

Chapter XIV

The lion cub...



Emergency at the Hospital. Shock room on priming. A stretcher lift at the entrance. My role as a Clinic Intern at the Emergency Unit is to be, at the bedside, ready to intube a bullet wounded patient. The helicopter brings a 42 year old man. Six 9mm bullet shots in the abdomen and two in the thorax.

He's lucid, not in shock. The surgeons, after a brief evaluation, send him "straight to the operating theatre".

The hospital, quickly returns to its routine. All have lived hundreds on times the emergency, and nor maneuvers are needed to maintain training.

And, after a lapse, information arrive from the operating room. It is "the mouth to mouth" of the resident doctors:

- *It has outbreak of stomach, colon and spleen, in addition to a iliaca artery "that it bleeds to bubblings". Two tubes of drainage in thorax...*

It enters running a woman. He is pale, very pale, very open black eyes, fat person, and takes of the hand a baby of ten years.

It does not know where to go... everybody guesses who she is... but they drop their eyes, and go on with their tasks (or pretend to). I can't, and she looks at me:

- *"Doctor, they have just brought my husband, where is he?"*
- *"Is his name José Gonzalez from Monte Grande City?" **
- *"Yes, I want to see him, please, I want to see him."*
- *"He's in the theatre, go up by the first lift and at the waiting room of Therapy the operating surgeon will inform you".*

She thanks me and turns round "in the air". But behind her there was a boy of about 13 or 14 years old with quite a similar but younger face than the wounded's.

He stretches up trying to seem taller, shows his best serious face, behind his teenager acne. He wears long trousers, which are shorter, perhaps he has grown up faster than the familiar budget. He tries to be tough, gulps and with a youthful voice between baritone and soprano, speaks hard:

- *"Doctor, I want to know how my father is".*

The woman tries to stop him, but the girl prevents it. It's "the head of the family" who's asking. They are "the cubs" who have the control of the family affairs. Just like that, mercilessly, giddily.

- *He's alive, but eight bullets have stuck him in "six in the stomach and two in the chest". At the operating theatre they are trying to do their best..."*

They can't speak and they cuddle among themselves. I hear the girl saying sobbing.

- *I couldn't kiss my father before he left today... I was cross with him because he hadn't allowed me to return home late from my friend's birthday party..."*

After an endless silence, the man-boy comforts them.

- *"Mum, it isn't the end... we are going to help you".*

I'm like a mutilated statue. Motionless, I fell empty and my stomach aches.

I'll remain like fire burning in their lives forever. I have the sensation the rest of the people on duty are looking at me. I don't know what to do or to say. I've already told the news hundred of times, but I feel like the first time.

It's the painful moment that revives my human helplessness; my failures, and even I ask myself if I should have become a doctor... I stay motionless. Each second is like an hour... without knowing what to do or say...

I only think it's proper to be silent...

- *"Thank you doctor, thank you very much".*

I'm surprised. Staring at me "the man of the house" gratefully shakes my hand firmly. I don't understand them, but the woman kisses me and also the girl (perhaps the kiss she refused to give her dad?)

Embraced to each other they leave walking slowly, even quietly. It's a torn and bleeding family.....but dignified in their sorrow. They have changed.

But, who has changed them? Who was it? Was it me who soothed them? What did they thank me for? What good did I do?

While I'm going to the Tomograph, strolling through the park full of lilac flowers of jacaranda. I remember an old professor who used to speak about "the mystery of being a doctor".

He died two days later of multiorganic failure. He left a "lion cub" who took his place. And the first thing he did was to put all his things in order.

* *Fictitious name.*