

My Return from Silence

There was a time, not long ago, when my world shut down halfway. I remember that dead weight; it wasn't only that I couldn't move my left arm or leg, it was as if a wall of fog had risen through the middle of my body. I, who had always been an active woman, known in the neighborhood, the one who greets everyone, who organizes, who gives her opinion, who carried the leading voice on the block, who welcomed all the grandchildren and chatted with half the world, suddenly became a statue in my own bed.

I remember that I was conscious. That was the strangest part. I heard everything. I understood everything. I knew who was coming in and who was leaving the room. But my body did not respond. It was like being trapped inside myself. I couldn't get up. I couldn't bathe myself. I couldn't feed myself. My hands - my hands that had so many times cooked, washed, embraced - did not obey.

I won't lie: there were moments when I felt that something inside me was going out. It wasn't just the body. It was the feeling of ceasing to be who one has been all her life.

When they told me about trying something different, something I didn't really understand, something that didn't resemble anything I knew... I accepted. I don't know if it was courage or simply that I had nothing left to lose. Maybe it was trust in the person who recommended it. Maybe it was that small inner spark that had not yet surrendered.

Then this young man arrived.

If I told you... I almost laughed my soul out. A young foreigner walked into my house, dressed in a suit as if he were going to one of those elegant offices downtown. He brought nothing: not a pill, not a device, not even a little sprig of rue for a cleansing. Nothing. And he spoke such broken and strange Spanish that I thought:

“Good Lord! My niece has gone crazy - what is this young man going to do to me? Even a shaman with drums would have made more sense.”

But he looked me in the eyes, and there was something in his silence that made me stay still. He already knew what it was to be locked inside his own body; he had already gone through that tunnel.

The Awakening

We began the sessions. It didn't feel like exercise; it felt as if the air in my room was rearranging itself. The first time was there in my bed, without moving. But something changed in my head. By the second session, they already had me in the living room.

And in the third... here is where putting it into words sometimes feels as if the entire episode happened to someone else, not to my very own self. I remember feeling a little thread of strength, like a light turning on at the end of a hallway. I stood up. Just like that, without anyone pulling me, without leaning on anyone.

I walked straight ahead. I felt my feet firm on the floor, they didn't lock, I didn't drag my slippers. I reached the center of the room, lifted both my arms high, pointing toward the sky, and felt a freedom I cannot explain to you. I sat down by myself again, with a calmness I myself could hardly believe.

The New Doña

Five weeks later, I went out into the street. A neighbor stared at me as if he had seen a ghost. He came up to me and asked almost in secret:

"Ma'am... what did that young man do to you? Was it voodoo or what?"

I just smiled. I wasn't going to explain sensory variables or environmental infrastructures. What for?

What I know is that the young man in a suit did not "heal" me with magic. He simply quieted the noise that was around me so that my own body could remember how to function. Today I bathe myself, I go to the bathroom by myself, I eat what I want, and I walk through my house as if nothing had ever happened.

Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and wink, because I know that the Doña who was confined to a chair is gone and not coming back. I have returned to being myself - but with a strength that is born from having been in silence and having learned to walk again.