

**DIATRIBE TO MY FRAGMENTED FACE IN A BUNCH OF GLASS THAT I AM
ABOUT TO STIFLE IN THE PALM OF MY HAND**

I didn't want to be like my father. But like my mother, a 1960s intellectual hippie, an economist and a sociologist (she studied for both degrees at the same time), who cohabited, with canaries and parrots flying around her house; head of the family, because my father didn't have a job. I also wanted to know a lot of things, to read a lot of books and smoke marihuana (without drying out my brain, getting the balance right, as she used to say); to have several lovers and get to know my body; to walk naked around the house; to sunbathe with my children in the garden and discuss Marx at night, with the noisy soundtrack of the typewriter and the word "Madera" on a blackboard. I didn't want to be like my father.

Books he saw with suspicion, reticence, like an indigene would white people arriving in his land with papers in their hands. Other men he challenged with his eyes, and towards women he looked with lust. He didn't smoke that penetrating odor, he held back from the discussions and inhaled white powder whose name I learned later. He wouldn't let my mother walk naked in the garden, nor let the birds fly around the house. Little by little, I understood that the nights without the typewriter were a caged nightmare, that the shouting and the sobbing were not the far away sound of a soap opera. I didn't want to be like my father. Although, I said it once as a child: the one who shouts most wins, the one who kicks the furniture. Right, Mom? She stifled a sob and inhaled nicotine (she stop smoking smelly cigarettes when I learned how to say "joint" and grandma heard me). No my little one, it's not like that. But she never told me how it was.

I wanted to be the kind that wins, that succeeds, that can do everything. Something in my brain registered that shouting the loudest, kicking the furniture, saying the most hurtful things would dissolve all the obstacles in the way. Then you arrived, with your eyes full of butterflies with yellow-black wings, with your eyes of traveler's dreams and of life together.

In this life you either win or lose. And, if you lose, you are like my mother now, whirlpool after, swamp where the woman is left behind in an empty house, the man leaves.

He has the money, she doesn't; he manipulates and threatens, tries to strangle her, time and again, in that caged nightmare called bedroom. And in the silence. That is why I had to win, to be my mother, that distant intellectual young woman. To be the woman that has other men in order to possess you, in order not to lose you, to be the woman who has money even though she is not interested in earning it, even though she prefers to be near her children rather than spending long afternoons in the office. Because she cannot afford to lose, she cannot let you become a man like her father.

To shatter the fine porcelain of the town where the car broke down and we had to ask for a ride and you said, as if in jest, marry me and I heard my mouth say yes and my heart pound in the back seat. We said the sanctuary would be to be together, we don't have a place, we said.

There is something in the rage that doesn't know about objects, names or persons. It's a compelling need, stab that which hurts somewhere else, that must be removed. I needed to do it – I really needed to – to hurl the phone against the wall. But you, suddenly in front of my rage. The phone on your head, looking into your eyes, knowing they were your eyes and not the wall, knowing those were your eyes, time and again. Why didn't you leave me alone? That's the only way of calming me down. It was the only way my father would come around, alone.

He would return hours later, after threatening us, saying he would never ever return and that he would crash his car to die and that we would never see him again. So, I, the eldest, was trapped by all the eyes on me, my brothers would do what I would do. First, cry. Later, when I stopped believing him, I would lock myself in my room or say come on, let's play. Finally, to challenge him, I would look him in the eye with a look that was no more that of a little girl. I couldn't articulate a go away and leave us in peace. But he knew I was about to say it, he never dared touch me. My brothers, the three of them, learned how to look that way and they were never the weak, the beaten ones. They became the enraged ones, like me, with tenderness as intense as unpredictable, and a curse that no medical prescription can cure. But you are a woman, my mother would say, the mother of now, the unknown one, the one who hides her books under her bed and says don't smoke, my little one, it looks so bad.

Forgive me, I love you (my father would say, time and again, when he came back

at dawn, without the promised crash and Mom would forgive him). But there was no answer, your fluttering emigrated elsewhere, your eyes became a swarm of other butterflies, the ones called nocturnal, giant moths. Your eyes vibrated noisily and your serene voice said: thus far. The fine porcelain I pick up, shard by shard, says that there will be no canaries and parrots flying in the home of my past. I won't know what to say to our children when they come back from school. I'll go to the office and you will be here to take care of them, I know. Night will fall and I also know you will not stay. How good for you. That was the condition, when we got married. I said it very clearly: the first blow, divorce. And we said yes and we swore an eternal love, a different love. Till the death of the butterflies do us part.

My hand bleeds.

The rage... is never going to end, ever.

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