

# Brain Stew\*

Hugo Possolo

*English version by Rodrigo Haddad*

- for titles are “Brains à la Mode” or the literal “Brain Vinaigrette” (Note from the Translator)

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This play was written specially for the schools participating in the **Conexões Youth Theatre Project Brazil** and it was part of its portfolio in 2014. Any performances outside this Project will need to be negotiated with the writer’s agent.

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Realização



### **Characters**

Leo - 16, narrates and plays her life story

Quim - 15, narrates and plays his life story

Totola - 15

Miguel - 13

Peter - 17

Paula - 17

Júlia - 18

Marta - 16

Beatriz - 16, Berenice's sister

Berenice - 15, Beatriz's sister

Doctor Armando - 40, chief of Police, Beatriz and Berenice's father

JotaBraga - 45, owner of the advertising agency JotaBraga Associates

Wesley - 30, JotaBraga's assistant

Mrs. Young - 70, former teacher who now works at the school's cafeteria

### **Supporting characters**

Boy, Secretary, Man 1 (same actor who plays Wesley), Other (same actress who plays Marta), Man 2, Man 3, João Biez and Romeu Tadeu. A few other groups various students from the school; various people who participate and work at the Ceremony.

### **Stage directions**

*When narrating, Quim and Leo speak directly to the audience. In these cases, the stage directions at the beginning read: (narrating). When there is no such direction, Quim and Leo are taking part in the action.*

*The stage directions indicate when the characters enter the scene, but not their exit, since Leo and Quim's narrations establish what happens in each moment.*

### **Set**

*More important than defining the places narrated by the characters is that the stage has many plans where different actions can happen, making the distinction between Narration and Action determined by Leo and Quim easier/clearer.*

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## **Scene 1**

*Leo and Quim are on stage.*

Quim (*narrating*) – It wasn't that simple! Man, I was standing in front of a two-meter tall rabbit. Its paw came up to... almost up to my thigh. If that think decided to kick me or hit me I would be crushed, defeated, you know, like dead or at least really disfigured forever.

Leo (*narrating*) – That’s cause you’re too short.

Quim – Short is the size of your skirt!

Leo – Wow, that’s a new one!

Quim – I’ve always said that. But anyway I had never thought of facing a monster.

Leo – It wasn’t a monster. It was a rabbit. A two-meter tall rabbit!

Quim – Well, don’t you think a two-meter tall rabbit is some kind of monster?

Leo – No. Monsters have an evil face and rabbits can be ten, twenty, even fifty meters tall and they will still have a kind face.

Quim – That’s why it didn’t work out, right, Leo?

Leo –What didn’t work out, Quim?

Quim – Us...

Leo –“Us” didn’t work out because you’re a big baby!

Quim – Look, Leo, I’m turning 15 but I behave like a 17-year-old guy, whereas you are 16 but talk like an 11-year-old little girl.

Leo – I don’t like this expression “little girl”.

Quim – Well, what are you then? #biggrownup?

Leo (*narrating*) – It was nothing like that. That day we had had an argument. And it was for good. While we were just going out, everything was fine. But then

Quim decided we were in a “relationship”... I mean, who’s in a “relationship” nowadays?... That’s when everything went wrong.

Quim – Or maybe that’s when everything went right.

Leo – Stop it, Quim!... Let me tell the story.

Quim – All right. Announce it then...

Leo –What?

Quim – The story... Or part of the story, before someone steals it from us.

Leo –Steal?... Nobody steals anyone’s story.... (*stops and thinks*) I mean, everything is possible!

Quim (*announcing*) – “Stew of Brains”!

Leo (*correcting*) – “Brain”, singular... “Brain Stew”, this is the overall title!... Now, to begin: (*inhales deeply and announces solemnly*) Chapter One: The Giant Rabbit.

Quim (*narrating*) – After two years of dating... I mean, after twenty months, eight days and twelve hours of dating, I, Joaquim de Passos Lobo, the unknown and up till then always frightened Quim, and my girlfriend, Leocélia Amarante, the beautiful Leo, broke up...

Quim (*narrating*) – It was on the day I went to Leo’s house with my friends Miguel and Totola.

Leo (*narrating*) – Miguel is kind of cute, but he’s always laughing for no reason. And that laugh...

*Miguel enters and laughs very peculiarly.*

Leo (*narrating*) – That’s the one! And to intensify the laugh he always says:

Miguel (*laughs again and adds*) – Cool! Pretty cool!

Leo (*narrating*) – As for Totola, he’s the worst!... He had everything to be smart but he’s a very “nerdy” nerd. Like those who fart to draw attention and then says “Hi”.

*Sound of a fart. Everyone stares at Totola, who has just entered.*

Totola – “Hi.”

Quim (*narrating*) – His jokes are amazing!

Leo (*narrating*) – His jokes are so stupid!

Quim (*narrating, ironic*) – Yeah, but the one who was really tough was Marta.

Miguel – Weirdo.

Leo – You’re just jealous, Quim.

Quim – Of course, she’s more man than me.

Leo – Bigot!

Quim – No!...

Quim (*narrating*) – But anyway I knew Marta was tougher to face than any giant rabbit.

*Marta enters.*

Marta – Losers!... Two shorties and a fatty: what are you hoping to achieve in life like this?

Leo (*narrating*) – The truth is everyone in our gang was sad when our relationship ended.

Quim (*narrating*) – It’s like we were the only ones brave enough to say the word “relationship”.

Totola – Did they fight?

Miguel – No. Now they’re like friends.

*Paula enters.*

Paula (*shyly*) – I wish I was like that...

Miguel (*laughs and then*) – Cool! Pretty cool!

Leo (*narrating*) – This is Paula. This is a little bit her story too. This is the story of all of us.

Well, we’ll tell everything in a while.

Quim (*narrating*) – Saying it like that... It seems like everything was simple and easy to explain... Well, not for me.

Leo – Did you count the days?

Quim – All of them. Twenty months, plus eight and a half days. I never thought you’d want me even for a day... So every day you didn’t break up with me was like winning an award, like a victory... I counted every hour of each of those days and got happier and happier.

Leo – That is so cute.

Quim – Does that mean you no longer want to break up?...

Leo – No, Quim. It’s just not working anymore, can you understand that?

Quim – Understanding is the last thing that’s going to happen. (*beat*) I just wish I didn’t feel like this.

Leo – Like what?

Quim – This pain.

Leo – We’re gonna be friends forever...

Quim – Liar.

Leo – I swear.

Quim – Never mind.

Leo (*narrating*) – Every day, every minute, millions of relationships starts and ends, but when you’re fourteen...

Quim (*narrating*) – And when it’s your first relationship...

Leo (*narrating*) – It seems like you’re the only one who has to go through it!

Quim (*narrating*) – Some things only happen to us. Like facing a two-meter tall rabbit. I was on my way to school, it was really cold. When I tried to get into the bus, he pushed me. Before I even saw who it was, I hit him with my elbow... It was an impulsive action, kinda silly. I was just defending myself and I didn’t even want to hit anyone, but a giant rabbit doesn’t let us take our own actions. Especially a giant rabbit. So after that it was “POW!”. And I couldn’t see anything else. He had hit me on my neck. When I came to my senses I was lying on the sidewalk. Only then I realized it was a rabbit, a huge rabbit, with white teeth and white fur, with a very kind face but filled with red anger in his eyes. I got up quickly. I didn’t want to demonstrate fear. It’s very hard to explain fear. And it’s particularly hard to explain why a rabbit, an adult and huge one, still takes the bus to go to school.

*Strong music. Change of scene.*

## Scene 2

Leo (*narrating*) – Paula was very quiet and kinda shy. The only person she talked to was me. She didn't need to study to know things; it was like she had been born already knowing everything (*announces solemnly*) Chapter Two: Paula's Dreams!

*Paula enters.*

Leo (*narrating*) – It seemed like one thing had nothing to do with the other, but indeed it did. I don't know. I was telling Paula about my mother dying when I was very young.

*Leo tells her story to Paula.*

Leo – Dude, I was like very small... I don't remember if I felt anything. Actually, I never knew what it was having a mother and a father. My grandma raised me with such care... I only understood it when I was like 10, at the club's swimming pool. Tati threw some floats on the water and when I went in to get them, she said the floats were hers. I didn't care and I held on to the floats, so that I wouldn't drown. Then Tati started pulling the floats through a piece of cord, taking me to the deeper side of the pool, kinda trying or threatening to drown me...

Paula – Why?

Leo – There are people who are just like that, spoiled, and can't be thwarted.

Paula – And did you drown?

Leo – No. I think it was even worse...

Paula – Worse?

Leo – Yeah. She left me alone in the middle of the pool and ran away screaming that I had no mother. Laughing and half-shouting, half-singing, really stupid: "The orphan doesn't know how to swim! The orphan doesn't know how to swim!"

Paula – What a jerk.

Leo – I was so embarrassed, dude.

Paula – You were ten?... And you didn't really know how to swim?

Leo – No, I didn't. I don't know, I was afraid. My grandparents are old, they never could...

I guess they never even tried to teach me.

Paula – And this Tati girl knew that?

Leo – Yeah. She did it on purpose... so that I cried, asked for help...

Paula – And wasn't there anyone there to help you?

Leo – There was. And they took me out of the pool... But I kept hearing that highpitched voice repeating: "The orphan doesn't know how to swim! The orphan doesn't know how to swim." And it hurt.

*Marta enters.*

Marta – Who's an orphan?

Leo – Me.

Marta – Really?... I thought Auntie Laila was your mother.

Leo – No. She's my grandmother... Well, she's kind of like my mother as well, in fact.

Marta – I've always thought she was too old to be a mother.

Paula – But she IS a mother, Marta. She's Leo's mother's mother.

Marta – Wow, I don't think I'd ever heard your voice, Paula. You have such a pretty voice.

Paula – You've already said that to me.

Marta – I have? When?

Paula – Yesterday.

Marta – Aren't you ever gonna pay attention to me, girl?

Paula – "Girl"?...

Marta – Don't you like to be called a girl?

Paula – I don't like the way YOU say "girl".

Marta – You're too sensitive... I bet you're very smooth and delicate.



Leo – Marta, stop bothering Paula.

Paula – Let it go, Leo...

Marta – One day this one will want me.

Leo – This thing you have of always thinking girls like other girls is so annoying, Marta.

Marta – They do. They pretend they don't, but they do.

*Julia enters.*

Leo – Look, there's Julia!... *(to Marta)* Your girlfriend's here, Marta. Tell her how you were hitting on Paula...

Paula – Don't say that, Leo...

Leo – Sorry, Paula... It's just that sometimes Marta gets on my nerves.

Marta – Julia, did you know Leo doesn't like to be called an orphan?

Julia – But she isn't an orphan...Are you?

*Beatriz and Berenice enter.*

Marta *(seeing Beatriz and Berenice)* – Oh, great, they opened the door of the asylum!

Beatriz – Hi Marta! Hi Julia!

Berenice – Yeah, hi Marta! Hi Julia!

Beatriz – Hi Paula! Hi Leo!

Berenice – Yeah, hi Paula! Hi Leo!

Beatriz – So, what have you been up to?

Berenice – Yeah, what have you been up to?

Leo *(narrating)* – That's exactly how it was. What Beatriz said, Berenice repeated. Exactly the same thing. Of course they were sisters. They dressed alike and always repeated each other's sentences, but they weren't twins. Paula called them "The Delirious Echo". And I liked Paula's definitions. The other girls didn't like her, but only because she was too quiet, always on her own, but I've always liked her.

Quim (*narrating*) – It seemed like a different world. And Leo wasn't even that much older than me... We kinda grew up together. I just don't get it.

Miguel – Peter said he's not playing today.

Quim – Why?... We said we were gonna play.

Miguel – He said he's going to go look for a job.

Leo (*narrating*) – The other day, I was standing in the patio with Paula and the “Delirious Echo”, Beatriz and Berenice. Then I moved a bit away from them.

There was a window where I always backed by head up against and just stood there, staring at the shadows in the basement. It was a kind of my thing, a way to relax a bit, I don't know. All of a sudden one of the shadows seemed to be too alive. There were two people there. One of them was definitely a man, trying to hurry the other one up...

Man 1 – Come on, hide it! Quick!!

Other (*holding a piece of paper*) – I can't!... I don't think I have the guts.

Man 1 – Give me this answer sheet!... (*tears the paper from the Other's hand and sticks it into his pocket*)

Other – This is crazy...

Man 1 – There's a lot of money in it.

Other – If they catch us...

Man 1 – Never! Everything is set. The test is on the tenth. Everything's in place.

Calm down.

Leo (*narrating*) – I screamed at once:

*Leo goes back to the action.*

Leo (*to the girls*) – Girls!... Girls!

Paula – What?

Leo (*narrating*) – But then I realized: If I told them what I had seen...

*Leo goes back to the action.*

Leo – Never mind!... I was just tripping.

Beatriz – Are you crazy, Leo?... Do you have to scream like that?!

Berenice – Yeah, are you crazy, Leo?... Do you have to scream like that?!

Leo (*narrating*) – They didn't notice anything. I don't even know if the guys... or the guy and the girl, I don't know... I don't think they noticed I saw them and when I looked back at them they had already disappeared. If I hadn't heard them

I could have sworn they were merely shadows. Then the girls went to class. I had already finished my classes for the day, so I was leaving when Paula came back.

Paula – You got scared, didn't you?

Leo – No, Paula. It's just that sometimes I dream when I'm awake. I do that a lot.

Paula – I don't think I know what that is...

Leo – Yes, you do.

Paula – Maybe. I imagine so many things...

Leo – And you don't tell them to anyone.

Paula – No.

Leo – You are too shy, Paula. (*starts leaving but comes back*) I'm glad you came back to check on me.

Paula – You're the only one who ever talks to me.

Leo – Or the only one you get close to in order to talk.

Paula – I wish I talked more... The other day I dreamed I was in a carousel made of white pebbles and glass. It was so beautiful. Julia and I were each in a horse which went round very slowly. There seemed to be music but everything was silent. There was nothing else around, only the sky and us, flying there. (*beat*)

This is crap!

Leo – And you never told her about the dream?

Paula – Of course not, never.

Leo (*narrating*) – I realized at that moment that Paula had changed, she was looser, speaking without fear. And she started telling me other dreams. Some of them were so pretty I thought I was dreaming.

Paula – And then an orangey wing grew out of my back, allowing me to get rid of everything else. It was like I was protected from everything. And I was. An intense light took hold of my body and felt I could change. Change everything.

Change everyone...

Leo – Paula, your dreams are so beautiful and you tell them using such delicate words...

Paula – Yeah. I like to write...

Leo – Do you write the dreams down?

Paula – Some of them. Sometimes I make them up... I enjoy poetry.

Leo – Do you write poetry?

Paula – Yeah. Well, I don't even know we can call them poetry...

Leo – That's because you don't allow anyone to really know you. The way you speak is pure poetry.

*Music. Change of scene.*

### **Scene 3**

Quim (*narrating*) – Nothing is so simple that it can't get very complicated. (*Announces solemnly*) Chapter Three: Peter, Julia and the Future!

*Enter Peter, Secretary and Boy.*

Peter – Where?

Secretary – Back there... Please sit and we will call you for your interview.

Peter – Hi... Are you also waiting for the interview for the internship?

Boy – Yes. And there's only one spot.

Peter – Good luck.

Boy – Good luck to you too.

Secretary (*to Boy*) – Your turn. Please come in.

*Boy and Secretary exit. Peter, on his own, notices an envelope on the chair where the Boy was sitting. He opens it and sees what's inside. Then, Boy gets up and puts the envelope underneath some other files on the Secretary's desk.*

*He goes back to his seat. The Boy comes back.*

Boy – Hi, sorry... I think I left some documents and my resume inside an envelope.

I'm so nervous...

Peter – No, no, I don't think it's here.

Quim (*narrating*) – I enjoy adventures provided I'm not part of them... That has always been my motto since pre-school. I've survived. On the other hand, I live many amazing stories in my imagination!

*Peter and Wesley.*

Peter – I applied for that, too, but the decision will only be announced in two weeks. Then there's also GEST. I hope I've passed. It is my dream to become an advertiser.

Wesley – This is the best place to learn.

*JotaBraga enters.*

JotaBraga – No. This is the best place to work...

Quim (*narrating*) – Pay close attention! This is JotaBraga. He's the owner of the advertising agency JotaBraga Associates. The memory of this moment keeps repeating in my head.

*JotaBraga, Wesley and Peter rewind their actions and resume:*

Wesley – This is the best place to learn.

*JotaBraga enters.*

JotaBraga – No. This is the best place to work...

Quim (*narrating*) – See what I mean?... Jotabraga might not even have shown up in this part of the story. But that’s actually how it happened. Peter didn’t even have a job and had already met JotaBraga in person, out of the blue. Coincidences don’t simply happen, just like that... Or else they happen of nowhere and then we make up stories telling that those things were coincidences... Could coincidences merely be things we make up?...

Wow, I’m tripping now.

Leo – Quim?...

Quim – What?

Leo – I’m so scared... Julia is in my house... Her mother can’t know...

Quim – I don’t understand.

Leo – Don’t tell anyone...

Quim – Calm down and explain to me what’s going on!...

Leo – It’s Julia, Quim... Julia’s pregnant. Preg-nant.

Quim – Wait, but isn’t she...

Leo – I can’t believe it...

Quim – What about Marta?... Does she know?... Dude, how could this happen?...

Leo – Do you remember the “Party of the Capricornians”? Marta didn’t go, I don’t know why. Julia hooked up with Peter there. Nobody knew about it.... I mean, Peter fell in love with her, wanted to hook up again, kept sending her messages on whatsapp, calling... But for Julia it was a one-night thing. After all, she only cares about Marta and no one else. She like even forgot what happened that night. But then two weeks later she found out

she was pregnant and she told Peter. Peter went totally bonkers... he's really mad. He wants to have the baby, be the father. He said he wants to marry her. He even started looking for a job, an internship, whatever.

Quim – He got an internship at JotaBraga.

Leo – That's why he got it!

Quim – I see... Are they going to get together? Get married?

Leo – No. Julia doesn't like boys...

Quim – God, you women are so confusing!...

Leo – This morning I saw Julia in the school's patio and I had no idea... It's funny, I had no idea, but the moment I saw Julia I had a strange feeling. I went to back my head up against the...

Quim (*completing*) –...the basement's window, as usual...

Leo – Yeah. And I saw something very strange.

Quim – What?

Leo – Two men... Or else a man and a woman, I'm not sure. They were hiding... stealing the answer sheet for a test... I'm sure it was for the GEST! Isn't the state test on the tenth?

Quim – Leo, we have to tell this to someone... To the principal. Was it some student?

Leo – No. It was an older guy and someone else. There might be someone from the Principal's Office involved. How did those guys know the answer sheet was there?...

Quim – Stop it! It's too much information at the same time. You'd better go help Julia. What can I do to help?...

Leo – What about the answer sheet?

Quim – We'll find out what happened, together. But Julia needs us first. Come!

Quim (*narrating*) – When we got into that dark corridor I knew Leo still liked me. She held my hand strongly. All of a sudden they come towards us, these warriors

in armour, carrying huge swords. Me? Facing eighteen warriors? Which girl wouldn't fall in love with that?...

Leo – Wake up, Quim!...

Quim – I'm scared. I'm always scared, Leo.

Leo – It's all right. That's exactly where the guys took the answer sheet.

Quim – The warehouse is on the other side. It doesn't make sense.

Leo – It does. If they had to hand the answer sheet to someone from the school, the basement would be the best choice.

Quim – No. They must be from the school and they had to hand the answer sheet to someone from the outside.

Leo – How?...

Quim – To save the scheme for other times. If someone from the inside is caught with the answer sheet, no one will ever be able to steal it again. But if it's in the hands of someone from outside, it's better. Don't you see? That way there is always someone inside who can pass the answer sheet around...

Leo – And why don't they do that outside?

Quim – The faster they get rid of what they stole, the better for them. No one inside the school must keep the stolen thing, especially inside.

Leo – Ok, so they passed it on to someone from outside the school. Ok.

Quim – See? You're right, we can't tell this to anyone from the principal's office.

Leo – But this person is able to get inside the school all the time.

Quim – Who?

Quim (*narrating*) – The list of parents, monitors and service people who visited the school was huge. It had about 200 names. I swear I'd rather study for a Chemistry test than to study that list!... Much easier!



Leo – Let’s go to the police!... We won’t be able to handle this on our own... We’ll never be able to solve anything.

Quim – Good idea.

Leo – Wait! What’s this? (*he picks a faceless bottom up from the floor*)

Quim – This seems to be a part of a bottom... You know, the safety pin that holds a bottom?... Look. (*hands it to Leo*)

Leo – Funny... The part with the image has detached itself from the bottom. It must be around here somewhere. Let’s look for it.

Quim (*narrating*) – The warriors advanced and I had to face the first one. Courage, Quim, you can do it!... I punched and knocked down the first warrior. His sword fell on the floor and I used it to defeat warriors two and three. But there were eighteen of them and the first one was on his feet again! I’m not sure I’ll be able to do it.... But for Leo I can do anything! I can do much more!...

Leo (*narrating*) – It was all very strange. We couldn’t leave things without an explanation. And I had to go back home to take Julia back to her house. And lie to her mom. Or tell her the truth, I don’t know.

*Enter Marta e Julia.*

Marta – Man, I will never be able to understand...

Julia – Forgive me, Martinha.

Marta – I don’t like it when you call me Martinha. My name is Marta. Marta, that’s all.

Julia (*tender*) – Julia But you’re still my Martinha, aren’t you?

Marta – I had so many plans for us, girl.

Julia – Don’t say that.

Marta – Don’t say what? You hook up with a guy, get pregnant and still has the nerve to question the way I speak. Is that it?...

Julia – Martinha?...

Marta – Bitch.

Julia – Don't do this... I need you.

Marta – But you don't love me, you don't respect me. It's over. I'm out of here.

*Music. Change of scene.*

#### **Scene 4**

Leo (*announces solemnly*) – Chapter Four: Miguel and Totola Discover Something!

*Miguel and Totola in the scene. Miguel is balancing himself on Totola's shoulders.*

Miguel – Are you crazy, Totola?...

Totola – Don't worry, Miguel, I've done this a million times.

Miguel – A million?

Totola – Ok, twice. I've done it twice.

Miguel – Twice?

Totola – But it's enough to know it can be done, Miguel.

Miguel – I doubt it!

Totola – What do you doubt?

Miguel – That you've done it twice.

Totola – Actually, it was only once. This is the second. I can't help it being fatter.

So, the fatter one is always the base. You are the short one, you climb up. Simple as that.

Miguel – I knew it!... (*On Totola's, shoulder's he tries to reach a window*) Totola, I'm falling!

*They manage to get on balance and Miguel spies through the window.*

Totola – Quiet!...

Miguel (*speaking in a low voice*) – There's something I don't understand.

Totola – What?

Miguel – At least six people entered the Secretary’s Office but there’s no one there and neither inside Professor Wilson’s room.

Totola – Maybe they left.

Miguel – We would have seen it from here, idiot.

Totola (*ironic*) – You have so much love in your heart, Miguel.

Miguel – Leo thinks one of them stole the answer sheet for the GEST test.

Totola – If we find the answer sheet, can we use it for our test?

Miguel – Of course not!... Especially me, who’s the second best student of the class.

Totola – Second?

Miguel – Yeah. You are the first.

Totola – Then why are we spying?

Miguel – To find out the truth and to denounce the criminals.

Totola – Right. And then the fame of being “problem fixers” will go to Leo and Quim, the dream couple!

Miguel – Maybe. Except they’re not dating anymore. Besides, the most important thing is that we’ve done our part!

Totola – I still don’t understand why we’re doing this.

Miguel – Because they’re our friends and asked us to help them. Can you understand the importance of all this? We’re part of an investigating team, integrated to our school’s social life, members of a community. We’re part of a whole thing!...

Totola – Right. A whole thing that despises us.

Miguel – But who needs us!...

Leo (*narrating*) – Yes, we needed them! The problem was that Totola and Miguel weren’t the two best people for the job.

Quim (*narrating*) – Don't say that, Leo. You want to tell everything in your own way. They are indeed not the best choices to face dangerous situations, but if it wasn't for them...

*Noise. Totola and Miguel fall. Leo and Quim join them.*

Quim – What was that?

Totola – It was Miguel, duh!

Miguel – No, it was Totola!... Weren't you the one who did this a million times?

Quim – Hold on! What's that?...

Leo (*narrating*) – When Miguel and Totola fell, a part of the shelf of the secretary's office came down with them and a door opened. It was some kind of secret passageway.

Quim (*narrating*) – Kind of? Leo, it WAS a secret passage! You're always doubting things that actually happen!

*Quim and Leo in a separate plan.*

Leo – I can't believe it!... What's going on there?

Quim – It seems to be some kind of meeting... A mass.

Leo – Mass?

Quim – Yeah. Like a ritual. Only without candles.

Leo – This is serious, Quim. We're gonna get screwed.

Quim – Now we're here, Leo, there's no way out. Take some pictures!

Leo – My mobile has run out of battery.

Quim (*grabs his mobile and takes some pictures*) – All right, I'll do it then.

Leo – What the hell are they wearing?... Why are they dressed in armour?

Quim – It's not really armour...

Leo – Why are those people there? And why would they steal the answer sheet?...

This is really strange, and crazy. Let's go, Quim.

Quim – Ok. Let me just take some more... We can go straight from here to the police!

Leo – Come on, Quim!... This is dangerous!... Who are these people? Warriors?

Quim – No. I think they’re some kind of cult.

Leo – Those armours must be used so that they don’t recognize one another.

Quim – Or else so that no one from the outside recognizes any of them.

Leo – Wait!... One of them is leaving... Let’s follow him and see if we can find out who he is.

Quim – We’d better not. I wanna go.

Leo – Then go! I can follow him by myself.

Quim – No way. I’m coming with you. We work better in a pair.

Leo – Yeah! We’re a team, partner!

Quim (*narrating*) – That one really struck me: “we’re a team!” My partner. I so love this woman... Ok, she’s not really a woman woman, but she’s a gorgeous babe and I want her back as my girlfriend.

*Quim and Leo go back to the plan where Totola and Miguel are.*

Totola – So?

Miguel – What did you see?... Tell us!...

Leo – Miguel, Totóla, go to my house, fast. Julia is already there. Call the other girls...

Quim – And Peter.

Leo – Paula, Marta and the “Delirious Echo”. Tell everyone to go to my place. We’ll be there in half an hour.

Quim – Better make it an hour.

Totola – Oh, man, Marta as well?... She’s always picking on me, bro.

Leo – She’s smart, she’ll help us.

Miguel (*laughs*) – Cool! Pretty cool!

Quim – Go, quick, otherwise we’ll miss our chance to find out who the guy in armour is.

Totola (*leaving*) – Armour?... This is so cool!

Leo (*narrating*) – I wouldn't leave Quim on his own. He's too much of a boy, I don't know.

We followed the man in armour... He walked towards a place in the parking lot. Quim and I, we managed to see him get into a room and a few minutes later...

Quim – I can't believe this!...

Leo – No!

Quim – It's Doctor Armando...

Leo – Beatriz and Berenice's father.

Quim – You know what this means, right?

Leo – Yeah. He's the chief, so we can't go to the police.

Quim – Shit.

Leo (*narrating*) – Everything was very hard to understand. For me, it was a money thing, maybe someone had stolen the answer sheet to sell it. But what we saw was very strange.

Quim (*narrating*) – And obviously Miguel and Totola made a mess. One of them told the girls to go to my house in half an hour, the other said an hour...

*Julia and Paula enter.*

Julia – Paula?

Paula – Hi, is Leo here?... (*realizing*) – I'm so stupid, it's her house, of course she is. Did she ask you to come here as well?

Julia – No... She's not... I mean, she must be on her way back. Did she ask you here?

Paula – Yeah. Totóla sent me a message to be here urgently in half an hour.

Julia (*after a while*) – Did Leo tell you anything?

Paula – No. (*beat*) Did she say anything about me?

Julia – No.

*Long pause. It's awkward for both of them.*

Paula – So... I wanted to see you...

Julia – Really?

Paula – I thought you were too sad this morning.

Julia – I’ve had some problems, you know.

Paula – Yeah. (*beat*) Is there a way I can help you?...

Julia – No. It’s alright...I just... (she cries and suddenly hugs *Paula*) I don’t know what to do. I really don’t!...

Paula – Calm down, Julia, calm down. What happened?

Julia – You can’t tell anyone... Leo is the only one who knows...

Paula – What?

Julia – I’m pregnant, Paula. Pregnant.

Paula – That’s awesome!

Julia – What do you mean “awesome”?... (*Altered*) It’s a problem! A big problem, don’t you get it?!...

Paula (*calm and delicate*) – No, I don’t. I think it’s beautiful. Ok, maybe it’s a little soon, but it is beautiful anyway. (*making fun of it*) Sometimes I stare at the sky at night, looking for the moon... But it’s not a “moon night”. Where did the moon go? Where did the moon go? And then I get distressed. But I shouldn’t. (*serious*)

There’s a right time for the moon to come out.

Julia (*laughing*) – I had never thought of something like that. You’re a crazy chick, you know that, right?

Paula – All you have to do is not to look at everything in the same way.

Julia – And I thought you were Miss Goody Two-Shoes... And suddenly you’re saying something like this.

Leo (*narrating*) – Everybody was there, in my house, in my bedroom. All of them had the same problem: they had no idea what to do!

Quim (*narrating*) – Fortunately Beatriz and Berenice were the last ones to arrive, so we had time to tell the others about their father.

*Enter Marta, Beatriz, Berenice, Júlia, Paula, Peter, Totóla and Miguel.*

Peter – This is obviously a money thing.

Quim – But we saw it... They were all dressed in armour, it was like a ritual from a movie or something...

Leo – Very scary, you know?

Quim – I thought of telling this to someone who isn't like... one of us...

Marta – You mean a grownup...

Miguel – But we're almost grownups!

Leo – No we're not.

Paula – We're kids who feel like adults...

Totola – We're not kids!...

Paula – We don't want to look like kids, that's what it is.

Quim – Guys, this is serious! There was a theft. It's the GEST's answer sheet, you know?

Julia – What's the meaning of GEST again?

Miguel – General State Test. It's one of the most important ways to get points in order to go to college.

Beatriz – I'm calling my father!...

Berenice – Yeah, I'm calling my father!!

All – No!

Quim – Look, Beatriz, Berenice, your father is from the police, but it's best he doesn't know about any of that for now, ok?



Leo – The two of you are gonna be one of the most important parts of our plan...

Totola – So we have a plan?

Julia – Shut up, Totóla. (*pulling Totola aside.*) Can't you see Leo is just trying to trick them?...

Leo – I know! The two of you will be our alarm.

Beatriz – Alarm?

Berenice – Yeah, alarm?

Leo – Hold on, I'll explain it to you later.

Peter – We can't tell the police. That's a fact. What if we asked someone else for help?

Quim – Who?

Peter – I can talk to the owner of the agency where I work... my boss...

Julia – But, Peter, you've just started working there...

Peter – JotaBraga is a smart guy, an ad man. He's well aware of everything that's going on everywhere, you know?

Leo – I don't know.

Marta – I think Peter is right. And he's someone who has nothing to do with the school. I can go with him talk to this guy.

Leo – You sure, Marta?

Marta – Yeah.

Paula – There's one thing we need to understand.

Beatriz – What?

Berenice – Yeah, what?

Totola – Yeah, what?

*Miguel hits Totola with his elbow.*

Paula – There must be a reason for this cult to exist. Or maybe it has existed for

a very long time.... No one is part of a religion, a cult or something like that without a reason.

Miguel – I don't know, they wear armour, maybe they believe in knights, witches, dragons...

Totola – I had a Playmobil that had an army of knights!...

Paula – Don Quixote!...

Totola – Great, Paula is out of her little box now!...

Miguel – No, Totóla, this can be it... Be it Don Quixote or some other kind of story involving knights... Maybe something can tell us something more about this religion...

Paula (*correcting him*) – Cult.

Miguel – Don Quixote was a kind of a dreamer who believed he was a great nobleman, a noble knight... Except the time of glory of the knights was way in the past. Maybe it's a cult made of dreamers. Well, guys, I'll tell you Don Quixote's first adventure. He left...

Leo – Miguel, this can be a big help, but I don't think we need to hear the whole story right now.

Paula – Yeah, and it's just a conjecture...

Quim – We have to find out what's happening inside the school...

Leo – Yeah, we have to investigate what they are doing.

Peter – Now, we do have an objective: to find out what this Cult is.

Marta – And how are we going to do that?

Quim – We'll watch every step of every member of the school's board and the secretary's office. One of the guys who stole the answer sheet wears a bottom... (*shows it*) That's all that's left of it. The rest of the bottom must be somewhere. So pay attention. It's our first clue.

Totola – Wow!... I love this.

Leo – Here’s what we’re going to do: Marta and Peter will go to the agency; Quim and I will go back to the secretary’s office, to the secret passageway; Totóla and Miguel will go to the principal’s office...

Totola – This is so cool!... I’ve never been sent to the principal’s office.

Quim – Paula, you could do some research about this Don Quixote and knights thing... Maybe you can find something about an old Cult, a secret society...

Leo – You can use my computer, there.

Beatriz – What about us?

Berenice – Yeah, what about us?

Leo – Well, you... you stay here with Julia. We’ll send you messages on the mobile.

Always resend the messages to everyone else. Remember, you’re our alarm.

Beatriz – Alarm!

Berenice – Yeah, alarm!

Quim – When I send the password which is... which is?

Miguel – “Swordfish!”

Leo – Good one. “Swordfish” is the password.

Totola (*aside to Miguel*) – “Swordfish”?

Miguel (*aside to Totola*) – It’s a character from a TV show I like.

Quim – When I send the word “swordfish” in the message it means you should all come back here. If anyone is not here in 15 minutes the two of you...

Beatriz – We call dad! We call the police!

Berenice – Yeah, we call dad! We call the police!

Leo – No! Not the police. Your father can’t know...

Quim – Never.

Marta – And if he does it will be bad for you!... Remember that time at the movies?

You were grounded for one month, without leaving the house. Do you want that again?

Uh?

Leo (*narrating*) – Seriously, Marta was amazing. She had the gift of speaking, halfaggressive, half-smooth. And that made sure those two girls would never tell anything to their father.

*Music. Change of scene.*

## Scene 5

Leo (*narrating*) – Almost no one had noticed Julia’s sadness. She took part on the meeting, sure, but she wasn’t feeling well... Also, she had to keep an eye on the “Delirious Echo” so that they didn’t ruin anything... (*Announces solemnly*) Chapter Five: Julia’s Decision!

Quim (*narrating*) – We kept hidden the whole afternoon, trying to dig up any new stuff.

As time passed Leo got cuter and cuter.

Leo – What?

Quim – Nothing. I’m just looking at you.

Leo – I’ve noticed that. But we’re here to keep watch...

Quim – But there’s nothing to watch, Leo. I just wanted to tell you that...

Leo – Look! There’s someone coming.

Quim – It’s two guys...

Leo (*narrating*) – No. They weren’t the same two guys I had seen stealing the answer sheet.

*In another plan, Man 2 and Man 3.*

Man 2 – Is everything ready?

Man 3 – Yes, the Great Dragon demanded the banquet is served for the ceremony.

Man 2 – Today we shall perform our first ancient task!

Man 3 – Of course, we're on the path for the truth.

Man 2 – I never thought it would be possible to steal thoughts.

Man 3 – We're gonna make it! The ceremony will be a success!...

*At Quim and Leo's plan.*

Quim – Did I hear that well?... I can't believe it.

Leo – The Cult, or whatever those guys are... They want to steal thoughts. Is that what this is?

Quim – We have to stay here and watch this ceremony.

Leo – We'll record everything.

Quim – Have you charged your mobile?

Leo – Of course I have, Quim.

Quim (*narrating*) – Leo had this thing of saying "Of course I have, Quim". She never remembered to charge her mobile, but every time I asked she would reply "Of course I have, Quim!" as if she hadn't forgotten anything. And usually she had forgotten.

Leo (*narrating*) – Sometimes I think Quim doesn't really like me, he just wants to be the boss of me... But this time he's being so... delicate, sensitive... It's really great having Quim by my side. I feel safer with him. Or something like that.

Quim (*narrating*) – Giant rabbits don't think. At least I don't think they do. In fact, they are very smart. And they're always threatening us. Those cute little faces, almost dumb, don't deceive me. I know how terrible they can be. I always meet giant rabbits who threaten me and I never know what to do.

*At a different plan of action.*

JotaBraga – What you're telling me is very serious.

Wesley – JotaBraga, what can we do to help these kids?

JotaBraga – You must be very frightened. Peter, do you have the address of Leo’s house?

Peter – Sure, we were there half an hour ago...

JotaBraga – Wesley is going there to calm the girls down. I’m going to the school...

Marta and you, Peter, are coming with me. You have to take those boys... what are their names again?...

Marta – Miguel and Totola.

JotaBraga – Right. *(to Peter)* You have to take them out of the principal’s Office and bring them to the basement.

Peter – Do you know our school?

JotaBraga – Yeah, I studied there, a long time ago. *(to Marta)* Marta, you’re going to find Leo and Quim. They also can’t stay there. They must also go to the basement. Without drawing anyone’s attention.

Peter *(getting his mobile)* – We can send them a message now!

JotaBraga – No!... What if they’ve already been caught?... Then they will know we’re on our way there. Didn’t you say there’s a police chief involved? This can be very dangerous. We have to be cautious.

Quim *(narrating)* – To begin with, giant rabbits are always smiling. Their big white teeth make us feel empathy.

*Enter Peter and Wesley.*

Peter – Wesley, can I ask you for a favour?...

Wesley – Sure.

Peter – Do you promise not to tell anyone?

Wesley – Don’t worry about it.

Peter – When you see Julia, tell her I’m doing this for her.

Wesley – Look, Peter, in my opinion all these things you think are happening are no big deal. It's just some kind of fantasy. I think this Leo and this Quim are simply exaggerating what they think they saw. You know, people tend to see something and use their imagination to add to the thing? So really, nothing is really going on.

Peter – But what I'm saying has nothing to do with that...

Wesley – Then what?

Peter – Well, it's a... it's hard to say it...

Wesley – Go on, I'm your friend, you can trust me.

Peter – It's just that... Julia is pregnant. And I'm... I'm the father.

Wesley – Look, Peter, you've just started here, but I can see you're a good kid, with a lot of potential. Don't worry, I'll talk to your girlfriend...

Peter – She's not my girlfriend.

Wesley – It's ok, I'll talk to her anyway.

Peter – Ok, it's just that...

Wesley – Don't you want to grow inside this company?

Peter – Of course I do... But I don't know what one thing has to do with the other

Wesley – Didn't you ask for my help?

Peter – Yes.

Wesley – So leave it with me.

Peter – Ok, let's go, Marta is waiting for us.

Leo (*narrating*) – I didn't like Peter. It was weird for him to be friends with Quim.

He was a little older and didn't have anything in common with the others... I didn't like it when he suggested talking to JotaBraga. What could a guy like that do for us?

*Marta and JotaBraga.*

Marta – I'm sure. They said the chief... the twins' father... was there.

JotaBraga – You should have called me right away, Marta!... This idiot will get in our way!

Marta – They are not going to call their father. I gave them a fright, don't worry...

JotaBraga – You cannot reveal yourself to this stupid girl, this Leo. If she realizes anything, we'll get screwed... Hold on a minute... Isn't she Laila's daughter... or else granddaughter?

Marta – That's the one.

JotaBraga – I can't believe it... This woman is always getting in my way!

Marta – What? I don't get it. JotaBraga, Do you know Mrs. Laila?

JotaBraga – Yes. I mean NO!... You don't need to know about any of that. And what about this boy, Peter? Can we trust him?

Marta – I guess so. I think if you offer him something, he'll come to our side quick enough.

JotaBraga – Great. Talk to Wesley and find a way to do that. Nothing can ruin tonight.

Quim (*narrating*) – The dive was deep. Underneath the water everything was in slow motion. Only slow movements. It was an impressive place, with singular colours and movements. It was unforgettable. What scared the most was the silence. When everything's quiet, without a sound, we think we have found peace, but we haven't. That's when anything can happen. And this anything can be the worst thing.

*Wesley and Julia.*

Wesley – First, you need to calm down. It happened to you and it can happen to anyone, all the time.

Julia – What did Peter say?

Wesley – So... I gave an advice to Peter and in the end he agreed with me... You're both too young. You don't have to ruin your lives so early...

Julia – Is that what he said?

Wesley – No. That's what I said to him. I've already convinced Peter... For him, whatever you decide will be ok. He will support your decision.



Julia – You mean an abortion?

Wesley – Well, you told me you don't even like him.

Julia – I like him, I do, it's just that he is a.... I don't LOVE Peter. But that's...

Wesley – Julia, I'm offering to pay for all the expenses you and Peter have with this... You'll see, in a week you won't even remember you did it. It will be much better.

Julia – I wonder if Marta will ever understand.

Wesley – Marta was right beside me when I talked to Peter.

Julia – Well, I don't know. I guess...

Wesley – It's for the best.

Julia – Yeah, I guess so. *(beat)* Listen, Wesley, I'm really anxious about this. When are we doing it?

Wesley – Let's first solve this stupid mess which Leo and Quim have gotten themselves into, about stolen tests and mysterious cults, and then we'll handle your situation. Just stay here till I call you. And don't let those girls call their father. It will be very dangerous if they do.

Quim *(narrating)* – You need a huge effort to reach for air. You're running out of breath and the strength you need to come up is enormous. It seems like there won't be enough time. Not until you have your head out of the water and the air filling your lungs gives you a sense of relief you've never felt before. And then you think: should I dive again?...

Leo – Quim, do you think this is something that's been happening for a long time in our school?

Quim – Why do you say that?

Leo – I don't know. If it's a Cult, it can't be something that just started out of the blue. There must be some kind of traditional aspect to it.

Quim – Didn't your mother study here?...

Leo – My mom, I mean, my grandma who raised me, didn't... But my real mother did.

Quim – Haven't you ever heard any stories about this place?

Leo – Dr. Armando, Beatriz and Berenice's father... Grandma Laila told me he decided to become a cop because of something that happened in the school.

Quim – Do you know what?

Leo – I don't remember. But I know it's got something to do with this thing that makes Berenice always repeat what Beatriz says. I always thought it was a joke. But now I think it makes sense. Because that can't be normal.

Quim – Man, do you think this cult is involved with witchcraft? Do you think the chief put a spell on their own daughters? Maybe he's one of those really cruel witches who's going to kill every student in the school? That would be really wicked!...

Leo – When they told me my mother had died, first they told me it had been an accident. Then, after some time, they said she died from some disease. And after that every time I hear about the disease something rings in my head, like telling me it's a lie, you know? Do you think they've been hiding something from me all this time?

Quim – I think you're tripping, Leo!... Trying to connect everything. Wanting for everything to have the same explanation!... Things don't work that way.

Leo – What about Mrs. Young?

Quim – The woman from the cafeteria?! You're right. There can be some kind of connection.

Leo – This story is so crazy!

Quim – I've always thought it was some kind of urban legend. There are many stories like that... There's a blog where...

Leo (*interrupting*) – I’m starting to think the legend of Mrs. Young has really happened, dude.

*Music. Change of scene.*

## Scene 6

Both (*announcing solemnly*) – Chapter Six: The Story of Mrs. Young!

*They both tell the story. The actions narrated by them are acted by Mrs. Young and other actors.*

Quim – Mrs. Young was a first grade teacher. She taught lots of people, people like our parents, how to read and write. At that time she known as Professor Young.

*Mrs. Young enters, dressed as a teacher, carrying some books.*

Leo – She was involved in a story, some kind of legend.

Quim – She was very pretty.

*Mrs. Young checks how she looks as if staring at a mirror.*

Leo – They say one day she was coming to school earlier than usual and that all of a sudden she started seeing some cans falling from the sky.

*Mrs. Young sees the cans falling, bends down and picks one up.*

Quim – There were many cans falling from the sky. It was raining cans. Cans of condensed milk.

Leo – Mrs. Young tried to shelter herself from the cans under the school’s canopy.

There was no one else around. She screamed for help but no one came.

*Mrs. Young hides and screams for help.*

Quim – The poor woman was desperate, she couldn’t understand what was going on.

Leo – Some people say one of the cans hit her hard on her head.

*A can hits Mrs. Young’s head hard and she faints.*

Quim – Others say she went crazy after seeing so many cans falling from the sky without understanding how that was possible.

*Mrs. Young gets up and starts picking the cans up.*

Leo – All I know is that from that moment on she started swearing at people in a weird language that nobody had ever heard.

*Mrs. Young swears at people who passes by her in a made-up language that no one understands.*

Quim – She probably thought it was the end of the world. And what happened was that she was never the same after that day.

Leo – It was like she aged 30 years in a few seconds.

*Some effect turns Mrs. Young into an old woman.*

Quim – And thus, the beloved school teacher Professor Young became known as Mrs. Young, a weird old lady, kind of dumb, who didn't know how to answer any question and was always swearing at people in a weird language.

*Mrs. Young, now an old woman, wanders around, adrift, swearing.*

Leo – As Mrs. Young was a lonely person with no family, the principal at the time decided not to fire her...

Quim –... even though she could no longer be a teacher.

Leo – So they decided to let Mrs. Young live in the school. And they gave her a job at the cafeteria, helping prepare the food.

*Mrs. Young prepares the sandwiches in the way Quim describes them.*

*Other actors play the Students who get the sandwiches from her.*

Quim – They say her sandwiches are flat and thin like that because of the anger she feels. Even though she has a kind face, she presses the sandwiches so hard because she imagines

the sandwiches are the students, and all she wanted was to be able to do that with the students, with the anger she feels from everything.

*Mrs. Young screams in anger. The students are frightened. Most of them leave the scene.*

Leo – I’ve even heard that Mrs. Young catches stray dogs in the streets and that she kills them at night, using their meat to make hot dogs for the cafeteria.

*Mrs. Young collects stray dogs in the street.*

Quim – So here in our school the hot-dogs are literally hot dogs!! For real!!! This is so disgusting!!!

*One of the students throws up after eating a hot dog. Mrs. Young leaves the scene, laughing with exagg eration.*

*Music. Change of scene.*

## **Scene 7**

Quim (*narrating. Announces solemnly*) – Chapter 7: Peter’s a Smart Guy!

*Peter, Miguel and Totola.*

Peter – So, did you find anything?

Totola – I don’t think anyone works at the principal’s office. No movement at all!!

Miguel – We couldn’t find anything new.

Peter – Great.

Miguel – What do you mean “great”?... Great would have been if we found something.

Peter – That’s not what I mean. JotaBraga is here with me. He’s helping us a lot.

Miguel – And where is he?...

Peter – He told me to come here and bring you to the basement...

Totola – No way I’m going to the basement. That place gives me the creeps! No way!

Peter – Come on, Totola?... Are you gonna chicken out?...

Miguel – Totola is right. It's better we stay here... This is our assigned station.

Nobody sent any messages through the mobile.

Peter – Let me see. (*taking Miguel's mobile*) What about yours, Totola?

Totola – Nothing either.

Peter – Let me see that.

*Totola hesitates but hands his mobile to Peter, who puts both mobiles in his pocket.*

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Miguel – Who does this JotaBraga think he is to meddle with our plan?

Peter – Look, Miguel, we're the ones who went to him for help, you know.

Miguel – What about Marta?... Wasn't she with you?

Peter – Marta went after Leo and Quim, to take them to the basement too.

Totola – I told you, no way I'm going there!... No one is gonna force me! That place is full of cockroaches.

Peter – Well, if anything goes wrong, it's your fault. Of course you're gonna play the victims later, say no one cares about you... It's fine, no worries. There's a smart guy such as JotaBraga willing to help us and you're all "ooh, I'm not going to the basement! Eugh, it's full of cockroaches!"... Why don't you use your brains for once?... That's why no one likes you.

Miguel – What?

Peter – That's what you heard. No one in the school likes you. You both think you're so smart, just because you study a lot, but no one cares, no one spends a second looking at you... Oh, wait, now I understand. Deep down all you want is to be the dumb nerds. You want to be ignored by everybody!

Totola – What is he talking about, Miguel?

Miguel – He's right, Totola. Everyone else will think we're two idiots...

Leo (*narrating*) – Miguel and Totola were the first ones to be caught in the trap.

*Miguel and Totola in another plan of action.*

Totola – “Everyone else will think we’re two idiots”... Why did I listen to you,

Miguel?!...

Miguel – I know, I screwed up.

Totola – You got me stuck inside this basement, that’s what you did! And I HATE this basement!!!

Miguel – Why did this Wesley guy lock us up here?...

Totola Miguel, get over yourself! It’s obvious that this Wesley guy, this JotaBraga guy, this stupid ad agency, they are all involved in this story!... These guys have been selling washing powder for 30 years and still call it “NEW”!! They live by deceiving people.

Quim (*narrating*) – Not the swordfish! He doesn’t see the bottom of the ocean as a threat. For him, silence is good, but he prefers the raging sea. That’s because he knows when the storm comes, when the sea is in turmoil, that’s when he can rest, as no fisherman will dare try to catch a swordfish in the middle of a storm.

Leo (*narrating*) – We were really fast, man! As soon as Quim saw the chief, we found a place to hide!... Beatriz and Berenice’s father put on the armour and before getting in he searched for something about him, as if he had lost something, or some such.

Quim (*narrating*) – The agony for the swordfish is to be caught by a hook and taken to the surface. He knows if he passes that line between sea and air he will die.

He will die.

*Marta and JotaBraga in another plan.*

Marta – They’re no longer there!

JotaBraga – What do you mean?... If they’d left they would have warned the others...

Marta (*staring at her mobile*) Nobody has sent the password so far!

JotaBraga – What password?

Marta (*mocking*) – “Swordfish”!... It’s a fake password that Quim came up with.

Something to stall, just so the twins had something to do instead of going after their father. Beatriz and Berenice are brain-damaged, so don’t worry. Besides, Wesley has already gone there. So everything’s fine.

JotaBraga – I’m not sure if this Leo went back to her house or is hiding somewhere.

Marta – Me and Wesley have already isolated the nerds from the others.

JotaBraga – We need to start. But pay close attention, Leo and Quim might still be around.

Quim (*narrating*) – As soon as the swordfish falls for the bait, it starts to resist with his strength! He tries to retreat and remain underwater. He pulls the hook and the line and tries to swim backwards! However, if by bad luck or carelessness he is pulled off the sea, he will always jump violently through the air and the waves, drawing in the sky a scream that is not one of desperation.

*Wesley and JotaBraga in another plan.*

JotaBraga – What about the girls?

Wesley – They don’t know anything. They’re not a problem. I even managed to buy off Peter’s girlfriend. Now we have some time for the ceremony.

JotaBraga – Armando can still be a problem!... Tell them they must check everyone who enters, ONE BY ONE, before the ceremony. He has already participated in one, so he knows the rules...

Wesley (*showing him the image which was supposed to be on the bottom*) – I lost that thing that keeps my badge attached... Where could I have left it?...

JotaBraga (*grabbing the image and sticking it into Wesley’s jacket*) – Just stick it there and it’s done!... We have no time. Bring Peter to me!



Leo (*narrating*) – How many times have I suspected someone and in the end found out I was right? It seems like we have to be suspicious of everything, all the time.

I hate this.

*Peter, Wesley and JotaBraga in another plan.*

JotaBraga – Look, Peter, if you want to, everything can be great for you. Wesley has already spoken to Julia and we're going to help you. A lot.

Peter – Ok, but what do I have to do?

Wesley – With us, your life will be totally different. We have the money to solve your little problem. Everything's fine.

JotaBraga – Send a message to the girls telling them to come here.

Peter – What should I tell them?...

Wesley – That we've managed to get the answer sheet to the GEST.

JotaBraga – Call everyone for a celebration. They're my guests for dinner.

Peter – Dinner?

JotaBraga – Yes, a dinner they shall never forget!

Quim (*narrating*) – It's the silent scream of defeat! It's the moment of surrender, when the swordfish knows he has lost and wants to show just how worthy fighting is.

## **Scene 8**

Leo (*narrating*) – Quim and I had barely found a place to record everything when the thing started!

*BOTH (announcing solemnly)* – Chapter Eight: The Banquet of the Thought Thieves!

Leo (*narrating*) – Suddenly they started to arrive.

Quim (*narrating*) – Some of them had large capes, others wore armour. We couldn't see the faces of any of them.

Leo (*narrating*) – I had no idea that place was so huge.

Quim (*narrating*) – And so hidden, right between the Secretary’s Office and the library!

Leo (*narrating*) – It seemed like magic...

Quim (*narrating*) – It was magic, Leo! It was magic!

*Pompous music is played. Many People enter the scene, all of them wearing capes and armours and holding swords and shields. A big table is set. They take their places around the table, ritualistically. There’s a special place for the leader, the Great Dragon, who’s the last one to enter. Everyone bows to the Great Dragon.*

Great Dragon (*hailing*) – Vitar! Vitar! Vitar!

*The Great Dragon gestures for them to sit. An assistant removes his helmet and we can see his face: it’s WESLEY.*

Wesley – The Great Dragon will begin the first ancient task!

*The Great Dragon removes his helmet and shows his face: it’s JotaBraga. The other leaders do the same – only the servants keep their faces hidden with masks. In a separate plan, Quim and Leo are watching everything.*

Quim – I can’t believe this! The principal, Professor Wilson, Mrs Edith the secretary...

They are all involved!

Leo – Who’s that guy, the big leader?

Quim – I’ve never seen him here in the school...

Leo – It’s funny... I think I’ve seen him somewhere.

Quim – I can’t see Dr. Armando.

*At the Ceremony.*

JotaBraga – Bring the young riders for the initiation!

*The servants bring the young riders: Romeu Tadeu and João Biez.*

Quim – Are you filming this, Leo?

Leo – I can't believe this! The two worst students in school: Romeu Tadeu and João Biez.

*At the Ceremony:*

JotaBraga – Darvut, inter dest!

*Then, JotaBraga gestures and masked servants enter and serve deep dishes containing a stew made of small brains.*

Leo – Is that what I think it is?

Quim – No, it can't be... It looks like...

*At the Ceremony.*

JotaBraga – It's time to taste the brains!

Quim – e Leo (*together, to each other*) Brains?

*At the Ceremony.*

JotaBraga – We, Knight of the Order of the Dragon, shall eat together for the initiation of our youngest riders: Romeu Tadeu and João Biez. After that, they shall remain resting.

The digestion of ideas might take three days.

Leo – Is that what that is?... They're eating brains?

Quim (*narrating*) – I almost barfed!

*At the Ceremony.*

JotaBraga – In three days our newest knights will take the GEST!...

Quim – They're probably from monkeys... I know in Malaysia they eat monkey brains.

*At the Ceremony.*

JotaBraga – That way, the Order of the Knights of the Dragon will be certain it is possible to absorb thoughts! Remember: this is only the beginning! We're still going to conquer lots and lots of thoughts!

Leo – Hold on...If they're trying to steal thoughts, then these brains are not monkey brains. They must belong to people!...

Quim – Stop it, Leo! I... Oh, God, I'm getting nauseated...

Leo – Be quiet, Quim!...

Leo (*narrating*) – Poor Quim, he couldn't stand it and he...

*Quim throws up, making a lot of noise. The music stops. The leader gestures and a servant goes towards Leo and Quim, catching them in the act.*

Quim (*narrating*) – I had seen many more disgusting things in my life. I'm not a guy who gets disgusted easily, but I simply couldn't take that, so I... (*Throws up again*)

*While Leo and Quim narrate, the ceremony scene is dissolved, as every actor leaves.*

Leo (*narrating*) – When they caught us it was my turn to almost throw up. A masked man took us to the basement and locked us up in a small, hot and dark room.

Quim (*narrating*) – It was at that moment that I realized that feeling fear is not really the problem. It's quite normal...

Leo – Come on, Quim, do something!

Quim – Like what?...

Leo – Hey, they didn't take our mobiles!

Quim – My mobile is gone. I threw up all over it. It's dead. What about yours?

Leo (*shaking her head*) – Battery. (*notices Quim is getting angry*) Don't even start with one of your lectures!...

Quim (*imitating and mocking Leo*) – "Of course I have, Quim... I charged my mobile!"

*In another plan, Miguel and Totola.*

Miguel (*calling from a distance*) – Leo?!... Quim?!... Are you there?

Leo – Miguel?...

Miguel – Leo, me and Totola are tied here. Can you help us!

Quim – We’re tied here too, on the other side.

Miguel – That Wesley guy locked us up here... Peter brought us here!

Totola – This basement sucks! I want to get out of here!

Leo – Calm down, Totola!... We’ll think of something.

Quim – Will we?

Quim (*narrating*) – So I did, until I left four knights on the ground, unable to get back up again, and so the others retreated a bit. They started doubting themselves.

They knew they beat me in number, in weapons. But they also knew I had more reasons to win, more certainties, more passion.

*We see Wesley, Marta and JotaBraga.*

Wesley – What about those self-absorbed little shits? What do we do with them?

JotaBraga – Let’s anticipate the second ancient task and start it right away!

Marta – I thought this “task things” were just illusions...

JotaBraga – We’re gonna cut off the heads of both Leo and Quim! We’re gonna eat their brains!!!

*Strong Music. Change of scene.*

## **Scene 9**

Both (*narrating. Announcing solemnly*) – Chapter Nine: What Is The Truth?

Leo (*narrating*) – Time never passed so slowly. We were locked up in there probably for less than thirty minutes, but it felt like forever. We still had no idea that they were planning to chop our heads off and eat our brains. So our questions were much more pleasant.

Quim – Leo, what are these crazy people gonna do to us?

Leo – I feel like we’re in a movie...

Quim – But we’re not!... Can’t we do anything?

Leo – Being afraid won’t help.

Quim – I’m not afraid... I’m panicking!

Leo – Calm down. If we don’t dream...

Quim – Leo, let’s get back together?...

Leo (*tenderly*) – I adore you, Quim.

Quim – You do?

Leo – I love you.

*Leo and Quim kiss. A Servant walks in, wearing a mask, interrupting the kiss.*

Servant (*ordering them around*) – Hey, you two, keep your hands behind your backs!

Leo – Quim, she’s dressed in the same way as that second person involved in the stealing of the answer sheets...

Servant – Shut up, girl!

Leo – Marta?

Marta (*removing her mask*) – Yeah, that’s me.

Leo – Thank God it’s you!... What a relief. Marta, you rock!... See, Quim, I told you they were coming to save us...

Marta – Save you? Are you nuts, Leo?... I’m here to get you ready for your end.

Which, by the way, is something I’ve always wanted to see! Sucker!

Quim (*narrating*) – When fourteen knights don’t give a damn whether you have reasons, certainties and passions. When they don’t give a damn whether you would bravely fight till the end... Or whether you have strengths coming out of mysterious places... Nothing matters that much... When that’s the way it goes, they simply despise you. You can freeze from fear, because the end is very near.

*Paula and Julia in another plan.*

Paula – Are you sure you want to do this?...

Julia – I don't know. I had never thought of being a mom...

Paula – There are lots of people who don't want children...

Julia – I know. But when I was a kid, I dreamed of that.

Paula – So this “never thought of that” is not actually true.

Julia – I'm too young, you know?

Paula – Is that what you really think, or is it something you were told?...

*Julia is silent, reflective.*

Paula – I... I wanted to show you something... But I don't know if I have the courage.

Julia – What?

Paula – I wrote you a poem.

Julia – For me?... I thought you were doing your research on the knights...

Paula – I was. But then it just came to me... *(she shows Julia the poem on screen)* It's called “The Night Still to Come”.

Julia *(reading)* – “Those who can't wait for the moon count the days as if they're waiting for a war, so certain of uncertainty, afraid to die. Those who can't wait for the moon drink from the fountain dreaming of a flavor they will never taste. The moon will only come out in the nights she feels like it, free as only she can be, pulsating with the sex and the blue shades that only the night knows.

Those who can't wait for the moon discredit the blood announcing fertility. They don't know of the fish and the tides. They don't know because they think only with their heads and don't accept looking at vastness just because it is so vast.

Those who can't wait for the moon only accept the time of the day, forgetting what the night brings with its slow and silent daze, the dewy cold and the icy wind that the

nothingness foretells. Those who can't wait for the moon only believe they wait, they wait tiredly a never-ending in which they will always search for an explanation which will never come."

*Julia kisses Paula.*

Leo (*narrating*) – It was really hard to put everything together: Marta, whom I had always liked and who hates everyone for I-have-no-idea-why, the Great Dragon who is that JotaBraga guy, that weirdo Wesley... And then there was Peter, the traitor, who wasn't with them. A Cult inside my own school? Formed by knights?... And now me, Totola and Miguel were gagged, lying down on this huge table, surrounded by lots of knives, while Quim, MY Quim, was hanging upside down, ready to be dipped into a barrel full of water. It was like the end of times..

*We see Totola, Miguel and Leo lying down on the table. Quim is hanging upside down from the ceiling. JotaBraga, Marta and Wesley surround them.*

JotaBraga – We're gonna do the same to all of you.

Wesley – The more blood in the brain, the better.

JotaBraga – One by one, chill their heads with cold water. Let them drown, then we'll cut their heads off. It doesn't have to be cruel. It's just a ritual.

Leo (*narrating*) – Does he need to describe everything he's gonna do?... Maybe it's better, at least we get some more time. No! Stop! They started to lower Quim down inside the barrel. He didn't fight, he was like a resigned hero, sacrificing himself. (*screams*) Nooooo!!!... (*narrating*) I couldn't stand watching that!

Everything went dark!

*Blackout. The scene remains that way for a while. When lights came back up, the previous disposition of the characters is undone.*

*We see Doctor Armando holding Leo, as well as Quim, Miguel and Totola.*



Leo – Did I faint?

Armando – Yes.

Quim – It’s Beatriz and Berenice’s father! He’s also wearing an armour!

Miguel – We’re gonna die!

Totola – I wanna go back to the basement! I wanna go back to the basement!

Armando – Calm down!... I’m a policeman.

Totola – We know! And you’re also from the cult! You can’t trick us!

Quim – Wasn’t Marta’s betrayal enough?! That traitor!

Miguel – What about Peter?! He told us to go to the basement and they locked us up!

*Peter enters.*

Armando – Calm down! Peter’s the one who saved you! He called my daughters.

They told me everything that was happening.

Peter – Hold on, guys! Calm down! Everybody is too nervous here. We managed to avoid...

Totola – But Peter, you’re the one who told us to go to the basement and they locked us up in there!!

Peter – I didn’t know that was going to happen... They were making a fool out of me the whole time. But then I noticed something in the lapel of Wesley’s jacket and I realized it was the top of the bottom Leo had found earlier... I had to pretend I was helping them so they wouldn’t catch me too...

Armando – JotaBraga and Wesley wanted Peter on their side.

Peter – So I took the time to understand what they wanted and what they were planning to do.

Armando – JotaBraga wanted to prove he could steal thoughts.

Quim – That’s a lie! The chief is a member of the Cult!... He was here, wearing an armour, before the ceremony started.

Armando – Well, I admit I have been a Knight of the Order of the Dragons.

Leo – What is this Order?

Armando – A secret society which preserves the values of the Knighthood...

Leo – Such as chopping heads off and eating brains? Nice values, uh?!

Armando – Look! You acted like fools! You decided to start an investigation on your own and got yourselves into a big mess. You should have called the police! But now I’m here and everything will be fine.

Miguel – What about them? Where are they?

Peter – They managed to escape when we turned the lights off...

Quim – The other armoured men will show up. I mean, we’re fucked.

Armando – I’ve already warned my colleagues at the Police station. They won’t get away.

Quim – They were going to eat my brain!

Leo – They ate a few brains at the ceremony earlier.

Armando – Those were dog brains...

Quim – Oh no, I think I’m gonna throw up again!

Armando – Deep down, JotaBraga was using and deceiving the Order of the Dragons. The theft of the answer sheet you witnessed had the purpose of helping those kids, Romeu Tadeu and João Beiz.

Quim – Poor guys. So dumb...

Miguel& Totola – (*singing, making fun of the boys names*)

Armando – So JotaBraga made the Order believe that if the stupidest kids from school ate the brains of two smart people, they would be able to pass the GEST.

Peter – Except JotaBraga had the answer sheet.

Armando – Which Wesley and Marta stole.

Peter – And I got back!

Armando – If everything worked out well, the Order would believe JotaBraga's ideas, and they would continue deceiving everybody saying thoughts could be stolen.

Totola – What about the brains?

Quim – Do you really need to know about that?

Armando – The ones you witnessed being eaten were not human. They used the stray dogs collected by Mrs. Young every night. She takes the dogs to take care of them, but since her head is not well...

Peter – They stole some of the dogs...

Quim – All right, that's enough, I get it.

*Music. Change of scene.*

## **Scene 10**

Quim (*narrating. Announces solemnly*) – Epilogue: How to Face Giant Rabbits!

Leo (*narrating*) – Quim is always saying I have this thing of connecting everything, of thinking that everything is related, that I'm very suspicious.

*Leo, Quim and Peter.*

Peter – Wesley was caught... So were Professor Wilson and the members of the board...

But Marta and JotaBraga have escaped.

*JotaBraga enters holding a gun and pointing it at Leo.*

JotaBraga – I should have known you would be trouble.

Leo – Me?

JotaBraga – You're just like her!... Did you know your mom also got in my way?...

Leo – My mom?...

JotaBraga – You think you’re smart, just like her, don’t you?

Leo – Now I remember... You’re the guy who used to go to my house when I was little...

JotaBraga – Your mother stuck her nose into something that was none of her business...

Just like you did.

Leo – That’s it!... You’re the guy who was on the road and came to talk to my grandma

Laila...

Quim – What are you talking about, Leo?

Leo – I was very little... This guy came home and told us he witnessed everything...the accident. Did you kill my mother?

JotaBraga – No! It was an accident.

Quim – But didn’t your mother die from a disease?...

Leo – That’s what grandma Laila told me... Of course! She didn’t want me to go after the truth.

JotaBraga – You mother and I started working in the same agency... She was very smart, I can’t deny it. For every good Idea I had, she had a better one. Her ideas were always better than mine.

Leo – That’s not a reason for killing someone...

JotaBraga – She stole my ideas, my thoughts...

Leo – Stole? You said yourself that her ideas were better than yours...

JotaBraga – That’s what you can’t understand. I would have had those very same ideas if she wasn’t always ahead of me.

Leo – What?

JotaBraga – She didn't give me room to breathe. I was better than her! I had to find a way to impose myself, to get ahead of her, to show everyone I could have better ideas than her! She couldn't keep stealing my thoughts! She couldn't!

Leo – You killed my mother because she had better ideas than you?

JotaBraga – There's a quote from the Bible that I really love. It's in John's chapter. He asks: "What is the truth?" I will prevent you from being told so many stories and that you keep searching for the so-called truth. Do you know why? Because there isn't an answer to this question. Not even Jesus, not even God, not even poor John the apostle dared to answer that question. So I'm going to help you: you're going to die without finding the truth.

*Just as JotaBraga 's about to shoot, Quim throws himself at him, making him miss the shoot and knocking him to the floor. Peter kicks the gun away, disarming JotaBraga.*

Leo (*narrating*) – I still can't believe Quim did what he did. He knocked the guy down! He saved me!...

Quim (*narrating*) – Yes, I did it, because I love Leo.

Leo (*narrating*) – He has always been such a pussy.

Quim (*narrating*) – I could never have let that happen. For Leo I would face every Knight in the world!

Leo (*narrating*) – Except JotaBraga managed to escape. The Police is still looking for him. Rumour has it he went to Lisbon, using a fake passport and pretending to be a dead cousin. But who knows?

Quim (*narrating*) – As for Marta, she said she regretted what she did, that she was only thinking of the money, that when she realized they were going to chop our heads off she knew nothing made sense...

Leo (*narrating*) – As she's still a minor, she didn't go to prison.

Quim (*narrating*) – But she didn't change that much.

*Marta and Paula.*

Marta – So you got my girl, uh? But Julia is still mine.

Paula – Yours?... So women are now property?... I really don't understand you.

You want to seem hip, cool, but you think like someone from a century ago...

Marta – What's your problem, girl?...

Paula – You treat girls like the worst of the guys, the jerkiest of them all.

Marta – Oh, so the little loser finally decided to flap her wings?... See how coming out did you good? Out of my way!

Paula – You know, Marta, I always knew that deep down you were nothing but a reactionary.

Marta – I'm a what?... What do you mean by that? Are you making fun of me with your uptight vocabulary?

Paula – Yeah. Yes, I am. You deserve it.

Marta – You're just jealous because you're invisible!

Paula – You're the one who can't handle what you wanted to be.

Marta – I'm special! You're nothing!

Paula – No. You try to do everything to look special... But in the end you're just mean!...

Tell me: what's the problem with being ordinary? Most people live ordinary lives and most people have character. In your case, being special is not a big deal.

Marta – None of you have attitude! Not even you, douchebag!

Paula – Do you think you're changing anything with all this selfishness? Look, to my grandmother being special is making a nice cake for their grandchildren and watching them grow up. This talk of "specialness" is pure crap.

Marta – Right. Miss Goodie Two-Shoes wants to spend her life baking cakes, right?...

Paula – If that’s what makes me happy, I don’t see why not. Better than pretending to be “angry at everything”. Accepting life as it is, that’s the key! You accept life as it is. Not like you, pretending to have a style that you bought. It’s not yours!

All this was bought!

Marta – Girl, you know nothing of being extreme!

Paula – It’s good being extreme, you know, Marta? But I mean really extreme.

I am more extreme than you. Extreme means being firm, holding on to your principles. What’s your principle? Getting ahead in life without caring for others? Walking over everybody else?

Marta – And what ’s wrong with that? Isn’t the whole world like that? Isn’t that what they want from us?

Paula – This just shows you how silly you are. Believing in all that crap. People keep repeating this mantra that “we must be special”. But when you stop and think about it, that’s a very individualistic thought, something totally selfish.

Marta – You’re the selfish one!

Paula – Wow, look at the “out and proud” girl pretending to have some attitude. Your clothes, your hair, they are just a way to hide the fact you don’t think for yourself. This is so old!

Leo (*narrating*) There was no way to help it. Marta punched Paula on the face. Right at the moment when Julia got there.

*Julia enters and helps Paula.*

Julia – Go away, Marta!... Get out of here, forever!... Wasn’t what you did to everybody enough? Go away! Get out!

*Marta stares at Julia and Paula for a while, then leaves.*

Leo (*narrating*) – Everything happened really fast. We hadn't had time to process things. I'm not even sure we would be able to process everything. I don't know.

Quim (*narrating*) – I was happy for Peter when he got into college. But he's never around nowadays. We only talk through Facebook. After everything, me, Miguel and Totola got even closer than we were before.

Totola – Now the people from school find us only a little bit despicable.

Miguel (*laughs*) – Cool! Pretty cool!

Leo (*narrating*) – The “Delirious Echo” got much better!...

Beatriz – Leo, are we going to Julia's house?

Berenice – What if we went to Julia's house, uh, Leo?

Quim – I don't know, Leo... I still think about this: what if it is possible to steal our thoughts?

Leo – Well, the world is full of people trying to steal everything. Why wouldn't they try to steal thoughts as well?

Leo (*narrating*) – Girls see things in a different way. You can't explain that. I felt relieved knowing a little better my mom's story. That made me think I also wanted to be a mother one day. Every afternoon I stop by Julia's to check on her baby. He's so cute. I just hope he grows up healthy... And with his own ideas...

Quim – Ever since all those things happened, I also started to see things in a different way. I noticed when the giant rabbit got behind me trying to catch the 743 bus ahead of me, so before climbing in the bus, I moved aside and let him pass by me. I guess he's always so self-centered that he didn't even see me there. It's not that I was afraid. It really isn't. I just didn't want to react without thinking.

After all, I'm smarter than him, right?... And then, when I saw that huge rabbit squeezed up on the bus' seat I felt like laughing at him, at how dumb he looked.



I thought of making a joke so that everyone else laughed at his bent giant ears getting crushed by the bus' ceiling and at his "I can't dream" face, "I don't have a future" face. But I realized I would only humiliate him. So I kept staring at him the whole way, with the certainty that I, through my imagination, would have so much more than him for all my life.

**The end.**