**Name and surname: Elisabeth DÍAZ LASTRAS**

Genre:short story

Age: 37

Country: Spain

EBU National Member: Spanish National Organization of the Blind

Number of words: 1003

**Sometimes we Receive Letters**

Marga had a quiet life. She worked in a small food store in the neighbourhood, she took her dog Bobby for walks, on Sundays she met her two childhood friends for coffee, and in summer she went to her village with her mother…in short, a normal life.

Marga was fifty years old and she asked for no more…this was her life and she was content with it.

Then, one of those normal days, something happened to Marga to break the routine a little. Just like every day, when she arrived home from work she opened the mailbox without thinking but, unlike every other day, along with the usual bills and flyers she found…a big, thick letter unlike anything she was used to.

When she took it upstairs and read it she saw it said “For Claudia”, but the strange thing was that the rest of the address was correct.

As the letter was peculiar she opened it (knowing full well she was interfering in someone’s private life) and, to her surprise, she discovered it was…covered in dots! She looked at them against the light to try to read them, but she couldn’t understand a thing…it was a mess of random, meaningless dots.

Her initial reaction was to put it in the bin, but she decided to keep it in case she could hand it on to the person it was addressed to. But who could be the recipient of these hieroglyphics?

That night she came across the first clue. When she was taking her pills, Marga discovered the letter used the same dots as the ones on her medicine box.

Well, well, how could she not have realised before? It was addressed to a blind person.

I think this is called…braille, she thought. Then she remembered she had seen it in lifts, on medicines and in some museums.

So the letter was for someone called Claudia and she had worked out that Claudia was blind, probably like the sender as they used braille to communicate with each other.

Marga thought about everyone she knew or had seen at some point, but none of them was blind.

She could only remember Marcos, the guy who sold lottery tickets from the kiosk at the corner, but of course his name wasn’t exactly Claudia. So, she put the letter away (as a memento of such a peculiar day) and got on with her normal life.

She forgot all about it until, some three weeks later, she received another similar letter…It was addressed, on this occasion, to “My dear Claudia”.

Marga put it away along with the first one. However, this time she couldn’t get this Claudia off her mind so easily, and at times she caught herself wondering who she was and what she was like, and who would write to her and why.

Three months later Marga had collected five of these letters, and they were all addressed similarly to “My dear Claudia” or “To Claudia, my love”, and so on.

Marga felt bad just thinking that somewhere there was a person in love with another person called Claudia and that, for whatever reason she couldn’t fathom, there was some kind of mistake and that person wasn’t receiving any reply. So, one morning, she got up determined to find Claudia right away.

The first thing she thought was that to find Claudia she needed more information about her, and this information could only be in the letters, so she just had to learn to read them.

Marga knew she could find the braille alphabet somewhere and that it would help her, but where? Who could she ask for help? She knew the easiest way would be on internet, but then she didn’t use internet. She felt she didn’t need to use it for her normal life.

Finally, she realised the solution was Marcos, and she asked him to teach her, claiming it was for a school assignment for her niece (a niece she had never had).

Now that she had the alphabet, she began to translate the letters. At first she tried letter by letter, checking each letter against the alphabet, but then she realised this wasn’t a very effective method so she decided to learn the alphabet to be able to read more fluently.

It took her five weekends to learn the alphabet and read all the letters, even missing her Sunday coffee in the process, which made her friends worried as Marga hadn’t missed their coffee date in the thirty years they had been following this routine.

When she finished reading the letters she was very moved, not just because she had got to know Claudia, but also when she imagined the person who was writing to her and the story that had brought them together.

She had to find Claudia and she had to find her fast, because the letters kept coming and love fades away if it isn’t nurtured, and this couldn’t happen to Claudia.

She considered a few alternatives, such as asking her neighbours or going to the estate agents that had sold her the flat fifteen years ago or asking someone to look for her on Facebook or contacting ONCE or any other blind organisation to find out if they knew her.

And, with all this information, she got down to work.

After a few days of hard work, she finally tracked her down! After thousands of pieces of paper with meaningless holes, other ripped sheets of paper, more unfinished drafts, pencils sharpened to use as a stylus…Marga finally managed to grab one of the few opportunities which, although by accident, life had given her, and, in almost perfect braille, she wrote:

*Dear Antonio,*

*Sorry I’ve taken so long to reply to your letters.*

*I’ve been looking for you too for twenty years, and I’ve never forgotten you. The trip where we met was fantastic and I have fond memories of it.*

*I’m so happy you want to rekindle our relationship.*

*I love you,*

*Claudia.*