



Morte no Colégio/Death at School

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English Version

1st Chapter - A CORPSE IN RECESS

It was the last Monday of March, and the sun was brightly shining over a hot and humid morning of Rio de Janeiro. At the Dois Irmãos Primary School, on Marquês de São Vicente street, Gávea neighborhood, Ivan was the last kid of his class to make his way to the playground, when he arrived, the yard was already packed and the racket of his excited classmates scattered everywhere.

Ivan was fourteen years old and was in eighth grade. His sister, Sofia, was almost two years younger, and was in seventh grade. They enjoyed their recess time sitting under the leafy canopy of the almond tree, which stood in the center of the courtyard, chatting with friends, while eating munchies prepared by Uncle Fausto, with whom they lived. It was a good way to trick the stomach until it was time for lunch. However, that morning, the boy was not hungry. He didn't even bother getting his snack out of the backpack. Sofia, who knew very well what was going on, finished chewing a piece of her sandwich and asked:

- What time is your meeting with the principal?

Ivan pressed his lips:

- A quarter past ten. It's in five minutes. I'm anxious. I'd rather have spoken to him earlier, before first period. But the thing is Mr. Moacir only shows up at school around nine, nine-thirty. They say that, for years, the principal has been accurately performing the same ritual, it's even become a legend. When he arrives, he sits at his desk in his office, says a long prayer, then eats something that his secretary prepares in the pantry, and only afterwards starts his workday.

- Have you found another one of those notes under your desk, today? - Sofia asked, after a brief silence.

Ivan nodded.

- May I see it?

He looked around to make sure nobody was watching them, and sneakily pulled the folded paper out from one of his pockets, handing it to Sofia. She opened it and read the following text, printed in large computer font:

GO AWAY FROM HERE FOREVER AND KEEP SILENT OR YOU WILL REGRET IT!

Sofia shivered inside. She folded the piece of paper back and returned it to her brother.

- How long have you been receiving these threats?

- Since last Wednesday. Coincidentally, the day after Uncle Fausto was here meeting with the principal. That's what is worrying me, the main reason why I really want to talk to Mr. Moacir. Why would anyone write me these horrible things, like this, out of the blue? Would it be connected in any way to the visit my uncle paid him?

Sofia didn't think so. Only a genius could figure out the mad conversation, without any rhyme or reason, which Uncle Fausto had with the principal. This, of course, if anyone had managed to hear it, since the meeting happened behind the closed doors of Mr. Moacir's office, after the morning shift had ended. Sofia and Ivan had been practically dragged there by their uncle, who swore that their conversation wouldn't last any longer than "just five minutes". But the two ended up lodged in the office's small sofa, having to wait for almost a whole hour, while their Uncle Fausto and Mr. Moacir chattered enthusiastically about some fantastic affairs, stuff kind of difficult to understand. They even spoke in Greek! Sofia pushed her memory and recalled that her uncle was most interested in knowing details about the trip the principal had just made to Greece. She also remembered that they repeatedly mentioned the name of a philosopher who lived many years before Christ and, especially, some ancient manuscripts that had been lost for centuries, which their uncle had spoken about before at home, but as always, neither she nor Ivan paid much attention to. At the end of the meeting, Mr. Moacir gave Uncle Fausto a CD that could only be viewed in a computer, and told him he should keep it with "very carefully".

- To me, these notes are just a bad joke, someone is trying to scare you - Sofia said.

- Anyway, why don't you ask Mr. Moacir directly what he and Uncle Fausto talked about so much?

- It's a good idea. I'll do that. Even if just to make sure that their meeting had nothing to do with these threats - Ivan looked at his watch and stood up - Well, it's time. Wish me luck.

Sofia also got up.

- I'll go with you, to lend a hand.

Break time passed by as normally as usual. To the right of the courtyard, near the access to the kindergarten rooms, was the small group of gossipy girls from seventh grade, led by the infamous Lorena, who proudly called herself "Gávea's number one preppy girl." This group spent its time practicing their two favorite sports: bad-mouthing others and snubbing the boys who eventually came around and tried to chat. On the opposite side, the troglodytes: Otto, who was in the same classroom as Ivan, and Vinicius, a freshman at high school. The two once again began playing their stupid game of throwing each other against the wall and then fighting to see who was quicker and stronger. They had been doing that since the very beginning of the school year, at least twice a week, up to the point that they were already called "Troglo" and "Dyte" by their fellow classmates. It wouldn't take long for Mrs. Dilma, the morning shift coordinator, to show up in the courtyard, gasping, in order to separate and take them to their classrooms, where she would give them the same old long, and ultimately useless, sermon.

Ivan and Sofia headed out of the courtyard and into the corridor that led to the principal's office. The place was empty and quiet, quite unlike the uproar that almost made the ground shake outside. They approached the double door that led into the room where Geraldo worked, the bald and hefty principal's secretary, and stretched their heads inside.

- Can Mr. Moacir see me now? - Asked Ivan.

Sitting at his desk, Geraldo smiled and waved his hand welcoming them in.

- You arrived in a good time. Mr. Moacir must have just finished his breakfast - he stood up, and pointed to a couch set against the wall. - You can sit there and wait while I go talk to him. What's your name again?

- Ivan Seabra. I am an eighth grade student.

Geraldo tapped lightly on the door twice and then entered the principal's office. The door hadn't even shut completely yet and Ivan and Sofia heard the secretary's deep voice let out a terrifying shriek, a cry of horror. The two jumped up as soon as they saw him coming out of there very disturbed, with a pale face and bulging eyes.

- What happened? - Ivan asked, not understanding anything.

- Mr. Moacir - Geraldo replied shaking like jelly. - He is ... he's fallen on the ground ... Fainted. Oh my God! I think he had a fit!

More frightened than anything else, Ivan and Sofia ran into the room and found Moacir sprawled on the floor behind his desk, belly down, face turned to the side, mouth and eyes half closed and still. His right arm was stretched forward and his hand held a reddish and luscious pear, bitten on one side. The rest of breakfast, still in its tray on the table, was practically untouched.

The ambulance arrived in fifteen minutes. Ivan and Sofia heard the doctor tell Geraldo that Moacir Portela, owner and principal of Dois Irmãos Primary School was dead. And that, probably, the pear he had eaten was poisoned.