

COFFEE BREAK AT KONFU

/ storytelling /

I was hanging around Konfu* neighbourhood yesterday, alone as usual, although people already know me, stop to say hello, look at me as one of their locals. And I start thinking that I already know everything, nothing more to explore. I know what was here before, I know what it is now and what more is needed. Nevertheless, maybe because of that youthful confidence, my eyes look around eagerly seeking something new that is bound to happen.

I decided to stop and have a chat with the shopkeeper at the corner store. This is the place where the best eggs are sold, those from almost the happiest hens in Dobrudzha region. At the door we pass each other with an elderly lady with a freshly bought ice cream cone in the hand, not a box of ice cream as one might expect at her age. She touches my heart in a way, and recalls the image of my grandfather who indulged a craving for sweet delights in quite a similar manner, and in that minute I feel that I will stop and talk to this ice cream granny.

It is her that I want to tell you about today. Her name is Evdokia. She looks 70 but she claims that the years of her age are a secret. Maybe the ice cream in the cone makes her look younger. White haired, slightly hunched over, sweet and smiling /who eats ice cream while frowning! /, with a light and elegant gait. She is not in a hurry. She has been living in the quarter for 50 years. First they had a house, one of those houses that are being built without permission. It had been rather small for the family, and they made an extension, a self-made extension that had to be authorized - one rather complicated effort, but successful after all, as these things were possible at that time as they are nowadays. She lives in an apartment building at present – the 4th floor. “It’s not the same”, she says.

I ask her to tell me more, hoping to hear some story probably unheard of. She laughs and suddenly invites me to a coffee break at her home. I accept with pleasure. Nobody so far has opened his home for me. We climb the stairs of one of the oldest buildings in the neighborhood. Brick masonry, large apartments. Her flat is 89 sq. m., but more than 120 in reality. Too large for her as she lives alone. Two spacious bedrooms, a living room, dining room and kitchen, toilet and bedroom, laundry space and a pantry, and one additional W. C Paris we are quite happy with our 60 sq.m. altogether.

Her whole apartment is full with paintings hanging on all walls. Flowers, streets, houses. This street brings back something familiar...and that one with the children’s playground...” I have been painting the streets of the quarter for 50 years. This is my hobby” says granny Evdokia. But I notice that the streets on the paintings are not the same as outside – not so many cars, more greenery instead. “I paint the way I want them to be”. She takes out a cardboard folder and starts to explain.



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“This is the future nursing home, there is a school at this site now and benches for the old”. This is why young people are so and spoiled nowadays” says she” because they are separated from the families and their grandparents. Most of the young families take care for the children alone and the bond between the generations is lost. But the young children make our age easier to accept and enjoy. Look at this garden next to the resting benches. The other day I started telling my daughter how much I used to like the opera and theatre when I was young. But we lived in Maksuda with my husband and his mother in their house at that time. There was so much filth and mud in the streets there. Going to the theatre required smart clothes and shoes. So we would dress up and my mother-in-law would walk with us to the bus stop to take back the gumshoes that we would change for the glossy leather shoes prepared for the theatre. Walking back home in the night is of no importance – will wash off the mud at home! So I narrate this to my daughter and she says “It’s the same here, mother. You cannot reach the avenue on high heels. If you pass the rest area and walk along the path made by the walkers through the bushes and trees, if it is muddy – you will get dirty, at night it is dark and you can hurt your feet on the stones and chunks on the ground...if you go around, the asphalt is so old and lumpy and on the other side, along the wall the path is so narrow that it is impossible to pass if you happen to meet the students going home from the neighboring school”.

The drawing in front of me displays an alley with street lamps. The next one shows the children’s playground, flowers everywhere, the new sports playing field next to the nursing house, on Magnolia street – so broad and so tidy. New parking lot! I stop in disbelief that granny Evdokia could generate so many ideas for her quarter, so many suggestions for renovation and I ask whether her neighbors have seen her pictures. And suddenly a strange smile looms on her face and she says: ‘Surely you don’t know who I am and how people call me – “the Witch” they call me. That’s because I have powers that nobody understands. I can predict, I can melt lead and foretell, I can dispel evil spirit... And do you know what I do...on Saint Ilia’s Day, late at night, I can transform one place in this quarter as I wish, for the night, just for that night because at sunrise it will look the same as before. I have been doing this for years, but people are afraid of changes, and they think this has been a night dream, so no effort to improve or maintain follows... So they call me The Witch, although I see that it’s possible and just a little effort is needed to wake someone in the Municipality and another one to organize the change. So I go on with my paintings and I wonder what to change at next St. Ilia’s Day this year”.

There were more things that granny Evdokia narrated to me while sipping coffee in her kitchen, she even tried to see my future in the residue of the empty coffee cup. I will not tell you what she told me.



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When I went out in the street, the houses looked somewhat tidier and more beautiful, the quarter looked better, greener and younger. With the taste of fresh ice cream...and coffee break in the presence of a witch.

*Konfu – name of the quarter that denotes dense construction of buildings with too small space among them.

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