

wind & mirrors

Activating the Arts
2019



1st Edition of Wind and Mirrors,

A Women's Literature Collection

Translation of *Espejo y viento, Material literario femenil*

Translations by University of Surrey students and staff, edited by Lucy Bell.

La Rueda Cartonera, Viento Cartonero Editorial & Cartonera Publishing, 2019



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



"Testimonios" crafted with dignity by the women deprived of their freedom in the "Women's Reinsertion Centre", a prison in the State of Jalisco, Mexico.

Books made and painted in solidarity with these women at a cartonera workshop at the University of Surrey, 2019, by Lucy Bell, Catherine Barbour, Julia Ker, Gemma Drake, Anna Fisher, Georgia Green, Ellie Hamill, Annie May, Isabella Panayiotou, Paloma Sanz, Georgina Sutton, Chrissy Waymark, Tess Clothier, Stephen Mooney, Doris Dippold, David Frohlich, Enaia Azambuja, Abigail Sharpe, Corinne Wood, Teresa Pilgrim, Debbie Bridges, Susan Moberly, and others.

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A Women's Literature Collection



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Lucy Bell

Wind and Mirrors, A Women's Literature Collection is a collective translation of Espejo y viento, Material literario femenil.

The texts presented here are translations of the poems, stories, and diary entries by nine women from Puente Grande prison in Jalisco, Mexico. They are the result of a series of writing and book-making workshops run by Israel Soberanes, Irene Ortiz Ruelas and Sergio Fong in early 2019. My friends Sergio, Isra and Irene – or “supercarteras” to me – have dedicated much of their lives to building communities through cultural production in some of Mexico’s most marginalized groups. They threw themselves into this prisoner publishing initiative with vigour and vision, and continue to pursue their invaluable cultural labour both inside and outside Jalisco’s prisons.

I would like to thank the nine participants – Erika Ivonne, Claudia, Griselda, Julia, Erika, Sonia, Enedina, Edith and Bogarin – for the courage, dedication, and skill they have displayed in putting to paper their most intimate stories, feelings, and reflections. They are now setting up their own in-house publishing project, entitled Bote Cartonero or “Cartonera in the Clink”, to inspire more imprisoned women to write and publish. I look forward to reading the works that come out.

I am extremely grateful to the prison staff who embraced this cartonera project, and welcomed us into their highly progressive prison, whose name – “Women’s Reintegration Centre” – reflects their vision. Special thanks go to José Antonio Pérez (Director General of Social Reintegration in the State of Jalisco), Génesis Georgina Nando Arreola (Director of the Women’s Prison of Puente Grande), and Livier González Brand (Director of Outreach). It was both striking and heartening to see their determination to transform Puente Grande, Mexico’s second largest prison complex, from a place of punishment to a place of rehabilitation, learning, and personal and collective growth.

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Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful partner Marco, who loves Mexico (nearly) as much as me, participated in the launch of this book in the women's prison, and came out smiling in spite of a vicious spider bite.

INTRODUCTION

Irene Ortiz Ruelas

“Every story has its scent...”

Experiences, scents which tinge the atmosphere with “a rare quality called eternity”. Is eternity absolute? Is freedom... relative? In the world shared by a group of women who spend months or years together in the Women’s Correctional Facility, experiences, the reasons for the deprivation of their freedom, give off scents; a whiff that wafts towards the mirror which defines their identity to be transcended, towards that space which sentences time, their time; but not the spirit, which reinvents itself in a world dictated by others where one can vanish into oblivion.

I am grateful for the opportunity in *Wind and Mirrors* to capture with them their feelings, their stories and their scent of solitude, of death, of hope, of betrayal, of love, of happiness. They have left their mark on my own story and my own mirror, a breath of luminous strength which in fact serves to wipe away the mist. The pictures take on new shapes: I see different faces, deeper, freer, other spaces where the atmosphere is tinged with an incandescent quality called transcendence.

Translated by Catherine Barbour

Their stories...

ERIKA IVONNE CORTÉS CÁRDENAS



Hi, my name is Erika Ivonne but everybody calls me Ivonne. And this is my story:

From the age of 13, I started experimenting with drugs. The first one I tried was marijuana which I liked, then I tried Class B drugs (mainly barbiturates) and over the years I also tried Class A drugs (mainly cocaine). I liked all these different things and I carried on using them for a long time. Then, I started committing crimes with neighbourhood friends, who aren't really my friends, because real friends don't encourage one another to do drugs or commit crimes. It stayed like this for many years, but then I distanced myself from the neighbourhood and met people who were involved in drug trafficking and small-scale drug dealing. I became involved in this, started smoking crack cocaine and began working with them, and that's how I lived for many years.

One time, four of us were in a limousine owned by one of the people we were involved with. We were carrying drugs, weapons and many bullets of different calibre. We were going down a dark road, with no cars around, when a patrol car stopped us for a routine check. They didn't find the drugs, but they did find the arms and bullets; they detained us and took us to prison for carrying army weapons. In a week, we got out on bail and from then on, I sank deeper into crime, going in and out of prison. I ended up here with a 31 year and 6 month sentence on the charge of homicide, third degree assault and kidnapping.

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I've now been here for 16 years and 4 months and have learnt many good things. To start off with, I met this beautiful being, supreme and all powerful, he taught me to repent of all that I have done, he taught me to love, to forgive and many more things that are very valuable. For me, this is the best thing there is in this life, exceeding all human understanding, and worth more than all the riches in this world. This great being is called Jesus Christ and only thanks to him have I survived in this place where life is very difficult, because we have to live in cells with 11 other people, and we're all different, we think differently, we behave differently.

I remember when I first arrived, I was very explosive and aggressive, my heart was cold, and I kept getting sent to solitary confinement in a 4m² cell. They punished me because I would get into fist fights (back in the time of my first convictions) and sell drugs and take drugs (I don't do any of this anymore). I remember one time I fought with three cell mates – three at the same time – but though they were hurt, I wasn't, because I didn't let them touch me. That time they punished me for a month. But at that point, something started eating away at my conscience and I thought about it a lot: the two beautiful princesses that I had left on the outside, my daughters, who were 7 and 11 years old, and this worried me a lot because they were very little and were left to my parents. Even though I helped them out financially by selling drugs and weaving – because I know how to weave purses, wallets, bags, etc. – I got tired of being like this and that's when I got to know Christ and devoted myself to him. And when I read the bit in the Bible that says...

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“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”

...this verse filled me with hope, filled me with Peace and now I am a woman filled with hope, with a true God in my heart, I believe in him and I know him, I have a lot of faith in him for who he is and for everything he's done for me in my life. What he's done is change my heart and my way of thinking, because I am no longer the shadow of the person I was before, this is thanks to God, because he looks after all my family, he gave me a husband, who also knows and believes in Jesus Christ. And although I've been and will be in this place for a long time, I have found Happiness and Faith.

God is the one who fills the holes in my heart, because before, I tried to fill them with drugs and everything else, but in this place I've learnt to value my family, my daughters, my sons and daughters in law, and my husband. Here I've learnt to value the smallest of things – the tortillas I eat, the friendships I've made, although there are still times I struggle not to get angry, but I know this struggle comes from the fact that we're all different. I like many things about God, because only in him do I find what I need, because I don't get visits, well, it's very rare for me to get a visit, but I take refuge in God and there are a couple of psalms that I really like, psalms 23 and 91, and it's in these psalms that I find refuge, peace and comfort.

Today, I serve God, in this place, in the Christian church that we have here, and serving him fills me with happiness and peace. I am happy because my life has taken a 180° turn and I know that

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when I leave this place a free woman, I am going to live the life that I always yearned for, a life without drugs, with a husband, a home and with all my family, with all my family, with a quiet life, full of love and harmony. I give thanks to God because he has helped me with this great change in my life.

Psalm 23

“The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in paths of righteousness

For His name’s sake.

Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For you are with me

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

John 8:32

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

This text freed me of many things that I was carrying that were shackles for my soul, my spirit and my life. I wish with all my heart for all to find that freedom.

Translated by Isabella Panayiotou



TRUE LOVE

*For the love of my life,
my driving force, my inspiration
to be a better and better person
the person that brightens my days, for you, my son.*

Thank you for being my son, the most beautiful
and sacred thing
that God has given me.

I love you!

Forgive me for not being with you physically
at this time, but it won't be long, and I promise you
we will never be apart again, sweetheart.

I want you to know that you are always in my heart,
we are always united, son, in soul and heart.

I want to dedicate this book to the greatest love of my life:

Pablo Emilio.

Son:
Little piece of my soul, I have to tell you how proud I
am of you, you are a great child, so precious, I especially admire the
strength you have at such a young age, I admire how smart and de-
termined you are and the love with which you do things. I admire
you because I see that when you put your mind to something, you

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achieve it. I admire you and it fills me with pride to see that you are a very grateful and loving child, you're awesome, the best.

Do you know, son? You are the greatest and most beautiful gift that God has ever given me. As soon as I found out that you were in my belly, I loved you, I loved you so much. From that day on, nothing has wiped this smile off my face. When you were born I realized that there is no love greater than that of a mother for her child.

Now that I'm here, I realize that I made mistakes and I'm working on them. We have to have a lot of faith in God and give him our all, he is never wrong, and I assure you that all we are living through now will serve us. I'm working a lot on myself to become a better mum, but we have to be patient. Soon, we will be together, and we will turn all our dreams and plans into reality, my darling.

I admire the faith you have in God and it makes me even more proud of you.

Keep it up, my son!

In this place I realized many things. I thought that I was the best mum in the world, that this would never happen to me, a lot of the time I was angry with myself for not being there, for not knowing what could happen, I never thought that one day I was going to be taken away from my son, I thought that being a good housewife, taking you to school, and taking care of you meant that nothing bad would happen to me, but now that I'm here I have hit rock bottom.

I realize my errors, I realize that I never knew how to say no, I never listened to my mother's words, I never paid attention to the tests that God gave me, I never accepted that in reality I wasn't doing things the way I should. I didn't look after my friendships,

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I distanced myself from God... I worked a lot to give my son whatever he wanted, so that he would have a nice house... and then all of a sudden everything was over, everything changed and now we have nothing, I mean nothing in material terms. He's not physically here with me, my family are upset with me and I'm alone in this place... But I am stronger now, working hard to be forgiven; I've hit rock bottom, but I've learned many things here, I've learned to value myself, I want to be the best mother in the world now with God in my heart, with a conscious mind, determined not to return to this place.

My son is a wonderful being, determined and decisive, and that gives me strength. It hurts me a lot when he tells me he misses me, but I know this won't be forever.

Now I think of God, he heard my plea, in spite of me feeling distant from him, he never abandoned me, and he was always with me, now I value many of the things that can't be bought with money.

Today my faith is strong, as is my self-love. I don't believe there is any reason that I deserved to be abandoned by my family, only they know why, and I'm working on it, but it still hurts me a lot. Today I stop being the victim and take responsibility for what is mine and ask that others take responsibility for what is theirs. I've learned so many great things, I've met some very valuable people and others that have helped me grow and really practice my tolerance.

I have my job, for which I thank God so much, because I love doing it, I earn money and the time flies. I live in a clean and pleasant space, with very good companions, I try to live in harmony with my universe. I want to get out of here and make the most of

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what I've learned, on top of what I already knew, and the job I'm doing is something that is becoming a passion of mine, which I'll make the most of.

There's a little person waiting for me, who is working really hard too. We are both growing, we miss each other a lot, but I know that what comes out of all this will be wonderful. We're going to have a nicer house than the one we had, full of the light of God's love, with the smell of mum's food and with the laughter of gratitude. With a blessed, respectable job and with an extraordinary and blessed pay. I am grateful for what my God gives me but also for what he does not give me.

I'm a fortunate and blessed person, there are times when I feel very sad, but there are many more when I'm cheerful.

I'm happy, and I have people close to me, I believe they love me because I feel it in my heart and I love them very much. I don't want to ever forget this... for many reasons.

Thanks to my mother for being firm and a constant with me and my son. I love you, mother, and I am grateful for all the patience and love that you have for us.

Translated by Gemma Drake



ALWAYS SMILE

There are times when we think or believe that remembering the past or something that happened will no longer hurt us, and that's the case sometimes. But when the memories are of our children, the tears well up inexplicably in my eyes.

December 31, 2017

It's now the last day of the year, in the last minutes of the year – exactly 3 minutes to go until 12 am. Two years, one month, twenty-four days in this blessed place. Without hearing anything about my little ones, my loves.

12.05 am, a new year...

This year, as I have always done since arriving in this place, I ask and I pray to God that He may bless my mother, my children, Beto, all the people I hurt so much, and all my companions in here. I also beg Him to soften my mother's heart so that she may come to visit me, even just for a minute.

I long for this to be the year I see my mother and my three children who I have not seen since I arrived here.

Thank you, my God, for giving me another chance at life.

January 1, 2018

Today is the first day of the year. 8 am.

Another year has gone by, and so many things have happened.

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My goal this year is to lose weight. My desire is to be a better mother, be a better person, to have the tolerance, wisdom and love needed to keep going in this place. I thank God for having forced me to put the brakes on, I thank Him for all the things I have learnt and discovered in this place. I also thank God for the many tough tests I have had to face in this place.

Now, my God, on this day as the year begins, I ask you to visit my mother and tell her how much I love her, that I love her, that I have always loved her. That due to circumstance and fate, I lost my way in life. I implore you, my Father, with all my heart. I also ask you to give my children stability, to guide them on the right path. How beautiful life is every day! Every day is a lesson and a new discovery.

How beautiful it is to live, even if I am imprisoned in these four walls!

March 2, 2019

It's a very special day, because 19 years ago, a rainbow, a sea and a sun were born in my heart.

March 3, 2019

Today was such a special day for me. Jorge gave me a great surprise: he brought me Iriss, my daughter, my little one, my girl; I felt so happy, It had been so long since I had seen her.

Life is so beautiful: we should enjoy it every day, living every moment that passes as if it were the last day of our life.

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I LOVE them:

Carlos, Iriss, Kity, Jorge and Graciela.

It's so difficult to understand God's plans that there are times when we complain, not knowing that when something happens that we don't like, good things are going to come.

We must accept life as it comes, every cloud has a silver lining.

You should always feel confident in yourself, always fight for what you want in this life. I am living this new opportunity that God has given me. Love is a tonic that has the power to heal, to make life blossom from its radiant core. Love is the key that opens all doors. It is the therapeutic reality that drives every desire for truth and all hope.

To want is nothing,
to love is already a bonus,
to worship is the real prize.

Value what you have right now, not when you lose it.

Translated by Annie May



ROOTS

Monday 11th March 2019. Puente Grande, Jalisco.

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I would like to thank the *cartonera* publishers for taking the time to teach us to make these books. Also, to the school for offering and supporting these workshops. Thank you to Génesis Nando, at long last I believe that you will be a turning point in this place, which, little by little, has flourished with your presence. To our teacher, Faby (the education coordinator), who signed me up for this course without a second thought – she knows that I love literature and that reading is a passion of mine.

To my daughters Gio and Beka, who are the driving force in my struggle to survive in this place. To my wife who has stayed with me and teaches me many things without meaning to. Lastly, to my blonde loyal friend Elia Aida Rodríguez, who helped me with the cover of this book and is always there, like a Jiminy Cricket in my conscience, no matter how crazy I am.

With love to all.

There is a time for everything,
a time to be born and a time to die...

I know that everything God does will endure forever;
nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2

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The fear of the unknown is a constant in our pilgrimage around this world. Could this ever be different? I don't believe so. Since we were in our mothers' womb, we have been receptive to positive and negative emotions. Or on your first day of school, you feel a dread that your teachers, your classmates won't like you. A constant fear; and then arriving here was no different: first the noise of the sirens when they brought us to this place, my status as a "legally married lesbian" was a constant source of fear. In this women's prison, the gazes of 453 fellow women turning towards me... yes, of course, it scared me to death. From the movies you have a very negative impression of what a prison is like, you would never imagine that the strongest bonds of friendship could form in this place, nor would you dream that this place could inspire the most beautiful "wishes" for your loved ones.

*Sincere wishes,
wishes of Love,
wishes to simply move forward*

"WISHES"

Wishes for my daughter Rebeca:

I wish for you not to miss me too much, my beloved daughter.
I wish for you to have friends, that even the bad and inconsequential ones will be brave and loyal, and that there will be at least one that you can trust unconditionally.
I wish that you will get to pet a dog,
Feed a bird and hear a goldfinch sing,

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Like those that sing to me every day outside my window,
As if triumphant in their morning chorus, because this alone
Will make you feel content.

I wish for you to find a good man on your journey,
That he will be with you tomorrow and the next day and that he be
The father of your children. And I wish to soon leave this place
So that I can take care of those children and enjoy being a grand-
mother.

I wish that you will always be prepared for the blows that life de-
livers you.

I also wish that you were two years old again
To remember the smiling girl that you always were.

I wish so many things, my daughter,
But what I wish the most is that you will be HAPPY...

I love you:
Your mum.

I wish for my daughter Giovanna:

I wish that you will smile always
And that you see life as you are,
Bold, straight-forward and sparkling.
I wish that you will never worry yourself
With the little things in life.
If you love someone: Tell them,
If you admire something in someone: Express it!
If they do something for you: Thank them.
As far as I'm concerned, I wish that you will always be thankful,
For only then will you live a full life.

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With love:

Mum.

I wish for my wife Chary.

I wish first of all that you will love,
And that in Loving you will be loved in return,
And that you Don't harbour resentment towards me,
And that you will soon forget the years spent in this place.
I wish for it to be that way,
And that, if you still have painful memories of me,
You will know how not to live in despair.
I wish also that you will be useful,
Though not irreplaceable, and that, in the bad times,
When nothing is left, this usefulness will be enough
To keep you strong in the face of adversity.
I wish also that at some point in our lives,
We will be able to travel together once again.
I wish for you to have money too,
Because you have to be practical.
And that at least once a year you will return to a women's
Prison to help them, and that you won't forget that here,
In a place like this, you found Christ in your heart.
If all these things come to pass, I have nothing more to wish for
you.
Your wife:
July Hakim

Translated by Georgina Sutton and Chrissy Waymark



SADNESS IS BUT DUST

Tales

In these tales I want to try to find a way to deal with the uncertainty, anguish, pain, triviality, daily routine that has taken over my senses. Here the concept of time is completely different, the atmosphere is tinged with a strange character called eternity. In this eternity, in this interlude, I spend my days here, making and reinventing chores, rearranging books in the library, preparing coffee, reading devotedly, Neruda accompanying me and at times inspiring me.

I want to find colour in every moment, without thinking, without reasoning, just living.

Friday 8th February 2019

Today I blame that nameless nostalgia for my plight, I blame nostalgia and not myself for the way my life has gone. In these circumstances, I don't want to remember more days without freedom. I restrict myself to the limits of my memory because I no longer recognize this bitter reality. Tonight, nostalgic sorrow has settled in me; this absurd pain in my ear and part of my face... sleeping in the foetal position, crying in my sleep. I break the dull game of silence and ask myself the question: when will I get out of here? and I break free of fear.

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Monday 11th February 2019

When this stupid nightmare began almost thirteen years ago, I thought that I'd die, and I said to myself: after all, I had some good times. The monster of nostalgia invaded me. I know now that I'm not the same. I have grown, improved, the breakdowns have stopped. I have defeated all my fears; the monsters have gone. I know that there is calm.

Everything happens. Even the most terrible things. The events that moved me, even those that shook me inside out have not lost their emotional charge. Life is constantly changing, every moment. I'm swallowing this reality and I know what I must do.

Friday 15th February 2019

There's no denying it, in here we all have the secret illusion that we are different, that we will reach FREEDOM again. What governs us isn't just the result of us breathing, of doing what is "required", but also what's been shaped, learned and accomplished by our will and our mind.

We have most likely lost many things on this journey: youth, time spent with our children, finishing our studies, maybe some people have passed away outside. I could go on with this list of things, people, tasks. I don't know how to react to all this, maybe there is no possible response.

To say that we have things that others don't as compensation is weak and is not true in the slightest. We have love, we have managed to find and reconcile ourselves, and we have grown spiritually, but none of this explains why we don't have the things I mentioned

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earlier. Nor does it imply that others don't have love or spirituality. The only answer is that there is no answer.

Today is Friday 15th February, it's now night-time and I am here in my cell, unburdening myself through these words, instead of enjoying the warmth of a drink in my blue dress or going to a concert, eyes bright after a glass of good wine, in a safe and sheltered place and not in this chaotic reality.

Monday 18th February 2019

I am in the dining room watching a film on the television. It's sunny and there's a great hubbub in the air as today is visiting day. I have everything, love, beauty, youth and I often escape to another reality as if I were touching another dimension. The only thing I don't have is FREEDOM.

That's why I can't jump in the sand, feel the hot sun on my back, feel the air of freedom on my face... that's why I settle for the sweet smell of popcorn.

I still think I have a life, right now I am with several women watching the television, chatting ironically and laughing at a game in the dining room of dorm C.

Sunday 24th February 2019

Sadness is but dust. It is like the colour sepia, it's dry, it doesn't have any flavour. It penetrates your nose, your eyes to reach the grey matter of your brain. But above all it lives in your mouth, once it has set up camp you can't swallow it, if it takes hold, it will settle in your being leaving you with no nose, no tongue, no grey matter and you will become those dust particles, you will become sadness.

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Thursday 28th February 2019

Every time I drink coffee, it's as if each sip takes away a bit of the nostalgia. It cleanses me, it tries to bring back the colour of reality to my life.

Sunday 3rd March 2019

My Mum is a great woman. She makes me feel a lot of things and I have great admiration for her. When talking about her, lots of memories full of nuances come to the forefront. On the dark days she cries with me, she consoles me. Her unbreakable strength sometimes makes me uncomfortable, her faith unbreakable.

Tuesday 5th March 2019

My happy moments arise when I include the snippets of the past and see life as a whole. Happy moments can be built in any context, whatever life brings you.

Meditation and yoga are very rewarding and seem to be key, I will try to express this in words. I'm breathing and I realize that breathing is my only job; inhale, exhale, these modest ups and downs known as life.

Friday 8th March 2019

I don't know how to describe this feeling. It's not bliss, nor do I believe it to be happiness. It's something simple, something very deep. It arises when you let go of ideas... thoughts, when the mask disappears, when I'm no longer thinking, when I stop trying to make sense of what I did, what brought me here, what I have done and what I have stopped doing, what I want to achieve, in the bit-

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terness of these months. As the veil disappears, my soul is stripped and my only and greatest goal appears, always within my reach: Breathing, Living. With each breath I am born, with each second I am born, and I live from that moment on to start again.

Neruda forgive me! But sometimes I get tired of being a woman. That's it, BEING A WOMAN.¹

I'm not an important person and my story is nothing extraordinary, it is just of a person who has been stripped of their freedom.

I lost clarity, smiles faded, fears arose, guilt, no reason to breathe. Then, that absurd and blunt sentence, 50 years. And this is where I resurge, wrapped in anger and in all the negative emotions. It seems absurd and unfair to me that I should have a longer sentence than a man. That's where I think it's a matter of inequality, it's a gender problem and I want to scream, I want to be heard! Why are men favoured by the law, whatever their crime? It doesn't seem fair to me and it's not simple. I'm not a feminist, but my reasoning tells me that this system is fucked up and our laws are rotten.

Who is to say what is good or bad, what is true or false, what is correctly established?

Hormones, menstruation, good days, bad days, skin blemishes, stretch marks, flabbiness, the ticking of the biological clock, being a working woman, being a professional or not, the idea of being a woman and not thinking about procreating is, like other issues, what frightens both women and men. And I don't know why it is thought necessary for all women to carry a child. NO. I don't want to be a mother! Not all women chose to have

¹ Here, Erika is playing with a famous poem by the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda: "Me canso de ser hombre" ("I'm tired of being a man.")

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children, please don't label me, it's simple, it's not going to happen. They label us, they stigmatize us, they violate us, they separate us, they defeat us. We need to stop, to raise awareness, to recognize this new society, not just by raising our voices but daring to live as we wish, exercising our freedom in every moment.

I love being a woman but with what I described above there are times when I am sick of it.

Tuesday 12th March 2019

Now I can smile, I can drink this coffee, I can watch the sun that comes up to greet me and the red-chested bird that perches in the garden in which we meditate. I have been able to break the curse of my internal images, those persecutory clouds that constantly made me compare the before and after of being here, in this experience without Freedom.

I could have lived in the now, in this moment, the one that is now within my reach. Without a future, without a past, without ideas, without emotions that make judgements and become co-webs in my mind, clouding what is real. Instead, we ruin every moment that never returns and that we sacrifice without realizing it.

WIND AND MIRRORS

Wednesday 13th March 2019

I

Not a day has gone by that I haven't loved you, that I haven't thought about you, that I haven't drunk a cup of coffee without blessing your arrival.

In the middle of all my tasks, my classes, and when I walk around the perimeter of the prison in the mornings ... your memory is in my heart, you occupy my thoughts. You absorb my calm, you inspire me.

I want to love you honestly, to the limit of my love.

Nothing compares to your hands; my body is filled with you day by day.

II

Today I was taken to hospital, I'm tired, hungry, I feel dehydrated. The news was not what I expected, more pills, waiting for more dates.

Despite the fatigue, the change of routine has been fun. Erika Acosta, time for your medical appointment. Going to the hospital means horrible and depressing beige uniforms, light and silent breakfasts in the ambulance that looks like a kennel, and security checks before leaving the prison. Questions and answers, surly faces from the external security personnel, rules to be followed, and then being called to attention, they force me to look down, it makes me laugh. Even so, I'm in contact with the world, people, haste, cars, colours. I saw a puppy with its owner and best of all, I felt the pulsing air of freedom. During the hours in the hospital, certain

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emotions that I have let go of were revived inside me, I made them mine again, they should definitely not be forgotten.

III

In December, the pain in my ear came back, a poisonous pain, the bastard. I'm sitting at the library desk writing and thinking: I'm sick of taking pills to stifle the pain. On top of the rules, demands, confinement, uncertainty, I'm tired, I'm in pain, I'm in a bad mood; I feel like I can't go on, I want to scream, scream. The pain on the side of my face from my ear, the pain when I remember the dates of my hearing, the pain of the forensic science verdict, sharp, sharp pains.

I have to prepare myself, I can't live like this, the legal process has its own rhythm, like the symptoms of an ear infection.

I want to recover, or I'll have to remember this time with nostalgia.

IV

I'm starting to get tired, it has been more than two weeks like this, in discomfort, feeling ostracized, in the confinement between the walls of the cell where I live, where I eat, where I sleep alone in my bed. Sometimes I think I do what I like, what is normal, natural. Right now, that is what I'm missing, I have the flu, so more pain in my ear. It's the weekend, and I'm still dozing in my bed with the flu, bunged up, with earache that goes down the side of my face, I'm swollen, not wanting to think about anything but the next minute,

WIND AND MIRRORS

nothing more. The next minute is deciding whether to blow my nose or find a guard so the pain in my face goes down a bit.

I feel like crap, full of snot, pus in my ears, I feel dehydrated, my hair is dry and in disarray, I have premature wrinkles. In these weeks my dose of clonazepam has made me feel sick, sleepy, lethargic, as if the symptoms have taken over.

I feel like a walking infection. I feel like an idiot, disguised with all these symptoms that are taking over and covering me so as to put a lid on the dark fire of my emotions. I've been able to deal with these days and minutes, why not continue and smile at this ridiculousness?

V

I woke up restless and tired that morning, I think it's because I've had so much clonazepam.

I headed to the library, I reordered books, swept, mopped the floors. I shook the dust of nostalgia from all the windows and shelves. I've left it looking so bright that now the sun looks faded.

It's not my day today and I wasn't scheduled to work but I decided to come anyway, to leave the disastrous dorm full of emotional chaos, noise, insects and the smell of rotting. On top of that, cellmates with gaunt faces and a hostile appearance.

Translated by Gemma Drake

SONIA GUADALUPE BERRELLEZA CAMACHO



The tale I am about to tell is for my children and my sisters,
from the bottom of my heart.

I hope this helps them understand the many things that I have not dared tell them or show them; about how I truly think and feel, which I stopped myself from showing them on so many occasions. I hope they understand – I love them all.

Thank you

I, Sonia Guadalupe, will share with you a part of my life, the painful memories, but the happy ones too.

I was 5 years old, I remember it like it were yesterday, we were a family of 9 (7 girls and 2 boys) and I was mum and dad's youngest and favourite. I was so happy, I felt like I was living in a fairy-tale, in a little pink bubble. I remember that nobody was as happy as us and that my happiness was very short-lived, because this bubble burst and blackened. My mum died, my dad, grief-stricken, drowned his sorrows in alcohol, leaving me practically orphaned. It was so shocking to see her in a coffin, I had no idea what was going on. Why wouldn't my mum wake up? Since that day I have cursed and blamed God for taking my mother away. I grew up with so much lovelessness around me until each took their own path. I fought against life, as I desired death. The thought of being with my mother was and is something that I still can't overcome. I clung on to the idea of dying, but death didn't want me. How many times have I died? I'll tell you. But I have always come back to life.

I tried to take my own life many times and I blamed God for it. I got to see my mother when I was in a 3-month-long coma, caused by a bullet, after shooting myself. I understood that I still wasn't

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with God. I could see my outstretched body in heaven and my mother told me that it still wasn't my time.

When I was 21 I had my beautiful baby girl, whom I had so long yearned for. But history repeated itself and I left her alone, just as I was when I was growing up. Then, I had my sweet little doll, whom I ask to forgive me for all the pain I have caused her and all that I did not notice.

To Daniel, my third-born, I ask forgiveness for failing to be the good mother I thought I was. I was the worst. Sometimes I wonder when I came to hate myself to the point of hurting and injuring myself so badly, and hurting those I loved the most.

Every 10th of May, on the anniversary of my mum's death, I suffered a lot and I hurt them too. I know I can't turn back the clock... I would love to have been a model mother, but I failed. But now I don't want them to be ashamed of me.

Children, please forgive me. There is no way for us to go back in time, but I'm so disappointed in myself and now that I don't have you by my side, I yearn to be with you, to hug you, to hear you uttering words of forgiveness for all the harm I have caused you. I ask that you rid me of the chains that I drag along with me and hope that you won't make the same mistakes as I have. They come at a price, as the harshest judges are your own children. For this reason, I beg your forgiveness from the depths of my heart. I am sorry, children, I love you.

Sisters: I thank you for helping me grow. None of you are to blame. I just went down the wrong path and some of the things that seemed minor to you wounded me forever. I thought that a fake life was better, but I was wrong. I ask your forgiveness and I too forgive you and love you equally. I have learned this hard lesson. Farewell.

Translated by Ellie Hamill



WHITE COLLAR SEWERS

Part 1

By way of prologue

White collar sewers describes, through poetry, the dance of current reality in the modern inquisition trials; as well as the unfolding of the chaotic putrefaction of excessive, ill-gotten power placed in dirty hands.

Enedina's writings emit an erotic charge to soften the funereal and dark truth with a touch of equanimity.

Acknowledgements

“A blank page corner is always an opportunity to cook up words when you're stranded in the desert; whatever your fate may be, art flows along the necessary path, at the opportune moment”. Thanks to all the characters who have played a part in this adventure, and especially to Génesis Georgina Nando Arreola, for her judicious, empowered work in the search for Social Reintegration for women deprived of their physical freedom;¹ may truth light up her way and protect her on this journey. “White collar sewers Part I” and “Clandestine loves Part I” are for you – to be savoured with a glass of good wine. I am the light... what about you?

1 “Personas privadas de su libertad” (PPL), or people deprived of their freedom, is the term used by the Mexican authorities to refer to prisoners.

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VOICES WITHOUT VOICE

They taught me that there are two books that show you the path to follow: the Sacred Texts and my country's Constitution. The first shows you how to learn to love with faith; the second is the manual to learn to live in society and defend your life and interests. After 36 years, however, I've discovered that both these books are the biggest lies told by man, since my truth lives within me, and everything external is relative.

I steadied my wondering gaze for an instant
on the cell of the sleepless lawyer,
the balance of my thoughts
tipped to the crowd of shoes,
nicely polished...

A fragrance with the smell of impunity
bounced around these four filthy
walls...

The echo made its presence felt,
voices without a voice,
murmurs without echoes...

Files written year on year, announced
one of those days that leave no footprint
through the window of memories
you glimpsed a mistreated wall.

The life of the prisoner
begins with slander

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by the one who holds the sword in his hand,
and the one who, behind bars,
receives as an offer
a plea bargain.

After a year in prison,
the beating you received
vanishes with your stolen innocence
because it's not the opportune moment for a trial,
because human rights aren't worthy
for any judge or magistrate...
– The Gods of Olympus –
in the image and likeness of the Earthly Supreme Court...
Deceit prevails....

If you're still alive, in
72 hours
you'll be in the new quarters of the hanged,
preserved in dungeons at temperatures
below 0.

And then they say you can appeal
or seek legal protection.

Time goes by and away once more.

Wounds heal,

physical pain is the least of your troubles,
you glimpse oblivion....

Amnesia sharpens,
you start forgetting the dreams that once were of comfort,
the possibility of a life worth living
has trickled away along with your morals

WIND AND MIRRORS

and your good principles.
Suddenly, your thoughts take you by the hand
and place you in front of the mirror
of the officer who framed you with a lie,
of the one who invented your crime
because it was his job.
Days, months... they're scraps of time
without value
for the masses of well-educated minds,
a time so valuable
for the reconstruction of a forgotten people.
And the minds of the learned people
are sent to an exile of silence;
are swept away by the wind
like days without sunsets.

WHITE-COLLAR GODFATHER

In the stillness of the night
far away,
Rolling bodies
enslaved souls
buried in...
refrigeration boxes.
The heat of the storm
ignites.
Lies have a scent...

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condemning the innocent with years in prison.

Do you remember that day?

Yes, when the girl left you

For a younger man...

Your miserable body, trembling and

fragile

– draped in expensive robes –

dumbstruck by her departure

you took your car and you drove away from your sanity

the life of a girl

condemning her to a sentence

of 112 years;

life sentence for her

for a desolate and deserted morning

what did you get out of

Falling in love with a...

Free woman.

How many shitty judgments reside

in your soul

your humanity – if you'd have it that way –

appears shattered in two parts

The fucked part

And the dick part.

The man, in his struggle for power,

eating lobster and

shitting out spiritual

poverty.

WIND AND MIRRORS

How many like you,
– your Honour –...
How many victims imprisoned by your
emotional past.
imprinted on the pillow of your offences...

CLANDESTINE LOVE AFFAIRS

Part 1

THE RED WINE OF YOUR LIPS

With the wings of thought,
at midnight,
a silhouette slipped by
walking down the avenue
of the red wine of the moon.
There you were...
as ever...
Drinking a coffee in the bedroom
of sighs
– Other times – drawing on the wall
of dreams the perfect essence
of the ocean of your lips.
The red wine of the moon
now shines with silvery hair,
in the grimace of silence

WIND AND MIRRORS

WHEN I THINK OF YOU

In this mirror

I gaze upon the marine blue
of your skin

through your dark eyes
that are my eyes...

Desire walks around
barefoot...

her soft hands like the golden
wind
that crosses the doors of your temple
and takes possession of the Sanctuary
that inhabits you at the heart of your
two worlds.

The other night
the scent of your fantasy
delicately found its way into my nostrils
and bumped into my libidinal
excesses...

The crimson of
the luminous mountains
are the infinite opening
to savour with this ritual of words
your divinity...
as you laugh...
and even as you fall silent.

How could I not love you...
if you are in me

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and I am conscious of you.
How not to lose my memory
in the relativity of time
 if the empty space traps me
between your claws
 when your lips
feed on this intoxication.
How to say no to love
 if you exist...
How to say no to the passion
Of the poetry
 that leads me towards your path.

DESIRING – U

“Hello, sweetheart...”
“Hello, do you want a coffee?”
“I want you.”
“Then I’ll give you a *tea*.”²
“A tea?”

I give you everything your erotic mind
manages to materialize
beneath your clothes; with whispers...
between moans; until our voices
become one in the echo
 of this censured bedroom.

2 In the original Spanish version, “t” is a pun on the words “you”/”u” and “tea”.

WIND AND MIRRORS

LOVING YOU SOFTLY

When the sun opens her eyes

I want you to be in me for an eternity,

I don't want to be
just a memory in your life, my love...

I want to be more than a stray

star

in the recess of your sighs.

I want a love that is free

from them, fearless.

One more eternity, and then

you can go

if you want to...

I give you a glass of champagne;

another night entangled in your naked body

like this...

playing with caresses

beneath these sultry sheets.

Take my hand, my love,

come...

you will be safe here

come in... don't close

the door,

it's your sanctuary,

enjoy this elixir...

Thinking about it... I don't want you to go...

Thinking about it...

I want to make love to you

one more time...

Translated by Lucy Bell



THE LOYAL POETESS

LOVE, YOU ARE... MY KNIGHT

Love, I have in my ear the sweet chime of your voice,
as you sweeten it with every word you say.
Love, I have on my lips the memory of your kisses,
those kisses that rekindle my beating heart.
Love, I have on my skin the tattoo of your caresses,
As they are as infinite as the life you give me.
Love, I have inside me the dreams of my life,
the present “today” and the future “will be” in you.
Love, it is you ... yes! Love, it is you,
the one that will give me life or death in life.
Love, it is you ... my knight who has stolen my heart,
with whom you must fight a battle to claim victory.
You and me, my knight, united in one heart.
Love, it is you ... Yes! Love, it is you, always you.

SO MANY WHYS

So many words written,
hiding a human feeling,
that I don't know
if it is really valued at all.

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So many tears shed,
soaking this heart,
that I do not know
if it is really valued at all.

So many letters spoken,
laying bare my naked soul,
that I do not know
if it is really valued at all.

DIRECT

Imprinted in my memory
so many nights,
oh so many nights,
where we made love in the dark,
and I am sure that is why
my memory
of those nights is so tactile
and that really is direct.

RELIVING

How fantastic it is
the tactile memory of my skin,
of those afternoons and mornings.
Where it was

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and will be beautiful to relive,
that brushing of my silhouette against yours.
Where we would
beat the same rhythm,
creating a rapport
like a harmonious melody.
Now we'll relive that,
you will orchestrate the instruments
of the sensations that bring me back to life ...
and that revive our love.

IT'S I

That look of mine, it's my soul
that turns into a kiss for you.
A kiss is a language
that means a palpitation
that turns into heartbeats,
forming a great feeling,
unique and unbreakable,
with the strength of a faithful truth,
everything and life, my love.

IT'S II

Not to sleep is to dream
I can't even pretend in dreams...

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you are the erogenous zone of my soul,
becoming a great problem in my desire for you,
ending up in your arms, needing one another,
subjugated by your seduction.

I miss you is a synonym of appreciation,
I have run out of words, feeling
that I value you highly,
like that star that I turned into
with the hope that a cosmic explosion
may return me to your arms, my love.

DISTANCE

Being close is more painful
than being miles apart.
Why is tonight so cold?
Why is it raining blood?
Why does distance hurt so much?

L'AMOUR

Love is stronger than us,
it also allows us to reveal what we are,
what we carry in the depths of our hearts...
To understand and accept
that we do not control everything
– it hurts to realize what you are and what you want

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in order to be able to accept it freely.
Allow the magical to become a part of your daily life.

YOU CALM MY HEART (1st Part)

In the middle of the night and the storm,
knowing that you are in my presence
calms my heart
Like the light of your countenance,
like a guide in the fog
I need your warmth.

YOU CALM MY HEART (2nd Part)

I like to hear your every step,
seeing you focused on my every word
calms my heart.

Like the scent of your skin,
like your hands and strength,
I need to hear you.
You calm my heart because I love you.

Translated by Paloma Sanz & Georgia Green

A light in the darkness



There he was, standing in that beautiful twilight, with his pale skin, rosy lips, and hazelnut eyes which watched me while the sun caressed his blonde hair. Yes, there he was, in that prison, watching me. After two years he left a free man, we got together, and upon many sacrifices we built a home together. Within a year of meeting we swore our eternal love for each other, before Christ, in the Chapel ‘The Divine prisoner’. We went on to have four children.

On a day like any other, I left work at 2.30pm. My husband came for me in the back of a truck, accompanied by an unknown man. I asked him about my kids, and he answered:

“Johan and Michel are at home and Osiel and Ángel are with Rosa” – my sister-in-law.

That was the last thing I heard, that Tuesday 18th August 2003. Suddenly, several armed men appeared, they beat us, got us into other cars, and stopped, passing by a tollbooth in the middle of nowhere. One of them put a towel on my stomach, he hit me, then he raped me while snorting powder; it was already getting dark when they brought my husband back, blindfolded and covered in blood, blood flowing from his ears, forehead and testicles. Then, they blindfolded me.

After five endless days of screams, beatings, abuse and rape, they took me to some filthy back-offices, showed me a photo of my son, and said:

“Sign it or your son will pay the consequences.”

WIND AND MIRRORS

When they brought me to this place on Saturday the 23rd of August, I couldn't believe where I was, the first things I saw were some roses.

My dad and brothers came that day, across the glass barrier we just cried. My dad gave me his blessing and left, my brother told me, crying:

“I thought you were dead.”

And I just replied:

“I am.”

My pain was unspeakable because they had taken my children, my father and my brothers from me. The only thing I could do was cry and the people in charge of that prison just said:

“She's depressed.”

But these people didn't know how to tell the difference between depression and a pain from the depths of the soul, a pain that tears out your heart, a pain that you can't understand, that makes you ask yourself over and over:

“Who did I hurt so badly? Why, dear God? What sins am I paying for?”

For the first few years, my father and brothers did everything they could to prove the injustice that was being committed, but they didn't manage to. They just stole from them, left them without money. Our home, that we had built on so many sacrifices, was left with nothing.

My two oldest children stayed with my parents. Of the two youngest, Osiel stayed with my brother José while the other, Ángel, stayed with my sister Lupe. My fear was that my youngest son

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Ángel, who was only 2 years old, would forget about me. The days went on like this, I spoke with them on the phone and the youngest said to me:

“Mummy, come back to me now.”

Only almighty God knew how much pain I felt.

One day my oldest son said to me:

“Mummy, my aunt Rosa has punished Brayan Osiel.” On the verge of tears, he told me: “He’s been sitting in a chair for quite a while already and she won’t let him get up for anything.”

Later, I talked to Rosa and asked her how she could punish my son like that – he’s only a child. When I spoke with my son Osiel he was always being punished, he almost never talked. My oldest son lied to my little brother, he told him that he would take care of his brother, so my brother handed him to my son, but actually, he took Osiel to my sister-in-law.

When I called again, my sister-in-law Nicol answered, in tears, confessing that she had thrown out the child’s clothes because they were filthy. They had put them on to wash time and again, but they had just shrunk beyond use. I couldn’t believe it. I used to talk to my son on the phone, he’d tell me all about what he had done, it made me smile, he was very happy, and I noticed that his grades improved. But then he changed completely.

One day, Nicol told me that Osiel wanted to work, I told him that he should wait, that he was only seven years old, but he kept insisting. I spoke with my son and asked him where he wanted to work, he answered:

“In packing, mummy.”

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Later, my sister-in-law Nicol went to a big shop and arranged for him to pack people's bags at the checkouts. He gave my sister-in-law part of what he earned. He was happy and sang to me over the phone. On mother's day he sang me the song by Cepillín:

“Mummy, tell me why children like me have no-one to play with, and don't have a mummy... I'll go to heaven”.

My anguish and this immense pain continued, the helplessness only grew thinking that everything was okay without me. They sentence you no matter how much evidence or how many witness statements there are, without studying the evidence in-depth. Without verifying anything, they sentence you. The judges don't look further than the piece of paper, they can't see what's inside a person.

And so it is, the days go by in this place... the same things going round and round in the same circle, day in, day out. My only light in this world of darkness was my youngest brother el Gordo – the Fatty. In spite of everything, one Christmas Day he arrived with my children... I am grateful to him for everything he did for me.

When she was still alive, on the 26th of October 2007, my mother came to say goodbye, in November she fell ill, and on the 10th of December 2007, she died. Just one year later, in January 2008, one of my brothers, just one year older than me, died as well, of pancreatic cancer. He was one of the ones that my mum worried about the most. Only 8 months later, one Monday in September 2008, I spoke with my brother el Gordo, who said:

“I'll bring your sons to see you soon, I am a bit sick, I'm going to the doctors' for some tests.”

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On the Tuesday I called to find out about the tests, but he hadn't gone or they didn't want to tell me. When I called on the Sunday, I couldn't believe or comprehend what they told me. El Gordo had died. My head was spinning, I couldn't listen, I couldn't take it in... He died during an operation, he had a heart attack, it was fatal.

They cancelled my next visits, my kids hardly visited me anymore, I was very isolated from them. My only consolation was knowing that they were okay. My mother took on the two that worried her the most.

My mother always asked God to let her die before all her children and he granted her wish. Although she had a thrombosis when she was 44, and the doctors said she wouldn't survive as she spent a year in bed, my mother died when she was 72. My father, who is still alive, always cared for her until the end of her days.

I'm still here, still trying to take in all this pain, all this injustice. I don't know how many times I've turned my back on God. Sometimes, I feel and believe that I just can't cope anymore, but then my children come back to visit me time and again. They are my light, and they will carry on being my light.

After my sentence was confirmed, a lot of time passed. I tried to smile, to be okay, not to worry. My children sounded okay and if they were okay, then I was too.

It was the 14th of February, I was very happy, my brother Efraín was going to take care of the lawyer, they were to meet that day at 11pm. The lawyer came to the visiting room to get me to sign some papers, because my brother wanted everything to be in order.

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I called him that same day after 5pm, I told him about the lawyer and what we had agreed, my brother reassured me, and said that he would make a plan with the lawyer and tell me about it the next day.

My brother Efraín desired my freedom with all his heart, he always said to me:

“I want you to get out now – your children need you.”

He passed me on to my son Osiel, who by then worked with him in his auto mechanic shop. Osiel was very happy:

“Mum, my uncle, he’s going to help you now, you’re finally going to get out of that horrible prison, that hellhole.”

On the 15th February, I was called to the visiting room. It was the lawyer, he looked worried:

“I bring bad news.”

He didn’t know how to tell me this bad news. In fact, I thought that my brother didn’t want to go ahead, I got into my head that they hadn’t got along, but the lawyer said:

“As it was late, I didn’t go yesterday, I called your brother and we agreed to meet today at 10am. I went very early to find him at the shop. There was a man painting a trailer. When I asked after your son, he turned and looked at me: “You don’t know? Yesterday at 11pm they killed him in his shop...” They found your son lying dead on the floor.”

My eyes filled with tears, I just said to him:

“My brother Efraín?”

“Yes, him.”

He asked me if I had money to make a call, took 100 pesos out of his pocket, and gave them to me. Then I started talking

quickly, I dialled my son Osiel's number and asked him:

"Son, is it true they killed your uncle Efraín?"

"Yes mum," he said, crying. "I left him at 9pm, and he stayed at the shop. I was at home, just having a wash, when I heard my cousin la Nena screaming. We found her lying on the floor. She'd had a haemorrhage. We didn't understand what'd happened, my auntie Lupe asked her who'd called, and she just said: "They killed uncle Efraín." She was so shocked by the news that she lost her baby."

My son Osiel cried and was very sad – his uncle Efraín was his confidant.

"Mum, they only killed him so they wouldn't have to pay him, they got him from behind. I'm so angry, mum – my uncle was such a good man. What am I going to do now, mum?!"

I tried to lift his spirits:

"Look son, these things happen, this man that hurt your uncle, God will deal with him, divine justice exists, my love."

"Divine justice doesn't exist! If it did, you would've got out already. The man that has you locked in that jail knows it wasn't you, he says it himself, on the record, that there were no women where it happened nor calls from women, only men... So where is God?"

I didn't know how to answer, I just knew that at that point he would not understand.

That 14th of February, the day of his death, was five years ago, and since that day the lawyer never came back until last December 2018. I hope that this time he helps us and won't disappear again.

My children are grown now, and they can't wait for me to get out. They always tell me:

WIND AND MIRRORS

“Mum, you’ve spent 15 years in jail now, you’ve completed half your sentence now, when are they going to let you out?”

I say “soon,” but sometimes I don’t know what to say.

I only know that you pay for everything in this life, that everything is returned to you, be it good or bad. They have hurt me, but also my family. I believe that everything is temporary, that nothing is forever.

I never imagined that I would be a prisoner, much less that it would last for so long, and less still that the man I loved so much, the man I trusted, would drag me to a place of pain and angst... Nor did I know that my heart would be capable of forgiveness.

This is the university of life, where you learn more than you can ever imagine. You learn to live and to enjoy the most insipid of things and the greatest of things, to value every word, every gesture, every dawn. In the end, all you yearn for is to leave this world of darkness, forever.

Do to others as you would have them to do to you.

Translated by Anna Fisher

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WIND AND MIRRORS,

A Women's Literature Collection

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