

THE MOON, ONCE MORE, LIGHTED THE DOORWAY

They both were for a while militants in the new formation that had emerged in the country's political arena. Both were part of the high sector of the candidacy for the elections. It was a tough campaign, but they got to know each other better and started an intense relationship. He, at rallies, used to emphasize that his party, if it came to power, would repeal the law against gender violence because it blamed men just for being men. She kept saying that she wanted a law that would protect her sons, if it was God's will that she had them, from false denunciations of manipulative women.

"Before she sat down, she put the car keys in her bag, wore high-end designer clothes, a stylist hair-style and a neat make-up that, however, revealed a bruise on her left cheekbone" – the lawyer testified as a witness.

One day, only three months after they started dating, his mobile phone rang in the restaurant. She picked it up. It was a friend. He was in the toilet. Never mind, he would call back. She saw the icon of a well-known programme to locate people. Why did you pick up the phone? It rang, I thought it might be important. Don't do that again, do you understand me?

Their formation failed to reach the minimum five percent required for representation in the Cortes. He didn't care, his job was more valuable than anything else. She continued working as a teacher of history in a secondary school in the capital. After some time they decided to marry. They wanted the wedding to be celebrated in the Cathedral. So, they became part of the waiting list.

"I became pregnant soon. You have to rest, you can't subject your body to unnecessary strain. The maid will take care of the house, the food, the clothes and whatever else is needed. The first thing is your health and the health of what's inside you. My outings with friends and visits to the family were diminishing more and more, until they were practically non-existing."

Just married, they moved to a swanky neighbourhood in the mountains, near the capital. She quit her job, he was a glamorous architect. They had four children in ten years, three boys and a girl. Now the eldest was fifteen and the youngest six.

“In the moments of greatest anxiety I talk to the neighbours. They, I think, are in a similar situation. The best thing to do is to keep quiet. But I just can’t do it anymore. If you don’t, you’ll be left alone, with nothing and no one. I can’t go on living like this. Your children will suffer. It hurts me very much to see how much they suffer with which happens around them day after day. If he keeps them, they will continue to socialise with their usual friends. But if you keep them, they will lose status and that won’t be good for them.”

“His put-downs began soon after we started living together. Then the control of my relationships would come, the insults, the strict inspection of my expenses through the credit card we shared, the beatings, the regret and the cycle started all over again. He never apologised, his apologies came in the form of flowers, clothes, pairs of shoes, a trip and, after a beating which took me two weeks to recover from, a top of the range Mercedes. On reflection, I have to admit that I let myself be purchased. I didn’t report it because I thought things would change.”

“At the end of the meeting, she wanted to pay me with a credit card. No, not yet. Have no doubts about it, I share it with my husband. We will have to have more interviews so as to get the case on track, when everything is over, I will give you the minute. I insist, I am more at ease this way”, said the lawyer.

“She came back again to ask for help, but she did so with a lot of shame. She was suffering because she, an upper-class, educated woman, was going to all this. She could not understand it, it was something that didn’t fit into her conception of life and was very far from her scale of values”, the lawyer continued.

After dinner, he started talking to his children. He told them that the house had been bought with his work and his family’s money and that their mum had not paid anything at all. She reproached him for trying to turn them against her. He became furious, grabbed her by her hair and threw her to the ground. There he kicked her as hard as he could. The elder children cried angrily and threw themselves on top of her to protect her. He kept

shouting insults non-stop. When he calmed down, he sat down on the sofa. The children were distraught, frightened, it was not the first time they had seen such a situation. The two older ones had frequent problems falling asleep and their school performance was seriously affected. The girl refused to eat and the fourth cried at any noise or comment made in too loud a voice.

That same night a dagger crept out of a cupboard and a river of blood ran through the house when the moon, after leaving a cloud, showed its face. The neighbours will never forget the screams of horror, the torrential tears and the horrified eyes of the four children at the doorway.

“Stories without Mufflers” (2006 -)