

## Chapter XI

*I want to see him... for another day...*



A quiet morning at the hospital. I had finished the general round and I was giving the last orders of the morning to the Resident doctors. The secretary phones me. They had to “Send” a patient from Intensive Therapy to the floor of Clinic.

- *“Doctor, I'm interning an undifferentiated carcinoma breast, state IV; three metastases in the liver; lymphangitis carcinomatosa and several lung nodules; a number of metastases along the backbone; a small and foculless one in the brain; jaundice and breathing insufficiency; tachypnea with 48 breathing a minute; Karnofsky on 10. A cyclophosphamide and Adriamycin was performed on her but with severe intolerance. She's lucid, with Bipap and refuses to remain in the U.T.I.”*
- *“How old is the patient, Dr. Gonzalez?”*
- *“32”*
- *“Pardon, how old...?”*
- *“Yes, 32 years old and she's a breast Ca connected with her pregnancy. A fortnight ago a Caesarean operation was performed at the 36 weeks; a baby-boy, without any manifest pathology. It started at the fifth month with mastitis. She was treated with antibiotic which added progressive dyspnoea, until it became of rest, dorsalgia understood due to lymphangitis and nodules. A breast biopsy; seven days after delivering, quimio was performed. She was introduced to the Tumour Committee and they decided surgery wasn't possible; only Radio-therapy to reducing the pain, if analgesics are infective”.*
- *“Well, send her to Room 1035”.*
- *“And, besides, I was forgetting, she's got estrogen receptors by two methods, negatives”.*

Thin, Marisa, very thin. A nose, two big black eyes that fight swallowing the air. She ought to have been beautiful, very beautiful.

Perspired, she seems to be weeping through the skin. Each mouthful of air was like a dagger stuck in our breasts. Her eyes are fixed on me. She tells me nothing, and doesn't even try to... But her wordless question hits me very hard. Including the walls ask me what I can do for her...

I request a meeting with the Committee of the Hospital Ethics: two Clinic Doctors, an Onchologist, a Matron, the Priest of the Hospital, a Manager and I, who by chance, am in charge of the Ward. A large table and solemn faces. Did Fate choose us to be round the table making up our minds and not in the bed suffering?

Forty minutes later and only one decision: Stop her suffering. Sedation. Her husband, holding his tears, agrees to discuss it with Marisa.

- *“Marisa, I want to give you a soft sedative, so you may sleep and relieve your difficult breathing”, he asked her hiding his fear as much as possible.*
- *“No”, Her face and body stop me dead. “I want to see... to see my baby... even for another day... another day... I prefer... to endure...”*

Five o'clock in the afternoon. A wrapped up small bundle, a sleeping face and chubby hands in arms of an aunt. A visitor has arrived. I look at Marisa and I see her prisoner of her body. She's a dying and injured tigress struggling for her cub. An hour, a cry and a bottle of milk in his tummy. And the mother looking at him and the baby looking at her too.

Marisa. She had spent five years trying to get pregnant, a nurse told me. When I arrive the following day, Marisa hadn't slept the previous night at all. She's sunk in the pillow.

- *“It's over... thanks... whatever you say... doctor”. She tells me, while she is looking at me, feeling sorry for me and I think she was encouraging me.*

Morphine... Diazepam... and she is a sleep... Five hours later they call me. She's quiet... in peace. It's a mother who is resting.

One week later, returns my Head and in the crossed one of the room, it asks:

- *Who was in that piece? Ah, yes, told me, was a girl to whom you gave “the push him” no...?*