

# The Shaking

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No matter how hard I try, this shitty screw does not move! To whom did I lend the thing which loosens everything? No, I am fed up, I will have to call the plumber, let's see how much it will be. Henner would have solved it quickly, he knew how to do everything. Rest in peace. Meanwhile, at least I will put this little casserole so that the water gathers up.

I dry my hands and open the email to notify that Manuel, my eleven-year-old son, is not going to school today.

I stir the soup and pull out the recipe book while I ruminate the mental list of pending issues. So many! Always! Everything is urgent and my projects go to the end, there, far away. Sometimes a little bit of them escapes from oblivion and jumps straight into my heart, making me tremble with joy; a little while for me, to dream without interference, how lovely. But they are like water that escapes from my hands. I would like more, much more of that refreshing water. I need a tub to keep it and enjoy it, minimum. No, two, another one for the leak, which is getting worse every day. Geez, a massage would be phenomenal!

Cakes, page 287: "The secret of success in making a cake lies in following the instructions to the letter..."

-Ujule! I have never been good at that; I always change something; but let's see.

-It was going to be super fun! There was going to be a drill today, mom!  
-Manuel complains from his bedroom. For him and his friends that means joking around.

-Oh well, honey. I told you, you did not come out on time and I am not going to run at this time when everyone is going as fast as they can to arrive punctual to a job that, for sure, they do not even like. I pass. I get caught up in it too, I go crazy and I do not want to. Either we leave early and go calmly, or you do not go.

Because I already know it: if we leave late, we run into the motorized fauna in a hurry and there we go, like yesterday when we got into the car almost running and in a hurry and I told you: "Put your seat belt on". I locked the doors, for safety, because of how things are. I turned on the radio: loud voices shouted their merchandises. Why do they scream? I changed the radio station, click: the news did the recount of all the femicide. Oh! It seems a lie that in a country devout of the virgin, they kill so many women, what a horror! Another radio station, click: "Dime cuando tu, dime cuando tu, dime cuando tu vas a volver, a-hai...". And in a country infected with homophobia they chant Juanga, who is able to understand? How flexible...Click: a political

commentator was scrutinizing the situation of the country, apparently without an exit.

A man with a golf beret drives the car on the left. Face of bored, tired, forty-something, two teenage children in uniform for school, connected to their respective cell phones. The classic car full of absentees.

Click: a new little gang of four or five boys with well-defined stereotypes, of different colors and attitudes so that no teenager can escape and sell their product. They sing simple and catchy songs, they are ephemeral, they collect a lot and they leave without fuss.

-Leave it, I like that one – Manuel knew the song. Inevitable.

In that, a boy with clothes of indefinite color because of the dirtiness and a sponge dripping with soap approached determined to wash my windshield; he almost succeeded, when I energetically told him no by nodding and with the hand. He left annoyed to continue his work as an informal worker, guided by the rhythm of the traffic light.

The woman from the car next to us, with her mouth opened, was curling her eyelashes and the soapy sponge was stamped on her crystal. Resigned, she set aside the teaspoon and looked for some coins inside her purse in exchange for the forced washing service, while they offered me juice, of orange, tangerine, beet or combined: “Take it!”.

On the right, a young man made roar rhythmically the huge tires of an electric blue off-road truck for the joy of a seven or eight-year-old little boy, who was balancing on the passenger seat, without a safety belt.

-But what a beast!

At the precise moment when the red light went out and the green light went on, the blue truck moved forward quickly and, at less than twenty centimeters, it closed onto me, forcing me to brake.

-What is the matter with you, idiot?

It is obvious that he did not hear me, we all had our windows closed, it was cold.

The blue truck sneaked between the cars, zigzagging, as if this was Formula One. And it is there, in those moments, when I tremble out of rage and I feel like putting the accelerator in depth and commit myself in a fight to reach the next traffic light first and so be able to show my supremacy...

-I am telling you, I get infected.

Where was I? Oh yes, cakes!: “the ingredients should be of the best quality: butter, baking powder, flour, eggs”. For a long time, I have wanted to write a book called Cooking with eggs and that it has many colorful illustrations. Another pending project. I read: “preheat the oven to 200 degrees Celsius”.

And suddenly, as everything that happens, an equal murmur approaches like a swarm that advances buzzing. A general, huge and growing rumor, which makes everything vibrate and that, when arriving, causes the earth to begin to stir us up, as if checking the contents of a box of matches; it shakes us in a brief chaos that seemed eternal.

Yank to one side and the other. Am I dizzy? To one side...No! to the other, it is trembling! Astonishment, to one side; alert, to the other. Wake up! Look for the exit! To one side, to the other...my children!

Instant response: Manuel arrives bursting into the kitchen screaming:

-We are going to die, mom!

-Not today, son. Come! Stand up!

I jump, jump, jump, while I automatically turn off, on my way, the stove with the soup about to boil. I grab Manuel by the arm looking suspiciously the walls and ceiling; I am pure adrenaline. We walk quickly and carefully, balancing on the floor which became gelatine.

I place us at the center of the courtyard of this nineteenth century mansion: adobe and beams, walls six meters high by one-meter-wide, the very image of stability and permanence that, contradictorily, now jumps nonsensical and oscillates from the foundations; it crackles rippling like a serpent vertically in an anniversary dance to which we are forced to attend.

All together evacuating at the one, two, three, chachacha.

I hug Manuel firmly by the back, who in his terror wants to run away and I order him, dominating myself so as not to scare him any more:

-Bend the knees and feel the earth, keep the balance, feel the power of the earth! Breathe, look around: what can fall? water tanks? are two, look, there is one and here the other one – I point –. How they move, look! that antenna, do you see it? it looks like a metronome! look how the house bounces! ayayay! Pay attention! take care of yourself, this is power and not tales, feel!

-Mommy, the dogs! – he worries.

-The dogs take care of themselves! You are first, look everywhere, my love, just look! If something falls, we move over there, that can not fall again.

Two plant-pots fall from their pedestals, distributing lilies and aloes all over the ground. At the same time, I think of my daughter Aurelia, who works in a school as a teacher. I count: new building, two floors, great garden. It will be fine, it has steadiness.

I jump, jump, jump. Seeing the house jumping is hypnotic, it looks like a toy and we are the pieces, we are so tiny! Now I know what a cup dice feels like.

Slowly, the trees rock less, more gently. The frequency decreases. My mom is alone! Apparently the tremor ends, although the sensation that it is trembling, the doubt, will accompany me for months.

We melt towards the ground, still embracing each other, a tense silence is heard clearly. Cats and dogs approach us: a reunion of fragile mammals. Astonished, we inhabit the mystery completely.

Although the house looks fine, it takes us a while to decide to enter. At last we dare, cautious as thieves, slowly, hunched over, waiting for I do not know what. Manuel goes behind me, almost stuck to me. We contemplate the interior evaluating the damages.

Nothing, not even a broken plate. That crack over there, was it already there? The key to the laundry no longer drips, oh well, it got adjusted! At least it is something. On the page that I left opened on the computer, I write: "Fuck!" in Facebook and I send it.

-No, mom, it is the face from my school! – Manuel shouts in a moan.

-Oh, no! my perfect image is going to collapse! how embarrassing! – I answer to him with a singsong, defensive. The truth is that I was really embarrassed.

The recipe book waits at the table with its instructions. Of course I do not dare to even turn on the oven! I try calling my daughter, but the home phone has no signal; the cell phone neither. Oh, my Aurelia! She is okay, sure she is, I calm down.

As soon as we recover ourselves a little more, we go out the street towards Nona's house, my mother who lives around the corner, how lucky. The people in the street go like we do, with eyes wide opened looking to see with what we will encounter. As if we knew each other from always, in silence, with brief gestures, we communicate to each other without formality, as well as one to another: concern, restlessness, relief of still being alive. We go afraid, scrutinizing the constructions where we go through. There is a lot of silence, not like the one at night. More, it is another kind of silence.

Women and men, by foot or by bike, they pick up their children early from school. A little girl says: "Today we did a simulation". Black humor, level: the earth.

In the parking lot of the apartments where Nona lives, the neighbors are gathered. Pedro, one of them, distributes in little cups "a strong one for the scare". I get one. "Just in time I arrived", I think. As soon as we arrive, Alfredo tells me: "Your mommy is fine". Thanks. What a relief.

Nona, from her little terrace, shouts:

-Daughter of my life and of my heart! praised be God! are you okay? and the kid? have you talked to her already?

-We are good. We have not communicated yet mommy, there is no signal. You, how are you?

We are getting updated while I go up the stairs.

-Perfectly, blessed be God!

-Where were you?

-Washing up. Oh, darn! – I said –, what is happening? I did not even turn off the washing machine and I left. I did not go down the stairs, I put myself in the frame of the door of the entrance; here at least they see me, and let be what God wants!

Manuel stays stroking the little dog, Candy. The neighbors continue talking condescending; they postpone returning to the solitude of their homes by relying on the company. They speak fast, they tell their experience. They agree unanimously to each comment. They get oriented to land safely after the turbulence. Even he who never greets, smiles at everyone and drinks from his little glass. He forgot how many times he has left us with a greeting in the air, passing through us without looking at us being totally shameless. He must be shy. Shy? No way! a creep! Well, enough, without hard feelings, he is also scared. What I can not stand, is that he has mockingbirds in cages, not that! But he will see, each person with its karma! Cheers! and in one gulp I drank the “strong one”. It tasted great!

-Do you want another, Aurorita? – Mr. Limon says to me.

-No, thanks, it is enough, I was already dizzy – I say joking from the handrail. Everyone laughs.

More neighbor’s children arrive to see their parents and the telling of the stories are repeated for them. A radio scrutinizes the damages known so far and we are silent in order to listen: “They report that the church of Los Remedios, located at the tip of the Cholula pyramid, also was left without domes”. Zás!

Manuel goes up quickly, embraces Nona, searches through the horizon and exclaims:

-Come on, yes, it is true! Look at the pyramid!

They go up in a mad rush looking towards the church of Los Remedios and there it is, shaved from domes. An unusual landscape. We look like a family of prairie dogs looking far away. “They are going to have to make new postcards”, I think.

The three of us return to the house, where Aurelia is already waiting for us.

-My love! – We hug.

-How are you? the children well? the school? what a scare!

-All fine – she says –. I was able to return until now because we delivered the children first. Did you see the fumarole that the Popo threw out? – she says while the four of us physically conjugate the verb to embrace.

-Let us put our emergency backpacks. What should we carry in there? – I say, while Pablo, the sentimental partner of Aurelia, arrives in a hurry and asks –:

-Are you all fine? do you have water? – anticipating that this is repeated and there is a shortage.

News rain, immediately we share them: the epicenter was located in Axochiapan, Morelos; the earthquake was 7.1 degrees.

First the summer downpours carefully soaked the centennial adobe, then the earthquake came to crumble it. Houses and houses cordoned off, and aftershocks continued. Everywhere, because in Cholula there are churches everywhere. We saw fallen ornaments and cracked domes standing next to their corresponding towers, some inclined: San Gabriel, San Pedro, San Miguel, San Pablo, Santa Maria, almost all the celestial court. Thirty-five churches were closed.

This is how they would look, perhaps, while the natives built them, forced to dismantle their own sanctuaries and with their own stones – carved masterfully and turned inside out to hide its symbolism and beauty – to edify the temples of the new god. Submit to survive.

Will something rise from the debris? An old spirit that wakes up with the tremor willing to take its place again? Who knows, but for now...

-Nona, do not even think about going to church, huh? Pray here, that God is not going to get mad.

Well, she went that same afternoon! Of course, very cautious she stayed “just outside” so, on returning, to tell us that there were priests saying: “It is the house of God, come to church, nothing will happen to you”.

-But I better did not go in – she says –, and I complained to the sacristan that the organist was playing the music too loud and that causes vibrations, does not it? Not to play so loud, that even the fireworks were forbidden. To preach mass in the park!

-Oh, Nona, what can I tell you! Because of that and much more, I “Band-Aids” not even on the wounds! But do not go anymore, seriously, in case it happens...!

And so it was, they silenced the organist and for a few days the masses were celebrated in parks and atriums.

The images and news that saturate the media are an overdose of pain, hand in hand with spontaneous solidarity. Women and men of all ages heard clearly the call for help and, swelling instantly, they joined the service, inspired

and determined, doing whatever was necessary to save, even if it was a turtle, a parakeet, a puppy, and not even to say of the serious emotion of participating in the rescue of another human, another me, that moaned under a pile of debris.

Fist held high, silence, contained breath, dozens of sharp ears are enlarged to the expectation. They go carefully removing stones, from enormous to small, until achieving to shake off the dust of their face and carefully bring water to their mouth, helping them in their rebirth, as midwives of survivors.

When they look at themselves, they show hearts full of compassion, some, and gratefulness the others; knowing that they love each other, even if they do not see each other again and that each time that they remember each other, they will love again with the same intensity. It took an instant to consolidate a permanent bond.

And the merit is of all the chains that were formed in each collapsed construction. They celebrate and rejoice for each survivor. Or they regret sorrowful the discovery of another corpse. Intelligence, dexterity and skills are generously granted with optimal agility, in general, from all angles:

The brave Topos who work without rest, are incredible and indispensable. The hardware dealer who donated his whole heart and inventory for strangers in disgrace; taco makers, tamale makers, water sellers, who give their merchandise to keep the forces of the rescuers and, with the forces renewed, they are able to be on time to help one more. Neighbors who take out plugs so that whoever needs can use the service. Musicians who animate the rescuers with melodies and, in their own way, they try to console a little the anguished relatives and friends in vigil, who, exhausted, await news at the foot of the debris. Trained dogs, privileged noses that undertake the mission with their usual loyalty. Unquestionable friends.

We leave the ruthless jungle in order to become an evolved community. The anonymous army of competent beings that make up our country, emerged in unison, amazingly articulated. In society, the certainty of our sufficiency germinates. A girl sings, giving what she knows and what she can: Giving. Help from abroad that does not wait, rescue teams from here and from there. Brothers from other countries bring their knowledge, tools and experience. Friendship and compassion witnessed with facts. That is the humanity that I dearly love, to which I aspire: the one of the authentic nobility that dwells in each one, not the one of blue blood that has amply demonstrated its falsity.

It was tragic, heartbreaking and irreparable for those who went their way without us and who, nevertheless, nest forever, with their best clothes, at the epicenter of our throbbing.

It is amazing to imagine what we could achieve if we permanently conquered this exultant, intense and purifying state that, like a lightning,



surprised us, illuminating for a few days the dark night that covered us, unleashing the spirit towards a creative process.

I make myself these considerations while I am stirring another soup, another day. We decide to stay all together in case there are aftershocks. Well, strong aftershocks, because those of low intensity continue to deplete the buildings that were damaged.

I only believe in the national seismological, since the vermin begin to reappear. Seers of terror that slip through the cracks with prophecies of even bigger catastrophes; fanatics of disinformation or simple clowns who mock about the bewilderment of the most naïve.

-I hope that the Popo does not erupt, since the epicenter was in its slope...  
- I comment during the meal.

-That is all we need – responds Nona.

We are afraid; we are overwhelmed and in occasions like this, it is better to withdraw and be together. It reassures.

We are collecting basic things for the emergency backpacks. It is a good exercise, although we had to buy chocolates twice, because the first batch we ate it between Manuel and me.

Thirty-two years ago – how time passes! –, I traveled around Mexico for almost two years with Aurelia's dad and with only a medium backpack. I carried materials to make earrings, embroideries and drawings, the I Ching and some clothes. If I liked one thing, I had to get rid of another. I was not willing to carry more. Besides, in a basket with a lid was my kitten Lilith.

We slept in sleeping bags, in hammocks, and once we made a delicious and aromatic mattress with sacks filled with straw and lavender, because our kind host in San Cristobal invited us to stay indefinitely in the attic of his residence, which was an old mill with very little furniture. We took the floor and, for two months, that summer we enjoyed our mattress, to which we renewed the straw and the lavender every fifteen days or so. But the summer passed and the cold of the place invited us to go to bathe in the sea.

There, in the warmth of the beach, we camped in front of the huts of the “uncles and aunts”. So, we, the young ones, used to call the fishermen and their wives, who for little money sheltered us in their piece of beach, feeding us with simple and delicious food. Win, win.

We played with their children, we helped in something, but above all we took the activity of joy and contemplation very seriously. Just what I need right now.

While we made earrings and thread bracelets that we sold to the tourists, we also strung together dreams, many dreams! In a word, we were young.

There, on the beach, we carefully elaborated my Aurelia. Beloved daughter of mine.

One morning, at full volume we heard on the TV of the “uncles” an anguished voice: “The apartment complex Juarez, they are communicating to us that also the Regis Hotel and...” What is going on? It was September 19, 1985. We listened until the transmission was lost. We could not believe it.

We sought to communicate with the family. Nothing, we were isolated from the world, neither telephone, nor telegraph; well, we were not even able to get a bus. We returned to Puebla in the back cabin of the van of some party-going-people, that, for our fortune, two nights ago in Cuernavaca, in order to continue the party, they had the happy idea to “continue it”, what the kids these days call the after, in Puerto Escondido, which at that time was actually hidden. And there they arrived, happy to break their leashes and run in freedom for a while.

In the cabin, with Lilith and the backpacks, we crossed the meandering Sierra Madre Occidental. A nightmare, because of the curves and the worry, because at each stop that we made the news were more and more creepy. The revelers left us in what was before the Federal District. We continued straight to Puebla. The only memory I had left from that D.F. is that it had a penetrating smell of fear.

It was nice to travel around carefree. I had a feeling of safe shelter, I was in my country, right? my house. Could it be that I was young? We were cautious, evidently. We used to travel during the day, we installed ourselves with light and we were not stupid. We separated a few years later, in peace.

Today the news, because of so shocking, scare me diminishing my strength. The daily record of violent incidents with which the media bombard, makes me tremble; the news that they broadcast seems to come from the Alarma! that yellow pasquinade, do you remember? does it still exist? the one of “matolo porque engañola” (kill him because he cheated). Is it on purpose, as “the bogeyman” to scare children so they obey and be quiet?

And the mobilization continues. Thousands are dedicated to the task, transporting food in their cars; in their bicycles, messages; they receive in their homes crushed strangers who lost theirs. Some lend their machinery.

Without giving up the challenge in the face of urgency, spontaneous internet-users, professionals and amateurs, managed their machines in makeshift offices; or from home, using up talent to map, inform, link, put together practical plans, report where and what is needed and warn about new routes to individuals, so that nobody takes away the larders that, armed among neighbors, in schools and universities, are delivered in spontaneous civil collection centers.

Or they personally distribute them, making sure not to turn them into political booty, to be immediately labeled with partisan emblems and stored waiting to be used opportunely during the coming campaigns. What we have to see! Making reverence to the work of others and immediately passing the urn, everyone knows that.

Private vehicles go to the most remote affected communities using their own resources. They travel through those hills that are almost always seen from far away and arrive at the forgotten country houses that refuse to disappear. They access following various itineraries, satisfied to help with something, distributing without measure nor a touch of pettiness, food, clothing, equipment, blankets, medicines, to the invisibles, to the usual ones.

And we saw them, on screens or live, in their real landscape, which is not that of a pampered memory, that of the nostalgic calendar of the kitchen that shows us the picturesque idyllic “small town”, where the “little indigenous” live with their “little animals” going dressed in white in the direction to the flea market of well-equipped stalls and translucent awnings of cheerfully vivid colors.

No, there they are, a miserable crowd not romantic at all. From here come many of the starving beggars of the street corners, the windshield wipers; the maids come here when they go to their town, and the next town is the same, or worse.

And, even so, they receive us from their pain and their daze with joy of carnival. Victims of a traditional pillage, worse than all the tremors together, we have treated them, as a country, without any respect. They live in an inequality that is not accidental. A complex reality that is not seen on TV.

How old is our country? Mental and emotional age, more than historical. This mural is Mexico, full of textures, facing the shaking in its center the earth, was set in motion creatively and harmonically, with the exalted and capable imagination, giving me the impression of maturity. Our multiple diluted differences for a common good. For a moment we walk through utopia.

Enough time has passed to digest the confusion of pruning and grafting. We survived the process of conquest, independence, revolution, all attempts to achieve fullness with some successes; others have already gone to waste. At the moment, we are going through the state of corruption. Are we already mature to set a new course? for a trip to health? to shake us off pests and fructify?

A mobilization of magnificent proportions was celebrated, between the astonishment and the passion summoned by the earth, which provoked initial surprise and immediate action, from which we came out enriched before our own amazement.

Here was where, although a little late to react, the government could have done something beautiful. Its work. For what in justice it is supposed to be there.

What a waste, gee! With the golden opportunity to be inspired leaders, examples of guidance, pride and climax of the common people. They could be respected, remembered with affection, their story be written with grateful acknowledgment. I do not doubt that it must be tremendously complicated to govern, but it is not a monarchy, they can get hold of very capable people for their work; from the human capital that we have in order to achieve that this nation of ours be what we deserve. Gosh! Do not you feel embarrassed?

While I think about this, I am putting a change of clothes of each one, something that we do not use much, in each backpack. The one of Nona is smaller because she can not carry. Eighty-two years old and one fifty tall; but, as she says: "Height is measured from the head to the sky". And, even if she is the highest of all, we distribute what corresponds to her in the others. Hand lamps, IDs, sleeping bags, tent for each one. Yes, I have a very complete equipment.

It will be necessary to make some repairs, but it is enough for everyone to take a small and complete covert for a few days, meanwhile it is one thing or the other, just in case. Hopefully not. Individual medical kits, now also chocolates, well hidden because, you see, those always come out before time. Tuna, milk powder, coffee, tarpaulins.

Oh, Henner! it has been already five years. Look at that having all this and even repeated, you died doing summit in the Pico de Orizaba and you left the phone with GPS in the van! In order not to carry it. You said that you were only going and coming. You had done it so many times, you were a certified guide, you were overconfident and, you see, even monkeys fall from trees. (even an expert makes mistakes).

As always, you liked celebrating your birthday on the mountains, Popo, Izta or Pico. It was your ritual, that was how you celebrated: October 28, day of the victims, what a coincidence! what a tenebrous coincidence! At 57 years sharp you fell in the crack and we found you three days later.

How much I would have wanted to hug you, so that you were not cold, to bring you back alive. The agreed time came and you did not come back. You, punctual and strict, if you said at four o'clock, at that hour the bell would have rang. Well, it did not ring. Worried, I searched in the computer if there had been accidents on the road, and nothing. You were not answering the phone. I never imagined that you had not come down.

I fell asleep that night wanting to convince myself that you were in Serdan City, spending the night because you were tired to drive back. And I dreamed that you were going up a staircase towards an attic. I wanted to go with you but you did not let me, I had to stay with Manuel, our son.

The next day I left Manuel under the care of Aurelia and Nona, with the command that they would not tell him anything until having truthful news. I went out early with friends to look for you. We went all around, we were sent from one side to the other around the Pico. At night, in a village at the slopes, we went to the police station, in front of the park, for some information of the search.

-No, miss, at night all is suspended because the climbers do not go up, the snow becomes ice and it is very dangerous. Until the sun rises, they can go up again – the cops explained to us in a small green, tight and grimy room.

It was so long for the sun to come out! I went out desperate in an attempt to breathe alone; they kept on talking. I walked slowly, dealing with my grief and with a horrifying cold, when from I do not know where appeared a little girl with a little dress and a sweater as to go on a field day on a sunny morning. “She is used to the cold”, I thought. She paired her step to mine and she asked me who I was looking for. I told her. “Mmm...he already died”, she exclaimed as if nothing.

I stopped in short, perplexed. I do not know exactly when she disappeared, just like that. She was not there anymore. I began to pray frantically to try to dissolve the impact that the certainty of her comment produced me. When leaving the police station, the friends who accompanied me said to me:

-We go to a house near from here where the rescuers of the town are, in order to know at what time they will resume the search.

I nodded automatically.

We went. To top it off, it was a funeral where, the relatives of the deceased drank coffee gathered around a large bonfire burning in the middle of the street. They shared with us. I approached the fire looking for heat, but malicious comments and grim looks full of resentment chased me away.

-Because of the outsiders, we risk our lives.

-If they do not know the mountain, why do they go up?

-They think it is a game, they do not even know.

Their words were impregnated with menace, with rancor. What desolation I had!

Later, in a hotel in Serdan City, exhausted, I dreamed that you sat on the bed, you took my hand and said goodbye. I got up furious with you, more clung than before to finding you. With all the will which I was able to have, I fiercely suppressed any hesitation that could bring me closer to surrender. I begged and promised all the deities that would want to pay attention to me. I went from the petition to the demand, and back again to the petition.

Twelve groups of rescue climbers were already looking for you. Many, your acquaintances. I got calls and messages of encouragement on my cell phone.

Those days, wherever I looked, little skulls, ghosts, witches and pumpkins smiled at me. It smelled as cempasuchil and copal. I still tremble when I remember it.

You stayed at the top. There was a storm and the fog came down ahead of schedule, you deviated a few degrees, which were extended during the advance, till it took you to your death. You loved the mountain and finally it corresponded to you.

With my forehead on the ground, in front of it I promised, in exchange for you, to plant in it ten thousand trees with my own hands if it would let you return. "Give him back to me, for mercy, give him back to me", but it preferred to keep you. I would have done the same. You left from a great landscape.

When they finally found your body and brought it down, they summoned us at a crossroad. As I was getting out of the car, I saw how, in one, two, three, they swung you, completely wrapped in a cloth, and they threw your beloved body into the punt of a police van. The sound of the blow hit my heart.

From there, to give part and keep record in the local office, where they coldly interrogated me, as if I had committed a crime.

-Are you the wife? Were you married?

-No.

-The concubine declares that today the deceased, name....

"Concubine", I thought, and I saw myself wrapped in veils embroidered with bells, with a precious stone hanging in the middle of my forehead, beautiful. I asked for a chair, I was falling. I had to go for it. When I came out of the interrogatory, I drank a coffee which caused me tachycardia. I remembered that I had not eaten more than one tamale and one atole (corn-flour drink) for three days. I left half the coffee, and right after a jumping character appeared.

-Madam, are you the widow?

-Yes – I said. The concubines are left widowers? What am I? I thought.

-My deepest condolences and from my company – he said while handing me a card –. I come to offer you our funeral services, we adjust to any budget.

He seemed to me a young vulture. I eluded him. "Thanks". Later, he reappeared at the morgue, when I did not know what was next. He knew his job well.

-If you want incineration, it can be here, immediately. Or we can prepare him to take away for one, two or three days.

Whaaaat?

-If you want him for taking away, how do you want us to prepare him?

“The only thing he missed to offer: in pipian or pickled? I thought. It was for two days, without seasonings.

I wanted Manuel to see him if he wanted to. That he had a choice, that his father would not only disappear from the scene like that. He did not want to, he was six years old and the blow was brutal. Even today we are dealing with the remains of that other earthquake.

I was left cut opened; the death is icy. I do not know if one's death, but the one of a loved one, it is. I know. That is how it was for me. It left me an icy cold feeling that took a long time to pass. And something was cauterized inside me.

Today I can talk about it, but I spent more than a year afflicted. Without an idea of how or where to continue life. I did not want anyone to leave home, I wanted to have them all close by, not to lose sight of them. I did not trust life; I did not trust death.

I had panic attacks while driving, while being away from home, when going to pick up Manuel from school. Curiously, when going back, with my child in the car, I did not have them.

A single certainty took hold of me, although sometimes it eludes me, or sometimes I elude it when I get angry. Only love matters.

And I continue with the emergency backpacks, because the Popo and the replicas just do not stop! Tweezers for the eyebrows, because since I went through menopause I get a few thick beards that I hate. If at least it was a full beard, I say... Toothpaste, toothbrush. Are needed five more stakes for the little houses. That is why I do not like lending things, now they are missing! But I always give in when someone asks me for something. I hate myself! but not anymore.

-Did you call Civil Protection again, sweetheart? It has been a week since it trembled and they do not show up.

-They are very busy with serious cases, mum. I sent the pictures of the cracks to Jimena, to architect Casas and to teacher Andres. They say that they are not risky, that there is nothing to worry about.

Meanwhile, we inform ourselves of what kind of fractures are dangerous. There is one that is the ugliest, right on the way through the bathroom. It is very cumbersome, we go through there with uneasiness, looking at it in case it breaks right at that moment; it would be very bad luck. So better the pee in the compost, are phosphates. All the rest, oh well, we go all around and we enter by the other side.

This house is like “in one go”, it is like the ones from before. A sausage of bedrooms and rooms until getting to the kitchen. All the rooms face the patio, except the bathroom! That was annexed later, in a small room that was for

sewing, or something like that. It remained there like a big box half the height of the house, with a door and window, next to a corner. Nothing aesthetic. But the rest is worth gold! The spacious rooms are delicious, the kitchen huge. It is beautiful, with its three ironwork balconies facing the street. It even has a hiding place from the times of the Revolution, in the living room, under the floor. I have never wanted to go down, several people fit in. It could be a cava, well seen. But I do not like its “vibe”. Let it be there.

And life goes on with its many domestic details. There are no classes yet because of the revision of the schools. For me, better. I like being with Manuel, besides not driving with cold in the morning and heat in the afternoon. For me they are vacations.

His sister gives him homework; and although he grumbles, he is occupying himself in learning by himself. Life, I have noticed, is a long personal investigation. In knowing how to search and knowing what we are looking for, there is the key. Although sometimes one finds that which extends the doubts, change the route and it gets to another place. And so we go, choosing.

At times, I do not deny it, Manuel drives me crazy. When he gets bored he starts to get dense. He wants what he does not have and he does not see what he has. It happens to me too. The miracle happens as soon as he finds a thread to follow and he finds an idea that interests him, by himself. He wants it, he courts it, he becomes passionate and starts doing it regardless of the result, for the pleasure. Without interruptions, he generates something in the process which builds it. It is built.

-Time to eat! Come now! Food is ready!

Sitting at the table, we comment the reports of what has gone on in our day. They have already stopped the search for victims, that is very sad; let other days continue.

-If I were them, I would keep on looking, there may be more people, it is not fair! – says Manuel disconsolate.

I do not know how to comfort him, nor me. Everything possible was done, they say. Now comes the reconstruction, we must continue. Oh well.

Numerous interesting proposals for temporary housing for the victims are offered. Mongolian yurts with PVC, minimal and complete booths (Housing used by nomads in the steppes of Central Asia, protected by a thick cover, easy to transport and optimal to withstand the intense climatic changes). So simple designs that make me think: how could it not occur to me before? They reuse the adobe; they build with PET bottles. Anyway, there is a lot of wit in the face of so much work. In Juchitan, where the first earthquake hit so hard on September 7, they still can not finish. This is going to take a long time, it seems.



It turns out that the old shovels resting the dreams of the righteous for years, and the pots with holes that were once plant pots, are useful to move stones in the absence of wheelbarrows, they go! And the Henner helmets for motorcycle, for climbing and paragliding, too, they go! Manuel keeps his favorites, it goes! Electric gloves that we do not use, they go! Gardening gloves, you think so? Well look, in some way it will help them.

These objects are added to many other things that Maria and her boyfriend have gathered together with other boys and girls, who, besides enjoying exploring the beauty that nature provides at any point, they help.

Enthusiasm is a precious word; it means: “with divine inspiration”. That is how they are, that is why they love what they feel. Inundated, they are, at the same time, divine. In those we are, when the sad lion of the knocker of the hallway rumbles announcing, at last! To whom do you think? To Civil Protection. Taran!

-Good afternoon – they wear badges, they show credentials, we salute, we shake hands. Very well presented with vests and official helmets. They are three architects and a technical specialist, no idea on what. But “come in”.

-Welcome, good thing that you already arrived!

-Are you eating? Are we interrupting you?

-No, no way! it does not matter! Come this way, please.

And if we say yes, that right at noon people usually eat. Better not in case they get offended and come back in six months.

We show all the cracks that we have discovered with the days. We ask, they explain us.

-There is no problem, the damage is not of concern.

-Oh, thank goodness! Well, we can be calm.

We crossed looks of relief. Fiu!

-Make them see the roof, Aurelia! – says Manuel, who loves to go up whenever he can.

-A month ago they waterproofed it – says Aurelia, do you want to see it?

-Yea, sure, since we are here, at once. Let’s go.

I see them go up the sea ladder that stands out from the wall and I better wait for them. I love solid land, although with so much aftershocks, real or imaginary, that seems like a joke.

While I wait for his return, I look at this second patio, the one of knick-knacks. So much wasted space; if we fix it we can put a little chicken coop and a vegetable garden, entertained I make plans. You see, Venezuela, so rich and going through hunger, without supply, and what there is, very expensive, they say.

Outrageous in an oil country! What perverse maneuvers of the government and its henchmen! Cheating continuously, to at any rate, always keep the score in their favor. What do they win? Outside of their exclusive club, nobody likes them, and I think nor inside. Breed of vipers! Would say Jesus Christ referring to the beggars of that time. Do not they see that they are going to die? That they will not take away anything, even if they accumulate everything?

Oh, but it is not their fault; well yes, too. But those who let them do and undo without asking for reports, there you go for being bad citizen! There you go for being distracted! There you go for being submissive! How awful! This theme always irritates me! Instead, Saudi Arabia seems to be putting it together, organized.... How will they do it?

I better clean this, and some tomatoes. If they come out through the compost, the more here! And being in that disorder, they coming down from the roof, Aurelia livid and Manuel quiet. And now? A woman architect, the eldest, tells me:

-You have to leave now. You can not sleep here; it is very dangerous.

-Wait a minute, slowly – I ask. Although I heard perfectly from the first time, what I want you to tell me is what is this game. Oh, how humorists! But in their faces I can see that no, it is no joke.

-Once again, please. How? Why? What is going on?

-The floor has a crack of at least one centimeter all through, better get out. Is the house yours?

-No, it is rented – I answer with a thin voice.

-Well, talk to the owners, because it even threatens the school next door, faces the courtyard.

No, not even to think about it! Playtime, an aftershock, no, no, no! the children! See the terrible story about the school in the DF; sorry, “Mexico City”. Was something won by re-baptizing the DF? I do not think so. As if there was no work to be done!

“Ups!” I think. I left the soup on the fire! I run and turn off the burner. Now we have half concentrated and salty soup. Pfff! I sigh and I go out to find out more. They are already marking with phosphorescent spray paint the wall in the street and the entrance with a folio number. They give Aurelia some papers, which she signs and they leave a copy to her.

-See you later.

-Thank you very much.

-Nothing to be thankful for, it is our job. Excuse me.

Gosh! And now? To make matters worse, that day rained. It was the last downpour of the season, confirming the diagnosis of the specialists. A pretty

curtain of water, like that of some elegant hotels, fell through the mentioned crack all along the length of the house; from the kitchen, through the bedrooms and up to the wall of the balcony facing the street.

While we were running moving up furniture and piling up various objects, the dogs went to lie on their rugs, keeping safe; and the cats climbed into the spontaneous mountains of things that we were accumulating, and licking unconcerned, they watched our agitation.

The following nights we slept in Nona's apartment. The little animals stayed at home, what else! I was depressed and disturbed, I wanted to sleep until everything was solved. Impossible. I spent the days between washing clothes, shopping and food, limiting expenses to a minimum.

I was exhausted from thinking up solutions. I scratched at my convolutions to see if I could find an idea. And no, all the ideas had gone for a walk. Now we were victims of the tremor, without right for any help because the house was not ours. Everything was dismantled, how to put it together again? Fortunately, misfortunes do not last forever, who would endure? So, somehow or other, we have to overcome it.

I drank linden blossom tea by gallon. How good that there was no mescal, because I would probably would have thrown into vice! Going away from my palace, thrown towards where? Whatever, to look for a house. How expensive everything is! Since Cholula became "Magic Town", it became expensive. We saw some insignificant little houses; we do not fit into any.

I accumulated so many things that there is no need telling you! without restriction. Imagine, seventeen years living here, with rooms four by nine, a central patio with trees that I planted and which today are taller than the house itself.

And besides, although it seems incredible, I never had the rent increased. Well, I painted it every two, three years, on the inside one time, on the outside another; it amounted to painting two houses. I made it prettier, I placed planks in the attic, all from my pocket; if something broke down, I fixed it. Hey, I was never a bother. Nor the owner with me; it was perfect.

He has about twenty houses and this is the smallest one; seriously, he plays Monopoly. He had seven siblings and they died one by one of old age. Only he got married, he inherited what the others left and he has only one daughter, who is going to get everything. Lucky her.

After a few days, we found an apartment that our budget could cover. In all, a little bigger than my old bedroom, it was like being in the whole house at the same time. I did not enter in the apartment, let's say that I put it on me! If I could carry it, and with two holes for my legs, I could walk with it on top of me, like a snail.

My soul fell to the ground! Where will I store my things? How do the Japanese do it? No idea! A temporary refuge of those that are proposed, would be fine. Yes, sure, and have them place it in the park, if not, where?

To sell whatever can be sold, to give away... I do not know. I remembered my great-grandmother, who had her “little chair for crying” in a corner, and when she needed it, she went there, sat down, I imagine that she was dressed in lace and perfumed with rosewater and benzoin, and she cried between deep sighs. I wanted to cry anywhere, with the little chair or without it!

Oh yes, fool, and those who lost everything in the earthquake? Do not be silly! Yes, it is difficult, it hurts, but we are all fine, you got to be kidding! take away the drama from your life! I already have lived before with only a backpack; this will not scare me. Come on, let’s keep on going!

And there we went. Aurelia, my beloved babe, she went to her school, my son to his, and Nona and I to cover the day-to-day work, to get boxes and to pack. Nona, as always, willing to help even in what she can not. I must watch her, because she climbs, like a Chinese tightrope walker, in three chairs to remove a spotlight that is not even worth fifteen pesos, risking everything! It is incredible!

Nona was born in Mexico City. My grandfather studied law and, therefore, he earned the nickname, which was repeated some Sunday at family meals in the house in Puebla, “the communist”. He found great pleasure in booze with the classmates of the faculty. And my grandmother had no choice but to take the lead, believing that it was something like an investment: “Today for you, tomorrow for me; when his career is over, he will take his place. This is temporary”. Yes, sure! That never happened; he never changed, but she grew a lot. They ended up divorcing after having three children; Nona the eldest.

-I worked as a secretary – my granny told me one night in her kitchen, having dinner –. In those times there were no labor rights for mothers, nor day care centers, as now. I used to leave your mom well eaten, changed, wrapped as a taquito and gave her the blessing so she would not vomit and drown. I had no choice. When I returned from work, eight hours later, with hard breasts full of milk – that must have hurt! I think –, and I unwrapped your mother, “she was steaming, as a tamale”.

A little bigger, around one-year-old, that was not possible anymore, so I left her under the care of the concierge.”

The paternal grandparents went from Puebla to Mexico City to visit their son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter, in 1936 or so, and they found my mother tied from the waist to a tube from the central fountain, because she was crawling so fast that she could be in danger, and the concierge had a lot to wash, she could not be carrying her.

They brought her to Puebla, they had a lumberyard and they lived in comfort. She attended the American School until, one afternoon, in a moment of boredom, she discovered a floorboard of the room that stood out from among the others. With her little finger she lifted it up and, oh! wonder! she found a treasure! That was upholstered with canvas sacks that the great-grandfather kept totally filled with pesos of silver 0.720.

-I filled my pencil case, which was like that, long, with many pesos. It was easy for me, why the hell not? – she tells us.

For a few weeks she was the school's sensation, she bought sweets for her friends everyday, until in the Head teacher's Office they realized that there was a lot of money, they detected it and told my great-grandparents, who made an uproar and moved her to another school as punishment to correct her, to the boarding school El Progreso, of nuns, paradoxical name.

-Sor Elodia was tall, abundant in flesh, with a pigtail and completely dressed in black. At five o'clock she entered the galley which contained the beds in two rows, as a barracks, and clapping her hands she shouted: "Hail Mary full of grace, time to get up!", walking along, back and forth, without any mercy. We were little girls! And from there like little lambs towards the baths. I had to bathe with my nightgown on, so as not to see my body.

-Girl, put on your nightgown!

-But I am going to bathe!

-Put on the nightgown!

-And how do I bathe?

- Well, like that. Under the nightgown!

Then to dress almost hidden, and then to mass and then breakfast. She still recites the Our-Father in Latin.

She only went out on weekends. She did not like that not even a little bit.

"I am not staying here – she thought, so she was thinking up plans for her escape –. Run, but where? And then, who protects me? No, my security!". Imagine at that age, it is like to be taken into account. If someone with brains had led me, they would have achieved a lot. Because I plotted, I made pipe dreams, I reconstructed family conversations and I remembered "the Communist". At that time there were posters, in shops and posts, saying: "Communism no, Catholicism yes". There it was the master plan for my liberation.

-I pretended to be very distressed near the gossippiest of the classroom. Her name was Victoria. It was a signal, I still remember. I cried throughout the corners, all acting! This girl, nor lazy nor slow, burning with curiosity, insisted me that her friendship was true and that she would never betray me, that I should open up with her to vent myself – she tells us.

And it was just what my mom, precocious being eight years old, was waiting for.

-I have a great sorrow – she said brokenly –. No, I can not tell you.

-Please Rosa Maria, be confident, I will not tell anyone. I swear.

And so for a while she was cooking her slowly. Until she let go of her regret:

-It is just that, no, I can not.

-Tell me, do not keep it.

-It is that....my dad is communist.

In the afternoon, the grandparents gave a thousand explanations to the mother superior.

-The thing is that my husband makes jokes to my son because he studies law, but in no way, mother superior. Look, it is a joke, a nonsense. He also calls him “pen-pusher”. We are a Catholic family, the priests of La Concordia visit us.

-Yes, Mrs. Rosita, but in this school she can not stay longer. I am very sorry.

There was no way, expelled. That same night she had dinner at home, very happy. A jewel, my mom.

Well, to look for school. Let’s see, let’s go with Mr. Gumersindo Vargas.

-Who was an honorable man, old-fashioned, but very old-fashioned! Rigid, a stereotype of that time: vest, watch chain, graying mustache trimmed, robust, dressed in gray, sitting behind a gray desk in a dark office.

“How awful! – Nona thought -. Going from bad to worst! I am not staying here; I am not staying here!”.

-Yes, Mrs. Rosita, we can admit her. She has to do an exam to see on what school grade she corresponds. Let’s see girl, how much is eight times four?

-Twenty-seven – she responded proudly.

-No, well, six times six?

-Twelve – with a satisfied face.

-Think about it, the multiplication table of number four can be easier. Four times seven?

-Forty?

-There was the double life exercised since that time for my salvation – says Nona.

Because she is a master in manipulation. “Tell me about it that I know her forever!”, I think.

-But you know it, Rosa Maria! answer right! - her grandmother said.

There was no way, she did not even get one answer right; they could place her in first grade.

-No! but if she has to be going into fifth grade!

As a next option, the German School.

-There, the sky opened for me – Nona tells –. It was illuminated, broad and there was that beautiful man, Herr Theiss, the Head-teacher. They made her do an exam again.

-I did it real well, you know? Because I answered everything. I was free. I studied, little, but I really played, I made friends! I was happy.

She excelled in sports, with the best time in 100-meter races in the country, and she was invited to the first Pan-American and Caribbean games. But my great-grandmother said conclusive:

-In the family there has never been mountebanks – and that was the end for her in races.

At her eighty-two years old, we were here now, choosing, say, very selectively each object to adjust to the dimensions of the new house to which the earthquake forced us. We got rid of furniture that no way could they fit in the apartment. We threw away totally full garbage bags everyday; of the big ones, black.

-Where was all this if we used to clean the house continuously?

We separate wood, plastic, what a plague! Metal, paper, can be sold, call Mr. Moi so he can take it away and whatever he gives us is good. Who needs five sets of tea? If we do not even use them! To the old bazaar of antiques. Toys: those that do, those that do not. Clothing: that does, that does not.

-This is good, we give it to Maggie, that as you know her husband totally disregarded his responsibilities and poor Maggie always wears rags, because of so many children she has. The toys too.

-But she has not even paid you the twelve thousand pesos which you lent her almost three years ago!

-Well, the universe should take it on account of any karma that I owe, what else! Every time I call her up she even gets offended, better leave it there! But I learned. It will not happen to me again! Also poor Maggie, either her children eat or she pays me. Well, let the children eat.

I did not feel that I was moving to another house, but that I was descaling myself from the previous house. The round begins, the bell rings. In this corner, with attachments and from another epoch: The Nona! and in this other, with attachments, but determined to throw, Aurora! There we go. In the center of the ring they both pull a sweater from each other that has not been worn, but that “can be useful”, says Nona. With arguments, Aurora tries to take it from her, but Nona defends herself and swears that now she will use it.

The daily bread and a round for everything: dishes, goods and chattels, ornaments. Labeling boxes, tie them up, make budgets with moving companies, to see which one is better for us.

At night we returned to Nona's apartment to snuggle, tight, but comfortable, and to rest.

To think, to think, in an unstoppable train of ideas that had already returned from their walk, but not the good ones –, I woke up restlessly, continually. The savings were vanishing, and another and another day were passing on settling the unscheduled move, the apartment's month of deposit, the one that runs, and it really runs fast! the recurring expenses...

-The thing is that it does not stop trembling since it trembled! – I say complaining about the situation with this metaphor in front of Aurelia, who with her forceful logic answers me:

-That is right, it is always shaking. The earth is alive, as you. "I can not even complain at ease!" I think. But I am grateful to her, she brings me back to the road with her clarity. Sometimes she shakes me and many more times she teaches me, I listen to her carefully. She is brilliant and sensitive.

When I reproach myself for not having achieved accomplishments that gave me fame and fortune or achieved titles and recognitions, I see my children so beautiful, intelligent, irreducible, full of virtues. There I see that I launched the biggest company and I have dedicated my life with benefit. Really I will leave to the world a couple of valuable beings that, without a doubt, they make it better.

I became sort of "the opossum (tlacuache)" of the song of Cri-Cri: "I change, sell and buy equally", removing the one of "I buy". I sold Henner's machinery that, I gave up, I was never going to use. It pays one month of school. Period.

It could have been a slow move, because the deposit and the current month payment was covered; otherwise, I would not want to think about it. And even so, it was very hard. Passing things in the car and with the help of friends with vans, one day some, another day others and so on, we finally achieved the move. Next, to unpack and again, to take out more things, because we still did not fit.

Aurelia shared with me an idea of enormous utility, very good. Just what I was missing.

-if it does not make you happy, thank it and let it go. You will not miss it, ma, believe me. There is a Japanese woman who writes books about this, she told me.



A treasure of wisdom that can be applied to all areas of life, at all levels. My growing pains are diminishing, the weight that I am carrying now, is less thanks to her advice.

Out from the corner of my eye, I had seen the minimalist style, in some magazine. Nothing to do with me, I thought. All those straight lines, the furniture, the clothing, the gray, beige, black walls; so cold and unwelcoming, is not my thing, I always thought.

What I had not noticed, other than that I did not like the decoration, was the background that sustains it. yes, that is, if I have only what I like, I can see everything, that gives me the opportunity to use it and develop it. Why having what I do not like? It takes away time from what I do care about.

It is simple: I can focus, and by not dispersing myself I achieve results. I think I accumulated so many things out of fear of fully committing the myths of my idealized image. Out of fear of not being the perfect painter or sculptor that I told myself that I was, and better, I covered it with things that kept me busy and complaining, instead of solving if was useful for what I had imagined or not, and to something else. Out of fear of failure or success, but that is another topic.

In any case, the earthquake decided that it is time by leading me to this. Frugality in living is not a punishment, it is more of a blessing, now I see it. It does not have to be gray or beige, it can be of the colors and materials that I want; the importance is the lightness and the approach. Until I understood it! "As it is inside, it is outside", they say. It must be, it seems true.

All kinds of knick-knacks went through the filter. And as if by magic, the pieces were falling into place. Manuel learned gladly and we were thinning of knick-knacks and good and functional objects, but that they had already fulfilled their role with us and, I hope, would be useful for someone else. Lighter, the apartment is being perceived spacious, pleasant. Less is more, in this case.

I started to like eating in the "good" tableware which only came out at Christmas in order to set up a simulacrum of ephemeral elegance that was vanished the rest of the year, in which we used to eat in several plates orphan remnants of earthenware, putting together a collage on the table of every day that, it was not ugly, but it was not beautiful, it did not make me happy. There being kept, the good tableware, in its showcase seemed to say to me: "You do not deserve me". How ridiculous, any day trembles again and goodbye unused tableware, life without living.

And there was time and space to remove from the bottom of the bottom of the trunk, projects postponed for years, they are still warm, they still make me happy, they stood firm waiting to see at what time it would tremble so that, at last, I would be removing the obstacles, from big to small, until hearing its slight moan which denoted that there was still something alive there, my dreams.

I dusted them off and looked at their eyes knowing that I was going to love them forever. They are me. This earthquake had its epicenter in my chest, it threw down the walls of my resignation. It resized the complaint, the useless, born of the pain of denying me, the frustration of hiding my talents for another time. if time is the only thing we do not have, we live of moments. The earthquake prompted me to be reborn.

How else can I teach my son to follow his passion if not by example. To preserve his originality by exercising it.

Time passes and we go back to the everyday. It was beautiful to be connected in the same frequency, vibrating. Something more that the floor and buildings was cracked. The certainty that this can not change was hopelessly cracked. Many little lights have remained lit, illuminating the hope until it dawns. Our children and we deserve it.

Yes, it is more the hope.