UNTIL THE PART ARRIVES

STORIES



TOMÁS VILAR

Until the Part Arrives

Tomás Vilar

INTERLINKED STORIES

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A Note on This Edition

Until the Part Arrives forms part of the fictional back catalogue of Tomás Vilar, a literary persona created with ChatGPT. Within the author's imagined career, this collection dates from 2011. The text was written and brought into book form in 2026, at the curators' request, for inclusion in the Margem 37 Collection.

The date 2011 belongs to the fiction: it does not imply that a historical edition existed. The characters, the workshop and the events in these stories are invented. The workshop is not presented as belonging to Tomás's father, nor do its characters constitute an account of the author's family.

The stories take place over a single week. They can be read separately, although certain jobs, objects and people appear in more than one.

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The Deadline

On Monday, Davi promised the radio for Friday because Friday seemed far enough away. The man on the other side of the counter had not asked for a guarantee. He had only asked whether he should come back that week. There was a way to answer without giving a date, but Davi had not yet learnt to use it without sounding as though he did not work there.

“Friday afternoon,” he said.

The man's name was Mauro. He took a small diary from his pocket and made a mark. Davi watched the mark as though it added an obligation his words alone had not yet carried.

“Does Anselmo know this radio?”

“He knows the type.”

It was a reasonable distinction. Davi felt he had made a good start.

The radio sat playing in Mauro's kitchen and lost the station whenever anyone touched the tuning knob. His wife, Rosa, had wedged a folded piece of paper beside it. This had worked for a while. Mauro brought the paper in an envelope along with the radio, in case it helped with the diagnosis.

Davi took everything. He filled in the job sheet, tore off the customer's copy and wrote Friday in the top corner. His handwriting was large, intended to make an impression through the worn-out carbon paper.

Anselmo returned from the supplier just before lunch. He put a bag on the floor, read the receipt and asked who had opened the radio.

“No one yet.”

“Then what did you promise?”

Davi considered saying he had promised to take a look. The word Friday, blue and perfectly legible, stopped him.

Anselmo did not raise his voice. He turned down the workshop radio, which worked well enough to offer the other one no solidarity.

“First we look.”

He took the set to the workbench. Davi stayed close, intending to help and hoping the fault would be minor. The second distracted him from the first.

There was a broken part in the assembly beside the tuning knob. Anselmo showed him the play in it, turned the radio towards the light and found a box of components salvaged from other sets. Two looked similar. Neither fitted.

“We'll have to order it.”

“Will it be here by Friday?”

Anselmo looked at him. Davi understood that repeating the deadline was not a way of producing the part.

Irene wrote the part number on a sheet beside the telephone. She placed orders, dealt with customers, chased collections and hunted for the glasses Anselmo left in places that did not support his complaint that nobody respected his workbench. She had forty minutes to go home for lunch. That day, she spent twelve trying to reach the supplier.

“He'll check and call back,” she said.

“Tell the man it depends on that,” Anselmo told Davi.

Davi found the job sheet. The telephone number was clear. He dialled, listened and hung up after five rings. Under Notes, he wrote “no answer”.

The supplier called back while Irene was at lunch. Anselmo answered with a dirty hand and held the receiver away from his

face. They had a part, he was told. It would be dispatched on Wednesday. It might arrive on Friday.

“Excellent,” he said.

As he hung up, he realised that excellent went further than anything the supplier had said. Even so, he told Davi they would probably have it in time. The young man put the job sheet away. Neither of them mentioned calling the customer again.

On Tuesday, Mauro stopped by the workshop. He was on his way somewhere else and did not want to interrupt. He said this three times, interrupting with care.

“Still Friday?”

Anselmo had the radio open in front of him. All he had to say was that it depended on the delivery. He said the part had been ordered.

“Right, then.”

Mauro left before anyone had to decide whether that answered the question. Anselmo watched him go and returned to the bench. On the other side, Davi pretended to look for a screwdriver.

That afternoon, Irene found the job sheet with no agreed price on it. She asked what the repair would cost. Anselmo gave her an estimate and asked her to check with the customer.

Mauro answered on the second ring. He accepted the price and asked whether he could arrive a little before five, because the bus times were different on Fridays. Irene covered the receiver.

“Will it be ready?”

“If the part comes.”

She uncovered the receiver and repeated his words without improving them.

There was a brief silence. Then Mauro said he had understood the date was definite. Irene looked at Friday written on the paper and could see no reason to argue.

“That's what it says here, yes.”

She promised to telephone before he left home. After hanging up, she added the task to the sheet. Anselmo said there was no need to make so much of it; the supplier usually delivered on time.

“Which deadline?” she asked.

He said Wednesday, caught his mistake and corrected himself: Friday. Wednesday was when it would be dispatched. Irene clipped the job sheet beside the telephone.

On Thursday, Davi swept under the workbench and found Mauro's envelope. Inside, the folded paper still held the shape Rosa had given it. He put it beside the radio. It was an inadequate solution, but someone had tried it before bringing the set in.

Shortly before closing, Anselmo asked whether there was any news of the order.

“It went out yesterday,” Irene said. “It hasn't arrived yet.”

Davi was about to ask whether it would come in time. Instead, he pulled the job sheet from the clip and checked the telephone number.

The Difference

Lídia brought the blender in a supermarket bag and asked them not to throw it away. The bag was stronger than the new ones. Anselmo hung it on a hook above others whose owners had given the same instruction.

“If it's more than sixty, leave it,” she said.

He wrote down the limit. A clear instruction, the kind he liked to be given. Lídia pointed at the number.

“Sixty, all in.”

“All in.”

She ran a juice counter inside a snack bar. This blender was her own, brought from home when the other one broke. Now both were out of use. She was selling coffee and soft drinks while the fresh-juice sign continued to promise a larger menu.

Anselmo asked how long the blender had been making that noise.

“Until yesterday I could pretend it was normal.”

He smiled. Lídia did not. She was calculating how long it would take to walk back and open before school let out.

The estimate came to forty-eight. Irene called and received immediate approval. Lídia asked whether she could collect it the following morning. Anselmo, who had heard the question, nodded without putting down the appliance he was working on.

On Wednesday, Lídia arrived at twenty past eight. The workshop opened at eight, but the blender had not yet been tested. She waited standing, although Irene offered her the chair by the wall. Sitting down felt like agreeing to an unknown length of time.

Davi filled the jug with water and switched it on. The noise was much reduced. Anselmo came over from the workbench, wiping his hands, and explained the repair. He used the patient tone he reserved for people he thought incapable of taking an interest in the full explanation.

Lídia heard him out.

“But it's leaking.”

There was a line of water beneath the jug. Anselmo switched it off and said that was a separate issue.

“It's the same blender,” she said.

Repairing the fitting would add eighteen reais. He did the sum aloud: sixty-six. The closeness of the numbers seemed to him to make the difference almost disappear.

“It's only six more than you said.”

Lídia opened her purse. She took out two twenty-real notes, a ten and some coins. Then gathered them together again.

“I said sixty.”

“But there was no way to spot the other fault until we got it running.”

She looked at the water. Davi fetched a cloth and dried the bench, wiping away the only thing they agreed on.

Anselmo offered to let the six wait until the following week. Lídia said she did not want to owe him. He said he trusted her. The conversation was acquiring an intimacy she had not asked for.

“It's not about trust. It's about the budget.”

Irene pushed the cash drawer shut with her knee. She did not intervene. Anselmo noticed her listening and went into greater detail, as though a sufficiently long explanation might lower the price.

Lídia said she had seen a new blender for eighty-nine, payable in three instalments. Anselmo knew the model and began listing

the reasons he would not recommend it. She stopped him at the second.

“I'm not asking you to choose for me.”

Silence settled, full of other people's appliances. The workshop radio announced the time; the one from Mauro's kitchen lay open at one end of the bench.

Irene pulled out the job sheet. The limit was written on the first line, with “all in” in brackets. She handed it to Anselmo, though he had not forgotten.

He could stand by his price and lose the job, absorb some of the cost or suggest another arrangement. He chose to say he would do her a favour.

“Call it sixty.”

Lídia accepted the price, but not the word. She put her purse away and said she would come back after lunch. She did not have the full sixty with her.

When she had gone, Anselmo remarked that some people were difficult to help.

Irene put the sheet back on the counter.

“You're selling a repair.”

The job was finished at eleven. Davi repeated the test, left the jug full for a while and ran his hand underneath to check. Anselmo watched without speaking. He wrote sixty on the sheet and drew a line beneath the total.

Lídia returned with the money counted out. She had also brought a bread roll, wrapped up, which she had bought to eat on the way. She put it down away from the wet bench. She asked to see the blender running. Davi tested it again. This time, nobody seemed offended.

She wanted to pay eighteen that day and forty-two on Friday. Anselmo was about to remind her that she herself had said she

disliked owing money. Irene simply asked whether she could put down the two dates.

“Yes,” Lídia said. “Today, that's what I can manage.”

As she was leaving, she asked for her bag. Anselmo took one from the hook. It was not hers. Lídia pointed to the right one, folded behind a box, and thanked him when he handed it over.

At the snack bar, she put the blender back in its place, made a juice to test it and washed the jug. Then she changed the bulb above the counter, which had been flickering for days. The six reais she had not spent made up what she needed for the bulb. She did not telephone the workshop to explain this.

In the Workshop’s Name

The fan had arrived the previous month, brought by two men from the neighbourhood association. They asked for a cheap repair for their classroom. Anselmo offered to do it for nothing and discovered, from the men's pleasure, that he had made a generous decision.

Then he ran out of time.

The fan moved from the bench to the floor, from the floor to a chair and from the chair to the top of a cupboard because a customer needed to sit down. Irene telephoned twice to say it was not ready yet. Both times, the man from the association apologised for chasing up a favour.

On Wednesday, Davi was looking for somewhere to put a box when he spotted the fan. He brought it down, brushed the dust from his hands and asked whether he could take a look.

“Go ahead. But don't invent a fault that isn't there.”

The advice covered a great deal. Davi took it as permission.

He spent the morning between the fan and whatever else came up: unloading a delivery, getting change, holding an appliance while Anselmo loosened a part. At two, he still had not had lunch. Irene shared a packet of biscuits with him. She did not call it lunch.

The problem was simpler than the accumulated delays suggested. Davi found a broken connection, rewired that section under Anselmo's guidance and checked the assembly with him. Then he left the fan running near the counter. Irene moved the receipts out of the way so they would not blow off.

“You can let them know,” the young man said.

She called the association. The man would collect it late that afternoon, with a teacher. It was the sort of news that allowed you to clear a space properly.

Anselmo came to the front of the workshop when the two visitors were already watching the test. The man shook his hand.

“You've saved our classroom.”

Anselmo began to say it was nothing. The teacher took a sheet of paper from her bag, listing the names of people who had helped set up the classes. She wanted to check the spelling of the workshop's name. They were putting a thank-you on the noticeboard.

Irene said the name slowly. The woman wrote it down.

“And you're Anselmo, is that right?”

He said yes. Davi was gathering screws left over from another job. He had learnt not to stand idle beside his employer during conversations with customers.

“Davi did this one,” Anselmo added.

He said it lightly, almost as a demonstration that he knew how to give others credit. The teacher turned at once.

“Would you write it for me?”

She handed the young man the paper and pen. Davi wrote his full name. The pen skipped on the last letter, and he carefully went over the stroke. He gave the sheet back before Anselmo could say that his first name would do.

The visitors left with the fan, making no promise to return one day with paid work. Anselmo was pleased all the same. He thought the job had taught his assistant something.

“You see? It's good to do your bit.”

Davi agreed.

“Could we talk about my pay?”

The change of subject seemed abrupt to Anselmo, who was still at the noticeboard. He asked what one thing had to do with the other.

“Nothing,” Davi said. “I was going to ask anyway.”

It was not entirely true. He had tried to ask on Monday, but Mauro's radio had taken up the conversation. On Tuesday, Anselmo had been annoyed about a payment being chased. The fan had given Davi a moment when his work was visible, and he did not want to miss it.

The original agreement had been for half-days. For nearly two months, he had been staying until closing three days a week. Some afternoons were paid separately; others vanished into phrases such as it's been a busy day and we'll settle up later. Davi kept the dates in an exercise book.

Anselmo said he was also teaching him a trade.

The young man opened his backpack, took out the exercise book and laid it on the counter. He did not answer that remark. Irene, who was adding up the till, stopped tapping the calculator.

The dates filled a page. Beside some were amounts; beside others, dashes. Anselmo asked what the dashes meant. Those afternoons had not yet been paid.

“But you left early that day.”

“I left at half past five. I started at one.”

They checked them one by one. The teacher must have been a long way off with the fan by the time they reached a total. Anselmo acknowledged two afternoons at once, disputed one and remembered an advance Davi had not written down. The young man looked on the back of the page and found it. They deducted the amount.

They settled part of it that day and agreed on Friday for the rest. As for regular hours, Anselmo asked to have until Saturday to work out the figures. Davi wrote Saturday on a fresh page.

Irene found the fan's job sheet and wrote “collected”. In the space for the person responsible for the repair, she wrote Davi, then added “checked by Anselmo”. The words were a tight fit, but they fitted.

At closing time, Anselmo noticed how stuffy it was behind the counter. For a moment he looked for the fan, before remembering that they had finally handed it over.

The Spare

Celeste did not want a new iron. She wanted hers working before four. She had six shirts to deliver and a dress a customer had brought in a bag too small for it. The dress did not need mending; it needed to stop looking as though it had travelled inside a bread roll.

Anselmo inspected the outside of the iron and asked her to leave it. It was Thursday. He could look at it after lunch, but he could not promise to finish that day.

“I need to work,” Celeste said.

He gestured towards the bench. He needed to work too. The scattered appliances seemed better evidence of this than an answer.

Irene asked whether they could lend her the spare iron. It was in a box under the counter. Anselmo used it for tests and, now and then, to press the fold out of his own shirt before a meeting at his son's school.

“That one's mine,” he said.

“I know.”

Celeste began to back away. She had already crossed the neighbourhood twice that morning, first to her sister's house, but her sister was out, then to the workshop. She did not want to add the embarrassment of listening to an argument about lending her something.

Anselmo fetched the box. He checked the cord, plugged the iron in and waited. Celeste kept checking the time. To her, the test seemed longer than it needed to be; to him, shorter than it ought to be.

“Bring it back tomorrow.”

“If mine's ready.”

That was the first difficulty.

Anselmo needed the iron on Saturday morning. He had set aside a shirt for his son's performance, and he did not like what the laundry did to the collar. Irene, who knew how to iron, did not volunteer. Celeste, who was better at it, did not volunteer either. He simply explained that he would need it.

They agreed she would return it at the end of Friday. Irene recorded the loan on a form and asked Celeste to sign. Anselmo said there was no need; he knew the customer.

“It's so we remember,” Irene said.

Celeste read the paper before signing. Seeing the date put her at ease. A favour with an end time felt a little like an agreement.

That afternoon, Anselmo opened her iron. It could be repaired, but needed a part he did not have. He called two shops. The first did not stock parts for that model. The second asked him to bring in the old part for comparison.

He set it beside the job sheet and began another repair. Going to the shop would take almost an hour. Davi was out making deliveries. By the time he returned, it was nearly closing time. Mauro's radio was still waiting for the order, Lídia would pay the next day and a stereo had occupied the bench since Tuesday. Celeste's iron was left until Friday.

At half past three on Friday, Celeste called.

“Is mine ready?”

Irene checked with Anselmo. He asked for another hour. The part to be taken for comparison was exactly where he had left it.

“Did you go and get it?” Irene asked after hanging up.

He said he had not managed to get away. She looked at Davi, who was dismantling some packaging.

“He could have gone.”

“I needed to check it myself.”

Irene did not know enough about the repair to dispute this. She knew enough about Anselmo not to consider the explanation complete.

Celeste arrived at five with the borrowed iron. It was clean, its cord loosely folded. One corner of the box was slightly damp: it had begun to drizzle.

Anselmo took the iron and thanked her. Only then did he tell her that hers would have to wait until the following week.

“I've got clothes to deliver first thing tomorrow.”

He looked at the box he had just recovered. The solution was so close that he needed to find a reason not to see it.

“We agreed on today.”

“To bring that one back, yes.”

Celeste did not raise her voice. She asked how much she owed for the inspection. Anselmo said she owed nothing; he had not finished it yet. She asked him to put the iron back together and return it. She would try somewhere else.

For a few seconds, he took offence at her impatience. Then he had to find a screwdriver to do as she asked. As he refitted the cover, he heard Celeste asking Irene where she could find another workshop open on Saturday. Irene knew where to send her.

Anselmo finished reassembling the iron and put both of them on the counter.

“You can keep mine until Monday.”

Celeste asked whether he needed it. The need had not gone away. Anselmo said he would sort something out for the shirt.

“I'll press it for you,” she offered. “It's what I do. You can pay me when I come back.”

He almost said there was no need for payment, that it was an exchange. The way she waited blocked that shortcut. They went to get the shirt from the back room and agreed on a price.

Celeste left with the borrowed iron and the shirt on a hanger. Her own iron stayed at the workshop, with a trip for Anselmo now scheduled for first thing Monday.

On Saturday, Davi took delivery of the pressed shirt and handed over the money set aside in an envelope. Celeste asked for a receipt for the payment. He made one out on a plain sheet. In the space for the service, he wrote “one shirt”, and she checked it as she had checked the loan form.

The Top Shelf

Ernesto recognised the stereo by the white mark on its side. It was on top of the cupboard, behind a smaller fan and an empty box. He did not like how high it was. An object placed so far out of reach seemed to have been given up on by other people.

“That one's mine.”

Irene asked his name and looked for the job sheet. It took a while. The stereo had come in eleven months earlier, when she still filed jobs by type of repair. Later she had switched to date order. For a few weeks, there had been two ways to lose a piece of paper.

She found it in the old folder. The estimate had been declined. There were three notes of telephone calls and a fourth, undated, that said “will collect”.

“I've come to collect it,” Ernesto said.

There had been no accusation in Irene's voice, but he had heard one all the same.

Davi fetched the ladder. He brought the stereo down carefully and wiped the top. Ernesto ran a finger over the mark, as though checking that it had not been added there. The mark was already recorded on the intake notes.

“My wife wants to give it to our nephew.”

“It still has the fault,” Irene warned him.

Ernesto knew. His nephew liked tinkering with things like that. He asked about the speakers. They were not at the workshop; he had brought only the main unit. Irene showed him the description on the sheet.

He read it slowly. At home, he had said everything was at the workshop. The information had not seemed false when he gave it. There were too many boxes in the room his granddaughter was now going to use.

Anselmo came over to greet him. He remembered the stereo and the estimate, but not the customer's name. He asked whether he had decided to go ahead with the repair.

“I've come to take it home.”

Anselmo said excellent. Ernesto did not care for that instant satisfaction.

“Wouldn't you have a use for it? For parts or something?”

Anselmo looked at the size of the stereo, then at the shelf. He did not need it. There might be useful components, but removing them would take work, and the rest would still take up space.

“Not today.”

Ernesto called his wife from the pavement. He learnt that their nephew had moved away two months earlier. The stereo was an old idea, mentioned over lunch and promoted, in his mind, to a settled destination.

“What am I supposed to do, then?”

She said something Davi, near the door, could not hear. Ernesto put away his phone and came back to the counter.

“Leave it here a few more days. I'll work something out.”

Irene closed the folder.

“We need the space.”

He looked at the empty spot above. There was space. What there wasn't, he thought, was any willingness to go on keeping it. He almost said so.

Anselmo suggested he take the stereo and find a home for it later. Ernesto explained that he had no car with him. He had come by bus, despite knowing what he intended to collect. In his

imagination, the visit would end in some way that did not involve carrying that weight to the bus stop.

Davi offered to wrap it. Ernesto said he might come back with someone he knew on Saturday. Irene wrote the date on the paper and laid the pen on top.

“Tomorrow, by noon.”

He agreed. The stereo went under the counter, where anyone heading for the till would have to walk round it. Ernesto felt a certain relief at seeing it off the shelf. It was still there, but now it seemed to be on its way somewhere.

On Saturday, he arrived at twenty to twelve with his daughter. She drove a small pickup and did not know why her father had made her come for a stereo that did not work. She said so as she held the door open.

“Someone might have a use for it.”

“Who?”

Ernesto did not answer. Davi lifted the stereo to carry it to the car. As he passed the counter, one of the side panels came loose. It did not fall; it hung by a fitting. The young man stopped and called Anselmo.

The fitting was already damaged. Even so, Anselmo eased the panel into place and secured it for the journey. Ernesto watched closely. He had paid for that stereo when his daughter was little. She did not remember the price, but she remembered not being allowed to touch the buttons.

“Not even to choose the music,” she said.

“You were very small.”

“I grew up, Dad.”

They both laughed, though not at the same part of the memory.

In the pickup, Ernesto held the stereo on his lap because he did not want it banging about in the back. His daughter drove slowly

to the corner. She asked whether they could go to her place for lunch. He said yes, as long as they dropped it at his house first.

“Not in the little girl's room,” she warned.

He thought of the hall, the utility area and a space beside his own bed. He would have to choose. This time, his daughter waited for an answer.

At the workshop, Irene swept the rectangle the stereo had left under the counter. Anselmo brought over a box to fill the space. For a moment, she held the broom across his path.

“Let me finish.”

He waited. Once the floor was clean, he realised the box could go on top of the cupboard.

Collection

The order for the radio arrived at ten past four on Friday, after Irene had already telephoned Mauro to tell him not to come. The delivery man asked for a signature. Davi signed quickly and carried the package to the bench as though there were still time to rescue the deadline.

Anselmo opened the cardboard wrapping, checked the part number and took the component out of its bag. It was similar. Similar enough to explain the mistake, and different enough to be useless.

He spent some time turning it between his fingers. Davi waited for him to find the right position. From certain angles, the difference almost disappeared.

“This isn't it,” Anselmo said.

Irene fetched the sheet on which she had written the part number. They compared the letters. The order was correct. Anselmo felt an immediate relief, which lasted until he remembered that being right did not make the radio work.

He called the supplier. He explained, repeated the number and listened to someone consulting someone else. The right part was unavailable. They might be able to find a used one. They asked him to call on Monday.

“Monday morning?”

Yes, they said, in the morning.

He wrote it on a piece of paper. It was what they could offer for now, and the piece of paper seemed very small.

Mauro arrived at five. Irene looked surprised. He said he had already left when she called; Rosa had taken the message, but

had no way of reaching him on the way. He had taken the opportunity to do other things in the town centre.

“It's all right,” he said, before hearing the explanation.

Anselmo began with the supplier. He showed the package, the part number, the wrong component. Mauro listened standing, a shopping bag in his hand. Davi looked for a chair and found the one that had previously held the association's fan.

“Would you like to sit down?”

Mauro sat. This gave the explanation scope to last longer.

Anselmo said the order had been placed on Monday and dispatched on Wednesday. Irene pointed out that confirmation had only come on Thursday. He agreed and went on. He finished by saying it was out of their hands.

Mauro settled the bag between his feet.

“What now?”

That was the part Anselmo had not yet worked out. They could wait for another part, look for a radio of the same model to salvage one from, or return the set. Each option required time or money that no one there could guarantee.

“Can it be switched on as it is?” Mauro asked.

Anselmo said he would not hand over a makeshift job as a completed repair. His answer came out firmly. Mauro looked tired.

“I asked whether it could. I didn't ask you to do it behind my back.”

Anselmo sat back down on the stool. He explained it differently: the fault remained, the part had not fitted, and he had no new completion date. This time, he did not show the package.

Mauro asked whether he would have to pay anything to take the radio away. He would not. The repair had not been carried out. They agreed that Davi would put it back together and Mauro

would return on Saturday. He still wanted to think about whether to wait longer.

When the customer had gone, Davi said it was his fault. Anselmo could very easily have agreed. He looked at Irene, who was checking the money Lídia had left, and realised she had heard.

“I said we'd manage it too,” he replied.

He did not add a lesson. Davi gathered the parts of the radio and checked where he had put the screws.

On Saturday, the first customer was a woman who wanted to know how long it would take to examine a toaster. Davi asked Anselmo before answering. He heard “early in the week” and returned to the counter.

“I can call on Tuesday to tell you what we've found. I don't know yet when it'll be ready.”

The woman preferred to take the toaster elsewhere. Davi watched her leave and was left with a blank job sheet. This new way of dealing with customers offered no immediate reward.

Anselmo opened the till and set aside the rest of the money owed for the afternoons. He called Davi over to check it. They had agreed on the amount on Wednesday; now they needed to decide on future hours. The young man wanted to work full days, for fixed pay. Anselmo could not commit to that this month.

They agreed to go back to half-days. Any extra afternoon would be agreed in advance and written down. Davi said he would look for other work in the afternoons. Anselmo asked whether he would rather wait a little. The young man closed his exercise book.

“I'd rather look.”

Mauro arrived with Rosa at about ten. The radio was reassembled, clean and still faulty. Davi made a point of showing them the envelope with the folded paper. Rosa recognised her attempt and smiled.

“I knew it wouldn't last.”

Anselmo offered to keep looking for the part without keeping the radio. If he found one, he would call with the price before ordering. Irene wrote this condition on a fresh job sheet. Mauro said that would suit him.

Rosa asked whether there were any used radios for sale. Anselmo showed her two. One had buttons that were too small. The other cost more than they wanted to spend. She bought neither and did not seem embarrassed. Mauro carried the old one under his arm.

After they left, Anselmo tried to tune in to the station Mauro had mentioned. He found a discussion about traffic, then an advertisement. Irene asked him to turn it down so she could answer the telephone.

Later, Ernesto collected the stereo with his daughter. Celeste delivered the shirt. For the first time that week, the floor in front of the counter was clear. Davi finished sweeping and left the dustpan leaning against the back door.

Anselmo picked up the pressed shirt. It looked good. He searched for a mark on the collar, found none and covered it with the plastic again. Irene was closing the folders, ready to leave. He began to ask where she had put the telephone number of the shop that sold parts for Celeste's iron.

She pointed to the job sheet.

The number was there, beside the address. Anselmo took a pencil and wrote down what he needed to bring on Monday. He checked the old part, put it in a bag and set the bag beside the key.

Outside, Davi was lowering the steel shutter halfway. He asked whether he could close up.

Anselmo looked at the bench. There was still work to do.

“Go ahead.”

Archive Note

Tomás Vilar is a fictional literary persona created with ChatGPT, and Until the Part Arrives is a work produced through that persona.

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