

WITHOUT CONSOLATION

De porqué te estoy queriendo
no me pidas la **razón**
pues yo mismo no me entiendo
con mi pobre corazón

Of why I'm loving you
don't ask me a **reason**
because I don't get through to
my poor heart

Rafael de León (1908-1982)

Consuelo was a happy, self-actualized woman both personally and professionally. She was a successful software programmer in an important transnational firm in Tijuana. Her husband, Fabian, was charming. He was very sensitive, helped with the housework, and supported her in all her projects. In the afternoon, they went for a walk, hand in hand, around their neighborhood in Playas de Tijuana, causing admiration in those who saw them passing.

The quiet and equanimous countenance of Consuelo encouraged some anguished people to call on her to talk of their problems. Maybe because she had to honor her name (Consuelo means consolation), maybe because of her good will, her initial intention was to try to help: she received them with sympathy, and listened with attention. Afterward, she analyzed their situation and gave them some advice, advice that dropped in a ragged sack because the people to whom it was directed seldom applied it.

For Consuelo, this was very discouraging. Slowly, she stopped being so sympathetic because, when she had a problem, she simply analyzed it, found a solution, applied it and went forward; why could not other people do the same thing? If a woman had an abusive husband, why did she not leave him? If a man had a drinking problem, why did he not go to AA? She could not understand why so many people *decide* to behave in ways that they *know* are not good for them.

Consuelo, like the psychiatrist Alfred Adler (1870-1937), assumed that **reason** is the primary force controlling the human being. "*Why are you doing that?*" was a typical question of hers. If she did not receive an answer, she would say "*Why didn't you want to say it? Why didn't you want to solve it? If you don't help yourself, how can I help you?*" And finally, she parted from that person who perturbed her.

But, one day, Consuelo went through an experience that endangered her quiet conception of the world. At her job she met Bernardo, another programmer, married, only a little older than she. He was not nice and cooperative like Fabian, but a pretty arrogant *macho guy*. However, they came to be good friends. Consuelo claimed that the disgusting sexist remarks of Bernardo had to be taken as a joke. She could never consider the possibility that he was serious about that.

Consuelo started spending more and more of her time hanging out with Bernardo. She thought that it was not a bad thing... Why would it be so? They were only friends and Fabian understood it. Fabian could not get jealous because he had no **reason** for it. Over the two years that Bernardo and Consuelo had dealt with each other, he had started looking for her more and more. They shared a lot, a lot of hours together, so many that their work was affected and they had to do some legerdemain to prevent problems with their supervisor.

It happened that both Bernardo and Consuelo had to attend COMDEX 2001, in Las Vegas. The programming firms are not used to having female employees, thus, because of a purely administrative decision, the firm arranged for both employees to share a double room. Fifty years ago, such a situation would have caused a stern protest from the female employee. Well, maybe fifty years ago, there would not have been a female employee.

It is likely that if Consuelo had talked to the right people, the firm would have arranged the necessary accommodations for both employees not to share the room. But Consuelo did not see a **reason** for it. For her, to protest would have implied that she was a conservative person and she did not see herself that way. Thus, she prepared for the trip, not taking account of this matter at all. Actually, when Fabian learned about the conditions of the lodging, he was uncomfortable. But he also found no **reason** for objecting and, then, the events followed their course.

Bernardo was not a modern person: he was old-fashioned and retrograde. He did not argue about the way in which the firm decided to lodge them. However, his case was different. When he was alone, Bernardo quivered and his eyes became full of tears as he thought about that day when Consuelo and he would be together, in the same room. For a long time, he had been in love with Consuelo. He wanted to be close to Consuelo; he wanted to be close to her in all possible ways.

Sharing a room was more exciting for Consuelo than she had predicted. The first night together, they could not sleep. Instead, they started talking. Their conversation was somewhat different than that which they had had everyday, but... *talking is not a bad thing*— thought Consuelo. The fact that they talked for more than six hours, into the early morning, does not change things: it was all *just* a conversation.

While they were talking they began to feel closer and closer to each other. At some moment, Bernardo took Consuelo's hand. Both got their pulse accelerated and were so excited but... *holding hands is not a bad thing*— thought Consuelo. Her pulse raced and she would never say anything of it to Fabian, but it did not change things: *it was only a gesture of friendship*.

Bernardo felt more and more exalted. A strange warmth ran over his entire body. He vaguely remembered having felt this before, ten years ago. The scent of the air reminded him of that marvelous time when he only belonged to himself, and only to himself he needed to give explanations. He needed to get closer and closer to Consuelo; then he had to hold her. Consuelo did not reject him... she was saying to herself: *holding is not a bad thing*.

When Bernardo kissed her, Consuelo stopped thinking. The air had turned into warm water and the throbbing of their hearts followed the rhythm of an ancestral melody, of a symphony written at the beginning of time. It is worthless to go on with the narration... it is obvious when that storm stopped.

Although some people can argue the opposite, I can assure you that when Consuelo stepped into that room, she did not know what would happen. She had not *planned* to get involved with Bernardo and, if by chance she had imagined it sometime, she was sure that, at any moment, she could behave *rationally*. She did not know that inside her there were those mysterious, **irrational** forces that, dethroning her mind, could assume power over her complete being. Actually, the world was not as simple as she had conceived it.

But Consuelo never understood what happened. When the week finished and it was necessary to recover her rational being, she talked to Bernardo to clear things up. This had been something exceptional; it was neither proper nor right to try to continue further. Bernardo did not listen to her; his blood was boiling: he had finally received that for which he had been yearning for a long time and he could not... he must not leave it.

The story did not finish well: Bernardo could not stand his loss. Afterward, he took advantage of a distraction of Consuelo to re-format her computer and lose her work of two months. Also, he stole all her CD backups and hammered them one by one, until they were reduced to shards. The worst thing was when he looked for Fabian in his office to tell, detail by detail, all that had happened in Las Vegas.

All these events caused very much suffering to Consuelo. Living a long period of her life immersed in pain and confusion was something that she had not planned for, either. Of course, she blamed Bernardo for not understanding the moment when all was finished. She always claimed that Bernardo had no **reason** to do what he did and that his violent attitude had no justification. But if you understand a little about the functioning of human beings, you will see very clearly what was happening. It is very simple: Bernardo was in love and, suddenly... he was left without consolation... without Consuelo.

Lydia Alvarez Camacho