

First Part  
**Sickness**



## Chapter One

### A beginning

In the morning, entering the office.

— Good Morning.

— Hello.

— How are you?

— Good, I have a slight headache though

— What!?! Again!?! You must have a work allergy.

— Maybe it's the other way around —Vázquez intervened—.

I see that José does a great job. I get the feeling he works hard because he is responsible

— Exactly! There's your answer José. I, Augustus Pettinatti can assure you that your headaches are caused by one of two reasons: work allergy or being too responsible. If it's the first one, don't worry, that's a sign you are normal. But if it's the second... you have to visit a psychiatrist URGENTLY. Being responsible! Who cares? What do you earn with that? Just sickness and loosing presenteeism!

— Pettinatti has a point José —Fernández asserted while he was taking off his jacket and untying the knot of his tie — you should be smarter than that; don't worry so much about stuff, especially considering the miserable salary the Bank gives us.

— Exactly José! —Pettinatti intervened again— you shouldn't take it so seriously because all of this is trash. Look, you can pay me as if I were your doctor because I have already found the origin of your problem, and I'll give you medicine for your headaches.

While this conversation was taking place, my peers were arriving at the office, getting close to us and participating with jokes and laughter. In the center of the conversation I didn't have a voice nor vow; I just listened and tried to smile while on the inside I was getting mad at myself and thought: Damn! Why do I have a head-

ache again? I have so much to do and these morons are advising me and staring at me... staring!

— Come on Pettinatti, we are all waiting for your “medical” advice for José’s headache.

— Alright, alright, but pay attention because these things are important and it is highly possible that many of you need the same medicine I’m about to recommend.

Sitting in my desk, I saw myself surrounded by my co-workers and bosses. Augustus Pettinatti acting solemnly as a professor, pointing at me with a pen, said:

— We have before us a typical case of discomfort experienced by many bankers, which manifests as indigestion and headaches, but it’s related to many origins. It can be because of too much work, or that foolishness of being “responsible”, or stress due to excess of worrying, etc., etc. many different causes but only one medicine. In order to provide you with this medicine I had to submit to long hours of study, essays and practice, exposing my own body to the most intense and deep experiments. I had to spend many nights working and working, and because all of this, my dear José, given the magnitude of your suffering, I’ll give you the recipe of this wonderful discovery—.

Augustus Pettinatti, with a severe gesture, wrote down in a sheet of paper, as if it were a medical order, and handed it to me. Then, he raised his arms and yelled: —Women! And goodbye headaches, worries and responsibilities... women, women, women! —

The cheering for his buffoonery was general. The group began to disperse, each one to their respective desk, claiming:

— Pettinatti is so crazy!

— Yes, but he is right.

— Of course he is! Who doubts it?

— The problem is that young men like José don’t know what they want these days.

— It was all different in my time; there were reasons to live for.

— True, now with this governments...

Pettinatti, the young men, the Bank, the governments...and I was left alone, with my headache and a bitter taste in my mouth.

This I've just told meant a beginning. The start of a movie that slid before my eyes without me having an active role in it; where situations and events happened without asking for my permission, where my will, thoughts and desires didn't seem to have any influence in the development of the events. I was the protagonist of my own life, but I couldn't rule it. A health problem had gotten me and ever since then, dependence.

University, work, extra hours, strolls, dances, relationships, friends, vacations, it all DEPENDED on my health's caprices.

— The day after tomorrow is Saturday, we could go to the movies, there is a beautiful movie screening.

— Okay, depending on how I'm feeling.

— Why? Are you feeling sick?

— No, not now, but I might feel sick on Saturday.

— José! Such a pessimist!

I depended on the doctors;

I depended on the medicine;

I depended on the opinions of many;

I depended on the results of the lab's analysis, sometimes wrongly done;

I depended on nurses;

I depended on hemodialysis;

I depended on pyrogens, on fistulas, on cramps, on the shivers, on diets, on potassium, on the urea...

I depended, depended and depended on a thousand factors that as great tyrants, they took over me and did with me whatever they pleased, without asking for my permission.



## Chapter Two

### The emergency room

Because of my friendship with José —even though sometimes we get distant from each other— he left me in charge of some fragments of this story. Who am I? I'm just going to define myself as a 'person' very close to José, someone who has been really close to his health problem. For the moment, I will identify myself simply as "CS", without giving my full name, you will understand why later; also, it took José himself a long time to figure out who I was.

Back into the story, José, who was entering a particularly difficult stage in his life due to the health problem that was coming up, had the best position possible in that circumstance, he had a good prepaid health insurance with offices at the bank where he worked. This was, without any doubt, undeniably helpful, given that without the need to travel, just by being absent from his office for a few minutes or during lunch break he could go there and see the doctor.

If this were the case, the 'preventive medicine' would have been a reality for José and this book would have already ended.

Sadly, some factors got in the way which left affectless or annulled any benefit that an early medical attention would have given; medical attention that was so near to José and, nevertheless, was totally useless for a long time.

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At the beginning, José would think his ailment was caused by indigestion or something he had eaten. He had dizziness, vomits, and hand cramps when he typed on his typewriter. That's how his usual visits to the doctor began.

Friend reader, let's look at a normal case of a medical visit, without too much complexity and trying to be as objective as possible.

Using his 45 minute lunch break, José would go to the doctor's office. He has a cold sweat, a bitter taste in his mouth, he gets dizzy. He had already vomited everything in his stomach, now he only vomited water with foam. He gets in line for his doctor's appointment, there are eight people before him and he must wait standing because the few seats there are taken.

The waiting hall is small. There are three doors: two doctor's offices and an elevator. Whoever has visited that emergency room will agree with us (José and I) that the climate in there was tense. Everybody has their own problem and is a little bit nervous. Also, the emergency room dynamic has a "rhythm" composed of two moments, one where every patient is taken care of and another where everything "falls asleep", the doors remain closed, the doctors and nurses disappear, the patients get accumulated in the waiting room... it is the moment of 'steadiness' where everything is paused until the rhythm starts over — torture for the sick ones waiting— with a door that opens up and a nurse that starts calling numbers at an amazing rate:

- Number 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59.
- Yes, that's me miss.
- No, wait a minute, I have the 55.
- Wait please, I'm 54.
- Well come in lady, where have you been? I've been calling for you.
- But I was right here, I didn't even have time to stand up.
- Okay, okay, no complaints, step forward, there are a lot of people waiting.

Yes, that was the first moment of the 'rhythm'. When José arrived the moment was the steady one, and after living a lot of similar moments, he discovered that the patients have a waiting rhythm divided between two moments as well. Let's see.

A lady goes into her purse and searches for something. Anything to kill time while she waits; she nervously searches and finds a candy, that's the end of the first moment. She will eat her candy and then she will return to searching in her purse, this time she pulls out a handkerchief, later it will be a mirror or a notebook, etc.

A young man reads a book apparently without focusing too much, he reads a few lines (first moment) then he looks up and scans every face in the room (second moment), then he goes back to his reading, he will take his eyes from the book to the faces and vice versa —poor man! He's not calm at all.

Answering to the same 'rhythm', another patient crosses his left leg over the right one, he does the same with his arms, he takes a deep breath and he will remain like that for a few minutes, staring at the other patients through his thick glasses until he decides to change moments, with another deep breath he changes the position of his arms and legs, crossing the right ones over the left ones and starting the second moment.

In this typical waiting room you can't miss the lady whose waiting moments consist of asking —what time is it sir? ... Oh, thank you — they are taking too long, aren't they? Then she stays alone with her thoughts until she asks the same question again —what time is it sir? ... Oh, thank you.

This waiting rhythm becomes some kind of hypnotism. One usually falls in a state of sleepiness. The waiting room transforms into a big pot where everybody adds something of themselves. Anxiety, anger, fear and sadness. Everything gets combined in the pot, gets cooked with the broth of impatience and then everyone eats it, like in a macabre rite. Feeding from such a meal, their discomfort increases and new condiments are produced, which are also thrown into the pot —the waiting room—, poisoning even more the common meal.

The air gets strange with all that grief in thoughts and feelings, besides the physical malaise that took them there. The expectation grows.

- Excuse me sir, are they calling?
- No, I have been here for a long time and they haven't called anyone yet.
- You know what? They must be having lunch.
- Having lunch? They must be chatting!
- No! It must be the shift change, the afternoon staff hasn't arrived yet and the ones from the morning already left...



## Chapter Three

### You can't complain!

Maybe the Emergency room story was long enough for you and you are desperate to continue to other topics of the story. It wasn't that easy for José. He had to go through every stage without short-cuts. We do not pretend that you, my friend reader, should follow every detail in José's story; in fact we are skipping a lot of events, but skipping is not the same as ignoring. That's why, if you allow me, I will continue a little bit more with the waiting room story, because we are convinced that with this stories you can pick up things (ideas, thoughts, meditation topics, conclusions, etc.) that will benefit you.

We have seen that in the waiting room (just as in every other one) the rhythm was binary; divided in two, a moment of quick attention and a moment of 'steadiness'. The ways in which each patient waited were also divided in two, but there was a disturbing element among all of this, the elevator.

Remember that one of the doors in the hall was an elevator? Yes, the elevator. He was responsible that not every person in there were patients. People kept arriving and it was easy to identify (because of their aura) who was there for the doctor and who was waiting for the elevator. Two totally different types of people stuck in the same tiny room. The stares got intermingled, the waiting rhythms were different and that discordance made the hall, which was both a waiting room and the only way to get to the elevator, even more disharmonic. When the elevator arrived, the people movement increased the general nuisance.

- Sir, are you taking the elevator?
- No, I'm waiting for the doctor.
- Please, get out of the way then.

Nothing in there helped to calm things down, exaggerating? I wish I was!

The patients were already getting on my nerves. It is useless in these cases to ring the office's doorbell because it is always disconnected, even though there is a sign that says 'ring doorbell and wait'. It is also useless to knock on the door, no one will open. But, why? Simply because the rhythm is in its "steady" moment and it is inadmissible and impertinent to try to change it.

Surprise! A nurse appears, who decidedly and quickly moves to one of the offices, with a frown on her face, undaunted and as if she couldn't see anything but the door she was heading towards. She knew that the patients stacked in the waiting room would interrogate her. She wasn't wrong.

- Miss, are the doctors here?
- Yes, Mrs., they will call you any minute now.
- But I have been waiting for over half an hour.
- Patience, you will be called. Excuse me, excuse me, they will call you soon.
- BANG!

What was that? It was the Nurse's door closing behind her, escaping from the crowd without answering their questions.

There's no doubt that this steady moment was a real torture for the patients, of which just a few react with force.

Banging steadily on the door,  
Opening it if no one answers,  
Calling the nurse,  
Asking for the complaints book...

Some would do this but they were few, precisely because whoever waits in the waiting room has a health problem. If you have a strong headache, or experiencing sickness, or a fever, it is probable that you lack interest and strength to make your life even more complicated, battling against bureaucracy, irresponsibility and a long etcetera of human trash behavior. It's not the right moment for that, but the displeasure produced by the moment, does not get lost by just ignoring it; on the contrary, it gets stored inside and in any other moment, the volcano erupts and all that anger lava will burn whoever is near.

Surprise! Luckily the long wait has come to an end. Yes, yes, yes! The steady moment has ended! Just as I said before, a nurse began to yell numbers. Let's see how this goes:

The patients begin to get taken care of. They come in and out pretty quickly. José is happy because that means he will be called soon. Effectively, a few minutes after watching people coming in and out of the office, it's José's turn. He steps into the doctor's office; a doctor with a frown, serious, look, tired after a hard work day, without even taking his eyes from his desk, speaks to José with decisively and quickly, really quickly.

- I'm listening...
- I'm not feeling well, doctor...
- What's the matter?
- Well... I have been vomiting... my head hurts...
- What did you eat last night?
- Rice stew.
- Of course! Stews are difficult to digest, especially at night.

Take this medicine (antispasmodic), one every six hours; if you don't feel better tomorrow come back, okay? Here's your card, the medicine and watch what you eat. What was your number? 62? Oh, yes, 62.

- 63! Come in number 63!

It is not necessary to say how José felt after his appointment. HE HADN'T BEEN CHECKED, HE HAD BEEN DISPOSED. Moments after arriving at his office, he had to explain why he was late and ask for permission to leave because the doctor forgot to write a justification to take the day off. That wasn't a problem for him but he felt uncomfortable having to explain, ask, being watched and probably misunderstood.

— It's alright José, don't worry, go home, rest but please do not be absent tomorrow. We have work to do, remember you have to do the balance of the spreadsheets A and B and then check them with C and D and lastly if you add the first ones and subtract the last ones the result...

— Sweet Jesus! - Says José to himself - now he's going to explain to me what we have to do tomorrow. Alright, okay... we'll see tomorrow.

— Yes, please. Get well José, I need you here, because you know, the thing is...

— Yeah, okay, you can tell me tomorrow...

— Okay, go home... you don't look so good.

Outside the Bank, José had the first satisfaction of the day. He bumped into an old friend. Seeing a friendly face after so many

bad things is really comforting. The surprise, a warm hug, and José briefly said that he was going home because he didn't feel so good.

— Actually, I don't know what's going on, I haven't felt well in a while.

— Oh, José! You can't complain... your health insurance is very important and the doctor's office is in the same building where you work! You are so lucky, that's an invaluable advantage, you can't complain!

## Chapter Four

### Dialogue between José and “CS”

— As the story begins, one can already tell who is a good guy and who is a bad guy.

— That is a common thing in novels, José, but I don't think it's like that in real life.

— I'm not saying my life is a novel but my workmates, specially Pettinatti are always making fun of my headaches; the doctor doesn't even try to help me; my boss doesn't take me seriously; thank god my problem is just liver spasms but it still bothers me and I even feel like if my headaches grow when I see all these cold and indifferent responses. I'm getting mad at everyone “CS”, especially the doctors.

— Okay, okay, let's cool down and analyze this. Let's suppose a doctor sees an average of one patient every 15 minutes; in 7 hours one has already seen 28 people, which implies, on the majority of cases, 28 different family groups. An individual never lives alone; diseases vary depending on the circumstances of each one's life. Places, family, work, alimentation, housing, everything matters and because of that medicine is a complicated science, every day it diversifies in more and more specialties and subspecialties. If not being comprehended bothers you, do not commit the same error, try to comprehend how hard a doctor's daily job is, mostly when it is impossible to cover the medicine as a whole.

Now it is imperative to work as a team, it is the only way to make preventive medicine and serious medical attention, responsible for any diseased person, possible. Laboratories analysis, complementary medical practices, consults with specialists, all of this is nowadays necessary and it generates interdependence between doctors, technicians, nurses and even administrative and sanitary employees. A chemical reactive in poor conditions can produce wrong

results from the laboratory and ruin all of a team's work. A deficient hygiene in a surgery room can ruin the simplest of surgeries. Do you realize how many things do a doctor's actions depend on?

— Come on "CS"! There is a long way between saying and doing. When a doctor suggested me to go to a gastroenterologist I encountered more or less the following inconvenient:

- 1) I got, luckily, an appointment due to two months later.
- 2) When the appointment day came, the gastroenterologist sent me to get some medical tests done.
- 3) That took me over a month.
- 4) Finally, when I tried to get a new appointment for the gastroenterologist, I got one due to two months later, again.

Also, you know "CS" how many times has the time of the appointment came and the results of the test weren't received by the doctor because they had got lost or something. Or how many times the doctor didn't show up and I lost the appointment... NOT DAYS, IT'S NOT ABOUT DAYS, IT'S MONTHS AND MONTHS LOST... and as months go by not only you leave your problem unsolved but also you have to deal with so much indifference from others that your nervousness starts increasing, and that's just what the doctor needs. From then on, the nerves, your nerves are responsible from everything that happens. If you complain they say 'do not get nervous sir'. If you can't digest food properly they blame the same thing, they send you to the psychologist and make you feel guilty. Nothing else matters to them, the only problem is that you are nervous, and you are the only one to blame for being nervous!

No! You don't understand! Let me finish. Have you ever thought about the fact that after suffering all those waits, at appointments or waiting rooms at hospitals, doctors dispose of you giving you some kind of medicine at an amazing speed? In any family home, if you want to put up a painting first you think about where you are going to put it, then you usually decide between two people if it should be higher or lower, if it's straight or not, if one can really appreciate it there; all of this takes time, longer time than what it takes for the doctor to decide what pill he's going to give you. Actually, sometimes I don't believe they think about it, because just the action of thinking takes time, and they don't like spending time. The classical pose of *The Thinker* by Rodin can even be found in a housemaid when she is deciding what to cook, but never in a doctor. They just look at you (sometimes), ask you something and already

start writing a prescription, with an amazing decision, as if it were the result of a profound analysis. I'll tell you "CS", that is not because of experience, it's theatrical practice. That is just theatre, they take up a role and act with various alternative scenes: sometimes they prescribe pills instantly, sometimes they seem to be more curious and try to find out the source of the problem, for which they ask you what you ate the previous night, or two days ago, or the week prior; it doesn't matter when because that meal will be the cause of your problem; they usually also blame extra hours, university, or anything that may look as an excess of activity. In other opportunities they prefer asking you for some random analysis, once obtaining a suspicious result: 'Albumin in urine'. They made me do the analysis again, which took quite a while, and when the result came out normal, the diagnosis was also normal: 'Nerves, a nervous person can produce the Albumin presented in your urine'. Isn't this theatre? Isn't this indifference? Not feeling like working? Not wanting to get complicated? Because all of these actions are done without even thinking, and this is a fundamental part, the speed in which all of this is done just yells: 'ROUTINE' there is no place for the detailed analysis. I am not wrong "CS", sadly I'm not. Doctors prescribe without thinking, ask without thinking, and act without thinking.

— Believe it or not, I understand your thoughts, but resentment won't help. Listen to me please, concentrate on what I'm about to say to you. All of this lousy performance that drives you crazy is a product of the doctors' inability to work as an organized team, as they should. The infrastructure they have and the existing *Status Quo* does not allow them to perform their profession as they should, therefore they leave profoundly frustrated, they escape without leaving.

— They escape without leaving?

— Leaving would mean quitting their jobs, but they need the job, they have to earn their lives, they can't get by without it. Suppose a cleaning lady is hired by a family who does not own a vacuum machine, nor a polisher and they buy the cheapest and fewest cleaning products; this lady would not feel comfortable working in such precarious means, but if he needs the job, she'll probably accept those unfavorable conditions.

— Perfect, I understand the example. They don't leave, but, escape?

— They escape, to ignore a reality that seems impossible to change. Not getting involved with the patients, being distant, they believe to be protecting themselves. They would otherwise carry a burden of at least twenty eight problems, previously knowing that they don't have the means to correctly treat them. Shame, fear, impotence are the reasons that drives a doctor to dispose of a patient without even looking at their face. They try to not get involved believing it's the best for themselves, but like this, as if it were an inclined surface, they would hopelessly go down. This kind of medical practice, giving one medicine for each symptom, cancels them professionally. They go numb without even realizing until they lose their capability to react. From this point they become the protectors of this state of things, because if the *Status Quo* changed, they would no longer be useful as professionals, because they would be full of incorrect habits such as the moments of 'steadiness', apart from having lost the habit of studying to be updated and being interested on each patient's problems. Some of these doctors have gotten to high positions over time and from there, almost as a survival instinct, they would difficult young professional's jobs making it impossible to want to do things right.

— Damn "CS"! Your point of view makes it look like whoever is a victim today, tomorrow will be a victimizer. This way things get a little confusing, responsibility and irresponsibility get mixed, one can't tell who are the bad guys and who are the good guys, due to the fact that bad guys were driven to be bad guys and good guys can be bad tomorrow. This way you can justify the undesirable. Alcoholism, smoking, drugs addiction, could all be justified if one said that they act that way because they don't have other choice.

— No, no, no! It's not like that. What I try to do is COMPREHEND, not JUSTIFY. There is always other way, right ways, constructive ways. But let's slow down a bit José. I believe this long conversation would be a total waste of time if we couldn't extract a useful lesson for you, for your situation. Even though we talked about the doctors, everything said can be applied to other professions and even to relationships and family.

The problem of escaping when a situation seems impossible to be changed can be found in every human activity. It is not okay to waste energy trying to change something unchangeable, but it's not okay to sit down and do nothing either. Not to row against the

current but also not to let it drag you. The correct way, the true balance, was expressed by Thomas Merton like this:

Lord, grant me:  
SERENITY  
To accept things I cannot change  
COURAGE  
To change those things I can change, and  
WISDOM  
To know the difference.

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Conversations with “CS” always gave me ideas over which I could go back with my thoughts to analyze them and meditate. Sometimes things stayed obscure, but I occasionally was able to drag conclusions that were really helpful.

Despite it, at the moment of deciding what is useful for the telling of my experience, I find that there are infinite details that are necessarily left out in benefit of an easy reading.

I will narrate the important moments explaining that each one of them has a background which originated them. The analysis of the background is vital to comprehend each event, but as such a detailed tale would be impossible, I invite you to take flight. In this quick flight we will go over a lot of events that will no longer come up in these lines but at the moment in which they happened they had their weight, their importance, their part that led to future events. We are going over them, some small, some big and all of them very important to me.

They are a part of my life and I can't help seeing them with profound affection and acknowledgment, as if they were old and dear friends and adventure mates. Goodbye.



## Chapter Five

### The 'Great Professor' and the 'Nobody'

As everything happens, the moment of not knowing what was happening, happened. One day it was detected almost by chance that I had a kidney insufficiency. What should I do? My health insurance offered me a specialist in this kind of diseases that was considered a scholar on the subject and, because of his high renown, he didn't see patients personally. As my problem seemed to be delicate, I had to get to him anyway I could. A card... a recommendation... personal gifts... and everything sorted out in a way I couldn't have imagined. I got under the care of this 'Great Professor', and with my health insurance, freeing me from paying all of my appointments, which would have been too expensive for me to afford it.

The first time I saw him he just wrote a long list of tests I should take in a short time period.

— Doctor, I have brought all these recent analysis, don't you want to see them?

— No. I want everything done again, but don't do it here, go to this (private) institute, they work better there. Come see me when you get the results.

And so I did, and when the 'Great Professor' had the results in his hands he diagnosed instantly: 'glomerulonephritis'. Right away he proceeded to writing me a prescription for new pills and a special diet.

Everything was so quick I still don't know how it took three years to identify the disease I was carrying, hearing stupid diagnosis such as 'too much work', 'nerves' or 'bad digestion' when with a simple blood and urine test one could figure out exactly what was happening to me.

I was the main injured, but the health insurance company was also injured because if things had been done right in the first place,

I wouldn't have occupied space in hospitals and taken time from clinical doctors, gastroenterologists, otolaryngologists, ophthalmologists, and even dentists for three long years, also the insurance company wouldn't have had to pay for all of my sedatives, analgesics and antispasmodics given randomly to me.

Anyways... three years of not knowing, wandering like a nomad, lost in the hallways of hospitals not knowing where to go, to the emergency room, the clinic or the psychiatrist. Wandering through life without knowing the way, because when health fails...

Without knowing if this could be solved or not, if hard times awaited or not, I was completely satisfied because now I KNEW what was going on, I was not in the dark anymore, no more mystery, no more suppositions. Now I had a true diagnosis, clear as day, and I found myself under the care of a 'Great Professor'. I didn't know back then all the things I still had to go through.

Let's go back to the treatment given to me by the 'Great Professor'. As soon as I started it there was no improvement, on the contrary, my malaise increased. Finding the 'Great Professor' available to ask him things about my situation was difficult, when he wasn't in an important meeting he was travelling, or at a congress, or recording a TV show. It was really hard to locate him because he was an important person.

My mother started tracking the 'Great Professor' every time we had to ask him something. I just lay in bed, I didn't have strengths to go to work anymore, nor moving or talking. To my multiple symptoms it had been added neck cramps, body itchiness and frequent nose bleeds. I remember my mother coming into the room victorious saying:

— Finally José! I managed to talk to the professor; he prescribed new pills for your cramps. Right now I'm going to get them so you can take them as soon as possible.

The amount of pills on my nightstand increased and so did my malaise. In a short time my situation was deplorable and the 'Great Professor' came to see me in my house. His visit was short and comical. Yes, terribly comical.

— You can't have so many cramps! Come on man! You must be exaggerating. Headaches? Must be from thinking too much, and the itchy body must be from staying in bed too much, you shouldn't stay in bed.

Then he spoke to my mother as he was leaving: 'Mrs., I recommend hemodialysis'. It had been two months since I started being treated by the 'Great Professor'

Typical, lying to the patient and telling the hard truth to the relatives. It would seem like there is a code of kidney diseases were it says that there are three steps to follow: diagnose the disease, try to treat it with medicines and, when it gets worse, hemodialysis for an indeterminate amount of time.

Shortly after the 'Great Professor' left, my cousin and her husband arrived. They found out about everything that was happening and recommended a doctor they knew. He wasn't a 'Great Professor' but he was responsible, he liked what he did and he cared about his patients. He was an old-school doctor one of those who liked to give their phone number to the patients for them to call them at any time in case of an emergency.

Mom called my cousin's doctor and he visited me the next day. As hard as I try, I can't remember that first meeting with doctor Esteban, I was in bed, sleepy, but I've been told he talked for a long time with my parents. His first instruction was for my mother to clean my nightstand. 'These are too many pills Mrs. We are going to change them to only liquids; I'll come to see him every day and you can call me any time if you find an inconvenient'.

It was crazy; the improvement a 'Great Professor' couldn't achieve with his arsenal of pills had been easily achieved by a 'Nobody' with his liquids, teas, vegetable stews and quitting salt...



## Chapter Six

### Doctor Esteban

A week later, I personally visited doctor Esteban (a.k.a. Nobody) at his own office and this I do remember. I had come out of the hole.

— Dear José, I CAN NOT CURE YOU, due to the fact that your disease is chronic and has no cure at least at this exact moment. But it is the case that science and technology are advancing at such rate that what seems impossible today may be possible tomorrow. Every day doctors have more and better resources to efficiently treat kidney diseases.

What I can do for you is the following:

First, improve your general situation, what I believe we can do to an acceptable level and as long as the disease allows us to.

Second, try to maintain that level of 'acceptable health' and prevent it from decreasing.

Third, in case time goes by and no new treatment comes up, hemodialysis is inevitable, but this type of treatment will have been perfected by that time, so all our efforts will not have been in vain.

For now you will have to adjust to a strict diet that we will modify according to the results of the blood and urine tests we will do weekly.

Medicine, just the indispensable.

An important disease such as this one brings a lot of changes in a patient's life, changes that are important to get used to for your mind and all of your being not to get exhausted in a useless fight against accepting the situations you will have to go through.

Those vegetables you have to eat as lunch, you shouldn't look at them with hate, but love, acceptance and enthusiasm, because that meal will do you good.

Accepting what benefits us and rejecting what is bad for us looks absolutely logical and healthy but usually we act the other way around, that's why it will also be necessary and beneficial to think a little bit about this topics.

## Capítulo Seven

### Seven years of life

- José! Are you José?
- Yes, Antonio, I'm José, how are you?
- I'm good, I'm good. I still can't believe it – he said as he looked at me from head to toes – we work in the same Bank and I haven't seen you in years... -and he kept looking-
- True, since you got promoted to a new office.
- Sure, sure, sure... but hey... you have really changed, I remember years ago you had health problems, and yesterday I bumped into Clotilda and she told me you had gotten a promotion, and you were studying at university, and that you were dating someone and about to get married... what happened? Did you visit a witch?

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No, I didn't visit a witch but it is true that all those positive changes appeared during the seven years where doctor Esteban treated me. The doctor put me in the right track but it was important what I did for myself too, working hard to follow his instructions and following the path he pointed. He said 'no salt' I ate with no salt, he said 'no meat' I stopped eating meat.

The new alimentation system I had adopted woke in me the interest for naturalism and drove me to read and inform myself about that philosophy of life which I later adopted with all my enthusiasm.

Likewise, the brief moments that doctor Esteban used to 'philosophize' a little about life and its problems, took me closer to an institution where I got lessons to help and overcome myself.

This way I managed to overcome doctor Esteban in this topic, he was surprised on how well I understood and accepted my diet, and on how I had progressed in my way of seeing things.

To sum up, it all consisted in frequent laboratory controls, an adequate medication and alimentation plan, and a good predisposition from me.

And seven years went by during which, thanks to my health improvement, I managed to put my life in order. I got better at my job, I made new friends, I got into university, I had a lot of activities, I started dating a good woman and I married her and we created a good home because we were united by a deep and true love.

You will notice, dear writer, that there are a lot of experiences I could share with you, about naturalism, life philosophies that I learned in that self help institution, and about everything that happened during those seven years of my life, but that would make this story too long. That's why, as I did before, I invite you to take flight and go over all those moments, all those days, all those months of those years and land right here, on the last day of those seven years, to hear the words of doctor Esteban:

— Good José, everything we had planned to do with your health we have accomplished it. During these seven years it is astonishing how much the hemodialysis technology has advanced, and as I think that in any moment it would be necessary to start this treatment, I believe this is the time you pass to Nephrology. It would be imprudent of me to hold it back any longer.

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That's how I said goodbye to doctor Esteban. I concluded a stage that had been enlightening in many ways, one of those ways being that I HAD RECONCILED WITH MEDICINE, because with doctor Esteban I always felt taken care of, not disposed as I felt in the previous stage. I have seen him think and concentrate before prescribing medicine, which made me think that in every human activity there are operative people and inoperative ones; responsible and irresponsible; still, I can't help but wonder what would have happened to me if I hadn't been able to afford such medical attention, because doctor Esteban was not covered by my health insurance,

neither were the laboratory tests, because the laboratory that my insurance covered was not always trustworthy.

I don't want to end this chapter without mentioning something I believe I still haven't mentioned and it's the fact that doctor Esteban was an homeopathic doctor, yes... HOMEOPATHIC.