

Red Vase

I lie down on the couch and the medical books call my attention to the shelves. Among many psychiatry titles is a red vase. The strong color emphasizes the silence. I stare at the concrete walls, hear the murmur of the air conditioner. I don't take off my coat but feel no discomfort. I adjust myself, put my hands in my pockets, and find the money for the end of the session.

The analyst moves in her chair. "I have thoughts, voices that persecute me," I say. The phrase is unexpected. "I'm afraid of losing my words." She wants to know more. I tell her that the doctors also wanted to know more. "They come and go," I say. "When they hospitalized me they were outside my head, giving me orders."

"It must have been frightening," she says. I grunt yes without conviction of what I feel.

"I tried to talk but I couldn't remember how. The handcuffs on the stretcher were hurting me. I fought, and I wanted to know where my mother was. There were other patients in the hallway." I notice I am out of breath when I finish telling the story.

A moment later she tells me, "But you're here now, talking." I think yes, but I don't know if that's enough. I look at the red vase and I have a sudden desire to break it.

I shift my gaze away. Minutes later, the session ends. I am nervous when I get up and pass by the bookshelf, a red shadow near me. My fingers tremble when I give her the money. "See you next week" I say, hastening to leave.