suffering, worm-infested dam with barely enough milk to feed all of us, she soon starved to death, leaving one of us to die, and the four remaining to scatter to the four winds and forage on our own. Among us, I was the only one that was blue; and I know now that we blue dogs are a rare brotherhood. Blue, I believe, is like a bruise, the mark of man.

That is what I am: once, a terrible man, I snapped at my wife (attacked her, physically, I admit), snarled at my children, got my enemies by the throat and pissed on the legs of my friends when profit was at hand. I fawned at the feet of the strong, licked the feet of the cruel, and leapt for the nearest bone. Consequently, I made a place for myself in the world, although I never rose to the same heights as those at whose thrones I groveled.

Then, one day, as my wife's interminable slowness as usual drove me to distraction, I began to bark at her. Mid-utterance, I had a massive heart attack--to none's disappointment, I fear, and soon arrived at St. Peter's gate, where he and The Tribunal immediately took up my case. Though I tried to wriggle out of it, they forced my confession out of me: I had behaved like a dog. Well, then, so be it. I would be punished, not in the endless fires of Gehenna (but a bedtime story, you understand), not pursuing a rock up and down an endless incline. No, I would be reborn as a dog and condemned to live out my next life in doggie hell, not as a rich person's spoiled pooch, but as a common Third World cur.

What a body they gve me! An old shoe, a sausage casing, a chorizo--and with that bad start, two forelegs which began to bend from lack of proper nutrition. If it weren't for a small boy who worked in the local market, I would soon have been nothing but a pile of spaghetti. Weak and malnourished, I had crawled behind the carnicero's where the child worked, running errands and cleaning up the mess, and each day he tossed me a rotting piece of meat or a bone or a mass of gristle with a few shreds of flesh attached. With this little bit of luck, I avoided further damage to myself. I had no idea dogs could get rickets!

Then the boy stole something for himself--a coca cola--from the restaurant to one side of the carnicero's, and that was that! Out--afuera--vayate! He went off to start a life of crime and I slunk around the corner to the back of the restaurant, hoping for some more handouts.

With my eating habits, of course, I became host to several varieties of vermin: hookworm, tapeworm, pulgas, ticks, a cattle warble, chiggers, a rather startling boil on my back that oozed--I was the Job of dogdom, though, unlike Job, I knew why terrible things were happening to me. Without a doubt, El Supremo WAS punishing me.

Now I live in a town, have always lived in a town--like many in this part of the world--named after the Conqueror. But that is only a passing name. A drunken Jesuit once baptised the place San Cristobal, but if its inhabitants knew one thing, it was that the Invader was NOT a saint. Furthermore, the town is smack in the way of everything, an impediment on the path from There to Here, from One Place to Another Place--which makes this No Place--and so, when souls returned, some townsfolk began to call it "de Circuloambulantes." But even that did not stick. Colón, San Cristobal, San Cristobal de Circuloambulantes--call it what you will, WE call it "Ciudad Loco." The return applies to the living and the dead, though I doubt that all are aware of the circuits of the latter.

*(hasta la proxima...)*