



## Italians do it better

Dan spent most of the day negotiating the last details. The owner of the place was a man in his 30s, obese, bald, with a big round nose like a ball and a strong shadow over his lips where it was notorious that he grew a very thick moustache but it was shaved today. A couple of sweat drops started to run from his broad forehead, it can tell that he was a little nervous and it looked like he wasn't paying much attention to that business, his green-eyed look was a bit misplaced as he felt rushed to sell the place. After agreeing on the fairest price for both parties the required papers were signed and they said goodbye with a handshake, the owner stopped at the door and gave a somewhat strange warning:

"You can decorate this place as you want, you can change the menu, the painting and even rearrange the furniture as you wish but there are two things I would like to ask you to consider seriously: in the basement there is a statue stored, please do not exhibit it, just leave it there and do not try to get rid of it"-.

The request was somewhat strange but not difficult to respect. He spent the next few days kitting the place out, cleaning the ovens, interviewing and hiring applicants, moving the furniture, refurbishing the floors... leaving everything ready for the grand reopening. Since the place was well known already a change in the administration wouldn't turn into a client loss problem and the new ideas brought to the menu and place concept made it to become even more popular quickly.

With such rapid growth he was forced to make even more changes, starting with the furniture. Dan decided to temporarily store some old tables and chairs in the basement, he had to move several boxes to make room and between all that chaos he saw it; a bulging canvas in the far corner of the place full of dust and mold, he removed it to clean it a little and discovered the statue the owner was talking about. It was one of those antiquated figures, a caricature of an Italian chef: an obese little man in his white suit and cap holding a welcome board. The face seemed rather curious, green eyes, round nose and a very thick moustache on a perturbing smile, somehow it reminded him to the previous owner, perhaps the strange request he made was merely for sentimental reasons, unfortunately the success of the place forced him to occupy the basement and he would no longer have room for old memories from somebody else.

Over the weekend, he charged the statue into his truck and toured almost every pawnshop in the city, trying to get rid of its cargo, getting just negative answers on each of the stores. Resigned to not being able to trade it for money, he just decided to take it straight to the dumpster at night and throw it away.

The next morning, just when we was arriving to open the restaurant he noticed it, a bulge under a canvas was waiting for him at the entrance, he only assumed that this

kind of waste could not simply be thrown into the dump so maybe a worker just returned to its place. He sheltered it back into the basement, with its green eyes empty and that fake smile. In the evening he tried to get rid of it again, he drove to the outskirts of the city and abandoned his obese friend in a wasteland.

The next day the statue was back at the entrance, nervous he kept it in the basement for the rest of the day and again at nightfall he set out to get rid of it, now it was more like a challenge for him. He couldn't pawn it, he couldn't throw it, he couldn't even leave it just abandoned, and the only thing he could think of now was to destroy it so he took it home. Decided he took a hammer and struck the first blow, the statue cracked and a layer of white dust rose to the ceiling, A second blow and pieces of plaster and glass fell to the ground as a strange fume came out from its insides invading his lungs, a couple more blows and it was completely destroyed. He collected the pieces and put them in different garbage bags that he took to the dumpster in front of his house, that night he slept peacefully.

The next morning he arrived at the restaurant relieved, no statue was waiting for him at the entrance. He continued the day as usual managing his busy business and when he finished working he went down to the basement to store some things, there he felt a mini heart attack when he noticed it at the far corner, its original place, a bulging canvas; He approached cautiously and removed it nervously, nothing. He left a nervous laugh out, some employee must have picked up from the floor and accommodated on the wall. He returned to the exit stairs when he began to hear a buzz inside his skull. It was at this moment when time seemed to slow down and his eyesight became blurry, he tried to exit from the basement to sit down but his steps got clumsy and slow, he looked down and noticed why, his feet and legs started to swell up squeezing into his clothes and shoes, He had to stop to remove the footwear because the pain was beginning to be unbearable and he managed to notice how from the toes to the calves his body was bulging as if it were a balloon.

The socks began to tear as the round fingers peeked through the holes they had already made, the legs felt tight inside his pants whose fabric began to sag and tear. Without warning he felt a blow of air in the lungs that was spreading along the chest which was being inflated in a similar way, the belly began to bulge forcing the buttons of the shirt to continue doing their work, they gave up to the next breath flying with an impressive force through the room while the balloon that he had as belly was released from the clothes, flaccid chest was piled over like two spheres the size of watermelons. He looked at his hands, and although the sight was still blurry he could tell his fingers were the like sausages, he tried to move them clumsily but his arms did not respond, they inflated to the size of a ham making it impossible to move them.

He began to feel an intense pain in his head, the buzzing inside him didn't give way and he felt his cheeks inflating so much that they crushed his nose that it was

now the size of a golf ball, under this an itch that he couldn't scratch indicated him that something was growing, his fat lips ended up framed with a thick, brush-like moustache. He became a balloon that seemed to float on the basement floor, the world was spinning around and the head was threatening to explode. As unexpectedly as the buzzing and pain came within his skull they ceased, he fell exhausted to the floor, on his teared clothes, he took a can from the bottom shelves and beheld his caricature features, although distorted by the curvature of his improvised mirror he noticed that he now looked like an exaggerated version of the statue he had disposed of.

He sat slowly not recognizing the sensation of the body he was moving, took a couple of steps with a lot of effort and a stream of air escaped from his nose, the sneeze was intense, the air was still flowing and a sound like a toy deflating accompanied him. As the air escaped uncontainable its comical proportions were reduced, his body still was round, but now in a more realistic shape. He recalled the strange warning from the former owner, and already being able to safely control his body searched for his phone and called.

"Let me see, you tried to get rid of the statue, right?" It was the immediate answer, "I'll see you in half an hour".

As he waited he went into the bathroom, and looked at his new body, He strangely felt attracted to it and wondered if it was normal to feel that that much, but he didn't really know if he was still being him. He looked at his face in front of the mirror: a kind look of green eyes, a round nose, a thick moustache and a clumsy smile; He placed his sight on his tanned skin chest, it was huge, smooth and hairless moobs crowned by large and dark nipples bulged solid on a round and hard belly. He looked down, the only tuft of hair on his body was over a short but unusually thick penis, under which a couple of heavy huge balls were hanging imposing. He was just starting to touch his veiny dick when a knocking caught his attention.

He covered himself with the canvas that had served to cover the statue and went up. Through the window of the door he could see a thin man with white hair, maybe 60 years old. — I'm sorry it's closed— said Dan. — I know, I think you were waiting for me, I'm the one who sold you the restaurant— it was the answer he got.

The former owner told him the truth: he discovered the statue was cursed and then he apologized for what he did, but it was the only way out. The statue was somehow tied to the place and there was no way to get it out from there, if it is destroyed the current owner ends up becoming a flesh-and-blood version of it and apparently the only way to reverse the transformation is for the venue to change ownership, then the statue will appear again at the basement in what it seemed to be an unbreakable chain.

After hearing the explanation and having overcome the initial fright Dan thought of his options, he felt comfortable with his new body so he came to the solution

of posing as a new owner, telling everyone that the previous one had decided to go to Italy to continue his gastronomic studies. The business continued to grow and Dan was even able to open a couple of branches, although there were rumors of some strange things going on in the basements.