

Mischief

by Juan Carlos Pareja

Massimo Garibaldi is now twelve. It's been four years since he last went to school. The story goes something like this: on the day of his eighth birthday he drove his brand new bicycle all the way down to the cemetery in Barrios Altos. He arrived happy and confident that he would in fact be invited to stay without a problem. He was received by a certain Felix Huarayoc, gatekeeper of the cemetery. Felix loved him from the very beginning. Massimo was different, of course, always talking about the deceased with such love and tenderness. Felix did not call the police, he instead hid him in Pierola's mausoleum, brought him meals every afternoon and taught him how to use newspapers as body heater. They would talk for hours about the different rituals families have to honour the dead. When his parents found him, Massimo reeked of dead fish and had his entire body smudged with newspaper ink, but oh was he a happy lad.

I should of course make very clear the following. This was not a rebellion against the powers *de jure*. This was something else completely, it was a call from someone who is not even Massimo necessarily, it was a cry for help from below, a plea to the sublime powers above to remind Massimo how Alive he was and how joyful he should be for feeling all that. In a way, Massimo was rediscovering what it is to feel someone else's smile upon us. And it was only among the deceased that he could understand why it all hurt so much out there in the world. From Felix he kept a very old expression he kept repeating "*a monkey in silk is forever a monkey*". When we met, he was still using it.

At home he had left obvious yet deceiving evidence of his whereabouts so that he could flea with a clean conscience. "*At Matthew's home*" read one note, "*Out for a bite*", read another. It took Mr. Garibaldi ten days to track down his son. There were

twelve Matthews at school. Of course, none of them knew what the hell Mr. Garibaldi was talking about. It was only by bon chance that they figured out the riddle. It was really thanks to Eddie Noriega, his not-so-bright school mate, that they finally got it. Eddie had come round after school trying to help, so he went into his room to find evidence. He grabbed a book lying on his nightstand and read out loud in the most hideous of childish voices, "*Of Heroes and Tombs*"

There was something so ridiculous about Eddie's shrieking voice pronouncing those words that the truth suddenly struck Mr. Garibaldi in the face and he could not help but grin. He later confessed that he rather enjoyed the challenge, he was damn proud of Massimo, that was for sure, but he had a wife and a mother to worry about, of course, so he could not say a word. He ran down the stairs and grabbed a large book from his study. It was there the whole time, "Presbyterum Master Matthew". He went back up the stairs to his son's room. This time he focused on the sign his son had written on the door. "*If you don't want to die, go fetch me a pie*"

