

The Mysterious Illness of Frances K.

Victor Mota

1

The wind is blowing outside. Frances K, 18, is in a hospital unit trying to recover from the drugs she was driven to by heartbreak when she was about to get married. How did she get into this? Her life had a fatal leak, like a gas canister in a busy kitchen in time of summer and parties. Nothing more elementary. The parties were many. Men, women, excesses. Anyway, some experts point out that one should have a regimented life, others that one should give full approval to our emotional, psychic, physical, affective manifestations...others fix things after skimping on everything. And Frances was there, in that white room, between four walls, trying to fix everything, anything and everything, accompanied by two or three books, a pen and notepad, two music DVDs, not much else. Already, a preliminary consideration: we present Frances K. as a singular case, as a scapegoat of a society that tends to annul, on the one hand, the anthropological figure of the scapegoat for my problem, but tends to produce myself as the scapegoat for the problems of others. In other words, there will always be witches, witches, scapegoats, at least as long as anyone believes that. At least as long as medicine places the existential burden of its problems on the suffering subject and judges him as incapable, in a context of natural selection of industrialization and progressive technological progress, for which he has to be cured, reprogrammed, re-evaluated, reprocessed... In this context, he should be consigned to Zen spheres of existence, to innocent rurality, or else he will forever be a Rousseauian Emilio, who will win in the end, when he is nothing but his shadow...

Frances was born in another country. She often found herself having to help locals who had not chosen that nationality, as she had. Most of the time, she did not feel like a local, and although she helped make them

feeling good, with high self-esteem, she felt lonely and alone. On one of those days, she had given up encouraging others, who made fun of her and left her alone on top of that... Unfortunately, Frances lived in a society where people were blamed for not getting married, not getting a job, not having an education, etc., in short, for not fulfilling a socially expected role. In other contexts this might not be so, but Frances was there, in that room, trying to make sense and to dream, despite the cold clinical white of psychiatry. So, little by little, Frances K. realized that she was just another piece in the jigsaw, in the gears, we are all connected to each other in one way or another, and we all have our weaknesses and strengths, our brightnesses and dirt, we all criticize on one point and praise on another.

2

Another day in the realm of unanimities, the certainty of love pushed aside, the heartaches pushed back as the greatest one indulges in the night alone among moans and secrets, among whimpers of dogs and meows of cats lost under wooden chairs. Frances' elegant body, even at the peak of her illness, went unnoticed in the crowd, after all, her illness could not be seen, neither on the subway nor on the bus, but it was noticeable in her thin, heavy face, in her gray hair and the torn tone of her voice, in the hunched air of her profile, as if she wanted at all times to frank any boundary, any goal, to tear away any prejudice. She craved all the time, beyond her strength, the sexual amplex, and all this mental effort, half desire half speculation, wore out her mind and body, such was the order of her compulsion for the act. One could say she was a maniac or a sexual deviant, but no, her pathology was duly identified, sex and cleanliness, the reader knows, there is no leakage here, and it is known that she had had, half her life, two dozen, if we want to quantify, coital relations, so to speak. One of the advantages of not having succeeded in finding love, if one can ask the question of succeeding in terms of love, is that, in a certain way, he always lived in the expectation of finding it and, therefore, his life was always interesting, that is, he always had, like the donkey, the carrot in front of him... By now, cameras had been placed in her room and everything was being recorded, all her steps in that tiny house, even her most intimate moments in front of the computer.

So in her more or less nefarious days, Frances would try to determine the exact moment when she felt happy so that she could reproduce it in senses of the opportunity and chance to self-program herself for happiness, beyond the medical-programmatic determinisms. Even Jeannie, her schoolmate, would laugh. The two of them would play when they were little and delude each other about how to reach happiness in the westernmost sense of the soul's best disposition, only to find out later, after leaving that inhospitable white room, that it is made up of unhappiness too, that it is only a process, and that happiness in itself is not an end, but a means to reach something much, much more grand, namely, Beauty. So what brought Joeannie to that particular room, keeping Frances company, spending night after night in the dark, between sleep and dream, between madness and unreason, between lucidity and pride, until they were able to return to the station of anguish and the whiteness of the sunlight that blinds and illuminates our thoughts through dialogue. Both of them would say they were made for each other, they often talked about the most trivial matters that suited both of them, political, social and moral, feminine and others. Until one day, Stephen, Frances' old boyfriend, decided to visit her at the hospital. He brought, under the guise of some facial distress, a bouquet of flowers, as if to symbolize the old relationship they had had and nurtured, as if he wanted to restart it and the flowers signified Frances' planned deflowering. But Jeannie didn't like it. Women's stuff, not necessarily sexual. Jeannie had gone through enough deprivation in terms of food, drink and affection not to find herself surrendering, so she kicked Stephen out of the room as soon as she realized his intentions...kicking and slapping.

Stephen, feeling powerless in the face of the situation, in the face of the female aggression demonstrated by the couple's macha and seeing Frances too weakened to give an account of her point of view regarding what might or might not be left of their relationship, decided to leave the building for good and went to the café at the end of the avenue, instinctively thinking of the stranger of the matter that had befallen her. She called a health line but it was no use, she tried the Internet but no one could get through to her.

So he scribbled a few words about it on a notepad and made an appointment to see a psychologist, better than a psychiatrist, who would certainly prescribe drugs that would, like Frances herself, put him on intubation for days on end, in addition to hours and hours in bed, which meant missing work for days and days on end. Then, on the way home, Stephen, who was bringing Frances great news that might cheer her up, such as the completeness of intellectual fulfillment through an academic thesis, wondered what it was worth to deprive her of affection for an end, the exclusivity of study, of speculation, to pitch to an audience that arbitrarily cared so little, in a society that was sectioned into so many specializations and the whole system was torn, perverted, including her mind with yet another sunset on its horizon.

3

Stigmatized by not having a job for years, due to a prolonged psychiatric illness, Frances never got up again, her illness was not cellular, not even psychiatric, it was social, she was the very society that the Others killed little by little and didn't even realize it, killing Themselves little by little, foolish and ignorant, enjoying themselves in drinks, discos, talkshows, and summer festivals. Before being born to itself, like a butterfly, society killed itself, as Albert Camus had predicted, in specific but quite disorderly, savage, deadly, cruel rituals that caught the most unwary off guard. It wasn't even worth being wise, for all notion of life beyond death had been destroyed, and zen, the practice of zen and meditation, only functioned as a pacifier for pain, that mental pain of conceptual unbearableness from which everyone fled, fleeing the city, rush hour, sexual cannibalism, by attraction or withdrawal from Self and Other, sometimes plunging headlong into it, sometimes forgetting, bathing in the river of forgetfulness of Self and cultural identity. Whatever that was. Whoever that was for. Minute images filled Frances' brain in that room, images of rebellion, aggression, some, others of compassion and despair, but she knew that from there she would never come back, even if she left without Jeannie, and she had this feeling, she had to let go of the love made and remade in that place and go abroad, into the jungle, once again, unprotected, ready for anything and everything, to start all over again, because every day, wherever it is, is a new beginning. With the advantage that the history of the previous days will be in us and be recorded...

So, then everything becomes something more or less experimental when, in order to be famous, writers risk being each one more nutty than the others. It happens to a lot of good people, oblivious to the truth of things and the veracity of events and anxious for fame and self-conceit, with a hunger for something they can't explain but which is certainly not beyond what they describe, but to which they should be mostly silent or eating sweet potatoes. Therefore, in that century, in those days, much prose contained a lot of nonsense, and the more nonsense it contained, the more rewarded it would be, and since there was not a shred of philosophy, wisdom or value of any kind in it, It involved itself in a kind of celebratory festival that at times fizzled out and at others went on senselessly, generating a logic of the absurd in the scope of city evenings that aimed not at the coherence of the text itself and its poetic, literary, philosophical or academic merit, but at its media impact, which collapsed into the hollow, amoral sensationalism that self-perpetuated itself. What mattered then, especially online, was the form, not the content, the form, not the human experience...

Outside of this, Frances waited for the right day to run away, forgetful of Jeannie, who was already bothering her with her false love. Then she vowed to be independent, look for a job, and never again love anyone or explain herself to anyone. Relationships between people in those times changed significantly. It was enough to have a job to not give explanations to anyone to manage your relationships as if life was a children's game, as if you could become a child again and life would become a stage like in children's theaters. Relationships were based on chance appointments, occasions, based on basic needs, like eating, sex, work, and so on, so on, no more delonmgar, it was all automated, there was nothing to fool with. So Frances moved away and got into these mental axes. But her good heart longed for spontaneous and programmed relationships (which, deep down she considered boring) and paradoxically, the contradictory nature of relationships satisfied her, doubt fulfilled her heart throughout the days, for certainty often leads, as she knew,

to suicide, to the death of the soul, to the impoverishment and brutalization of the spirit...

Thus, little by little, Frances freed herself of the feeling of desire for revenge against those who had brought her down. It wasn't easy, nor did she know she had succeeded, she never knew it, nor would she ever know it, no one would ever tell her, her battle would never end, not even after her own death and that of her family, what is certain is that within her people many people had conjured evil against her and her family in order to annihilate them physically and spiritually, of this she was completely certain, there was no need to evade the problem with relativism or false moralism. Still, apart from the feeling of revenge, Frances was far from finished, she felt for a moment that she could carry out this revenge if she took the trouble to identify the culprits of such a feat, it could be deadly for either party, still she had lost a lot of time, but she could consider that something could be done, at least the problem had been identified. Still, her loneliness was the result of a genetic, immemorial conspiracy against her, she was not responsible for the disease that had plagued her for centuries, her clinical report card had revealed, according to two doctors, that there was a point of physical, mental effort and philosophical reflection in her clinical course in struggling with the disease, and that she had finally reached a point where she could control and circumvent her symptoms, that he could lead a normal life, but then he found himself alone, with the completeness of solitude, which he didn't need, that is, while he had the disease he had company, when he healed he became alone, so one can conclude that all accompanied people are sick...

Suddenly, out of nowhere, the shot rang out in the early morning hours. Frances was seen and felt all over the country. Everything she did was perceived in the other corner of the country, for she spoke the same language, the same language as everyone else. However, strange condition, her knowledge, the fact that she was almost constantly in the mouths of the world she knew, did not bring her much benefit: economic, material, affective. Most of the time, the loss, due to the usury of the fourth power, was quite considerable for his psychic health. So she made a huge effort to think positively, much more than those who lazily and indolently criticized in the cafes, but who were quick to celebrate a soccer victory, even if the next day economic sanctions were decreed by European leaders. At some point she realized that there were people interested, in the life of the world or whatever that was, in her interest in the logics of everyday life because, summarily, most people were past reels and stirrups, had no logic at all, and somehow not only looked for one but envied that she saw logic in things and people. Curious, huh?

So, on that autumn day, Frances slipped into the bar where she would once again sing the blues of her troubled life conditioned to the intents and reasons of others' hearts, among metrics and misaligned new soaps... He reached a situation where living what he lived, he had only his heart and mind with him in his bed on a balmy autumn night. Her soul was leaking out of her body and she felt herself aging slowly, better, fast, with her eyes wide open, feeling her body waning, aging, fading with pain and fainting, left to herself and her conscience, she would have to dance again the next day, to sing, and so she went from job to job for days and days until she found herself a company of events and shows. Some days and hours she thought to herself, knowing that she couldn't find anyone with whom to share confidences so that if she fixed her affection in those parts of the big city, she would have to return to the village, even if it was depopulated, deserted, inhabited by wandering old men who either stood on the threshold of their houses or crawled into the cafes taking turns sipping their drinks. Meanwhile, one of the

bar patrons, Stephen, gradually became closer and closer to Jeannie in order to get to know Frances. They even got married. Years later, Stephen still thought about Frances and met her at this particular bar, the *Attendance*, somewhere between Central Street and Marginal Avenue, almost on the waterfront. Her vices, for lack of a certain occupation, given the complicated economic and social situation of the country and her advanced age, were relatively well known to her acquaintances, that is, drinking, women, bars, the night in general. Some said for lack of purpose in life. Others for lack of money. Others because of a fixation on women, on the body of women, that never left his mind, wrapped like a sacred cloth in his mind, stuck to the marrow of his unconscious. Others still, knowing of his interest in Frances, said it was out of passion or chase mania, but perhaps he believed it was out of love and perhaps he believed deep down he had found the love of his life after so long. Jeannie was with him in bed, but Frances was with him in mind and heart, she was all the women he saw on the screen, erotic, involving herself with countless men who could be himself, who were himself, they were himself and they were Frances. Stephen, rehearsing a description of his days of estiolagem and desvelo, had tried to get it right like many, but sometimes you have an artist's life and sometimes an executive's and sometimes you have one and sometimes you have the other and he fortunately had both and that meant problems...a lot of problems and inner weariness, a lot of inner work, an immense amount of meditation and preparation in relating to others and what it all entails, while others would never worry about it, for them life would never be remarkable at any time. Meanwhile, his old mother was growing old, his old father was also growing old, in a sad and veiled country village, where everyone hid and only appeared to criticize, with a young mayor going back 50 years in time...

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Waiting for Frances to come into his life, Stephen had Jeannie in body and soul, plus a few leftovers from time to time, in those turns he took when the house was too full of himself and in which he was in a hurry to live, if going out at night in search of the unknown in the shape of a woman's body was living. I would leave behind work, life projects, a family life, so many other things that many others considered essential and that the media promulgated as sacred duties of the common citizen, be he a policeman or a civilian, whatever. In all of this, Stephen felt the social pressure to constitute himself as a minimal cell of society through marriage, not only the pressure of work, that is, society discriminated against those who for one reason or another chose to be alone, through word of mouth and gossip, ruining their lives, sinking them into meager pay, ignoring them as if they were scum of society, forcing them to live on the margins, and there was effective pressure to constitute a tiny group in relation to others. He was not looking for any social scientific explanation for the case, nor was he particularly concerned about it. It just happened. Or it didn't happen. In fact, it was an interesting sociological phenomenon, also affecting young people, lovers of new technologies, that he was interested in studying and understanding, in a way. Therefore, he channeled all his energies into his hobby, while still living with Jeannie: going to the movies. He followed the classic Hollywood movies and saw in them a source of moral enlightenment and a way of behavior for himself and others, he wrote little reviews that he dreamed of sending to a big newspaper but didn't have the courage to do because he didn't know anyone in that big city. In any case, he was in a condition of having to learn to live in open weather

that he now had at his disposal, without crutches and aids. On that particular Sunday in summer, in the midst of an intense, dry, cutting heat, he was not particularly inspired in his criticism, he was distracted by looking at the river and the seagulls, distracted, letting time go by, sipping a cigarette here and there in Time, resting a bit, listening to some music. It was no use pulling inspiration by the hair, inspiration that day was bald. His life is two frames, a before and an after. A hypnotherapy session in which you get a fright and return to normal life.

5

Frances K.'s mysterious illness often kept her at home and in her neighborhood for days on end, causing her to delude her mind with preconceptions about people, that is, whatever they were doing, she was also doing, feeling or thinking, a coincidence of thought that spoiled many simple everyday tasks. But wasn't Frances K.'s illness also a social illness, that is, something inculcated from a very young age, a fear of living that prevented her from realizing her creativity and that in adulthood masqueraded as fear of death and, consequently, fear of life? So her daily strategy for coping with the traumas and difficulties that were on her mind and the sayings and observations of others, would be one of avoidance, trying her best to have deaf ears, because there was also a small social disease in the criticism that everyone makes of each other without having moments of reflection with themselves and if there was one person who self-reflected it was Frances K. As the days progressed, Frances had been challenged to leave the nightclub *Attendance*, which brought her nothing new. At the other end of the continent, Stephen shared some of Frances's symptomatic pathologies, namely a tendency toward reflexivity, so in other times they had spent countless hours by the beach, it sounds like pyrosis, but it is one of the best metaphysical experiences one can complete. The tendency toward intersubjectivity made relationships between people forced, people felt forced to have so-called normal (sexual and general) relationships, and there is no greater violence for a subject than to be forced into a social norm. This created hollow, abnormal, superficial, artificial relationships, just so that the so-called "society" could function, generating more and more revolt and discontent in its elements, some dissatisfied because they had no goods

material, others because they had no spiritual goods and ardently wanted to "have". This theory may seem strange and weird. But that's all it is, just another theory.

Her mind acted like a visionary scale in micro and macro terms, assessing what was right and wrong, making judgments about one and the other in a way that always benefited the other. But little by little, Frances and Stephen's promised love was doomed to failure and estrangement. Frances had freed herself from a love that she thought was eternal and this would be at the cost of discovering the cure for her mysterious illness, not within the walls of the hospital, but outside in the streets where people can be seen. He understood that life is a constant learning and adaptation to the social and natural environment of the mind and what is "outside the mind". Her discovery of inner freedom, although the old marked fetters, the old cobwebs still remained as reminiscences, she freed herself from them little by little, in moments, or explosively saying to herself various interjections and curiously felt happy even though she had practically no friends. She knew that if she persisted on that path she would go her way and everything else would be "unprovoked", would be a part of that which was assigned to them. She knew that she had always been a woman of causes and was now able to discover beauty in them, helping others, as well as in the smallest things, like the sacrifice of being at home, appreciating what you have instead of obsessively dreaming about what you don't have.

6

While some prepared themselves philosophically for death by asking themselves countless questions, others, before or after it, tried to live in the moment. But if the reflected life brings some unpleasantness such as monotony, the instant, the moment, living the present, it can also bring certain bad surprises. No one, however, cared, it was every man for himself, as in the street, and in this respect, war declared on the absence of liberation of the Egos, and in this respect Frances was particularly gifted and prepared. In terms of family and the configuration of her world, Frances was piecing that world back together little by little, one way or another, despite the recent death of a childhood friend and the general state of poverty in the country, where some persisted in making wealth among vultures, like vultures. She also had her entire family, almost complete, who were increasingly distant from her and to that extent Frances loved her more and this feeling of feeling far away, spreading the emotions and vertigo of the moment in the city, made her at the same time stronger and more sensitive in her 29 years. At the dance academy, after exercise, on a warm August day, Frances met Hilario, a 26-year-old engineer at Telecel, the communications company that was in charge of the saturation of much of the city, from which we can easily see that it won't be easy to describe in full literary terms, in detail, all the foci of light on the relationship between Frances and Hilario. But we do know that Hilario was lost in the world at such a young age, occasionally with a smattering of innocence in his eyes, but most of the time tormented by more or less philosophical questions about his destiny, love, and happiness. Frances' experience was scratching at Hilary's more or less constructed profile and she came to realize that she couldn't save him from the inflammation

of the world he was suffering from, of a sick excess of meaning that made him unable to stop...

The anonymous days of anonymous people do not serve the curiosity of those who are looking for a date, to talk, to go out, to have a relationship, for those who are distant from the world in all its incidences and considerations of more or less circumstance. One celebrates sometimes and flees from oneself, finding in the flesh the means for the sublimation of the spiritual gap that dwells elsewhere. So the meeting of these two actors was particularly easy here, in terms of their conception of life and style for approaching everyday life in terms of life convictions. But Frances, as she demanded of herself everything, whatever this was, demanded of Hilario, too, everything, to know everything about him, down to the smallest elusive particle of thought. Thus, what seemed like pathology in everyone's eyes, was simply a malady of the heart. On a summer Saturday, the day was open, wonderful, sunny. Frances, at home, was willing to be walking around, doing nothing special, just thinking about the abandonment of Hilario and his elusive presence. She could go out for a while, jog, go downtown, to the mall. But no, he felt like staying at home, ignoring the opportunities for health and happiness in an outing alone. So he thought that happiness takes a lot of work, in the limit happiness is a form of slavery, and that happiness takes work, you prepare for it, you work on it, you wait for it, it is nothing more than the result of a process of habituation.

