

# BLIND SCALPEL

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The bag that hangs next to my bed contains the blood of I do not know who and decreases this weakness that consumes me. Its thick consistency, its coldness, hurts my veins; and the life that penetrates hurts me, reminding me of the commitment that I have to take care of it and to preserve it.

I have always been certain to be alive. I feel, I smell, I listen, I look and taste every single moment. I am able to experience suffering, hunger and thirst. I surely exist, but on this occasion I crossed the threshold of matter and I saw myself floating in a vanishing dimension where I only perceived imprecise sensations, as if I immersed myself into a cottony bedding. I came back to meet the girl who longed to glimpse in the sky a shooting star to make a wish, the most fervent aspiration of innocence; and like a ray laden with reality, appeared the certainty of death. It was then when I felt a sword penetrating through my womb; my heart began to palpitate like a small bird anxious to flee from the confinement in a box. I tried to wake up, but my body refused to answer: it remained abandoned before the ecstasy in which my soul immersed itself in an attempt to reach other territories. A hot jet burned my thighs. I felt flowing in an endless parade of hemoglobin, and the organism remained unresponsive, inert on the stretcher of the recovery room, without anyone noticing what was happening. The pain, like a glass dagger, remained enticed inside my entrails. My face alerted the nurses. The doctor did not wait, despite the patients who were waiting in his office. His humor was not the most appropriate when he arrived at the operating room

for the second time: I noticed that by the way that he treated the caregivers. I did not do better than them.

The violence with which they manipulated the stretcher to enter it again into the surgery room, it made me react. Dusty eyelids hurt my sight. A nausea sensation was brewed in the middle of my stomach and a death rattle escaped from the lungs, emitting abruptly a new wave of blood. The dehydration drank avidly the liquids that were inside me. One more connection of suction cups, tubes and mask over my face was the last thing I noticed. They opened my legs as if I were an animal about to be cut. The darkness came abruptly.

I still remember the day I heard for the first time about the specialist who operated on me. Of an intense blue were the pupils that scrutinized my face with curiosity, sizzling like the flame of a blowtorch. His high and pronounced cheekbones. He was a person of age and a sturdy chin, carefully shaved, which gave him reliability. The man in white clothing claimed to be a professional. This way, his old and yellowish diplomas on the wall determined it. I bought that image and entrusted my life to his surgeon's hands, speckled like shadow of rain drops on a crystal. It was a recommendation from a friend, who esteemed that person more than his surgeon skills. But she told me wonders about him. And I needed a good gynecologist to attend to me.

The doctor who had treated me until then evaded the problem. He refused to operate on me contending that it was not necessary. But the cramps and hemorrhages had turned into razor blades that hurt me mercilessly month after

month. I could not stand it anymore, so I consulted another opinion. After several clinical analyses, my condition was determined.

With routine indifference, as those who look at statistics, the sullen face of the doctor did not even turn over to see me, fixing his sight on the studies that were showed through with the phosphorescent light.

- This womb looks like a “muégano” (*candy made with many little pieces of fried flour and all stuck to each other by honey*) – he said it as if he was talking to the plaque that mutely showed a bulge report that only he understood -. They are called “myomas” (*fibroids*) – he continued – and they are benign tumors that grow in the internal and external walls of your womb.

He talked to me with a familiarity that puzzled me since it was the second time he saw me. Suddenly, his countenance showed interest when he checked the last images, which revealed a reddened and bleeding spot located somewhere in my body. With his thumb and forefinger, he rubbed absently the corners of his lips, as if he was appeasing a nonexistent moustache, while a dense silence broke into his office. The expectation dug a hole in my stomach and engendered an invisible octopus that climbed slowly winding in my throat.

Recovering his immutable serenity, he fixed his pupils in me saying with his habitual indifference (which in my ignorance I interpreted as unbreakable wisdom): “We have an injury in the cervix that, if not removed, it can degenerate into cancer”.

This way he said it, without softening the syllables, without qualifying his voice with sooth-ing words. He left me speechless, bewildered by the memory of that voracious predator eating away the lungs of my father and reflecting in his face its greyish shade. He gave me no more explanation of this scheme, which appeared in my nightmares as my father's scarlet cry ululating in my memory.

And here I am again, recalling the specter of cancer that dances enticed before the helpless flesh that is being offered. My tranquility was cut off by fear, uncertainty and dread of one who knows is alive, but doomed to death. Now I smile on having remembered the sadness nesting in my heart as I feel invaded by the apathy that made me believe that nothing mattered anymore, and on having vanished my hopes when the doctor pronounced the damned word. I understand that life does not end when you believe it, but when you are defeated by discouragement, when you let yourself fall down dejected. That is why we have to fight, because living is a present, a gift that must be valued, it is a collection of lumi-nous periods, perennial instants that have shaped me as a human being; moments that have taught me to understand the meaning of existence.

The date finally arrived. The intervention was scheduled for seven in the morning on a humid summer day. The imposing building received me with its tons of concrete impregnated with disease, suffering, cry and blood. The single glance of that construction shook me, especially when I thought that very soon I would be part of that collection of human miseries. The decoration strained to hide the

ailments of those who entered their rooms. Just like when you check into a hotel, receptionists take your information and, of course, make a temporary charge on your credit card to cover any unforeseen event. Lest-you die and you leave the debt without paying, because in those places even breathing causes fees.

My sight traversed frightened the cubicle for preparation in which they stripped me of my clothes; from that moment I would use the “official uniform” of those who already belonged to the list of hospitalized: a pathetic robe that leaves at hand the necessary holes to purge the body and to comfortably manipulate whatever that has to be involved in the process of healing for those of us who have the necessity to have our organism mutilated. Sometimes “less” is “more”, as when what once was useful to give life, now intends at all costs to take it away from you, and there is a need to subtract from the inventory of your body the organ that sheltered your children for nine months. Ungrateful lap that cries out to kill you... However, I do not feel “empty” as many women who are subjected to the same operation: I am much more than a womb which begets life.

The essence of the feminine does not lie on the organ that makes you be a mother. Being a woman is much more than a pair of breasts and a womb. It is to love life because we are the bearers of existence, and even without being mothers we can offer shelter and love a child conceived outside our womb. Being a woman is to evaporate yourself with a sigh, to shine with a caress and to hum snuggled in the fold of some arms, enjoying the wonderful enigma of the

man who completes you. Now, being older than forty years of age, I am a woman who vibrates passionate, able to live intensely, who enjoys the satisfaction of duty fulfilled and who gets excited by the wonderful display of a sunrise, although I have also felt the whiplash of heartbreak, the explosion of jealousy, the cruelty and anguish of loss, the weight of loneliness. And I have been present at the funerals of my longings when I have not been able to live what I really wished for.

The luminous eye fixed attentively his glassy pupil on me. The glow blinded me and bathed my body with the warmth of his gaze. The movement of nurses and men in blue attire was continue. Everyone seemed to ignore my presence, and the devices I had connected with their ripples shouted at me that my heart was beating, and that blood was stirring in my veins, irrigating my desires to live. The man behind me began to connect electrodes that sucked my bristly skin due to the cold of the operating room. An icy liquid over my stomach startled me, as my knowledge slipped in a cascade of clouds and oblivion...

The nebulosity was real. It swallowed me, driving me through its uninhabited gullet by the light until the end, where a glow attracted me, weaving with its silky fingers a cocoon that flowed out of the blackness as a maternal shelter. The glint wrapped me, cooing me in its light arms of cotton. Nothing mattered, my body and my mind wandered into the innermost recesses of luminosity. I only perceived myself in a different place, without time and without space, where everything was a blur, a single thought nuanced from

my yesterday, from my today and from my always, forming whimsical figures like the multicolored roses of a kaleidoscope when you spin it. All my memories paraded before me, like dead leaves whispering in the air, and I felt the scent of my past, filling me with flashy images that were shown to me as slides that will never come back.

People who lived in my memory as unfinished farewells, now smiled at me; I perceived them as if they were alive, reconciling my disquietudes, my anxieties, my remorse, but did not mediated a single word, I understood everything with their faces, and the harmony filled my soul with an inexplicable serenity. And my father was there, caressing me, silencing my doubts, forgiving my cowardice in the face of death: his death... It is said that, it is no bigger the one who occupies the most space, but the one who leaves the biggest space with its absence. And I felt that the enormous g-a-p that his death left in me was filled with that ethereal presence. His gentle face continued protecting the storms to come, the same ones that now germinate in me...

Situations which I thought that were buried, arose as if they were present; words, voices, petrified breaths hit my neurons. Past and present were united, settling in my being. The thinking became a spellbound ball in a corner of the light.

Security caught me as one who gently takes in his hands a wounded bird that, without resisting, appreciates the affection provided and entrusts his feeble body to whom saved him. The luminous cavity which sheltered me, offered me everything that I needed, it comforted my sorrows,



mitigated my fears and mitigated my sufferings. And I abandoned myself to the lethargy of happiness.

Like water flowing over stones, the calm captivated me among the dampened murmur. How far I was from the rude manipulations dispensed by the clumsy hands of the individual who tore my entrails, making an attempt on my life with his blind scalpel.

The heaviness of my eyelids prevented me from opening my eyes. I heard voices around me that I could not recognize. Everything was scrambled, faded in shades of gray, like a white's dingy gauze covering the invalidity of my understanding. Slowly I managed to open them; a tenuous mist clouded what I tried to focus on. The tripod next to me held a bottle of serum and a bag full of blood whose contents slowly descended through a tiny hose up to my wrist. It was then when I became aware of the needle that slowly and painfully fed my bloodstream. The clarity began to clear my conscience.

Resting in this hospital bed, recovering slowly from the double aggression, with the mood bloated by the excess of anesthesia and the mind lost still by the labyrinths of the subconscious, I remember the hours of struggle in the recovery room, in which I struggled only with my desire to live. The minutes passed with heavy slowness, like the sap that spills from a wounded tree. I felt a great desperation to emerge from that immobility. Intermittent moments of lucidity allowed me to perceive the coagulated atmosphere where it lay, while death awaited patiently for an oversight, with its murmur of ice freezing my nerves. The cold eroded

the flesh and my veins were stuffed with the impoverished blood. My mind clung to existence like the fly trying to get out of the sticky substance in which it is trapped.

I was there for twelve hours. Stifling moments of inert struggle to survive, to return, but not from the light that once welcomed me as a baby in the maternal cloister, but from the darkness. My children still needed me, I could not leave them alone, their life needed from mine and I could not forsake them. I had to go back. Hours of anguish for my relatives who ignored the fate that I had run, because the nurses had hidden the deficiencies of the procedures when, the emergency had happened and there was not enough plasma, since it was not foreseen that it could be needed. The blood bank did not have my blood type and they had to put me O positive, which is universal, but since it was refrigerated, immediate transfusion was not possible. I lost about two liters, almost half of what the body requires to live. And while I waited for the organic liquid to warm up, the anemia got possession of my strength, like the water that floods a ship that is shipwrecked.

Sometimes pain helps. It is the silent alarm that warns you about the liberated beast that threatens to devour you. It is the lightning that hurts the calm announcing the storm. It is then, when it shakes-you and drives you to life, and the one who saved me came when the abdominal cavity was filled with blood, because if I had not felt that stab in my belly, I would have not woken up and I would have bled-to-death. But there are also useless, destructive pains, which become the enemy to overcome, such as those that the

cancer patient suffers, or the amputee whose phantom limb hurts, replacing with cruelty that part of his body, or the paralytic whose legs, that he no longer feels, give him stabbing pains. Terrible pains that help nothing and that, like a tattoo in the memory, it reminds you of the reality you are living.

We, human beings, learn by force of mistakes. The errors give us experience, wisdom, they make us cautious, careful. But the doctor who slashed me, did not accept it. He shielded himself behind technical arguments trying to confuse me: first he said that I had had a pressure increase due to the anesthesia and that a blood-vessel burst; after, that in the cleaning they detached a stitch from me. He went from one excuse to another without coming up with one to rely on. Later on, I learned what really happened. The rush to attend to his patients on a day especially saturated with work, made him commit the error: the ligature of an artery was not well held. With the postoperative movement it got loose, causing the hemorrhage. And he did not notice it. He left immediately to continue his routine, with his patients, with his mediocre proceeding, without considering that what he manipulated with his hands was something more than a sick body that required to be mutilated, without taking into account that it was a human being with yearnings, with desire to live and to love.

But this time it was about my own body, my pain, my life, my dreams trampled by a human error. How many women will have died from mistakes like that? And the culprits, were they able to convince the family members with

their technicalities and complicated chatter? If this happened to me in a private hospital, what will happen in social security, where doctors and nurses become butchers and patients become spoiled pieces of meat? Places where the in-sensitivity to the suffering of others becomes tedious routine and the suffering is part of a bureaucratic procedure to perform. And the beneficiaries remain endless hours in waiting rooms full of resigned silence, rooms that stink of disease and death, waiting the turn to count their miseries and to program long-term the solution to their ills, perhaps the only hope they have left for continue living, because they lack enough operating rooms or the specialist possessor of the talent that will save their lives. Their only sin is not having the necessary resources to buy health...Yes, it was in a social security hospital where they let my father die by denying him the care that he required. And I, lucky of being-able to afford a space, a date and some “specialized” fingers that promised to restore my health, I received the slap of indolence.

Now I recover my strength, I clarify my memory and I realize how absurd life is, since what I feared so much that could happen before the surgery was performed, it came as if I had invoked it. Experiencing the sensation of almost losing my life made me value what I have, to appreciate what I receive, enjoy what I give and appreciate the opportunities that existence gives me. And I look at my belly, with a broad scar just above my pubis, like a smile tattooed on me, so I never forget how wonderful it is to have a body.