Nana, A Bird in the Sky

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now, when the autumn wind sweeps through the city streets and drags the dry leaves across the cold asphalt, the sweet, pungent scent of "Nana" comes alive in my memory. A scent always mingled with the bitter aroma of coffee and sometimes the astringent hint of alcohol. I was her closest friend, perhaps the only one in this vast world who knew her not by her appearance or .superficial judgments, but from the depths of her restless soul

Nana wasn't a girl who could be summed up in a single glance. She was the embodiment of a beautiful rebellion. Her thick, burgundy hair, like a shock of fire, always fell freely over her shoulders, creating a breathtaking contrast with her pale skin and honey-colored eyes. She had a flawless, slender, and well-sculpted figure; any garment, even the simplest of dresses, looked stunning on her. When she walked down the university hallways, it was impossible for anyone not to turn and look. But her beauty wasn't the only thing that agitated our rigid, traditional society; .their main issue with Nana was her rebellious spirit and her unconventional morals

In a society where everyone tried to fit within the narrow confines of custom and tradition, Nana was a giant question mark. She adhered to none of the unwritten rules for young women. At night, while girls our age were in the dorms studying or chatting quietly, Nana was dancing at loud, crowded college parties. She was constantly socializing and wasn't afraid to say she loved

forbidden experiences. Often, she would show up to early morning classes straight from a party, with puffy eyes and the sharp smell of alcohol lingering on her clothes.

University professors and the administration tried time and again to find an excuse to expel her. They couldn't tolerate a girl who laughed loudly, disagreed recklessly in debates, and had a lifestyle nothing like a "proper" student's. But there was one massive barrier in their way: her immense intelligence and unparalleled genius. Nana was a prodigy. Despite all her drinking and sleepless nights, she always got the highest grades. Her memory was terrifyingly strong. She only had to read a text once to analyze it word for word. Furthermore, she possessed a complete and astonishing mastery of both English and Spanish. When professors in comparative literature classes tried to humiliate her with complex questions, Nana would smile coolly, recite lines from Borges or Márquez in the original Spanish, and then analyze them for the class in a flawless English accent. She was so brilliant that the university system had no choice but to endure her.

Beneath this mask of rebellion and indifference, however, Nana had a deeply kind and fragile heart. She was the one who spent all her savings treating stray cats. If she found out a dorm mate was struggling financially, she would slip money into their coat pocket without anyone noticing. One night, as we sat on the dorm balcony and she smoked a cigarette in the dark, she told me: "Do you know why I live like this? Because life is too short and the world is too big. I don't want to grow old regretting the tastes I never tried or the things I didn't do out of fear of what people might say. I want to experience everything in this world, even if it means burning up in the process."

And it was this thirst to experience everything that brought Ricardo into her life.

Ricardo was an immigrant from South America. A man with sun-baked skin, dark eyes, and curly black hair who worked at a trading company. They met at one of those late-night parties. When Ricardo realized how perfectly Nana spoke Spanish, he was mesmerized. They danced together until morning, speaking in a language almost no one else in the room understood.

Ricardo's entrance into Nana's life was initially like a warm tropical storm. He fell madly in love with her. He was a deeply emotional man and worshipped Nana not like a human, but like a goddess. He was willing to set the world on fire to keep her. Every day, he sent her massive bouquets of flowers, stood under her dorm window for hours just to catch a glimpse of her, and expressed his love in words full of Latin passion and fervor.

In the first few months, Nana enjoyed this intense, romantic attention. For a girl who wanted to experience everything, the fiery love of a South American man was an alluring venture. But the trouble started when their true natures collided.

Ricardo, despite all his passion, was a traditional man who yearned for a quiet life. He loved Nana, but he wanted to keep this wild bird in a golden cage. Gradually, Ricardo's pleas for marriage began. He had rented a small house and constantly talked about the future, the children they were meant to have, and the quiet nights they would spend together by the fireplace. He wanted Nana to stop partying, to quit drinking, and to become a loyal, docile wife.

But Nana was not a woman bound by convention. Words like "marriage," "eternal commitment," and "starting a family" felt like a hangman's noose to her. She felt suffocated. One evening, as we sat in our usual café, Nana, her eyes red with exhaustion and frustration, told me: "I like Ricardo, but he is suffocating me. He doesn't understand that I can't wake up at seven every morning, make him breakfast, and wait for him to come home at night. I don't belong to one person; I belong to my life. I have to end it."

Nana's decision to leave was the beginning of a horrific nightmare. When she told Ricardo she no longer wanted to be with him and rejected his marriage proposal, something broke inside him. At first, he didn't believe it. He thought it was just another one of Nana's girlish games. But when she left his calls unanswered and refused to see him, Ricardo suffered a profound mental breakdown.

The man who once walked with pride and dignity had now become a pathetic shadow of himself. He lost his job. Day and night, he wandered the streets around the university in disheveled clothes with hollow eyes, hoping to see her. Whenever he did, he would fall to her feet, crying in the middle of the street, begging her to return. He said he would die without her. He said she could do whatever she wanted, just as long as she didn't leave him. But Nana had made up her mind. With that same inherent resoluteness, she told him: "We aren't meant for each other, Ricardo. You don't want me; you want an illusion of me. Let me go."

But Ricardo couldn't let go. His love had morphed into madness. His shattered mind couldn't accept that his goddess of beauty was destined to belong to the free world and not to him.

That fateful night was in late October. A light rain was falling, and the streets had taken on an eerie atmosphere under the yellow glow of the streetlamps. Nana and I were walking back from a café. She looked as beautiful as ever; wearing a long black coat, her red hair gleaming under the lights. We were discussing tomorrow's literature exam, and she was laughing, mocking one of Neruda's poems.

Suddenly, a shadow emerged from the darkness of the alley. It was Ricardo. Soaked from the rain, his eyes devoid of any trace of reason or logic. He had drowned completely in the darkness of insanity. He stepped forward and blocked our path. The harsh stench of cheap alcohol radiated from his breath into our faces.

In a trembling, rough voice, he said something in Spanish that I didn't understand. Nana frowned and told him sternly to leave. Ricardo suddenly dropped to his knees and grabbed the hem of her coat. Nana tried to pull back and shouted angrily, "Leave me alone, Ricardo! It's over!"

And in that very moment, a sudden fit of madness dictated the final act of this tragedy. In Ricardo's sick, shattered mind, there was only one way to keep Nana forever: if she wasn't going to be his, she wouldn't belong to anyone else either.

I don't know where he pulled the knife from. Everything happened in a fraction of a second. A flash of metal gleamed in the dark. A muffled scream caught in Nana's throat. With brutal, maniacal speed, Ricardo struck the first blow to her stomach. I was paralyzed with fear, hearing my own screams in my ears as if they were coming from far away.

Nana stumbled backward, clutching her stomach, and looked at Ricardo in sheer disbelief. But the madman didn't stop. He rose and, with eyes full of tears and blood, relentlessly brought the blade down on her chest. One, two, three... Nana collapsed onto the wet asphalt. Ricardo dropped the bloody knife, sat on the ground, cradled Nana's bleeding head in his arms, and began to kiss her lifeless face while weeping loudly. He was laughing and crying simultaneously, whispering words of love in Spanish.

I couldn't breathe. I wanted to scream but couldn't. I had fallen to the ground, just watching. Blood... Nana's warm, crimson blood was spreading across the dark asphalt. Under the streetlight, the color of her blood blended with her thick, beautiful hair; as if flames of fire were leaping from her head and chest onto the ground. Her honey-colored eyes remained half-open, staring blankly at the cloudy, rainy sky.

Nana was a girl who wanted to experience everything. She had tasted freedom, intoxication, knowledge, distant languages, and fiery romances. And in the end, the darkest and most bitter human experience, death at the hands of a mad lover, became the final period of her story.

Years have passed since that night. Ricardo is waiting for death in an asylum in some remote place. And I, every time I see a woman with red hair on the street or hear the sound of Spanish music drifting from a café, my heart crumples for that beautiful rebellion, for that kind heart that stopped beating beneath the blade of madness. Nana was a bird who, rather than staying in a cage, preferred to die in the sky.