

MY HOMEWORK NOTEBOOK

For Spanish Version

Inverösímil

Edición #17



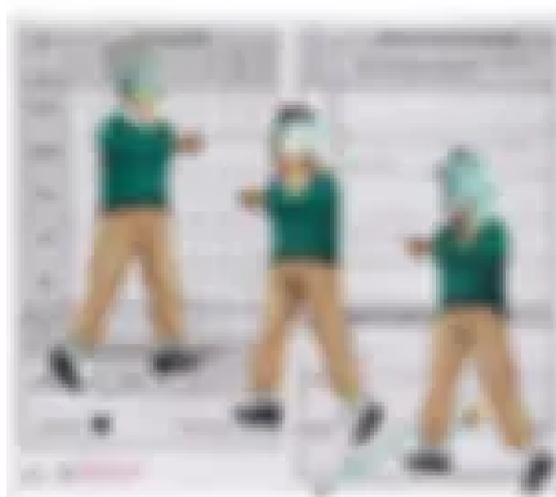
Up until second grade, everything was fine. I am 6 or 7 years old. At the school pledge to the Flag, at seven thirty in the morning. The sun's rays illuminate the patio, the groups are in formations all around and everyone is silent. I am in the group that carries the flag, I'm in the front, I am not the one who carries the flag but I am on the side, with a serious, serene look, taking with professionalism the role that I perform, which is to respect the flag. Being part of the group that carries the flag is a privilege, that is what the teachers have told us, only the best can be there. I don't believe it, I don't belong to the group of the intelligent ones, and my mother knows it too. 24 years later, I look at the photographs of that morning, they are too many. It was the only time I was in that group because the following years I would be in the group of the lazy kids, of the excluded ones, those who have citations, suspensions. Starting in the third year of elementary school, my student life was in decline, I never managed to adapt to the requirements of the school. The elementary school had a system similar to a prison: uniforms, recess schedules, reading schedules, you had to line up to enter the classroom, to buy food, participate by raising your hand, weekly evaluations, bimonthly exams, etc.

Perhaps one of the most torturous memories I have around school is my homework notebook. Although it was a notebook in which a calendar was printed from Monday to Friday where the tasks had to be written, there was specifically a section, on the lower right side, which was surely one of my great fears of my childhood: REMARKS ON THE STUDENT. In it, the teachers elaborated freely around the mischief, recklessness or misconduct that I continually carried out. When the fault required a more extensive explanation, the teacher used to add a separate sheet to it since the box was not enough. Once, during recess, I was premiering a sweet called Viper, a test tube that had a strawberry-flavored liquid inside it, with a slight acid taste (it worked as a spray, it would have to be put close to your tongue to experiment with more intensity the flavors of the industrial dyes) that plunged me into a state of ecstasy, in addition to that it was not so easy to obtain one of these sweets since they were expensive and difficult to obtain. To have a Viper was to be fashionable, to be an avant-garde among the mass of children, it was like having gone to Disneyland and showing off that you had gotten on the roller coaster while the other children had to settle for having spent their vacations in Oaxtepec. There I was, sitting on a bench in the patio, savoring the acidic strawberry flavored liquid gold. I must have been 10 years old, third or fourth grade. A boy, Alberto, approached me to ask me for a bit of the Viper. I didn't feel like giving him some, it took a lot of work to convince my parents to buy it for me. The act of putting the candy near his mouth disgusted me. To top it all, he had no qualms about sticking out his tongue, in which I caught a glimpse of chunks of food lying folded on the surface of the taste buds. A harmful impulse surged within me and I aimed the spray directly at his right eye. After a few seconds, Alberto was crying intensely and saying: "I CAN'T SEE, I CAN'T SEE!" Some children came up, and in less than two minutes I was already at the principal's office; The principal and a teacher questioned me about the reason for such an act, and I simply did the same as Alberto: I closed my eyes and began to cry. Before the end of the school day, the teacher wrote the longest letter about the recess incident and pasted it in my notebook, I was terrified because at the end of the letter it said that if none of my parents signed it, I would be suspended for a week and despite certain daily incidents that happened to me during school, there were moments of happiness.



Nicolás Marín

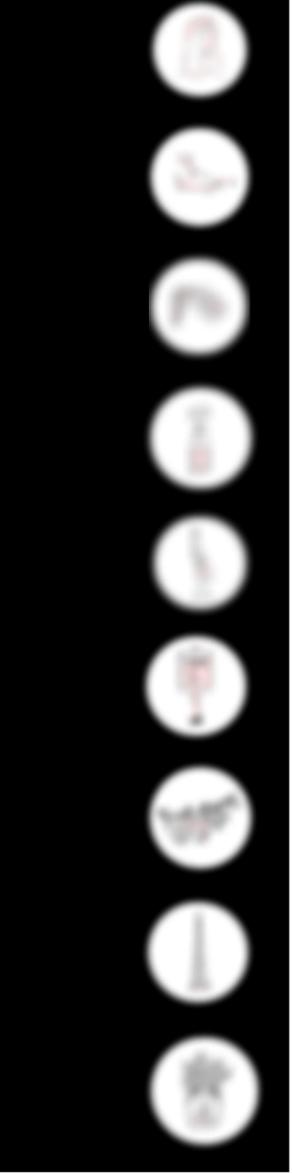
By: Gustavo Maldonado



By retelling this memory, I look with nostalgia and suffer at Nicolás Marín's report cards, intervened with illustrations of elementary school boys and girls. In one of the report cards -4 B where there are two children playing the Mule (as we used to say in elementary school), the teacher's observations can be seen with clarity: The student is suggested to reason through mathematical problems; The child is asked to practice reading comprehension. In the following observations, it is no longer possible to read the sentence, but it implies that the child has to continue studying, to make an effort.

On another report card, 6B, the observations are limited to: Congratulations on being a good student. What would it have meant to be a good student? Having good grades? Not having reports of conduct? Being generous with the other children and giving them Viper? On the report card, 5 B, it is perhaps the one that reminds me the most of those sunny days in the classroom where I felt isolated from everything, uncommunicated, isolated not only by distance, but by the incomprehension of my sudden impulse to destroy what surrounded me. Alberto was one of many characters who best adapted to my compulsive need to destroy. My homework notebook, if I rightly think about it, could





be a diary told by someone else, or a medical file where the teacher is that sadistic nurse from the movie One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest with no way out.

Marín's ballots not only reflect nostalgic experiences - that feeling of wanting to return to childhood - they also convey the daily conflicts of childhood: the search for approval towards authority figures, the impossibility of being authentic, the moral connotation with which school knowledge and merit are judged based on grades and averages where individuality is privileged over social.

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