

E . L . A (lice) and Ela (Queen of Roses) ⁽¹⁾

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I think I don't know how to say this... Will the words become autonomous when I get there? I hope they will become autonomous. I want them to get out without dominating them. Can I do that ? What if they absorb me ? What if they suddenly dominate me ? I won't be dominate!...I'll begin with this. But this is already a decision. I want them to get out by themselves...go! I arrived and then...there was no one there. No one, like not seeing anyone, not hearing anyone, not feeling anyone. It wasn't. There wasn't. It was a big room. Behind me, no doors, no walls. In the right side, there was a bed, a high one, without people's traces. In the left side, there was another room. It wasn't separated from the first one, but I knew it was another room. It had another bed, as big and tidy as the first one. I knew that this one wasn't mine. Mine was the other, turned to the glass door, under the bell-glass. It was a sunny day, but it wasn't a sun light. It was mixed with branches light. I saw a few branches on the other side of the door, because it was made of glass. The other side of the door was kind of green. The door was half closed. I was my own keyhole. In spite of that, in spite of that She wanted to get in, or to get out. Therefore, She abandoned the room, she left the house whose existence was fed by the only improbable certitude of finding something more behind the no walls room. Was she led by the urgency of finding someone ? However, the meeting didn't seem completely excluded if she stayed in the house. I don't care, I don't care! I don't want to explain!...And I left.

When you don't get anywhere, you only have two solutions: either you continue not getting anywhere, or you get somewhere...She repeated the sentence a couple of times to herself. Two steps later, she reconsidered the conclusion she had arrived to. She was wrong. You can get anywhere as well as no where, as well as somewhere. But, doesn't "getting no where" implies "not getting anywhere"? And doesn't "getting anywhere" means "getting somewhere"? The steps calmly advanced, although her black eyes didn't notice it.

The ear was the first to feel. Somewhere near, some cups of tea's whiteness was calling it. The feet stopped and the legs went along with them. E. L. A chose a chair, even though there was only one chair. In front of her, there was a merry-go-round. It was stopped, but its colours were merry-go-rounds' colours, so it was a merry-go-round. Under the skirt on the top of it, there were only four tables, each one had only two sits, and only one of them was taken. There was a Sacher Torte in each. They probably didn't notice her. No one asked her anything, and when you notice, you ask. E. L. A wasn't still sure if she should consider she had get no where, and therefore, anywhere, or if she should think that since she had get anywhere, she was somewhere. Nevertheless, she heard a melody that made her change subject right away...

-You're not a merry-go-round!!! She yelled
-Of course I'm a merry-go-round!! answered the bailarina.
-No! The music says your name is Mary! A merry-go-round couldn't possibly be called Mary!
-Look little girl, it's *Merry*, not *Mary*! But I don't even know why I'm explaining this to you. I didn't notice you, I didn't ask you anything. You didn't notice me either, you didn't ask me anything.

She was right, nor E. L. A, neither the merry-go-round had asked anything, and a conversation can't happen if both interlocutors don't notice each other. Without existence how could they speak with each other? E. L. A's bright eyes immediately faded again behind their own brown. If E. L. A didn't notice Mary, she must be speaking to no one, what presumed she wasn't speaking with anyone. But Mary was under the same circumstances.

¹ E. L. A is a name consisting of the initials of Alice (from Alice in Wonderland) and her two real sisters. In Portuguese, it is also a personal pronoun, equivalent to "she".

Either E. L. A was someone whom Mary was speaking to, or E. L. A was no one whom Mary was talking with. Then she thought they both could be no ones having a conversation, what implied spoken silence, or even better, quiet no ones. She also wondered about the chance of being no one whom Mary wasn't speaking to, but to be no one whom you don't speak to, it's the same as to be someone with whom you're quiet. So, she corrected her previous reasoning, although her obstinacy didn't totally surrender: when you notice, you ask, not always with words. Hands, eyes, arms, legs also ask. E. L. A was enjoying this new conclusion, when she saw the merry-go-round spinning. It looked as if the smoke of the herb tea, inside of the cups'whiteness was the responsible for the skirt's whirl, on the top. Crispy sparks were flying from the tables. E. L. A managed to get one. She bit it again and again, while the blue from her eyes watched the dancing meal march.

Sitting at a table, a Sacher Torte stayed apparently indifferent to an almond pie and to a "Japanese Kastella", who tried vainly to incite him, in order to find his melting point. However, neither the first one's fresh cream, nor the second's honey and condensed milk were enough to melt the thick chocolat layers of the arrogant gentleman. He wanted to keep his recipe's litigation. He was made with refined sugar and he knew that, since the first bite, he was the most coveted chocolat cake in the whole world. Thus, he refused to be tasted, though, under his smooth white castle, he was delighted to see his admirers avid look. These ones didn't let their pastry rest. On the contrary, they kept challenging each other. If the pie sweetened the Cake with icing sugar, the Kastella tried to set him on fire with rum. More and more dazzling of proud, the Sacher Torte let an almond smile from time to time, but before the two deserts' forks had the chance to kiss him, he wrapped his pastry in flour in order to not loosing his shape.

Charmed by the irreverence of the Cake by whom she also felt tempted, Mary spun; a revolution that, this time, E. L. A's look followed. Now, she could get a glimpse of a second Sacher Torte, maybe less rich in cream layers than the last one, but surely with much more than a tea-spoon of vanilla extract. A Meringue Pie was asking him permission to sit at his table. Her pastry was tired, she was telling him to justify herself. No pretext would have been necessary. The Cake had perfumed himself on purpose with apricot jam in order to attract forkfuls. Although he had just assimilated the ghost from the past, in which the butter had beaten him, and though the Pie's lemon juice remembered him of this bittered past experience, he felt attracted for the castles this meringued lady sustained in the air. Therefore, Mary hadn't finished completing her first turn yet, when this Sacher Torte's chocolate became melted for the Pie's hot and gold curves. After a few bites and seductive slices of each other, the couple constituted a distinguished combination of contrasting flavours.

Near to this table with a risky fusion taste, there was another one, where a Freshed Plum "Genoise" was discussing with a third Sacher Torte. She was criticizing the fact that some cooks had asked her to change some of her ingredients. She was feeling teared to pieces! How could anyone prefer apple strips instead of plums?! The obstinated "Genoise" refused to let anyone fill her round shape with plastic food. She wanted to stay authentic! She used to see herself as an integrant part of refined menus, which couldn't possibly be inebriated by gustative papillas seduced by fast appetites. Sometimes the Cake listened to her amused, other times he gesticulated effusively, he palpitated without loosing consistency. No doubt he was the most turbulent. He reflected life and vigour. Made by an inventive cook, he was soaked in brandy, and he was decorated with nuts, crystallized cherries and ruffled chantilly pillows. From time to time, he picked some of the few red plums which falled off one of the two section layers of his lover and wrapped it in crispy chocolat leaves. Afterwards, responding to impulsive exigencies of their own tastes, they both bust their pulps into aphrodisiac crumbs'smiles.

Casually sitting at a fourth table, another Sacher Torte? The same one? E. L. A couldn't make the image of the blurred tea become clearer. This fourth Cake was drinking his tea in small draughts. Everything in him had a fragrance of dispersion. His covering was plunging in the tea-cup, his filling was releasing in waves of sweet, alternate with almond lava. Surrounded to this Sacher's mystery, a Poppy Seed "Strudel" had decided to occupy the vacant sit in front of him. The scattered raisins and the cinnamon which composed her

couldn't go unnoticed. However, nothing was said between them. The Cake seemed to be absorbed in his own fudge, and the Strudel was observing the flutter of the seeds she had seen turning into puppies. Sometimes one of them just broke into laughs, what led to the same reaction of the other one.

Mary was jealous! She was watching her favourite Cake being nibbled by her dainty guests on her own whirling plate! What a napkin! She was getting enraged because of the last Sacher Torte's sticky behaviour, their respective admirers and all the other caramelized deserts who didn't had sits, but who marched among the tables trying to poke the stimulating gentlemen with greedy insinuations. So, she began to speak.

-Eeeeenough!!!! It's over!! There's no use for you to look at me with these honeyed eyes! Right under my skirt! What a lack of polish!

All the sweets started giggling. It certainly wasn't a lack of polish! Enraged, Mary stopped twirling.

It was at that moment that E. L. A's eyes got confused. The merry-go-round had suddenly become empty. Where could have gone the Pies? And the chocolat gentlemen? She decided to approach it. Mary seemed too absorbed in her protesting monologues, to notice her presence. Shyly, E. L. A entered the merry-go-round. Now unoccupied, the tables started offering her their chairs "Take this one, sugar, sit down!". All the table-clothes were pulling her shirt: "Here!Here!". Hesitant, she was still standing up, when Mary shouted:

-Hey, are you still going to take long ?! I don't have the whole day!

Actually, there was only one table, in the center of the merry-go-round. Why doubting?! E. L. A felt relieved and sat down. In front of her, there was a cup without a tea-pot, but filled with tea. It was so disappointing! She had just watched a march of delicious snacks and now she had to be satisfied with a miserable tea! Now, she was feeling hesitant once again. It must had been this that they have had all been drinking. If she drank some of it herself, she might also disappear. If she didn't, she would never know where the others had gone. Tempted by the image of The Sacher Torte's layers, she took the risk!

Simultaneously, Mary began dancing over again. At first, she turned slowly, so slowly that E. L. A could no longer distinguish her blink from the bailarina course. She couldn't understand either the garden around her was swinging, or if it was just an old bill, the background of a former ice-cream shop, fascinating, but scary cause it promessed an unknown kind of life. Then, faster, faster and faster. There was no longer neither garden, nor a bill; only colours, green and pink and yellow, which were getting an absurd consistency; as if spread sheets were mixing on the air with not totally diluted paints. They were fluid colours, but also easy to seize. Liquid blocks of colours. Colours Flowers, colours castles, colours giant coats with crocodile's feet, colours uterus, sexual colours, colours animals-dragon-flies-bats-crabs, colours angels, colours waiters with big red bows. Mary had said something. Was she upset? E. L. A couldn't stop words. Mary kept speaking. What on earth was she saying? E. L. A was still in the «question», while Mary was already far ahead of her in her speech. «Question», had said the merry-go-round. Question what? What question? Whom? Yes, E. L. A had a lot of questions. So many. She didn't know why she didn't ask them. It probably wasn't necessary. They were springing everywhere. In the tea-pot, in the table, hanging from the merry-go-round's metallic bars... She had stayed cloistered in the word «question». She tried to run after the sentences' traces. To ask Mary to slow down her rhythm. To tell her that no matter how interesting the subject she was talking about was, she couldn't follow her. She had got behind, or maybe she had taken side-paths which ran away from the sentence she heard. And when there's question, there must be a dialogue, E. L. A wondered, proceeding her initial reasoning. Nevertheless, there were no answers. I must ask the questions. I can't only watch them, even though when I just watch them they continue to be questions. Perhaps it's sufficient to make answers. When there's an answer, it's because there's a question. Consequently, if I create an answer, I create a question. So, E. L. A yelled « There's a lettuce leaf crumpled on the floor », and then « I think I've just said there's a lettuce leaf crumpled on the floor», followed by «I'm going for a walk», and by «I won't be back today». She couldn't

tell if she was actually answering to Mary, or if these answers were only meant to put her plan into practice: to create questions from answers. She could only perceive one of Mary's reactions. A strange smile, whose volume assumed unknown proportions. Sometimes, too loud. Almost imperceptible, other times. Was she laughing at her?

But... Before she could get it clearer, the merry-go-round, which had accelerated, projected her far away.

Unexpectedly, E. L. A didn't get hurt, in spite of the fall. Actually, the spill seemed endless, since E. L. A didn't feel the landing. Maybe I'm still falling, she thought. However I can feel the ground. I don't know if I can still be falling, since I'm on the ground. But I feel my feet drawing my stomach and pulling my head, I feel the soft pavement digging a powered hole which attracts me. I look down and I see no abyss. And, though, a gap is progressively opening itself under me. It's the gap that gets deeper and deeper while I fall into it, I'm not falling because it was already deep. I feel as if I was walking against the wind. I'm the one who impose a tear mould to my size. The only difference is that the wind is horizontal and, when I walk in his opposite direction, he asks me to move backwards, he doesn't want me to enter the air. Contrarily, my tumble is vertical and it fascinates me, calls me and protects me.

Stunned by the fall, E. L. A hadn't opened her eyes yet. She was feeling warm, cosy, she was trying to explore the wellcoming darkness of her tumble. She was sure this corridor wouldn't end. She advanced safely and she saw the comfortable dark getting darker and darker, so she could conjecture shapes, some of them shiny, other ones only coloured, only those she wished, when she wished them, because the dark yielded inexorably to her. When she wanted to erase them, she just had to come back to the soothing dark. This way, she was drenched in impulses, curled up on the closed eyes lap, when she heard a Sigh⁽²⁾:

- Ohhhh! Ela's coming! Ela's arriving! We're going to see her! Move! We're going to see her!

E. L. A dared to activate her eyelashes. She was still in the woods. Yet, there was no sign of the merry-go-round. Now, entire shelves of hale and pullulating pastries were passing, running by her. She had finally found where all those dancing deserts had gone! Although she got up with difficulty, since some cream pastries, coconut cakes, brownies, and fruit pies kept bumping into her, E. L. A managed to address herself to the roll-shaped Sigh, the only one who remained in the same place, though he gesticulated and hopped effusively:

-Excuse-me, but I'm already here.

-Sure, sweetie pie, good for you, but it's not here. It's there! There!

And he pointed the depth of the wood, which was quite invisible at that time of the day, because the day light was dazzling. E. L. A insisted:

-But I'm here.

-No, no, no. It's not here! It's TH-E-RE!!

-May I ask what is everyone going to do there, if I'm here?

-We're going to join Ela! What were you expecting?

Getting more and more confused, E. L. A answered back.

-But I've already told you that I'm here.

-Yep, O. K, do whatever you want, but we're going that way!

-I'm here!

-Don't you think you're a bit egocentric?

E. L. A just didn't get it. Was she able to be in two places at the same time? Was there another Ela? Because "she" was E. L. A and if Ela was there, who was the "I" here.

² In portuguese, a sigh is also a cake's name

-You can't go join Ela, because I'm "her" and I'm here!

She shouted angry.

-You wished you were Ela! To be "I", being her! What a nerve! You must think I'm stupid! I know exactly who she is and she's neither "you", nor "I"! Be quiet and let me continue warning the others!

He exclaimed, with no more patience.

-Oh, really?! Go on, then, tell me who she is.

-She is... There are no words, no words!

"Just great", thought E. L. A.

-In that case, I'm going with you! I would be glad to know who "she" am!

And so she got on the road with all the other sweets and, of course, with a few bitter tastes. After she had walked for a while, often pushed by the rushed inhabitants, she arrived to a crowd of static deserts. Now here must be there. She could see the bright mouth of a branches tunnel. She was able to distinguish something that looked like two enigmatic eyes, without a definite colour. Later on, after she had been treaded and nudged several times, she managed to observe a bit further. Ela was walking through the verdant corridor, with firm steps, serene stones, an alighted face, and silver clay. She was getting nearer and nearer. E. L. A. couldn't avoid a distrustful smile. Who's this?! After the tea chapter, she no longer could be sure that Ela was real. No one can have such long eyelashes. Where? The hair? The feet? Has she got nails? She seems to be made of marble. But she breathes. She has pink cheeks. She isn't embarrassed, she didn't put blusher on her, she isn't sweating, she isn't gasping. E. L. A.'s imaginary started leafing through all the characters Ela could be identified with. Yet there were no pages in the imaginary. Only presences, unshaped and vague sensations. It was as if she had been blindfolded and she had thrown her hand into a well that smells like people. Feeling there are beings in there and trying to catch them, to get them free. Some of them will be caught by their hair, others will tikle you till you let them go. They all seem so amused and cosy that they don't want to get out. Are they real? Having momentarily forgotten the honeyed inhabitants who involved her, she canalized her attention to the silhouette who was standing in front of her. She tried to analise her, she studied her moves, she wrinkled her brows each time she faced a new ambiguous detail. She looked for a goat-foot, a mermaid's tail, or a snake's back... Nothing, the lady from the forest didn't show any legendary trace. In order to find any Perrault's, Grimm's, or Aderson's vestige, she tried to describe her to herself, to put the image she was facing into words. Nothing. Nothing came out of it. Her mind suddenly went blank. Feeling images was easy to her. It was easy to see what she wanted and what there wasn't in what it actually was. It was also easy not to see what it is, or not to see what exists but isn't there. She had always let the images take their natural course. She used to let them cross her, as if she wasn't real, as if her body was translucent, felt only through images. Perhaps they weren't images. She usualy felt incessant winds of figures, colours, interrupted shapes, of slides with no bed, paths to be continued, disagreeing sounds. She had never had to arrest them, to stop them. They used to run. Reality? Comics? When everything keeps transforming itself. And yet she could speak...To put everything into words...Was it to arrest them? And yet she could speak...Had she ever arrested? Said by others. She had received images said by others. They were no longer words. They changed into this champagne's bubbling. It was an alchemy she could easily do. But the opposite... changing the chaos crackling into words? She wasn't words. Was she an image? Images can't possibly be definite. They're fluid, fuzzy. What about words...Ask me to describe a dream in details. Can I? Catch it? And wasn't it my dream? And can anyone describe it better than me? And I often don't know the eyes colour. Sometimes I do. But once put into words, it doesn't seem the same colour as the one in the dreamt eyes. It changes into another one. Another image. She looked her from different points of view. If Ela was made of paper, she would have turned her round and round, she would have shaken her, fanned her, torn her, crumpled her. Since she continued to cope with the mess in her imaginary, without managing to articulate a single word, not even mentally, she concluded: "Ela is real". E. L. A

was real after all, because I can't say what actually is and I can't "say" her. However, she had a fairy colour. Now, Ela seemed to want whispering something. "It was enough to say Ela existed, to make her speak", she thought. Well, E. L. A was wrong!...or maybe not. Without words, without sounds. Without words! Ela had preferred roses to words. She expelled roses from her lips. In front of each inhabitant whom she walked by, she slightly opened her red lips and released a puff made of petals, stalks and thorns. They seemed to understand her. They were all familiarized with the peculiar words/petals hermeneutics. They were fed by it. They calmly expected her. They admired her. E. L. A's turn was coming. There was no organized queue. Ela was walking in a casual way, but sneaking amongst one and another, she didn't forget anyone. Ela stopped in front of her and smiled to her. E. L. A couldn't get if Ela was smiling in a maleficent, in a naïve or in a condescending way. The enigmatic lady left a rose in her hands and kept rambling through the fluttering tissue that was covering her. I don't get it. I don't get it. What am I supposed to do with this?! Although she was still thinking that this whole sweets'show was sickening and mollycoddling and though she was determined to keep a certain distance of that suspicious beings, the anxiety of knowing what kind of secret communication was shared by those caramels arose in E. L. A.

-What do the roses taste like? She asked.

The brownie glanced at her.

-Haven't you ever tasted words?

-Yes! Of course I have!

But with tiny hands, riding pick-a-back, hugging her neck, the doubt was peeping: "Are you sure? Do you really think so? Do you? Why? What? What were they made of? What did they taste like?"

-Be quiet! Shut up! I'm sure! Of course I've already tasted words!

The brownie became crystallized, half suspicious, half worried. Naturally, he saw no doubt.

Yet, the doubt was right there, restless and she continued: "Is it so? Is it so? How do you know? What if it's not what you think?! Oh! Yes! Do you know the words you are talking about?" The doubt started gradually going down of E. L. A's back and in a few seconds she became an adult. Now, in front of her, there was a charismatic woman who kept saying: "How can you be sure?", "Why did you answer so quickly?", "You don't know...", "don't speak...", "You're not sure...", "Are you afraid?", followed by a lot of questions.

-...

She remained speechless. She didn't know if the doubt was a pretentious woman whose aim was nothing but to kindle her inner chaos, or if she was right. The doubt was surer and surer of herself, she was prettier and prettier, more and more vigorous.

Standing before E.L.A's paralyzed figure, the brownie shrugged his shoulders and declared:

-The rose tastes like all words together.

This answer was enough. Tearing the turpitude wrapper where she found herself in, she impulsively devoured the rose she had kept in her hand.

At first she felt lost. Was the impulse due to words, or was it the other way round? Nor the sweets seemed so honeyed to her any longer, neither the doubt seemed so inhibiting. She looked around. There were no doubts, and no roses. On the couch in front of her, there was only the soothing voice: "I'll see you next week, then".