

Two totally different lives

All the preparations for the great celebration were almost finished. Mom and dad decided to make the wedding at my future husband's house. They said that it would be easier if there were no misunderstandings. I? I was wishing the police would catch them with their hands in the dough, but I was afraid.

Days before, when the marriage was agreed, it was when I was clear that I did not want to be with them anymore, and that as soon as I could, I would escape. I knew it the moment I realized that the cows had more value and mattered more than I did to my own family. They changed me for ten cows and two goats.

I begged my father, since he was the most understanding, to not leave me with that horrible and elderly man. But he did not listen to me, and neither did my mother. My whole family saw it as normal and turned a deaf ear to what I was saying. All the women admitted to having been afraid at the beginning but that it was an obligation that we all had to fulfill, and that if the man was rich, much better for all.

Papa told me that they needed the cows, because at that time we did not even have enough to eat. He told me to make an effort, a sacrifice, and that I would be rewarded with a good life next to that man who called himself "my fiancé".

Mama told me that at 13 she was already a woman sufficiently developed and mature enough to get married and have children with the richest man in the village who did not even know the name.

My grandmother, when she was older, told me that I should not be afraid and that I should face whatever was put in my way. He also told me that if that man did something bad to me, all he had to do is pay attention and keep him happy, because happy men are calm men, right?

The day before the wedding I decided to investigate more about what my husband was going to be. As he was the richest in the whole village, everyone knew him, so it was not difficult to gather information about him.

His name was Ismael, he was 53 years old and lived in the largest house in the whole village, as expected. He had had 6 women before but only 3 were left with him, because of the others; one escaped, another committed suicide and another died of a heart attack. This was what scared me most about him, because even his women did not want to be close to him.

The day of the celebration arrived, and I was very scared. Just thinking about how I was going to get married already gave me the creeps. I had breakfast with all my family, I got dressed and went out to work. I started a day like any other, the difference was that it was not going to end like any other.

After lunch they began to prepare me for the ceremony; they put on my clothes, shoes, jewels ... The only alternative I saw to get married was to escape, and I was

so scared that I decided to escape. I ran as far as I could towards the road that led to the nearest village and, halfway down the road, when I could not take it anymore, I hid behind some bushes to recover my strength and keep running.

When I woke up, I was in a cozy red cabin. Suddenly there was a lady in her sixties who told me that my parents were already on the way, that I had called them and that they were not angry with me but just scared.

Desperate, I tried to explain to that old lady that I did not want to go back with them that they were going to marry me without me and that it was not right, that maybe if she let me escape I would reward her later, but she did not listen to me.

At that moment, I thought that I would have to escape again, and I looked for a way out of there, but the only thing I got was to get to the front door, because it was locked and before I could throw it away kick as my brothers had taught me, the old lady realized that she wanted to escape me and locked me in the guest room.

About an hour later, my parents and my future husband arrived to pick me up and gave the old woman a good reward for having found me and taking care of me.

I was all the way back without speaking to them and when we arrived at the house of Ismael, they told me to prepare myself that it was already late and that we should get married quickly, otherwise it would be too late. I tried to extend the wait as much as possible; dressing slowly, moving each time they painted me, trying to hide the jewels to take time to look for them ... All this did not help at all, because in the end I had to go out and marry equally.

The moment arrived, Mom kissed me goodbye and Papa took my arm to take me to my husband. I was shaking like a thin and delicate leaf of a tree. We went out and all the people began to murmur; that if I was beautiful, if my husband was very lucky, how poor of me ... I began to show a tear as soon as I saw it, but either I had to accept reality and walk to it.

Suddenly, screams sounded and someone interrupted the ceremony by abruptly opening the door. From there, chaos was formed. Everyone running from here to there, throwing vases and wedding gifts and even stealing everything they could because of the mess. That's when I saw them, I saw the police arresting my husband, my mother and my father and, at that moment, I knew that I was not going to be afraid anymore.

* Right at that moment, somewhere in Spain *

I arrived home and Mama asked me what we had given that day at school. I replied that the teacher had told us that in some places, outside the European Union, girls of our age were married to older gentlemen only because their parents wanted cows, which was a symbol of wealth in those countries. And they exchanged their daughters for those cows.

Mom said that was horrible and that they should not do that with girls so small and I answered that, although it was horrible, they were already fighting against it and that the teacher had explained to us that even if they caught the husband, the mother and the father By marrying their daughter, they could be imprisoned for up to 30 years.

I reflected on this and realized that we live in a great country, not only because we have almost everyone to eat every day, but also I, a twelve-year-old girl, could be playing on the street while a girl from some another country was getting married right then and there.

I went to the park to play with my friends on the ball and a clown came by who gave us a balloon. We were playing all afternoon and when it got dark, we returned to our homes. I did the homework that I had been given at school, I showered with the hot water and went to bother a little my older brother who was playing the game and 3 hours. Then we all had dinner together as a family and watched a movie: Star Wars. The whole family loves that kind of movie, and once a week we see one.

At the end of the movie, I went to my room to read for a while and, when my eyes were closing, I fell asleep thinking what would have happened if I had been born in a different country, with a family that preferred cows before that I.

* At Ismael's house *

When the police found me, they told me that in the trial that would be held by my mother, my father and my fiancé I would have to testify against them and that, if everything went according to plan, they would be in jail for 20 years. He asked me if I would but I already knew that I would do anything to keep them away from me.

The trial was held days later and in it my father, my mother and my husband were imprisoned, even begging me that they would not do such a thing again. In spite of everything, my father escaped from prison, but I did not know anything about him again.

The police took me to a house where there were many other girls who, like me, had been forced to marry before they came of age. I was living there for a while. Every day I went to school, I made food and I worked in the fields, I was very grateful that those police arrived at my wedding on time and gave me a better life.