

APPOINTMENT WITH AUNTIE WILKINSON

When I thought the moment had finally come to begin our conversation, she took command.

“Come with me into the other room.
I want to show you something.”

“What?”

We entered a hall almost as large as my current apartment.
About one hundred and seventy square meters.
At its center stood a billiard table.
She asked me whether I knew the game.
Whether I could play.
I said yes.
I explained that I was not particularly fond of Goriziana, the traditional Italian version, and that I preferred American pool.

She smiled.

“No doubt about that.
I already knew.”

I immediately seized the opportunity.
I asked her whether she had spent money on Her Majesty’s Intelligence Service, whether she had read my books for free, or whether she had simply asked my mother for information about me.

She did not answer.
Or perhaps she answered with silence.

Then she led me toward a long table.
Displayed upon it were cutlery sets, manicure kits, pedicure kits, and numerous personal care items.
Everything was made of polished steel.
Every single piece was polished every week to preserve its shine.

But that was not what caught my attention.
Every object carried the same symbol.
The two swords.
The brand.
The signature.
The identity.
Wilkinson Sword.

A chill ran down my spine.
For the first time, I truly understood where I was.
I was not the guest of a manager.
I was not the guest of an executive.
I was not even the guest of a corporate legend.

At one point I heard female voices calling for her.

“Auntie...
Auntie...
Where are you?”

Without hesitation, she replied:

“I’ll be right there.
I’m with my nephew.
Gillette’s son.”

At that moment I had no doubts left.
I was in my auntie’s house.

We returned to the other room.
Everyone was ready to leave.
Everyone except me.

Maggy took my arm and said:

“Let me introduce my daughter and my two granddaughters.
Neither of them is married.
Come along.
I want to show you something.
I hope it will make you happy.”

To tell the truth, I was completely drunk.
Not with wine.
With information.
With emotions.
With time.
I could no longer process any of it.

She, on the other hand, that little English old lady, was an earthquake.
I immediately wondered what she must have been like when she was young.
And whether anyone could ever have managed her.

The answer came by itself.
No.
She was beyond that.
She was a woman of steel.

We arrived in front of an abandoned factory.
She stopped.

Looked at it in silence.
Then she said:

“Fernando.
Everything started here.
And if they had known you earlier, we would still have our company today.
We would never have been forced to sell it because of poor management and arrogant decisions.”

Her daughter.
Her granddaughters.
All silent.
Even Dominique seemed moved.

Then he said:

“This is the emotional tour the old lady always gives to impress her guests.
Always the same English ceremony.”

But this time she was not speaking to a guest.
She was speaking to her nephew.

When the tour ended, they drove me back to my hotel.
I was the one who asked to return.
I was not ready to absorb so many emotions in a single day.

But we would meet again the following day.

Ferdinando Frega