

Chapter XII

It happened in some country....



The Hospital of a very important Charity Establishment. Intensive Therapy Unit. Twenty beds with ten breathing tubes. All of them taken. Flu epidemic in the city with Geriatric Residents and extremely unbalanced patients. The ambulance system collapsed due to unusual demand.

A young woman of 19 is admitted with asthmatic trouble, intubated and in manual breathing attendance, at the medical ward. It's impossible to send her anywhere as well as to get an available bed or rent a breather.

The patients attended by breather were analyzed. All of them are recoverable, except one. He's an old man of 79 with lung opacity-ray nodular lesion and two nodules in the hepatic ultrasound scan, with a week old node biopsy that showed an undifferentiated carcinoma.

- *"I won't withdraw him the breather"*, says the ward doctor, implying religious and moral reasons.
- *"Neither will I"*, replies the Therapy Director. *"There are ethic and juridical reasons for not withdrawing it. I'm not going to assume something that's responsibility of the Medical Board of Directors or the Charity Establishment Management, such as having enough breathers."*
- *"And neither will I"*, states the Medical Director mentioning the Penal Code. *"I'm going to call a consultation meeting at the Legal Department"*.

A few minutes later the Charity Establishment Manager arrives at the Hospital surrounded by guards. Great commotion, everybody wants to great him, talk to him, ask him such a favour or a "job" for a relative, promising his or her vote for the following elections at the "Syndicate" will be only for him.

He gets tired of distributing "yes, yes" decorated with smiles to everybody. The syndicalist walks up to Therapy with all his guards and goes on smoking peevishly. Shiny shoes, tight trousers, silk shirt opened, showing his navel, black leather jacket and lotioned-combed hair. Lucrecia, the Matron of the Unit recibes him with the warmest kisses.

- *"But, what's the matter with the "docs"? Damn, what do I pay them for, if they aren't able to take a decision"?*

The Director of Therapy and Medical Director don't even try to answer. They remain silent with their hands in the pockets of their white jackets hiding their wrath and brooding over their helplessness. They swallow their feelings; don't say anything; they look like two poles lost in the middle of the country.

- *"Lucrecia, withdraw the breather form the old man, who has no family and put it to the girl who is a friend's daughter"*.

The nurse doesn't hesitate a minute. She neither waits for the doctor's approval, nor looks at the Director. She's the most perfect of blind obedience. She proceeds immediately.

A small radio at the nurses's office is emitting Enrique Santos Discepolo's, tango "Cambalache".

- *♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪... "Everything is the same thing, nothing is better: a donkey is similar to a great professor..."* ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪
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