

FIRST CHAPTER. KIDS' STUFF

If you want peace, prepare for war.

Vegecio

I

It all began as if it were any given day.

The only one who realized that something was amiss was Gabi, Gabriela, whom everyone at school called Greedy Gut and who, of course, emerged from the corner ice cream parlor, scoffing an extra-large ice cream cone: three scoops piled one on top of the other, in a precarious balance, of Kit-Kat, Oreo and custard cream flavors. If her nutritionist had caught sight of her at that moment, she no doubt would've had a fit. Her mother, ditto. Regardless of the fact that they were both to blame that she be gorging herself with that gush of sugary and greasy calories at ten to nine in the morning.

If your breakfast is reduced to whole wheat piece of toast, the kind that come in a cellophane wrapping, with a slice of unsalted cooked turkey, practically transparent given its thinness, and a skimmed yogurt—mind you, with active bifidus, as if those invisible dairy ferments might somewhat sate an appetite that knows no limits—then you'd be in a position to understand Greedy Gut. When you go to bed hungry and wake up famished, and then your breakfast looks more like a revenge than what your body is asking for, it's no wonder that an Italian ice cream parlor, located fifty meters from her exclusive bilingual school in the north of Madrid, meant a temptation which was hard for Gabi to avoid.

We can assure you that eating an ice cream of that size, in less than two minutes so as not to be late for class, before turning the corner and facing the school entrance, thus avoiding being caught by your classmates gorging yourself like a pig, is quite something; even more so to do so without the pain in your temples forcing you to stop and, above all, without staining yourself so as not to become the laughing stock of your entire class and the immediate target of the "popular ones".

You must tilt your head forward a little, as if intending to properly hear someone nearby speaking in whispers, and rest the last scoop, the one that tops the ice cream, on your lips, with the cone forming an angle of about thirty degrees on the vertical, thus preventing the inevitable melting drops from falling on your clothes.

Once this position is reached, just enough pressure must be exerted on the lips to maintain the structural integrity of the whole, without the excess pressure deforming the malleable mass of ice cream, whilst at the same time perform a skillful constant suction movement with them, whose efficiency more than one industrial sludge pump would care to have.

The fact is that Gabriela had just come out the ice cream parlor closest to the school entrance and was just beginning to erode the first scoop, when what she saw caused her jaw to drop.

The subsequent lack of one of the support points, together with the tilt and the inescapable force of gravity, caused the three ice cream scoops to collapse on her Dr. Martens boots, her favorite footwear, which she had had to buy with her savings, since

her mother, who by the way was a librarian, refused to finance what she called "Chicote-like boots".

Actually, those boots were the only thing she liked about her goth outfit. It's not that she liked this aesthetic so much in itself, but one of the few pieces of advice from her mother that the Greedy Gut appreciated and admitted as accurate—perhaps the only one among all the ones she got at every occasion and without asking for them—had to do with slimming power of the color black.

For a girl who has been the chubby one in the class since kindergarten, it was an unavoidable choice.

But the boots were something different: they gave her a sense of power that she'd never experienced before. When she put them on, they made her feel like she could kick the ass of all those who'd made fun of her for as far back as she could remember.