

Case 16

This is a lady of 45 years old. She's a gym teacher. She wants to clearly underline that she's proud of being the daughter of one of the most famous Generals in Italy. Her father was a very important and well-known person in the army, even in the Secret Services of Italy.

She seems to be a very strong person but she looks extremely depressed.

She attends with a severe pathology and although she looks skinny you can see that her body is full of water and it was difficult to understand how much of this oedema belongs to her pathology and how much belongs to the huge cortisone that she has to take.

She's suffering from a rheumatic disease and she has this kind of rheumatic arthritis that comes with symptoms of urticaria.

**** They diagnosed a kind of urticarial arthritis and since then I've lost almost 20kg... I've had several cortisone treatments but they didn't get to the bottom of it. I've come here to see you because I need to be put on a diet and something else for my health, if possible.*

§ The joints in my fingers started to swell and since then they all swell up periodically, more or less badly. When I have the pains in my joints this urticaria comes out but I couldn't say which is worse... It's horrible and it burns me more than the pains in my joints, it doesn't leave me in peace.

I've had every single test you could imagine but they didn't get to the bottom of it... Now I go all red in my face and I swell up like a red balloon. Then my face burns, actually I bum all over. I'm on fire all over and I can't bear it any more. § The swelling happens independently of me taking cortisone, it happened before I started taking it and I also get it at times when I'm not taking any medication.

I try to have a cold shower but it's only a momentary relief, because afterwards it's just worse. §

When I have the pains my joints burn and they swell up, especially my knees and my wrists.

I have pains in my fingers and in my neck. The pains come on sometimes here, sometimes there, there's no specific place where they come, they appear in different places, they always move around in different places...

**** I've always suffered from gynaecological problems... § I've never had regular periods, so that the three times I was pregnant I only noticed quite a while after I was pregnant, because I never knew when they would come. I've had several treatments for it, even the Pill, also because I've also had cysts on the left ovary. But then I got bored because when I was on the Pill I felt like a goose.*

§ I was terribly hungry and I got a headache and then I had to stop because they found an adenoma on my liver which they said was almost definitely caused by the Pill.

§ The only thing that could give me a definite clue was my sad state of mind... § I didn't use to cry, I hardly ever cry, but I'd be really sad... All I could think about was all my problems and now things have got much worse... I always feel very down when my period is due.

*§ *** I think that my state of mind, or should I say non-state of mind, is responsible for the pains.*

§ I fell ill after the separation... I couldn't go on any more... It was too much for me. I'm the daughter of a general, and as often happens, I married a soldier. It's the only thing I wish I hadn't done in my life.

§ It's not because of the military environment, I like that, perhaps too much... That's what finally persuaded me to say yes... But ever since I was small I've travelled around Italy... I've never had a house of my own.

My father rose up the ranks quickly and every three or four years we had to move house, we knew we would have to...

I've never been able to stand the idea of moving house, I really couldn't

By profession I'm supposed to be a teacher, but can you imagine, how can a teacher and a colonel manage with each getting different postings? In the end I gave my husband an ultimatum and after some more wanderings with him I convinced him to buy a house... Rut for him, his career always came first

To cut a long story short, we bought a house. It wasn't a lovely one but it was mine. It was where I wanted it to be and I could put furniture in it that belonged to me, and if I hung a picture up on the wall then no-one would move it, and if I bought a washing machine then I could be sure that it would stay there until I felt like changing it Those were the two happiest years of my life.

I had always dreamt of settling in Modena and having a house in the centre. I have so many nice memories in this town.

But then it became like a curse and our marriage began to fall apart, like an exercise book in the rain²¹. I tried to persuade him to change jobs so as not to have to accept his umpteenth transfer, but then I realised that he liked to live like that and I didn't try again.

§ What really destroyed me was fate... Because of a legal technicality the house stayed in his name and now I live in rented accommodation and on my own.

§ The children wanted to be with their father, even though now each of them is in a different place. My children are grown up and are already at university. I have two twins aged 20 and another aged 23... We got married very young.

I knew that they would go their own way sooner or later. That's how life is. But I was hoping I wouldn't grow old in a rented flat... He can go to hell but he did this to kick me while I was down [literally: punch me in the chest], he shouldn't have taken the house from me. On the other hand, I never made his life a good one, our relationship was just founded on sex...

*§ ** I always have dreams about houses... I often dream about my house.*

§ Not an ideal house... They are always nightmares about my house emptying and filling up and moving about or going away or falling apart... Being abandoned and empty and no-one looking after it.

There's always the house in the middle and me who has to go away, and every time I leave something there and have to start all over again somewhere else. Very often the house collapses on top of me... Like the ones on a birthday cake. § Haven't you ever seen one of those cakes with something on top of it which falls over when you cut it or after the cake is a few days old?

Rage, anger... I get on edge when I wake up. This happens because men are in charge of the world.

*§ ** I remember I had stabbing pains like from a stiletto knife in my abdomen and I had to put an ice pack on it, like a lieutenant in an army camp once advised me to do. Of all the specialists I saw, he was the only one who gave me some good advice about how to make the pain go away²².*

*§ ** I no longer have any appetite for anything. I get a sudden unexpected heat in my stomach and my appetite disappears... I don't have pains, only this heat that burns even my appetite... Eating doesn't suit me and I've lost weight, even though I swell up like a melon.*

²¹ She used an expression that explains what happens to paper if it is drenched in water.

²² She wanted to explain that this soldier just out of training helped her more than the people in authority.