

The Bits and Bobs of Frustrated Thoughts

This homemade philosophy began to extend its roots into me, when on one sunny day, my family was gathering to have lunch together. Nothing special. I was in charge of setting up the table as usual, according to the inequitable distribution of labor such as commonly happens to the most responsible children, especially those who have no siblings and crave all attention to themselves. All they want to do is to please adults by doing something tremendous and worthwhile, so the story of their achievement would circulate around the family table the whole year. This present story does not fall into this category, because it simply revolved around me finding out that no matter how well I thought I knew somebody, there was always some skeletons in his or her closet to discover. One can spend most of his or her time with their dear person, sharing all the important things in life together and talking about themselves and their feelings to each other. Indeed, one probably does know them better than anyone else knows them. However, after all those years, I still return to that episode in order to remind myself not to let such perceptions of closeness lull myself into thinking that I can know anyone perfectly.

As auntie Ulena put a hot dish of mashed potatoes topped with a caramelized onions on the table, I asked her if her husband was coming, so I could fetch a plate and cutlery for him. She calmly smiled at me, being flattered by the fact that I treated her new husband as a member of our family and then she added that he would be coming later around 4, leaving me uncertain whether to set a place for him at the table. With her pride, eccentric strictness and a whole host of other vices, Ulena had somehow managed to attract her new husband and now they were happily settling into their routine.

After some time of traveling to the kitchen and back to the table to bring the other dishes and napkins, we all finally were indulging in the food, quietly gesturing to each other to pass the bowl of a cold chicken broth, a slice of fresh-baked bread or the salt due to our

mouths being too occupied with chewing and savoring the bites to talk. I sat between my mom and my older cousin, trying to understand what my cousin had found delicious in the so-called Olivie'r salad, the traditional Ukrainian salad, that includes all sort of sliced seasonal vegetables and meat and then usually totally drenched in litres of mayonnaise so that it became impossible to sense any other ingredients. (Adding enough mayonnaise to rub one's entire body with in every dish was how to traditionally cook the loathsome cuisine of my country). I felt somebody was kicking my left leg under the table. It was my mom trying to hint to me to stop staring and cringing . As she distracted me from drifting into my universe, I noticed that she was secretly pulling out the tiny pieces of carrot that were randomly stuffed in the turkey steaks. I leaned to her, asking what crime the carrot did to her. She surprisingly and a little bit ashamedly looked at me and whispered that she always hated carrot. My mom hated carrot?

That news shredded me, leaving me shocked and astonished at my own poor knowledge about the personal preferences of the most dearest and closest person in my life. I had been living with her for all my sixteen years. I was armed with a variety of the manipulative tricks of how and when i could talk her into something that under different circumstances she would never agree to, knowing, as I thought before that incident, all and any hues of her personality. The reality of always having a bunch of carrots in the fridge, consumed on a daily basis (but not by mom) suddenly struck me. How could I be so blind, not being able to see my mom avoiding the carrots my whole life? How could I consider myself a best experienced observer, if I was not fully aware of my mom's eating habits. How well did I think I knew my mom?

At that time while sharing food and memories infused with everyone's laughter, learning about my mom's aversion to carrots seemed not to affect me that much and, after a minute, I was completely involved in the discussion about installing traps for foxes in the

chicken barn. A beginning of summer was always considered a noisy period thanks to the roosters' relentless crowing, as they marched around unfamiliar wooden fenced yard like a captured kings in the unknown kingdom.