

The Probation

There is always the instant when we have already looked at a landscape enough, just like when we realize still need a lot of time to see it fully.

Albert Camus

Before I found my initial job, my first occupation worth of making a note, I faced the unreasonable: a list of endless informal chores, not to mention my very little money. I was exhausted at knocking at every door showing such useless demeanour. Those three years were an affliction, without counting my hard work with my studies. Every day was like entering a dark basement. Every day the same terrible somberness. In a certain way, overcoming this ordeal left me with consequences. Symptoms I hardly tried to hide, an open and unhealed war wound, that surfaced whenever I walked into a room with my head down, over apologizing, silenced before any sentence or commitment.

Today it would be difficult to describe my emotion, or how I felt when I was called to be the assistant manager of the company I supervise today. Dressed in my best clothes, I made sure I arrived early. The person from human relation took me to an ample room, surrounded by very tall windows. At ease, despite acting as someone who is fulfilling a grand but daily mission, he briefly introduced me to his colleagues and sent me to my desk. Following his instructions, I was to bind and number processes, successfully completing an indispensable task to the well-being of the company.

Already burned by my unemployed years, I did my best. I tried to follow all the deadlines, as well as being there in case of an emergency. All for the “team effort,” the precious tagline of the company’s management. The only thing that bothered me was how my coworkers, since my first day in the job, looked at me. It was terrible. They observed me nonstop. They rarely talked to me. Like children, they pretended being adults despite acting like children and following me everywhere. For a long time, I tried to understand what was going on. I created hypothesis, signs, clues. But the motive was beyond me. No matter what I did, I was still the center of their attention. Despite my efforts, they never told me why they acted like so.

I suspect, for them, everything was normal. And their denial made me panic. Made me a stranger, a foreigner, in my own job. Sometimes I'd come across a slight agitation. An expectation. Their surrounding me as if I was about to make a sudden revelation. But I can't be sure of this. During that period, I learned how to live with this expectation without much embarrassment, already owning a discreet naturalness. Even so, they never revealed me anything. They just continued to survey me. My inaction, I trust, incited them even more.

Until a beautiful morning, after two years, when I find the person from human resources again walking into the room accompanied by a very frightened young man. The HR made the usual introductions – the same discourse he did when I first arrived – and dragged the newbie to a table near mine. My neighbor was a newcomer now. A very clumsy one, incapable of hiding his lack of professional experience from his coworkers.

I've always noticed how people don't know where to put their hands in these situations. Or where to look. The first problem surrounds the body's materiality: how it doesn't know how to measure its own space or demarcate its borders. As years pass by, it learns its own codes. It domesticates its daily chaos. From then on, everything becomes natural, even if by protocol. But nothing in the world exposes more than the crime of a fake spontaneity, filled by artifices. Two feet under conventions, norms of conduct and well-being – what is then left of a man?

I kept looking at the new guy. I saw all my former discomfort in him. And that's when I knew, in a coordinated yet extraordinary manner, how I had stopped being the center of attention. My fellow companions no longer searched me. Everyone, including me, were obsessed with the new guy. And he, as expected, was very bothered by that. The poor devil purged in his sins.

And so, just like that, all my estrangement disappeared. I started to follow the new guy with the same easiness as all the others. There was no difference. And that's when I saw how I had reached the end of my probation: my so-dreamed stability.

Since that day, the deed of being the newest member of the team, belonged to me.