We spend our life searching,

trying to find clues to find out who we are.

We search our childhood memories, deep inside ourselves.

But, sometimes, stories find us first.

And this is one of those times.

Excuse me, I haven’t introduced myself,

my name is Olvido (Oblivion).

Under the rain, in my hands,

the faces of that enigmatic couple made me feel anxious and doubtful.

What were they doing there?
Why were they among piles of rubble?

/tc 00:02:14:11 00:02:18:08
Who has thrown away their image, their memory?

/tc 00:02:18:12 00:02:20:07
Who were they?

/tc 00:02:41:05 00:02:45:19
I was so shocked by that find that, somehow, inevitably,

/tc 00:02:45:21 00:02:54:13
I knew they were already part of my own story, of my search.

/tc 00:02:59:15 00:03:04:19
I am sorry but right now I can hardly remember who they are.

/tc 00:03:04:22 00:03:07:14
I don’t know them, that’s for sure.

/tc 00:03:07:21 00:03:10:22
Maybe they aren’t from the village

/tc 00:03:11:13 00:03:14:18
cause personally, I don’t know them...

/tc 00:03:16:03 00:03:18:23
and if they are from the village...

/tc 00:03:19:01 00:03:23:06
I'm already 85 years old and I don’t remember them.

No.

Aunt Irene maybe? Irene?

I..., they look familiar to me but no, I don’t know.

Domingo.

I don’t really know, I used to know but...

I knew a woman who also but...

Because it hasn’t got any writing on it, has it? it hasn’t got anything, nothing but this,

and it was very small but you made it bigger...

I think I know this face, her face but not his,

I don’t know him. And he has a moustache so...
This looks as if it was from the war, you see...

Those people must be very old, Domingo.

The task was not going to be easy,

but the effort to remember,

to listen to that people's stories, looked worthwhile..

The next thing to do was to go to the only place where I could find a clue.

A visit where I found more doubts than revelations.

These are the marriage books, until 1874.

The other ones begin again after war.

It's because during the Civil War
the marriage records were also burnt in the church.

That was how a lot of information was erased,

they set all the documents on fire, as they did in the town hall,

everything was burnt there, I think.

And this is the last one we have, until 84, 1884.

And we have information from 1570.

But no, there isn’t anything else.

Those ones are just bundles of papers, marriage books,

all of them signed but the document we are searching for is lost.

That is because we were very civilized and we just destroyed the documents,
people from both sides.

So I am very sorry but we’ve come to a dead end.

The only thing I had was that picture,

those eyes lost in time,

accentuated by the restorer’s touch,

his baggy and probably borrowed suit,

that wedding flower bouquet,

that solemn dress,

that make you think they were a working class couple.

But they looked serious, proud,
waiting to be immortalized in the picture,

waiting to fight the passage of time.

Listening, trying to remember those people and their lives is all that I could do.

Slowly, the memories,

without any established order, were coming to their minds.

When I got married I was dressed in black because I wanted to be dressed like that,

I wanted my shawl.

Aunt Marcelina made that dress for me.

But I haven’t got any picture and I was going to have one but the dress, a very beautiful one, was eaten by cockroaches.
We had decided to go to Madrid to take the photograph but after that we didn’t go.

I can just tell you there were no photographers here...

There was a man who offered to paint our portrait.

I gave him a couple of pictures from Domingo and I

and he asked me what my wedding dress was like

like so I told him I had worn black dress and a shawl

but I didn’t tell him I was wearing a short dress, nor long

and he painted me with a long one, a bouquet of wedding flowers I didn’t have

and with a veil,
I had borrowed the shawl, you could not buy one.

Well, looking at this picture and remembering one of Don José and the kids in 1915,

well I think they look similar.

Maybe it’s the hair-parting

and I think he also had a moustache but I’m not sure.

That was the first and only clue I had about who those people could be.

José Ríos and María Cristina,

the names of two teachers that worked in the village at the end of the past century.

The impressive effort to save the children from illiteracy
of helping them to reach a better future, was on their shoulders.

The school was on a square at the bottom of the village.

After that I was always in the school on the old square.

I had eleven teachers while I was there.

Of course since we were at war, some of them went away, other ones came...

You know, what could we learn? But we can read and write.

There wasn’t any library or any place to read about anything then.

The few books we had were at the priest’s home and they were about saints and things like that...

But nothing about good literature.
All those teachers were people who were working in other jobs so they became teachers without any training.

Because most of them were republicans and they were removed...

The ones who didn’t agree with their ideas, well, you know, was killed.

Let’s go to celebrate the big tree party because the tree always helps man.

And under the branches we sing thankfully for our Lord’s glory and greatness,

because it gives us its shade in the hot summer,

it gives us its perfumed flower in spring

and it offers us his heat in the winter.
When I heard those people, when I spoke with them,

memories came to them,

sometimes they were sweet, sometimes tragic.

Memories from a generation whose innocence was stolen,

a generation who lived one of the most dramatic parts of our history.

Gosh, we were all running then.

As soon as the bombs started we ran away scared.

And we were very scared. We escaped to the fields.

You could see mothers guiding old men by their shoulders,
others ran through the crops because there were a lot of sown fields then...

ev[00:13:06:16 00:13:08:19] everybody was running though the fields

ev[00:13:08:23 00:13:10:11] and it was better at home,

ev[00:13:10:14 00:13:14:00] because you can be killed on the fields more easily.

I remember when radio came to the village for the first time.

It was war time, so we all went together to listen to it because all of us had somebody fighting the war.

The main door of the church was crowded, that’s where the radio was, so we went there to listen to it, to laugh, to speak... and others to cry.
I said “mother, I am going to get water”

and my brothers were out to get figs.

My mother prepared breakfast, that was called lunch back then.

A soup.

I went out to get some water and when I arrived to Real street I turned back because I thought...

I was so scared of the bombs.

And then I came back home,

maybe if I had been around there when they bombed the bridge of Caño de Enmedio...

I came back.

My brothers left the fig baskets
and came to home too.

But you know, with so many bombs, no one was able to eat the soup.

We were ignorant and that was the reason why so many people were killed.

Not because they were bad people.

People killed each other because they were right-wing or left-wing.

It was just because of ignorance, not because they were wicked.

And that was it.

I remember Italians and other kids like me.

Do you know why I can still remember them?

Because their barracks were at uncle Julio’s home.
We and other kids used to go there with empty pots because they gave us the left over food.

So we didn’t have any bread, we had a pot of potatoes on the table, maybe another one at dinner, once again potatoes, or chickpeas, things to be eaten with a spoon, because the portion of bread was as small as this, and it was given to us at the bakery.

And that was all.

We ate whatever we could in 1940, we were starving.
There wasn’t anything to sell, no food...

We got thistles and whatever we could find,

there wasn’t any other way to get nourishment.

You couldn’t earn money, you could not get anything to eat,

nobody sowed so there wasn’t any food at all.

Years of unnecessary pain that could have broken those couple’s life.

A couple, still unnamed, whose look was at the back of my mind.

Something new showed up.

A few years after the picture had been taken,

at least three people from the village were taken to a Nazi extermination camp,
to Güßen specifically, were they were killed.

The tragic and unfortunate story of these fellow countrymen followed the fate of several hundred of thousand Spaniards which crossed the border between February and March in 1939.

At first, when Germany invaded France, they were mobilized by the Army. In some cases, they are mobilized as assault troops; in other, to build the Maginot Line, as hard labours, but well, it’s an option too, they understand this is another way to fight, well, against the Nazism
and, in one word, to fight for the Republic, to keep on fighting for the Republic.

The French Government surrenders

and the first soldiers which they hand over as prisoners are Spaniards.

Franco's Government doesn't take an interest in them, they say that they are not Spaniards

and well, in that condition they are finally moved.

More than ten thousand Spaniards are transferred

and nearly eight thousand are assassinated.

And this is the tragic destiny of these three fellow countrymen who we've heard from.

But, in spite of drowning under those long lists of missing or assassinated people,
everything led me to a dead end again and again.

On one hand, I wanted to know who they were,

but doing it using those long list of people who had been murdered would have been horrible.

The remaining possibilities made me think beyond the boundaries of that village.

Indeed, there were a lot of people who had no choice but to leave

in search of the prosperity they couldn’t find in the village.

Gradually, loneliness gained ground in the streets.

I said, well I think I am going to Madrid, and they didn’t want to believe it!
You are going to Madrid without liking it?

And my sister María, she didn’t know it either,

and she said:
You’re not going to Madrid. You don’t like it.

I said: I’m going to Madrid!

Because I love my children and,
as I love my children, I’m going to Madrid.

And I’m going because of them,
I’m going because of them.

Because if my children go now, they can still get a job,
because they are at an age to get a job, and tomorrow they’ll have a trade,

and they won’t have their father’s misfortune.

Then, well, there was a big difference
between the village and Madrid, the big city.

Because, well, back then there wasn’t absolutely nothing here.

That’s why when the Theatre Company came, there were a lot of people, and when they sold sweets, they sold tons of them, not like now… And then a lot of people left because of necessity.

Many of them were totally ignorant, they really must have gone through bad times. And then they made progress for one reason mainly, they had the ground prepared for them, a lot of people left with eight or nine years old children; they were used to working hard.

That was because of the kind of life in the village,
although life in Madrid was also hard.

But it was even harder in the villages.

And then those people started to work there, started to live, they could get a house...

Then the situation got worse, because people were unemployed.

A lot of people could earn some money from hunting.

Because in this village a lot of people went hunting, there were lots of rabbits.

If someone shot a rabbit, he could sell it and, at least, had something to eat.

And that was when so many people emigrated.

There were people who had even more difficulties,
and they had to emigrate out of the country, which made harder to find a clue about that couple.

My grandparents emigrated with no destination.

They sold all their belongings in Nombela, they bought carts, trunks…

And headed for Algeciras with no destination in mind.

They walked twenty, thirty kilometres…

When they arrived in Algeciras, they sold everything and got on a steamboat.

They were travelling southwards, to Brazil.

They went via Rio de Janeiro, they crossed the Strait of Magellan,

and they went up by Argentina and arrived to California, where they settled down.
They bought a house, they settled down there and they were working in a canning factory.

Years later, my grandmother said she wanted to come back to Spain and my grandfather didn’t want to.

Finally my grandfather listened to her and sold everything they had again and they came back to Spain.

I was suffocating here in the village and then I left home.

I had an aunt in Madrid, my mother’s sister, and I asked her to write me, telling me that she was ill, that she needed me and that I had to leave, and I was 18 or 20 years old.
And then I met a French family and I left Spain.

I settled down in Paris.

Here it was awful, because women couldn’t go anywhere alone.

You had to go out with a cousin, a brother or someone…

But I could have that freedom there. Not here, and it drove me crazy.

That freedom, that was what I liked about France.

People that decided to stay at the village, or those who had no chance to leave it,

remember with yearning the annual festivals and gatherings that, back then,

made them forgive the hard farm work by the minute.
Here, in those days, the little fun you had was in the summer time, in September.

Some guys came from Madrid and the few people living here.

And I think that we had really good times, even better than now,

because we danced on the road.

Since they didn’t let us inside the bar, they played the gramophone at Tio Mariano’s,

and we had the ball on the road.

Then there were more people than now, anywhere you went in the annual festival.

Then, when the war was over, two years later or so,

people organized a society, at Tio Mariano’s.
There was just a roof, the rest was outdoors.

We organized a society and we went with the hurdy-gurdy that we bought in Nuño Gómez on a donkey and a mule.

They played it as they brought it here via Garciotún, Bayuela and El Real.

It cost one thousand pesetas.

The man had a big piece of land, and he put some branches there, and they watered the ground, well.

There was a hurdy-gurdy, the young people in the village bought it.

I was there because my husband paid for it too.
And this hurdy-gurdy was one of these which went “dilín, dilín, dilín”.

“The milkmaid, I am the milkmaid; she’s set up a dairy.

It is a dairy where they work harder at night time than daytime”.

Those people’s stories,

their experiences and memories

made me stop the search of that enigmatic couple for a minute.

A letter in reply to the only trail I had, returned me to them.

My grandparents, possibly the subjects in the photo,

met on a train, when each one was on their way. They were both from the area of Zamora.
My grandfather was travelling to Pelahustán and my grandmother was travelling to Talaván, which is a village in Cáceres.

As the journeys were so long in those days, a friendship or love sprang up between them, whatever it was.

And they got married.

The first time I saw the photograph... The man looked a lot like my grandfather, in my opinion.

And the woman... It was like a shiver you feel down your back... she looked like a sister of mine, Valeria.

Then, if you compare it with
my grandmother’s photograph,

she didn’t look like her so much.

The thing is that the photos we have were taken later, and she seemed fatter.

Then, I shouldn’t rule out.

There is a 0.7% possibility that she is…

Well, I would say 0.5, in probabilistic terms.

I think that there’s a possibility that they are, yes, but it can’t be confirmed.

There are some features which don’t fit properly.

For example, the man, the husband…

I remember my grandfather a bit more stout, but it can be a faded memory in a girl’s mind.
I mean, when someone is young, the buildings seem so tall and then they are not.

Then I can’t know for sure.

The great tree party, let’s celebrate my friend;

the tree is an’s unchanging benefactor.

And under its branches, we sing thankfully...

Eduardo Galeano said oblivion is the only death which really kills.

That image had lost all its value, all its role of preserving the memory of those two people.

Without date, without name, with no one to remember them,
those were just two figures,

they were like empty suits.

Were they really José and María Cristina?

The doubt will remain throughout time.

At least, the effort has been worthwhile to revive some of the pieces of a puzzle to which I am now a part of.