

THE FAMILY AND THE BIC OFFER

I walked into the house and found my wife smiling.

Then I saw my brother-in-law and his wife, both smiling.

Finally, I found my sons, who had come from Venice with their wives, all smiling as well.

And standing beside me was my daughter.

She was the only one who was not smiling.

They asked me to sit in the living room, in an armchair, almost as if I were a guest in my own home, and they brought me a coffee.

Everyone was smiling.

For a moment I thought we had won the lottery.

But I have never gambled.

I was born fortunate already.

About ten minutes passed and nobody spoke.

I asked to go to the bathroom, but the request was denied.

What was happening that I was unaware of?

The intercom rang.

Giorgia answered and then turned toward her mother.

“It's her. She's already here.”

When the front door of the building opened, living as we did on the first floor, my sense of smell caught a familiar perfume.

I knew it.

But why was it here?

She entered the house and greeted my wife with a simple ciao.

That alone told me this was not their first meeting, and only a few seconds later I had

confirmation.

“Hello, Nando. Did you receive my letter? Did you pay the hotel bill? Remember: this is not over yet.”

Inside that room there were more people than I had seen at some funerals, yet I was still alive.

Although perhaps only for a little while longer.

My wife asked me to stay calm, relax, and listen.

“You don't know who Chanel really is.

You think she is an intermediary, a French colleague, the woman who accompanied you and the six shareholders in Paris, the one who created the contacts for you, who followed your every movement, who provoked you intimately and never received a response.

But you don't know who she really is.”

Holy shit, I thought.

What kind of screenplay have they written around me?

“She is the daughter of the principal shareholder, the same woman whose mother you spent hours talking with.

She remained in the background the entire time.

She watched.

She listened.

She was the reserve force.

And now they have played the final card.

The seventh one.

We know everything.

The unbelievable offer they made you.

Your refusal.

And there is something all of us want to tell you together.”

WE ARE PROUD OF YOU

My wife continued:

“I explained to Chanel that even after thirty-three years of marriage I have never succeeded in making you do something you do not want to do.

You are stubborn, difficult, and sometimes impossible.

But you are also a man of character and principles.

Money has never been your problem.

Everything began as a way to preserve a memory, not to build a business.

Otherwise, he would have sold the project to the newspaper vendor on the corner.

He pays more than Amazon for my husband, although I'm not sure whether he is related to Bezos.”

Everyone laughed.

As the gathering came to an end and Chanel moved toward the door, she turned around once more.

“Tell me, Nando.

Why did you lose the security team in Paris and never allow us to know where you were staying?

Especially considering that your name was not registered in any French hotel?”

I smiled.

“Only for one reason.

I had to protect myself from seven women.

Because they are my weakness.”

Ferdinando