

Chapter IV

You will always look for the love, denied by your parents.



Long ago when I was living with my mother, although I didn't enjoy that period of my life very much, I keep it in my memory with the sweetish taste of how life is appreciated by a four year old child.

At that age our own life is accepted as if it wouldn't be able to be otherwise. Rich or poor, you don't imagine there's another way of living. You just accept it, enjoy it until, through the time you Fate may be worse, and later, as a grown up, you look backwards and miss it.

Memories and more memories. I remember my mother taking me to the Immigrants Hotel (it was called "The Immigration"), today Puerto Madero. Possibly it wasn't its name, we weren't foreigners, but we were there waiting in a long quiet to get a smoky plate prepared with nice things (few) and nasty things (a lot) called stew, which we had to eat very quickly, even if you burn your mouth as you were hurriedly dismissed to allow other people to take your place. You needed to have a big glass full of cold water near in case of burning. And beware you weren't seen to drink it desperately, because it meant you had bad manners (I wonder what they'd do when their mouths got burnt).

Mum got terribly scared when two men started fighting and a bottle was thrown near my head. She refused to come back to that place. But I wanted to. One of the men was knocking to the other one very hard and I wished to learn how to knock the big boy who grabbed my tricycle when I was at the sidewalk...

Memories and more memories. I also remember a tin hut with a piece of cloth as a door and soil floor, behind Argerich Hospital, where we used to live with aunt Hilda. It was nice to walk along the railway as far as a grocer hut where we bought "yerba", sugar, rice and little sugary chickens in a paper cone for me. If they didn't do it I jumped and cried until I got it. It was a good technique to convince grown ups.

Between ten and eleven we waited for the passenger-train (freight trains passed by at any time and they were only to count carriages, engines and the caboose; but the best of all was that mum was with me). In the passenger-train, people travelled and used to throw coins. Was it cold or hot I wore a dark blue coat with two lines of golden bottoms; my aunt Hilda, who was very fat, rose me up from my waist (I was very happy because I could see inside the carriages), while mum rushed to pick up the coins that people threw out from the train windows; other women were doing the same thing....I remember a boy who threw a big coin and hit on my face.

He laughed and laughed, but I didn't like it, and I cried and cried for a long time. Mum promised to give it to me...but she never did...

Memories and more memories. I also remember the day my grandfather Pedro was dead, my mum and my aunt Hilda had to try their luck somewhere also...A lot of debts...

The things had white numbers painted on, while a man, on a chair, shouted to other people looking at him: -"Who bids more? Who bids more?" and the people cried numbers.

- "But who bids more?" Somebody says: "No more", he had been running like a lunatic, but those big ones were standing and no one had come running..... I couldn't understand anything...
- "And why were our things on the patio?" Suddenly I saw my tricycle stained with a number and I swore that with a piece of cloth and some of the powder mum used in the kitchen, I'd clean it thoroughly, even the tyres, in spite they might get dirty again.

And I'd never forget it in the patio when it was raining; I'll lend it to the big boy and even let him stand on the back crossbar. I'll never tread down my grandfather's geraniums with the wheels of my tricycle, because surely they would miss it...

But a woman came and took it away from me. She said she was going to take good care of it.....but I never saw it again...

The green tricycle... what will have happened to it...? In a cartoon film a tricycle spoke to another....mine never spoke but I'm sure it loved me a lot...

Memories and more memories. I also remember a police-woman who took me by my hand, gave me a sweet "a nasty one" that got stuck on my teeth, and led me into a large room where my mother and father were with a lot of other people and an angry-faced man who was staring me.... I got frightened and I ran to my mother....And that man whom the called "the judge", scolded my father saying something like:

- "...if the child chose to go with the mother, she mustn't be such a bad woman, as you say she is...the child stays with the mother...that's enough".

And afterwards the "Sabona Hotel", opposite to a building called "Congreso". My mum takes me..... and tells my father: "If you want the kid so much, here you are..."

I grasp both by their hands....join them....but they go on arguing.....until I hide behind a wardrobe and cry....I'm afraid....What's going to happen?

Later, a train... my father doesn't speak to me... I enjoy the landscape I see through the window... But mum isn't with us... Where is she...?

Presently, I see her head some seats in front of me...I run to her happily....when I'm going to hug her, I realize it isn't she...Where's mum? Has anybody seen her? I start crying....father buys me a sandwich and a Coke...It's very nice... I fall a sleep... and mum...? and mum...? I wake up and stand up. "Please mum, come out, surely you're hiding just like we used to play together, I couldn't find you and you caught me from behind and we laughed so much...please mummy come out... I don't want to play anymore please come out... Haven't you pity of me? please mum come out... People

repeat something about Rosario, Rosario... we arrived... Rosario Norte Station, Santa Fé. That word on the board frightens me...

- "What does it mean? Is mum here? or isn't she?"

Days passed by... and I cried... but mum wasn't coming. A woman I had to call "Nona" was kind to me, a grandfather who gazed me sideways....and another woman young and bad I had to call aunt Giolanda and she terrified me...terribly.... Months and years passed by....Sometimes I wore a thick sweater because of the cold, and sometimes I wore a short as it was very hot. Does mother still remember me? One day mum came I kissed and hugged her. I couldn't stop running, skipping, kissing, hugging her again and again....and breathing deeply.

- "At last!! Did you come to fetch me?"

She didn't answer me, her abdomen was enormous and she talked something about a little brother...

"I can't understand why my brother can be with you and I can't.... They didn't allow her to go to my bedroom.....and I couldn't show her the teddy-bear I sleep with...

And now Giolanda yells she isn't ashamed to show herself in front of the neighbours; she has got a kid with each man....mum cries....we are all quiet....and mum goes on crying, her tears keep falling....and once again "Aunt Giolanda" tells me aloud...

- "Not even the beasts desert their cubs as it was done with you".

And she goes on yelling....and mum crying....I was terrified she might hit my mother...But I'm going to protect her...and we remain all quiet standing at the front door.....

Mum kept coming on Sundays, she used to bring me sweet lollypops and little sugary chickens, take me to the cinema "Heraldo" where they show only cartoons....she allowed me to sit on her lap, and then she took me to a big house with very luxurious furniture not to be sat on...or run...too muffled....

A woman with embittered face, who smoked a long black tube (mum said it was a holder) looked at me and said:

- "Ah, the servant's son, "beware" he doesn't mess or break anything". It was nice to play with mum on the terrace, skipping on a rope which she moved saying it was a small snake, playing hide and seek, imitating a cow a dog, a cat, a hen, a cock...making paper ships, drawing on white paper that she kept when she bought some sugar.....

On coming back home, aunt Giolanda was waiting and her questioning began: What did you do? What did your mother ask you? What did she say? What did you see? Who was she with? What else did she ask? What did you tell her? What else...? And she always finished dooming:

- *"Your mother is a whore, the worst of the prostitutes, and you shouldn't be like her, because she'll lead you astray. She has no salvation"*

I only cried and cried, but sometimes I insulted her grossly in a low voice, and tried to convince myself my mum wasn't so bad. But as it was so constantly repeated that finally the poison was nesting in my mind.

One day I had an idea. I asked my mother to go out together but without talking, absolutely nothing, so when the "fat one" asked me what we had talked about, I'd answer "nothing", she'd stop "bothering" me.

So I explained it to my mother....She began crying and told me she couldn't have me with her, I didn't know why...Our outing had been very sad, but I returned home untroubled, because I had thought I wouldn't be annoyed with questions any more....

It was much worse....I got tired of explaining to my "blessed aunt" we hadn't talked.

She refused to believe me, and she said my mother had taught me to answer that, she was corrupting my soul, I was following her wicked behaviour, I'd go to hell with unholy people and she'd punish me...

Later I heard her saying she was getting very nervous when she beat me and that day she didn't want "to trouble herself anymore because of a whore".

- "Go to the shed at once", Giolanda shrieked.

Shed! Dreadful word I those years. Terrified word similar to a scaffold in my mind of angels and dragons. I had been threatened several times and even dragged to the door, bulling to lock me inside if I was found in lustful attitude (I had been caught looking at advertisements of feminine undies and the zip of my jeans was down).

The shed was under the house, a dark cellar where we stepped down by a short ladder, with soil floor and always wet. It was used to store bottles of wine and old things. There were cobwebs and everything was grey and black...

- "It's full of huge spiders", aunt Giolanda repeated and laughed....She used to say eerie voices were heard even the dogs refused to come near it...

She caught me by the hair, I got to escape, but she caught my ear and twisted it, forcing me to crawl on my knees. She opens the door of the shed and pushes me in. I tried to resist a few seconds at the door frame, but I fell down...

I touch water with my hands and knees....I'm scared the spiders might sting me...and cry:

- "Auntie, please, let me out the spiders will sting me".

The door is closed and it's all dark inside; I hear her voice.

- "Don't worry, there are no spiders" (I felt relieved)

"Because the snakes have eaten all of them...She adds laughing and laughing...

I'm alone, I can't see anything....it's very cold...I only listen to my breathing and a hard beating of drums inside my chest, tum, tum, tum, I can't control and I wet myself without being able to bring down my pants, (surely they'll also spank me because I

soiled my undies)...I feel like vomiting... I imagine the Martians are regulating my movements....there's a witch saying I'm guilty...the Virgin with a broken chain in each hand...I can see red, green, blue colours coming and going like a waterfall....

I'm crouching....but none snakes or spiders have stung me yet...I'm pitying myself and also angry not to be stronger...and I refuse to move (in a film, Tarzan didn't move and a snake passed by without stinging him) I feel very sorry of myself and I'd like to die...

Nobody is going to help me. I'm a whore's son (I looked into the dictionary the meaning of that word: "Woman who profits from her body". I close my eyes although everything is black... and I remember the happy days... The Immigrants Hotel....the tin hut....the auction of my tricycle....the house of the rich people....I'm less scared...yes, practically nothing (.....or very little). There must be a better life. Something turns round inside me and I vanish... I don't understand what's happened. I'm sleeping in my cot and they tell me I must sleep on my right side, but I like changing. I cover my head and I deceive them so the won't notice it..... My grandmother is scolding Giolanda.

Through my closed eyes I can perceive how my memories go by: "It's imperative to be bad, to go on worse", "The Guatemala a Guatepeor". Somebody quoted it in the radio...I don't know...I beg somebody to pray for me, not to get at my wit's end....although not too much...