

The Impossible House

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In that house, no one agreed with anyone else, even about coffee. If someone said, “I feel like having a coffee,” the other would respond in a singsong voice full of cynicism, “Why don’t you make it yourself?” Having lost all desire for coffee on hearing that cynical response, the first one, full of spite towards the cynic who was happy criticizing everyone’s flaws in that impossible house, would head to the kitchen. He would add this insult to the growing wound of indignities in his heart and blame others in the house for his misfortunes. In that impossible house, the residents mocked each other in the past and continue to do so, with such savagery that it is hopeless to recount all the invectives. We can say, in general, that the people in that house are lazy, but when it comes to hurling insults at each other, they are very athletic. The conceited cynic knew how difficult it was to make coffee in that house, but he would just keep quiet so that others experience the unpleasant surprises. He had tried before and failed so miserably that he wanted vengeance. He knew that to make coffee, you would need at least the ingredients and the utensils. The third person in that house, tired of hearing those two arguing over the miserable coffee, headed to the kitchen to make it. He did so not because he was nice, but because he wanted to rub in how useless the others were, quarreling over coffee.

The truth is, there was nothing in the kitchen to make that “miserable coffee” with. In that house, they added the qualifier “miserable” to everything: “his miserable specs,” “her miserable shirt,” “that miserable plate.” What was simply a tasteless desire would turn into an annoying challenge and a threat. A woman, the fourth person in the house—sometimes there were up to five people living in that impossible house—would realize that there was neither coffee nor sugar in the kitchen and would quietly go to the store to buy these with the idea of teaching a lesson to the others. However, as she steps out of the door, the others would look at her with a patronizing grin. Incapable of appreciating a generous gesture—perhaps it humiliated them—they would say in unison (in this, of course, they all agreed), “Look at her! There she goes to make coffee.” The woman who decided to break this chain of vitiated dialogues was the younger sister, who was fighting against the hopelessness that reigned in that house. She wanted to finish what she had started but she always faced obstacles in that impossible house—cooking, cleaning, and organizing. One has to eat food

every day but making it was the problem. They lived with conflicts, fought at the dining table, and seasoned their food with the bitterness of their words.

When the younger sister returned triumphantly from the store and was about to make coffee, she told the useless residents of that impossible house “no one will take this”—a feeling of catastrophe and hopeless chaos yanked the fragile strings of her will, already strained by the laziness, anger, and resentment that she saw around her. She realized that there was no gas in the stove, which is so vital for survival. The fight for cooking gas was a lost cause in that house. Everyone, except her and the mother who really took care of it, thought that gas fell from the sky. Like the water bill, none of the others ever paid a gas bill. Quite often, the electricity was disconnected as the sons and the father fought over who paid what and when. “Damn it!” screamed the mother, who rarely stepped out of her room in order to avoid running into all that hatred. “Will there ever be a day in this house when a miserable coffee is made without fighting over it?”

That same day, the mother threw the coffee cup on the floor and fled the impossible house to take shelter in an old age home where the meals were served at fixed times. After that, in the house, there was only the father and the older son who, like his father, was haunted by perpetual failure. The middle son, cursed by chaos, rearranged the house walls to set up his shop in front and dismantled the bricks in his father’s room, accusing him of being selfish. Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you that they never finished building the house. The daughter one day packed her bags to leave, but she was scared and couldn’t get herself to let go, so she took on the responsibility of paying the bills, and she spent most of her time at work.

I always think that this impossible house is at the verge of total collapse: that the middle son will destroy the building; that the older one will kick the father out of the house; or that the father will burn it down since he has the habit of falling asleep with a lit cigarette between his fingers. Perhaps nothing will happen to that house in near ruins. Or maybe someday, someone will come who is capable of calming the restless hearts by bringing order to chaos and playing a melody to make them dance, to align them to the secret rhythm of the universe that makes everything move in harmony without reason. Meanwhile, their hearts wrinkle and shrink like dried prunes in a sack inside a darkroom haunted by rats. Soon these accursed creatures will ambush the shriveled hearts, but miraculously the little sister will reach out in time to avoid the inevitable disaster. It’s because of her that this impossible house survives on the edge of an abyss, standing neither straight nor falling over the cliff. Not surprisingly, everyone blames her for keeping alive this impossible situation. Their hatred is fed by their impotency. Contrary to their desires, it is the little sister, that fragile pillar, who saves them from total oblivion. No wonder she is criticized so much.