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BR. TBES. 22.00

describe Manuel  
white shirt and freshly pressed  
light blue linen pants,

Connect this  
to the little story  
of Chaves' "adopted"  
girl + advance into  
Volatin's Brasília,  
making a novella  
out of it. 2

A SECOND PROFESSION

It was seven o'clock of what already promised to be a sultry day. Manuel opened the steel roll-top doors of the "armazém" and went in, <sup>and</sup> ~~and saw that~~ Everything was in order for another day's work. In the center of the cement floor were the huge wooden tables and long benches which would soon be occupied by a horde of women, the coffee graders. They were a conglomeration of slim and fat, young and old, <sup>Negro, mulatto</sup> black and white women who labored separating and grading <sup>green</sup> coffee.

The "armazém" was an enormous room for the storage of coffee and piled against the back walls were the thousands of bags that had already been graded, <sup>waiting to be stacked on trucks which carried them to the port, from where they <sup>may</sup> be exported.</sup> The room was permeated by the smell of green coffee and its thick yellowish walls were streaked by dankness and mold.

The women started coming in and taking their usual positions at the tables. All of them ~~had~~ arrived <sup>at</sup> seven thirty, including Stella, <sup>like</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>a</sup> light skinned mulatto, with large green eyes, long <sup>black</sup> hair. ~~And she was young~~ <sup>figure</sup> for the fact that she was young. But, not so young as the little ten year old girls who worked side by side with grandmothers in their sixties.

Stella was twenty three. She was neither black nor white - she was a mulatto and, as generally is the case, neither slim nor fat, but quite well shaped, <sup>like</sup> bosoms ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> would often slip off her low-cut dress while she bended over the pile of coffee.

The low-cut dress was more a measure of economy <sup>thrift</sup> than of sophistication. Even the breasts of the old women could be distinctly seen through their long-sleeved, conservative, <sup>rough</sup> torn dresses. Stella knew, however, that a tight fitting dress which was sleeveless and low cut, on her shapely mulatto figure, was both frugal and an enticement. She had often seen the fair skinned, thick mustached Manuel glancing at her from the corner of his eyes in very busy hours, and defiantly staring at her when work was slackened. She did not mind Manuel's stares. It was a sort of approval of her looks, but she never knew whether she should feel flattered or not. There was a standing belief that no matter how many women there were in a group, a Portuguese would always prefer a mulatto. And, Manuel was a Portuguese.

short shorts  
21 800 22 200  
April 30



7 who's! let plain the whose nose set up 3

Re-word

Not only from the lusty way Manuel would look at her, but also from the stares she attracted as she walked down Avenida Central, Stella knew that she could easily have another profession. What was still more reassuring and exciting to her were the looks and often heard "piropos"-meaningless, but hopeful sweet nothings - from the male workers of the "armazém". These were mostly strong, muscular Negroes, who worked dressed in nothing more than thin blue cotton shorts. That is probably why Stella preferred this to the other profession. Here she received only stares and gallant words. If Manuel, or anyone else for that matter, attempted any intimacy he would be fighting against principles. They knew she was a virgin. Had she any lusty thoughts, they were hers alone.

"I know I could lay any of them anytime," she would think, "I've seen them horny for me to the point of showing it through their thin blue shorts."

That is why she did not take the other profession. If she did it, she would also have to acquiesce to unattractive sex-boxes such as white skinned Manuel. She much preferred to work honestly and observe. One day, perhaps, she would quit grading coffee, but it would be to settle down with a brawny man like Antonio, who could lift three bags of coffee without any apparent effort, and not just "lay him". Until such a man proposed to her, in decent terms, she would just live in mental masturbation.

There had been many unsuccessful tries and she knew that even Manuel would make a lover of her if she encouraged his passes. But, neither was she attracted to him, nor did she intend to be anyone's lover, especially a married man's. She had also refused proposals that were based on momentary impulses. vague

Stella was very happy grading coffee, feeling she stirred emotions in those men and having her own emotions stirred. She confessed to the priest every Sunday, but confessions are for acts, not for thoughts. Had she done <sup>let herself go and indulge</sup> some of the things she had thought she would be out of place <sup>feel</sup> "for <sup>in church</sup> she herself would not have the strength to tell it to the "padre". She knew she had a choice - and of the two, this was a better profession.

While Stella was thinking of all of this there was a commotion in the "armazém". Antonio had been hit by a truck while crossing the street, right in front of the big steel roll-top door, coming from "Café Sport". Stella had seen Antonio cross the street over there. He hardly ever looked



at her but she knew that he had gone over for a drink of "caninha". After a while, however, afraid of putting too many "mochos" among the good beans of coffee, she took her eyes off "Café Sport" and continued working, while engrossed in her thoughts. The sudden agitation brought her to.

"Put him on the Jeep", Manuel said. "Better take him to the hospital than to wait for the police."

Stella spread her hands on the table and mixed "mochos", greens, black and good beans all in one. She got out in a hurry and already by the Jeep she said, "I'll go with Antonio, Senhor Manuel. You just take care of the business, I'll take care of him."

In a few minutes they were in front of "Hospital Bom Jesus". Before that, without any idea of what to do for first aid, Stella had held his hand tight, her thumb on his wrist, and felt his pulse beating. She lowered her head to his ear and whispered, "Where does it hurt, Antonio?"

"I was looking... I was looking... Stella... She was there... Sitting... Stella... Grading coffee... I didn't see..."

"Don't talk, Antonio... The doctor will get you well. Stella is not grading coffee. I'm Stella. I'm here, here with you and you will be well because I'm here and the doctor will treat you."

Two men in white uniforms were holding a stretcher, where Antonio was placed <sup>to be</sup> and taken to a room of green walls where fluorescent lights burned. At the door of the room the doctor told Stella: "Please wait in the lounge." Stella bended low and touched Antonio's cheek with her own cheek and said, "You will be well, I'm waiting for you."

"Stella... You... Wait... You... I... Marry... Yes?"

The brawny, tall, strong and never obviously staring Negro was there now on the stretcher - all of that, except that he was staring into nowhere, but Stella knew that she was that nowhere.

"Will I, Antonio? I never knew... I always wanted... Yes, Antonio, it's you... I'll wait."

Two hours later Dr. Soares came out. Stella was sitting at the waiting room. Her tight, low-cut dress went unnoticed because her solemn, grievous face was more blatant.

"I'm sorry," the doctor said, "we did all we could, but your husband..."

"My husband?!! ... You mean, Antonio is dead?"



"Yes... Wasn't he your husband?" Dr. Soares asked.

"He would have been..."

Stella walked back to the "armazém". She spoke to no one until she saw Manuel and told him about the outcome of the accident.

"Few men are as good as Antonio," Manuel said. "I'll certainly miss him. But you, Stella, have shown a devotion I did not expect you had."

The fair skinned, thick mustached, thin Portuguese was alive now. No one could be so understanding. Manuel put his arms around Stella and said, "I'll take you home. Don't worry about a thing. I'll see about the funeral." After a short pause he added: "I'm sure Antonio's last hours were his best because you were there. In a way I envy him..."

The funeral took place as Manuel had directed. His soothing manner found a way to Stella's heart and in a short time she saw herself unable to go to Sunday confessions, while in her bedroom she saw the black mustached, thin and white figured Manuel, while on her mind, the dark skinned, muscular figure of Antonio played on.

It did not take long for Stella to switch to a second profession.