

## The Asian Hornet

It was 9:00 pm when my mother arrived at my house. I opened the door and she automatically headed to the living room.

— Can I sit? — She asked me, as if this question was really necessary.

I've never quite understood why my mother visits me by surprise. As soon as she walks through the door, all she wants to do is walk back out again. Not to mention, we never know what to say to each other. I am afraid to ask her anything, because normally, all her answers are a quick way to her favourite theme: "tragedy". She doesn't ask me anything at all. I think that she imagines how my life is going, and doesn't dare ask me directly, in case the truth contradicts these views. A few weeks ago, I asked her if she knew what my favourite colour was, after all, we have known each other for twenty-eight years.

— Black! — She answered, maybe because I wear black almost everyday. I think it seemed obvious for her, that this would be my favourite colour. I only wear black because I don't know how to combine colours. Black goes well with everything, especially with more black clothes.

— You got it right! — I lied. My favourite colour is blue, and to be precise, indigo blue. The same colour that I decided to paint one of the walls in the living room, the wall that faces the armchair where my mother usually sits when she visits me.

We sat in silence for a few minutes, she was on the chair and I was a little further away, sitting at the desk. I had the computer on, and I was trying to close all the search windows, which had been opened before she appeared.

— A man died the other day. — She said, with a dramatic expression. She looked at me as she waited for a reaction.

She had showed up at the worst time, and now she was telling me the story of a man, whose name she didn't mention, and probably because she didn't know him. And then neither did I. There were a million other things on my mind than a nameless man, but I pretended to be interested.

— Did you know the man? — I asked her, just to be sure.

— No, I saw it on the news. — She replied, with a certain disappointment in her eyes. She knew that the fact that she didn't know him, would make the story less exciting.

— How did he die? — I said anyway, and this was the moment that my mother was expecting. My interest in the man's death.

— He was killed by an Asian Hornet. — She said, and by this point, she couldn't hide her smile.

— No, I'm wrong! He was killed by two Asian Hornets, that's how it was! — She added, with her finger pointed to the ceiling. The typical gesture that she uses when she is sure of what she is talking about.

It was not the first time that my mother had told me these kinds of morbid stories, and they're always followed by a smile. I'm used to it, now, but I confess, at the beginning I

even began to wonder who that person was, that person who I called "mother", that person who was once delicate and sensitive. The first time that I caught her smiling about someone else's misfortune, it was about her neighbour, Tessa. This old woman had been found dead at her own home by a support worker, around lunch time. My mother told me back then: "Tessa died and didn't even have lunch!".

Sometimes it makes me sad the way my mother tells me these stories, but I know that she does it because other people's problems make her life more bearable, by comparison.

I don't remember the last time that I saw my mother smiling about something related to her life. When she is silent, she always looks sad. And we were both silent in that moment. I wish that I could have told her about my life, but I feared that it would make her even more bitter. I would have liked to have asked her why it was always so difficult for her, to take the initiative, to hug me or to try and get closer to me.

I know that for my mother, I have always been a disappointment. She wanted a boy, and I was a girl. Later, she fantasised about me becoming a doctor, and I started my studies in the arts. And when she asked me about boyfriends, I introduced her a girlfriend.

— What was the man doing to be attacked by Asian Hornets? — I asked her, instead of telling her about what was upsetting me that night. Instead of asking her why she never prepared me for the world. I wanted to tell her that I was not a normal person, that my essence, pushed everyone away. Perhaps my essence had driven her away from me as well, and I blame her for not being able to love the monster, that she deliberately brought into this world. And for never being the haven I needed, or even trying, on days when everything was going wrong. That night was one of those days.

However, I also know that it just isn't worth blaming anybody anymore. Blaming people is just as bad as believing in people, especially when all evidence indicates that people are bad-natured. My lack of faith in others now is absolute, and even when I sleep, my dreams no longer include people, only different sizes of dildos.

— I think he was in that area cutting trees. — She answered, oblivious to any thoughts that I was having at that time.

How could I tell her that the lack of human touch had led me to commit the biggest mistake of my life, so far? A mistake called, Alice. This woman had told me about love. Alice believed in love. She believed in the word. In fact, it was all about the word, and nothing to do with the act itself.

With Alice, I expressed my love in the best way that I could, but never really knowing its meaning. Alice, despite acting like she knew everything about the essence of the word, expressed absolutely nothing. The next morning, I saw her take a pill and then I asked her about any possible illnesses.

— Now it's a little late for those questions, don't you think? — She said with a very fake smile, and I rushed to leave her house. Alice hadn't even given me an orgasm, but there was a possibility that she might have given me a disease, instead.

— Did he cut any? — I asked my mother, interrupting my own thoughts.

— I don't think so! He must have died before that. — When she said these words, she became introspective all of a sudden.

I have been noticing, for a long time now, that my mother has been delighted about the idea of dying. I don't know if she's alive because she lacks courage, or if it's because she still has some hope about life. I once caught her lying about putting all my childhood drawings in the bin. I confronted her, and without hesitation, she raised her arms in the air and declared, dramatically, "I did not! And may I die right now, If I'm lying!". She didn't die, and hours later she confessed, and told me that she had lied.

I do not believe in divine entities, but my mother still believes for some reason, even though they have always failed her. She used to pray to have a better life, and those gods did nothing. Now, she does everything she can to get them to kill her, and everything counts, even lying.

I believe that in that moment, we were both contemplating the luck of that man, for having left this life so quickly. Almost like someone who contemplates a lottery winner, with a certain envy. With nothing more to say about Asian Hornets, we were both staring at the floor, as if that floating floor would provide us another topic of conversation, or give us enough courage to talk about what we really wanted to tell to each other.

— It's getting late. I think I'm going home now. — She said. She got up from the chair and started walking slowly towards the exit of the living room. At that moment, we looked at each other, as if there was something else to say. As if we were suddenly brave enough to talk about what was really consuming us. But we didn't. The only thing I managed to do was take her by surprise and hug her before she left.