

*His face turned: quizzical, inimical, fantasta-critical.*

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost, Dalí.”

No matter how long Mr. Filobusto has known the world renowned artist, he calls his life-long friend by last name. Even now, in their 60s, after knowing each other for almost five decades.

Dali turns to his friend, then back to the women on set, without responding, deep in thought, pensive and unsure of where his latest project has gone (or has led him). It won’t recapture the fetish in his mind, and therefore, naturally, troubles him. Mr. Filobusto, who has come to visit the studio per Dalí’s request the night before at a party, has recognized this artist’s worried look a long time.

Mr. Filobusto became a short story writer of considerable fame—“On his own,” Dali often adds, “and independent of me, Dalí!” But Filobusto—easy to evade his friend’s ensnaring ego—will break free of the cuffs with a trained roll of his eyes at cocktail parties; a look Dalí in turn has grown to recognize.

The two of them met on one of two possible days, “many seasons ago,” as Dalí puts it, “before the war and before the love affairs.” Ask either gentleman, and both would give you roughly the same story of how they met, each with their own embellishments, their own twists and cliff hangers. Yet both seem to disagree on the details, and therefore recount the story with slight differences—needless to say, the other friend tends to appear less prominently than the one telling the story. The general gist of each man’s tale, however, always mirrors the other’s retelling. The main characters remain the same (them two), and they act the same, a chemistry in both artist’s friendship not unlike many between the men of their time (and of any time for that matter). Most of their early energy was spent over a gem, over a girl they met at the same time, *la loable señorita Villalobos*.

Villalobos is a common enough name—so much in the Spanish speaking world as in other worlds. Most people take it for granted upon hearing it. But for Filobusto and Dalí, both zealots of Roman history and mythology, they had a strong affinity toward the image of a werewolf woman breast feeding two brothers out to kill one another: an affinity that soon translated to a deep fraternal bond between the men. Despite their friendship, the urge to flatten the other’s cranium with an uneven stone from time to time does crop up. For Filobusto, as he tells it, this feeling of wanting to ram a piece of Mother Nature into the back of Dalí’s head, first came to

him moments after meeting the painter. For Dalí, as he tells it, in retrospect, also came moments after meeting Filibuster.

Filobusto tells it thus:

The two of them had been introduced briefly at a party in Pamplona during the Running of the Bulls of 1905. (Dalí insists they couldn't have met in Pamplona that year, because that seventh of July he was on a tour of the *bordelais* wine country with family; instead, the two friends met 18 months later at a mutual friend's book launch in Valencia; Dalí adds, both the friend and the book "have since passed.") Filobusto, fervently denies ever having met Dali in that southern city. "I can't stand the *valencianos*," Filobusto states on occasion. "They make the worst paella on the peninsula."

What both gentlemen do agree on, whatever the setting, is that the radiant Villalobos had made a hell of an entrance in both stories.

"She had the greatest pair I had ever seen up to that point in my life," Filobusto says—pulling out an image of her, a bust, from his wallet—"or probably will ever see." He refers to, of course, the *señorita*'s noticeable chest liken to two slices of quarter moons illuminated by the crevasse of the mounds themselves.

"It was the first thing I noticed about her," Filobusto continues, "when she walked up the stairs to the rooftop where we were watching the Run of the Bulls. I and some friends, including the very odd friend of a friend, Dalí, were quick to accommodate the *señorita*. Before Villalobos even sat down, all of us boys had served her a cold glass of sangria and offered up our seat. I should probably also mention she was remarkably charming and receptive of our gifts and attention. She must have taken the invitation to watch the bull run with a group of 15 year old boys as a waste of time, but, as she soon realized, we youngsters could be fun; though something deep down, a voice I don't like, tells me she must have known what would happen to her: an older woman surrounded by sex-deprived Spanish men. At any rate, I believe her kindness (or coquette air) came as a surprise. Especially when she opted for my glass of sangria and drank it on the ledge, even if seated next to that Dalí *baboso*. That's when I really looked at the bastard, saw his scheming little grin as he nestled next to Villalobos, the new love of my life, watching the bulls below with his hand nervously and deliberately creeping closer and closer to his desire, her behind. I know...I was there, behind them, on my own lawn chair, waiting, watching, as the oldest and most confident of us (though, I stress, Dalí was at the time as tinkerbell as any of us, only life seemed to provide him with more opportunities to exercise his confidence; and as anyone will tell you, practice makes perfect)...but yes, no, Dalí sat next to

Villalobos while the rest of us drank the sangria we had poured for her...

“Oh, and to answer your question from a second ago, Villalobos had been invited by two of our lady friends—today lesbians I believe, living in Mallorca—who had rented a three bedroom in Pamplona and found Villalobos through a mutual, friend-of-a-friend. Though a woman in her thirties, alone, off with her younger and then stranger roommates (a couple, in retrospect) hanging out with a group of adolescent boys didn’t strike me as odd. I fear that if I analyze the first encounter too much, the thoughts will extinguish the embers that this once hot memory has for me...

“What I can say is that I had never been so attracted to a woman so close, and yet...as the saying goes...

“The dry air, enough to chap your lips, raised the dust from the stampede below off the cobbled streets of Pamplona and into the atmosphere, where my unfulfilled desires were met with the back-turned woman of my dreams and that twit, Dalí, that geeky fairy boy, and his hand getting closer and closer, but never making it to its target...

“The bulls ran. Glass shattered. No one died that year, I believe. Except me. I died. I died for not making a pass at Villalobos then (how could I?) or ever. And if the everlasting staleness of unrealized desire isn’t death, then what is? What I mean is, if never realizing your love for another woman, no matter how much older she was, isn’t death; or if living with my lips’ wish forever on the tip of my tongue, forever left to shrivel forever, the taste of ants sticking to the cavities of my teeth; if this isn’t some sort of death, then what is? I stalked Villalobos party after party for decades like a puppy who had chased a car into insanity and now couldn’t find its way back home...

“This sole image I have of her is this token,” Filobusto says, downcast eyes set on the photograph of Villalobos, tears pooling around his eyes. “Dalí gave it to me twenty years after we all left.” Filobusto counts on his fingers. “Yes, yes, twenty years later. Only recently...

“He destroyed my secret wish of meeting Villalobos as an impossible virgin on our impossible marriage bed. He had run into her at an art gallery and gone home with her. I have my doubts that Dalí actually laid with the affection of my heart’s deepest desire. But I must admit—and any analyst agrees—that I am likely lying to myself: Dalí, the bastard, actually laid with Villalobos then, decades after the three of us met; and that he had the balls to tell me about it (he knew I loved her, which is why he confessed to me—without malice, without ego, this I do believe about him, and forgive); and so I asked him to go back to her and bring me a hair brush, a garment, anything that would remind me of her, so that I

may burn it to ashes and perform a love-break spell with it, and let her go forever...

“Friend, as you can see,” Filobusto said—tucking away the sepia-colored photograph into his wallet, after fanning his tears with it—“Dalí fulfilled his duty as a friend and brought me this lousy photo of *señorita* Villalobos. Of course I didn’t burn it, and of course I am still in love with her, even today, (how?) three years after her death.”

Dalí tells the story differently, inverse almost, though, still as ghostly and nebulous, in another part of Spain, and over the same woman. *La señorita* Villalobos.