

“Nosotros No” (“Not us”) by José Bernardo Adolph

One evening, when the typewriter bells jingled and the news was spread like a miracle, people everywhere joined together in a single cry of triumph. Just as had been predicted two hundred years earlier, mankind had finally conquered immortality in 2168.

All of the loudspeakers in the world, all of the image-transmitters, all of the newspapers, highlighted this great biological revolution. Naturally, I also rejoiced at first.

Oh, how we had awaited that day!

Just one injection, of ten cubic centimeters, was all that was necessary to avoid death forever. Just one injection, administered every hundred years, guaranteed that no human body would ever decompose. Since that day, only an accident could end a human life. Goodbye to sickness, senility, and death by organic decay.

Just one injection, every hundred years.

Until the second piece of news came, supplementing the first. The injection would only take effect among those younger than twenty years old. No human that had passed up their stage of growth would be able to stop their internal decomposition in time. Only the young would be immortal. The federal world government was already preparing to organize the shipping, distribution, and administration of the dosage to all of the kids and adolescents on earth. The rockets' medicine compartments would bring vials to the farthest-out terrestrial colonies in space.

Everyone would be immortal.

Except for us, the grown-ups, the adults, the developed, in whose being the seed of death was already definitively planted.

All of the kids would live forever. They'd be immortal, and in fact, animals of a different species. Not human beings anymore: their psychology, their vision, their perspective, were radically different from ours.

Not us. We, the men and women more than twenty years of age, are the last mortal generation. We were the goodbye, the farewell, the handkerchief of blood and bones that would flutter for the last time on the face of the Earth.

Not us. Quickly alienated, as the last old geezers, we had suddenly turned into inhabitants of a nursing home, confused, terrified rabbits among a race of titans. These youths, all of a sudden, had inadvertently become our executioners. We weren't their parents anymore. Since that day, we were something else; something repulsive and sick, illogical and monstrous; we were The Ones that would Die. Those that Waited for Death. They shed tears, hiding their contempt, mixing it with their joy. This naïve joy with which they expressed their certainty that now, yes, now everything would have to go well.

We just waited. We would see them grow up, become handsome, stay young and prepare for the second injection... a ceremony (which we would never see) whose religious nature would become apparent. They wouldn't be with God anymore. The final load of souls on the way out would be ours.

How it would hurt us to leave the earth! How this painful envy would eat away at us! What a murderous desire would fill our souls, starting today and lasting until the day of our death!

Until yesterday. When the first boy, fifteen years old, with the injection in his body, decided to kill himself. When this news arrived, we, the mortals, recently began to love and understand the immortals.

Because they're just poor tadpoles condemned to a perpetual prison in the greenish pond of life. Perpetual. Eternal. And we began to suspect that within 99 years, the day of the second injection, the police would go out searching to impose it upon thousands of immortals.

And the third injection, and the fourth, and the fifth century, and the sixth; each time less voluntary, more and more eternal children that begged for an escape, an end, a rescue. The hunt would be horrible. They would be perpetually miserable.

But not us.