

DAYS INSIDE THE DIVING SUIT

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This is my fifth day. How many more will I yearn sitting on this rotten bench? My genes are creased with your weakness; I have no doubt, but deep down inside I'm stronger than the legacy you left. Yes, I spent five days looking at the door of your house, through that path barred with weed confused by some withered stalks of lilies, and then a wilderness that goes up to the houses below.

Five nights passed since insomnia attacked me. My eyelids are scratching my eyes and I hear the elephant breath I've gained with the weight of my body and memory. And it is you who torments me on those nights, the nights of now and those of forever, with confusing images, agonizing my spirit and, above all, filling me with a blindness that, little by little, constrains my ability to discern what I am and what everything else is in this house.

From here, from this bench that looks more like a trench, I've seen your neighbors come out loaded with kids, bags in hand at the end of the day; I've heard homemade discussions, I know who they are and I can even guess the storylines that destroy their consciences. I know the mail man who visits the neighborhood every late morning; I know that policeman who wastes time at three in the afternoon on "duty" driving at forty kilometers per hour. And the children already have names: John, Emmanuel, Andrew. And you... nothing...

Outside there is a man in an overcoat, sitting on the wooden bench that Mrs. Adelaide used to sit on. I haven't seen anyone sitting there for so long that I feel some strangeness. However, from here, from the small patch of light that was not

sealed by the curtains, little is relevant because everything is closed in this bottle of loneliness. That's what I am: a jar of loneliness and memory.

From this seat, I have been counting the clouds that surround the withered autumn sun. There are a hundred a day... can you believe it? They move slowly in an idle route of silence. And I feel they challenge me, provoking me, almost assuring that their time is more valuable than mine. After all, I have been here for five days, fifty meters from your door, and my legs change their mind whenever a stroke of courage crosses them. I have to hold my tongue not to yell at the clouds. But, although firmness is continually being broken, I'll be back until the day you'll open the door for me.

There is always the possibility of...

I believe you were born in 1966. I'm not really sure and I don't want to be counting years. Dates are boundaries that I'd rather reject. Still, I remember that caste skin, soft, like a fabric woven by the most delicate silkworm you brought from your mother's womb. That was skin camouflaging you. What a profound astonishment you caused! Now, your hair should be black in contrast to the swarthy skin you have inherited from me. I hope ... that you have inherited it, because I have nothing more to give. You were an idyllic creature and yet, I went out, I disbanded myself remorselessly.

The house I see from here must be like your face. It doesn't seem inhabited. The walls are aged by the hardships of time. The dim windows hide yellowed curtains and you're in there... I assure you I do not want more than one explanation. What happened anyway? Did you sleep tormented by my cries at night? Were you kept away from me?

A harsh and unfortunate blood doesn't allow me to dominate the inconstancy of life running through my veins. And, as there is always a story, I tell you, I have none. I was not a sailor, I barely traveled the world, and my love had no time to fill up like a balloon.

At birth I must have conditioned you to that “father figure” and then you ran away. You built up a life in opposition... What life is that? A life of an old man wrinkled in its existence? Soon I'm going to knock on your door and tell you that if I could choose I would have killed you the day I was born! I would have lived quietly. Since you are still alive, I hold the stark loneliness of not having a father.

There is no explanation. I cannot explain, explaining. But as human society dictates, I am an offender. I committed the greatest of crimes, because I do not feel guilty, only bearing the pain of being your father... without being. If I were a woman, at least, I would have protected you with the breasts of life. Thus, I gave you the time of an absence...

I grew up observing empty walls. I used to imagine the husky voice of a mature man guiding my steps. I screamed in anger for you through the fields outside. I was jumping walls of contention to assert myself without a father. What for? I always had you on my shoulders... this giant burden, void of love.

I like you because you came from my heart, nothing more. However, if you ask me how much I want to protect you, I'll tell you that I will do nothing to open the horizons of shelter. I can only say that I freed you. Freed you, not from a bad man, but a man incapable of being a father...

There is a resolvable gap in all this. I could forget that I ever had you. I could leave the bench in front of your house. However, this halo that has been lost between two bodies is alive in me. There is this unusual thing between us. I hate you as I am in your image, and yet, I have said countless times that I want you.

Do your hands have long fingers? I groped those small nodules where life happened. You were like a small conch where a fine sand is growing into pearl. I have no doubt... that precious being became a man. And I passed over that trail of hope. Now, I can only say that days have been like smoking cigarettes: they persist, linger and go deep into the walls, but they are no more than a fog. However, you exist.

I am weak. I pity myself... and you. Why didn't we meet before? Why do I sit on a wooden bench wasted by seasons waiting for the impetus to surpass my fears? Yes, we are all made in the measure of our fears... but we play the hard roulette of lying about courage. And so we are fears tucked in a drawer.

Hatred comes only once, and runs like a river and becomes a salty sea, choleric, spreading in time. It is not like a wound, it is rotten pain. If you hate me, I am sure that you don't understand me. Anyway, the understanding is for the unwary.

Going on the sixth day and it rained yesterday. My body was soaked, yet the tears grew more violent. Persistence fits in all my pockets. Therefore, I prevailed in front of your house, No. 22. Ah! You opened the curtain! Did you see me sitting here, provocatively? Yes, I'm talking to you!

*Yesterday it was raining. Who cares...? I'm old and I live imprisoned in my body and my house. The years are creased in the curtains and only this window allows me to insinuate myself to the world, to see that the man is still sitting in front of my door...
for six days.*

I'm not sure if I want something more ... or simply to see you, and if you ask me who I am, I will say that I am a piece of you.

If you were my son, I would open my door like an ensnared trap, but not to keep you captive.