

## **A TRIP TO THE PARADISE**

Is it true that our name can mark our destiny? In my case, I have no doubt that it is true. My name is Selda, which means fighter, word that I think describes me perfectly.

My story begins in Kobane, the Syrian town where I was born. I grew up in a very humble family who lived thanks for how little the land gave us and the flock of my father. Despite this, I will always remember with joy the nights with my 2 brothers and my parents telling stories around the bonfire. They were happy times, until the war broke out. Then, everything changed. The ways to the school became authentic battlefields, in which the happy cries of the children turned into desperate screams, shots and bombs. Evenings playing in the street with my friends, were things of the past, now, they spent the long afternoons enclosed at house hoping that good news that never arrived. My father keeps telling his stories, but now his eyes reflected fear and concern that people lived at that time.

In a short time our town was destroyed. One of the things that remained in was the old cinema, the only place where, in a way, we could escape from reality. One of those eternal days, my brothers, my father and I went to see a movie; that afternoon, they were projecting "Mary Poppins". We went to the ticket office, bought the tickets and entered into the room. It continuing to stand, but the cinema was not the same: the various attacks had left their mark in form of holes through which daylight entered; people did not show the illusion like before and the popcorn stand was closed. That night I dreamed, that I lived in a city like London, in a house like Jane and Michael's. That my father had a well-paid job like Mr. Banks, and I had a nanny who took me to the park, where we travelled to a nice place through a chalk drawing on the floor.

Next day, they came to take my father, as they did with almost all the men of the town. I remember that day as the saddest and most tragic of my life. We were about to start eating when they knocked on the door, my little brother opened the door and they asked him where his dad was. My father got closer to the door and two men in military clothes gave him a letter from the Ministry of Defense, in which he was notified that he should join the army that same afternoon. We were in a state of Shock, we knew it could happen, but ultimately, we had the hope that it would not happen. My mother prepared a bag with the necessary while he was saying goodbye to us. My father came out the door smiling, as always, with a "See you soon." Months and months passed and we had no news about him, while the war was getting worse and worse. The home was not the same without my father, without his glint in his eyes, which inspired hope; nor their stories, which made you smile no matter how bad you were.

One day, my mother met us all in the living room and told us that she had important news to give us. "We're leaving", she said. She explained to us that a friend had told her about certain people, that if you paid them so much money,

they could help her to go out of Syria and into Europe. She said she did not think twice about it, that she knew the few savings we had would be enough. And without hesitation, he ran to the bank to get the money that those men asked her for. A week after giving us the news, we began our trip. We went out with what was necessary, willing to travel miles of kilometers, in order to escape from the horrific war. Must reach the west coast of Turkey. From our town we left with another family, the Jusid, who had three children and a very young couple, Saya and Junaid. The father of the Jusid, was being persecuted for suspect of belonging to the opposition, and for that reason they decided to flee; Saya and Junaid escaped only from the war, just as we did. They were 15 hard days. We slept anywhere, hidden, because we did not know what could happen at any time. We ate rather little, to have reservations in case something happened. But, finally, when we had walked the thousand kilometers that separated the two cities we arrived to our destination. There we met with other dozens of families who also waited for the boat that would take them "to paradise", as some of them called it. The first thing my mother did was ask for the man she contacted with. When she located it, she gave him the money and he wrote down our names on a piece of paper. We spent some time together, in that time I met Larissa, a 14-year-old girl who had lost her parents in a confrontation in Aleppo and who was travelling alone with her 8-year-old brother, thanks to the money that their parents had left them. Then, the large and wooden boats arrived, and began to call one by one the people who were on the list. They put on a life jacket and we went up in the boats. When we were all inside, the boat began to move. We were 50 people on the raft, although this only allowed 35 on board, each with our history and our aspirations. There we found out that Saya and Junaid were expecting a son, and that's why, really, they made the trip, they wanted their son to be born in a peaceful country. Also traveled with us Ahmed, a boy who was studying in Egypt, whose mother was in a refugee camp in Italy, his purpose was to reunite with her. But, after all, all the faces reflected the same, the anguish and despair of escaping from the war. In an hour and a half we already saw in the distance our destination: Greece. Soon, we arrived at the island of Lesbos. We went down and left the vests on the shore. People kissed the ground crying and looked at the sky, thanking God for finally being on solid ground.

When we arrived, the volunteers gave us blankets and water. And later, they took us to a refugee camp in the capital of the island. Seeing all that, I remembered my father, I imagined what would have been his face of happiness and gratitude to see so many people willing to help who needed it. There were hundreds of camping tents and tents of different NGOs, where people received medical attention and food. When we were all together, they placed us in different tents and gave us some food. When we were already settled, a volunteer lawyer, Pablo, came to speak with us, who came to inform us about the right to asylum in the European Union. He was the one who helped us throughout the application process.

The days in the camp were very similar to the life in Kobane before the war. In the morning we went to school, and in the afternoon we did activities with the volunteers. The daily routine broke one day when we saw a large white sheet. We asked what it was for and they answered that they were going to show a movie. What was my surprise to see that the film they were going to screen was "Mary Poppins", the last movie I saw with my father. When I saw it again, I realized that I was closer to get what I dreamed of having one day.

Two days before our first year in the camp, Pablo, the volunteer lawyer, came to give us a letter from the European Asylum Support Office. In it, we were given the opportunity to travel to Spain to live in a house to receive refugees in the city of Murcia. A week later we were flying towards Murcia. An employee of the Ministry, took us to what would be our new home. Shortly after, my mother was given a job as a cleaner in some State offices and my brothers and I enrolled in a school, which we joined immediately. We had before us a great challenge: a unknown language and customs, but we managed to overcome it, thanks in part to all the teachers, who were very involved in our adaptation. We met wonderful people who helped us integrate into this new environment. I met a group of girls who did not care about my origin and who became a fundamental support during my high school years. After a while, we received the news that, thanks to different NGOs, my father was going to return with us. The war had done him a lot of damage, but he got back with the same smile with which he fired us. When I finished Baccalaureate, I enrolled in Psychology at the University of Murcia, where I met my current husband. And ten years later here I am, working as a psychologist in a Social Integration Center, where my story serves to help other people. Now, I am happy and I have nothing to envy the protagonists of "Mary Poppins".