

A TOUCH OF HAPPINESS



Juan Moisés de la Serna

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A Touch Of Happiness

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Serna J.

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Happiness for some is a state, for others it is the way, but when love arrives, all pain is gone. An intimate novel about people unknown to each other, with mixed feelings that converge into a common point which is LOVE.

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Juan Moisés de la Serna

Translate by Omolara Mofeoluwa Ogunwale Ogunwale

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PREFACE

Happiness for some is a state, for others it is the way, but when love arrives, all pain is gone.

An intimate novel about people unknown to each other, with mixed feelings that converge into a common point which is LOVE.

In life there are times

When we have to decide

what we want to do

what steps to follow

Easy it might not be

the environment is hostile

but if we strife

We can make it.

Work is important

daily efforts have to

Be done, pressing on

So as to conquer.

Nothing can stop the steps

Once you have decided

To fight with all your strength

your dream has been achieved.

LOVE

Dedicated to my parents

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CHAPTER 1. FIRST DAY

I arrived in the city, I didn't really know why I was there in the first place although I was sure there was something I had to do because until this point whenever I got to a place it had been for somebody to find help through me, even though this person was not aware that I had been the channel used.

I stayed in a motel in the suburbs and took the first bus line I saw to visit the streets of that unknown city. When you hear about a new place for the first time, you find out information about the most significant and touristic places that can be visited, but the most important thing for me was to know the religious and hospital centres, where I could develop my purpose.

With a guide in my hand, I paid attention to each street, in order to memorise which stops were interesting to me in that line, and so I did every time we dropped or took passengers to a destination on the map and looked for nearby buildings of my interest.

I learnt that when one has little time you have to make the most use of it to fulfil your mission.

That is what I did and for that reason I looked for those places where people of faith were gathered, that made it easier for me so I didn't have to go looking for them house to house.

I got off at the last bus stop, it was really a long journey back, but before catching the bus back to the motel I wanted to walk a little and meet people because in spite living in a great country with its own idiosyncrasies, each city has its own style and in this one, each space has its own identity.

It was a working class neighbourhood with the tenor of the large buildings that as beehives gave shelter to thousands of neighbours. The scarce green spaces around it and the lack of equipment for leisure activities, gave a clear idea that its inhabitants were too busy in their constant daily job to be wasting their time sitting in a park to read a newspaper.

I walked a little further and I noticed the vehicles, these were somehow old and in spite of their careless appearance it was because of their daily use. Certainly they were used to carry entire families, leaving each person at their place of work or study centre before ending up in some parking inside the buildings built exclusively to serve as parking lots.

A whole tower buildings that were used daily by thousands of workers who knew that they would not find a free space to park on the street.

I continued walking, I spotted by surprised that there was hardly any dirt in the streets, this is something that I had already noticed in other cities in their working class neighbourhoods. The more humble the population was, the better taken care of were their common areas, as if they knew that no one was going to come and fix what they did not take care of themselves.

I continued walking and I found a small church in the middle of an open field, it was a tiny apartment in the shadow of two big buildings. I wanted to enter, but when I got closer I saw a sign on the door announcing the business days and hours indicating that the rest of the time it remained closed.

Going downstairs the entrance of the temple, ready to start my journey back to the motel, an elderly lady who was passing by wearing a pretty jazzy flower dress, greeted me saying,

- Young man, it's early for mass, two hours left still.

- Yes ma'am, I am new in the city and I just checked to see if it was open for a visit.

- It's been long since they opened on non ceremonial days. When I was a child, the house of the Lord was always open at any time, one could go in and pray, have a short quiet time and then continue their way, but now it's different, everyone is too in a hurry to even realise that there is a church. It seems to me that even the priest is in a hurry and for that reason he does not even have time to open before his time.

I thanked her for the information and as I had found her a nice lady I cordially asked her,

- Can I give you a gift?

- I am not as old as I look, which woman would not like to be given a gift?, but I don't think I know the reason for it, she said surprised.

-I have no reason to share my day, I just want you to be happy.

-Oh, then yes.

That said, without waiting any longer, I placed my right hand on her forehead and after a few seconds, I took it back and said,

-That is it, I hope you have a nice day.

She seemed transposed, with a strange smile of happiness, like the one a girl puts on when she is in her mother's arms, it took her a while to react and by then the man had gone.

As fast as I could, in haste, but not rushing, I went back to the hairdresser where I had left an important conversation with my friends, whom I had shared a major part of my morning with. But my responsibilities to my grandson, who I had to make lunch for, had made me leave that ludicrous moment to go back home. When I arrived at the door of the hairdresser I opened it and as I entered I greeted everyone and one of them seeing me asked,

-Did you forget something? Well, we thought you would be cooking already.

Another added before I could answer,

-Hey, girl, why have you got a stifling? Did anyone hit on you on the way and you came back to share it with us? And everyone laughed at the joke.

-Something way better I said, and at once everyone was in silence.

-Better than getting a compliment at our age ?, Tell us, because we are interested -stated the first.

-I met a man ...

-Well, introduce him to me, said another, interrupting me, and they all laughed again.

- Seriously, girls, this one had a special look

- Go on baby, said the woman from behind again and they all laughed again.

-And then he touched me with his hand and I felt a heat ...

-Stop that girl, there are innocent people around here, you are really flushing, said the first one, cutting me off and everyone laughed again.

I was feeling very comfortable for no reason, but it seems that my happiness was spreading to others, because even though we were matured women, normally that place served to discuss what we cared about, the problems of our youth, unemployment, how expensive life was ...

Instead, we were now laughing so nicely, not worried about any of the struggles we had to face daily.

I left them with the sensation of having had a good time and feeling very well, my friends in their farewell told me that when I had another day like this I should not hesitate to pass by and that if I found the man again I should ask for his phone number, as there were several single candidates willing to let themselves to be touched.

I was going down the street as if I were on top of a cloud, remembering the many witticism of my friends, laughing at the jokes they said, it was a wonderful feeling that enveloped me.

Being above fifty , I do not remember a moment as pleasant as this, despite the fact that I have lived very good ones, like the day I got married, when I had my daughter or when she had my grandson.

Maybe those three were the most outstanding, but all the good moments were those ones sharing joy with others, but now it was different, I felt happy from within and was able to participate in that happiness, as if I had a fountain with the mouth of the pipe broken in me and happiness was gushing out of me.

I got to the gate of my house , I opened an iron bar; his was a security measure that the community had had to take to prevent outsiders from getting in, or at least to make it a little bit harder.

Anyway, one day after another someone would complain about being robbed and this was a humble neighbourhood we were talking about.

The truth was that, in our houses we had the essentials to live, no kind of luxury, in spite of that people would still steal what they found, they could either steal a toaster or a radio.

On my way to take the lift I came across one of those difficult-to-treat kids, a refugee as I called them, they walked through life drawing away from the rest so as not to hurt them, because they looked very tough and rude.

Normally, if it were before I would have been intimidated and let him go up alone and then take the lift when it was free, but I was feeling too good to be afraid, so when the lift came down I opened the door for him to get in. He was surprised by his reaction and the look on his face.

-Good manners are for others, I said with a smile.

The man held the door putting his hand over my head and said,

-Please, go first.

I thanked him and I entered, once both of us were in the lift, he asked me,

- Where are you going today?

-Well, I'm going to see my grandson, I'm sure he is already acting out because his meal is not ready yet, you already know how kids are.

-No, not yet, the man answered with a small smile

- Don't worry, you will find someone who loves you and you will see how happy you will be when you have children -I said with a broad smile.

- Do you think so? To tell the truth, I hope so, but because of my size, people tend to think that I am not easy to deal with and they almost flee from me.

That surprised me, I thought that he was the one who maintained a certain distance towards others and instead he had a sociable and friendly character, willing to have a conversation with anyone who would give him some minutes.

-If you would permit me some advice, you should change your way of dressing, I like blue or white for you -I said winking at him.

The lift got my floor, I stepped out saying goodbye to that neighbour whom I had never crossed a single word with and now seemed so nice to me. I opened the door and heard how my daughter was scolding my grandson and complaining about my unpunctuality.

- I am here, calm down, I will take care of everything - I said so she could know that I heard her.

-But have you seen what time is it? She reproached me nervously. Do you have any idea how late it is? If you're not going to take care of the child, just tell me, and I'll see how to drop him off at school. You know that I have to go to work and that I cannot take care of everything.

-Well, dear I got delayed a little bit with my friends, nothing else, I said in a conciliatory voice.

-Of course you are as idle as usual, but some of us have a job, she recriminated me.

- I have been thinking about looking for a job myself lately, I said thoughtfully, knowing that this could solve the delicate economic situation at home.

This remark made my daughter mute, since she expected me to apologise or start protesting about the many tasks I handled in the house which ultimately led us to engage in arguments that lasted hours.

I would reproach her for how much I had sacrificed for her when I was young so she could move forward, paying for studies that other people did not have.

While she would accuse me of being selfish, reminding me that her job paid the bills, which prevented her from attending to her child as much as she wanted without having the possibility of paying for someone to take care of him.

But something had changed in our argument, she had remained silent, like thoughtful, and after a while she said,

- It's okay, don't worry, I'll do something quickly and we'll fix it. By the way, forget that idea of working, you don't have the age nor the need, while I am in this house I don't want you to be worried about that.

That surprised me, she always recriminated me about how costly it was to keep up with all my monthly expenses and now it seemed she was apologising.

-Don't worry my daughter, I am going to change and start working in the kit-chen immediately, where is my king by the way? I asked, looking for my grandson.

My grandson saw me being playful, he hid himself hoping to scare me off suddenly, but I knew him well and knew where he used to hide, I turned around and found him crouching behind a door and I said,

- I caught you

And so he ran towards his mother, laughing. It seemed unbelievable to me, for a long time I have not had this feeling, the feeling of living again as a family. Despite the fact that we have been living under the same roof for so many years, it was not the same as this moment.

- Do you want garlic? - my daughter asked.

- Only a few, you know they don't make me feel very well, I replied while undressing.

When I returned to the dining room, the food was already served and my daughter told me,

-Do you know what I've been thinking ?, I'm off this weekend, if you want, my son and I can go somewhere, and you can have the day off for whatever you want.

-I would rather spend it with you, it's been long since we went out somewhere as a family, even if we just play at the park.

My daughter must have liked that, because she came closer and gave me a soft kiss on the head.

-I want to play with the ducks -said my grandson with a few words.

-But you must know, I answered. Ducks are very smart and they know who eat their food and who does not. Would you like them to know that you eat little?

-No, today I'll eat it all, he said with a big smile.

That was wonderful because for the first time in a long time the three of us were at the table eating together, normally my daughter ate standing up or took her food in a lunch bag and ate on her way to work.

But today, even after stealing a part of her valuable time, she sat down and my grandson, who would always start a war in order to eat, was eating everything his mother had given him and even without protesting. Once we finished eating I went to clean the dishes and my daughter went to work.

I was already late, although I did not care, because I liked very much how the morning had been resolved, although I was quite angry at first, because when I arrived my son was alone at home when my mother supposed to be with him.

I asked him how he got home and he told me that he came with one of his friends, a neighbour of ours and that his mother had brought them both; al-though this was fine by me, because he arrived home, I did not like it very much, because if someone is responsible of a task, the person must comply and even more when it is about my son.

But strangely all that bad mood had vanished when she opened the door, it was as if a breath of fresh air had entered and had made me forget all my com-plaints.

Although I usually left my son doing his homework, today I barely had time to say goodbye and I went running to work. Luckily my place of work was next to the house, I just had to walk a little faster to be able to recover the extra time I spent more preparing the food.

I left the house in the direction to the supermarket in the neighbourhood and when I arrived I met the the supervisor who told me,

- Hello, miss, I see you are looking radiant today, I'm glad, that's the attitude I want for my employees.

Radiant ?, I did not really know what he was talking about, he surely wanted me to do extra hours and that's why he told me such a compliment. I did not give it more importance, I put on my apron and started charging in my box.

-Hello, it shows that today is a beautiful day, said an elderly man I always saw buying the same thing every day.

-You know, today I recommend an offer that we have, if you are interested in adding it to your diet.

-How do you know I'm on a diet? The strange man asked.

-I'm very observant, besides, you are ageing well, you must be doing so-mething.

-Oh, thank you, you've noticed, but it's not just about the food, I walk about eight kilometres every day, can you believe it at my age?

- Well, if I may, I recommend some supplements that contain iron, it is good to replace the mineral salts that are lost - I replied with a smile.

- You know, I am very happy that you attended to me, whenever I come I will try to make it that way. And in confidence, if you think I need something else do not hesitate to tell me, because despite the saying "the older the wiser", the truth is that my head is too small and sometimes I can not fix my eyes on everything.

-Why do you take care of yourself so much? -I asked wondering.

-You know, there's a girl, I met the other day at a party, but I was shy to ask her for a dance. She also seemed somewhat demure and I want to look good for this Friday.

-Do you have a new party? I asked surprised.

-Yes, every Friday at eight in the social centre, you can come if you want, I'm sure you would have a good time.

- Thank you very much, but I have no partner, I replied sadly.

- I would be happy to be your partner, the man told me, winking at me. Al-though, to tell the truth, I am already interested in another person.

- So are you going to tell her? I asked quietly.

-I don't know, I never have the courage - he said with shame.

-Try with some flowers, that always helps and if she does not accept you, you will only have lost a bit of your ego.

- I no longer have pride miss, time took it away, it's something else - he said in a mysterious tone.

- Listen to me, some flowers, even just one, but not a red rose, I said, winking at him.

-Oh, why not? He asked surprised.

-Don't be mischievous, you already know what it means.

And we both got that nervous laugh of complicity that two friends have when they touch personal issues and the man left happily towards the direction of the florist as he told me, to prepare for his attack next Friday.

I stayed alone for a while as no client came, surprised at what had happened.

Normally, I had the habit of not talking to customers, since it was very stress-ful to have to be marking and thinking about the answer I had to give.

The only reason I would talk to a customer was to give the total cost of the purchase, and I would do this with haste, since usually there were one or two more customers waiting on the queue

But at this moment, it seemed time was not important, as if what was really important was to dedicate a little time to this man who was always looking down, instead, he was encouraged and had a big smile.

"Let's see if it's true what my boss told me of him having a good day," I thought within myself.

The next customer arrived, she was like those women difficult to deal with, because they complained about everything. I still remember yesterday's argu-ment, because some yogurts had today's expiration date. She complained and argued that with so little time she was not going to have

the time to eat them all and that she would have to throw more than half, so she asked me for a discount of at least half the price.

The day before, it was because I mistakenly gave her a penny less of her change. She was very angry saying that, if the products were already expensive, she could not afford not having her change back correctly.

But strangely I did not feel afraid or intimidated by her presence as in other occasions. She was one of those people who were hard to forget and it wasn't nice meeting them, those type of people if you saw them on the street you would prefer changing sidewalk before facing them. I had barely begun to dial when she asked me,

-Hey, which perfume is it today?

Feeling surprised I told her and she spoke to me again saying,

-I might buy a bottle of that, you know I like to wear perfume, but in very little quantity, I prefer my own smell to mix with the perfume.

- That way people will know you by you smell, I said with a forced smile.

-Indeed, I do not like those people who because of lack of hygiene they hide their own smell behind a litre of cologne.

-Besides, they say it's an aphrodisiac, I mean personal smell, I pointed out.

-Yes, I have also heard about that, but they say that men are rather visual, that's why I always wear clothes of one size less than mine.

We both laughed a lot with that statement, the truth is that I didn't know the woman, perhaps I had judged her wrongly or maybe too easily.

Now that I knew her a little better, she seemed to be a beautiful person, and of course anybody could have a bad day even her, that would explain the clashes we have had in the past, nothing to remember anymore.

I said farewell with a smile and after a moment of being alone I heard on the public address system that I was needed in customer service. That shocked me, because when a cashier was needed they usually send a girl to give the errand to avoid causing the scandal of using the speakers.

When I arrived, the manager with a big smile told me,

-See, some of us have been talking and we believe that you will be the employee of the week.

- In all my years here I have never been employee of the week - I said surprised.

-Well, you are today, he replied winking at me.

-But that means ...

-Yes, indeed, collect your things, because you free for the rest of the day.

It seemed like a dream come true, I had always envied the luck of some people getting off thanks to being the employee of the week, but it had never really touched me until this moment.

I felt lucky, as if I had been touched by providence, capable of doing anything, of making my dreams and desires come true.

I left after hugging my colleagues and even a customer who crossed my path and gave everyone a nice smile. I went to a children's goods store, because I wanted my happiness to be shared with those that are mine, and although I didn't have much money I wanted to surprise my son so I went to buy him a toy.

Before entering the store, I saw a person selling lottery coupons. I had always been suspicious of those games that take away you salary and also your illusions with them, because years and years pass by without winning, neither you nor any family member, despite the gossip that says that they have heard of one person or the other who won but nobody ever knows the person directly.

I bought a number and I left the change to the seller, who delighted me with a poem as a thank you, the poem despite being short was beautiful and so I let him know.

After I went into the store and looking around a lot I decided on a ruben cube, although I knew that my son was more of wrestling toys, it seemed a good en-tertainment that would help you focus on difficult tasks.

Well, to tell the truth, I did not expect him to ever solve it, because when I was younger I tried several times and never succeeded.

I asked the clerk to wrap it for me as a gift and once I paid I went home exci-ted. There was my mother sitting on a chair watching TV and knitting a scarf, even though we did not need it, because we already had a collection, but she liked to weave it and it kept her busy.

After greeting her, I went to my son's room, where he spent the afternoons. Al-though there was no one to watch him, he knew that I would ask him about his homework in the evening before dinner and I would check if he had done them well. For that reason he divided his time as he wanted into studying and rest time, if he liked he could do his homework first and then spend the rest of the afternoon playing.

When I arrived he was colouring a notebook, seeing me enter he was surprised and looked at a clock in case time had gone without realising and he said,

-Mom, what are you doing here at this time? Are you okay?

-I'm doing great, I've only come to see you earlier, to know how you were- I replied with a smile.

- I'm fine, thanks, but you have to go unless they might complain at work, he said hurriedly.

That filled me with pride, knowing that I had such a responsible son.

-Look today I have no more work to do, I have been granted the afternoon off, so if you want we can go to the park for some time.

-I still have homework, he said with a sad face.

-Don't worry, I'll help you to finish it later if you come with me.

He quickly released the coloured pencil and with a big smile he threw his arms around my neck and said,

-I love you mom.

This made me feel emotional again, the truth is that everything that a mother could wish was this, seeing my son happy and he telling me these beautiful things.

-Look, I said. Since you have been well behaved , I brought you something.

-What is it? He asked excitedly.

-Open the wrapper and you'll see I said as I gave him the gift.

He did so quickly and found a cube of six faces, each one of a different colour and looking at all its sides he asked,

- And what is this for?

This put me in a difficult place, because although I had tried to solve it, I did not know what the instructions were or how it was solved, so if he asked me to do a demonstration I could not do it.

-Well ..., this ... -I said taking my time to find the right words-. Each side con-sists of of the cube having all the cells of the same colour.

My son looked at the sides again and after a moment he said,

-Mom, it has them already, look all the yellow cells are here and on this other side the red ones.

-Yes, right I said, laughing at the occurrence of my son. Wait a minute.

Picking up the cube, I turned the pieces around, I gave it back to him and said,

- Now you have to reorganise it.

He took it between his small hands trying to figure out how those pieces mo-ved and he realised he could only make horizontal or vertical movements, of a row or column. After trying several times and before his desperation I said,

-You can move several columns or rows at a time, that will make the work easier

He looked at me with a face of not being too convinced and started spinning the chips again. I knew that it was going take a good part of his afternoon, so I said,

-Well, leave that aside because we have to go, I'll ask grandma if she wants to go down too.

I went towards the living room and before I said anything to my mother, my son called me and said,

-Mom, mom, look

I was surprised, because I left him only a few seconds ago, I turned around and to my surprise I saw in his hands the ordered cube and a big smile. I took it to look at every side and after checking that all the colours were well placed, I said,

-Very well done, son. -And I kissed him on the cheek as a reward-. Now take the jacket so you don't catch a cold.

-Are you going out? My mother asked me, listening to what I had told her grandson.

-Yes, let's go to the park for a while, they gave me the afternoon off.

- What have you done this time?

-Nothing mom, just that I'm the employee of the week.

-Really? She asked, getting up and opening her arms to give me a hug-. I'm so proud of you, she said putting her arms around me.

I had a strange feeling, we always fought so much and now it seemed she had a big heart, I smiled at her and asked,

- Do you want to go downstairs?

-No thanks, it's too late for me, I don't want to catch a cold.

-Okay, take a rest, we will not take more than half an hour.

-I'll be here, I also want use this time to make dinner, I'm going prepare so-mething really good, you'll see, it's going to be very special, my girl is em-ployee of the week.

My son and I went out, there we were playing with a ball, it was rather for him to run and blow off steam, than my sporty interest in football.

I sat for a moment while he kicked against a wall, when a young girl came and sat next to me. Is he your baby? She asked with a worried face.

-Yes, that's right, why do you ask? I asked, surprised by her attitude.

-I do not know, does he give you many trouble? She asked again.

-No, well the normal one of his age -I answered with a smile

- What about at the beginning? She asked again uneasily.

-Well, he has always been very calm I barely had any trouble sleeping the first weeks after his birth, other mothers say this is what cost them the most after having their children.

-I'm pregnant, said the little girl, who should not be more than fourteen years.

- Congratulations, I said, giving her a hug.

She did not return the hug, she seemed somewhat self-conscious and I asked her,

-Are you okay?

-I don't know how to tell my parents, she said fearfully.

-Do you love him? -I asked looking into her eyes.

-Him? Of course, she said with a broad smile.

-I mean your son, I pointed out.

-I don't know, did you know ? - she returned the question.

-My circumstances were different, I was already married and we had been trying to be pregnant for two years, it was a blessing for us.

-You are so lucky, I don't know how he is going to react, I'm afraid that he will leave me for this.

- Do not think that way, besides men are the way they are, they do not need reasons to leave you. Look at me, everything was fine between us, our boy was growing up healthy and one blessed day he went out saying he was going to look for a job and he never came back.

- Something might have happened to him, said the young girl, looking scared.

-Nothing bad I assure you, he called me a few weeks after saying that he had gone to another city to start a new life, he longed for his bachelor freedom and wanted to recover it.

- And he left you with the child? She asked worriedly.

-Yes, we are getting ahead thanks to my mom who takes care of him when I'm at work. -I answered with a smile.

- I don't know if my parents would help me if I have the baby, she said worriedly.

-Parents are usually quite stubborn and insist on imposing their way of thinking on us, but in the end you are the one who must live your life and if you decide to raise their child they must accept it, no matter how hard it is for them - I said putting a hand on her shoulder.

-That's easy to say, by the way, is it true that it changes your life?

- What changes your life? I asked before answering the question she made in a whisper.

-After delivery, is it true that afterwards you don't feel anything when you are doing it?

-No, who told you that? I asked surprised.

-I don't know, in school they say since everything changes, what is under also changes and then you feel nothing.

-No way, it feels the same -I said in a reassuring tone.

- And don't the breasts fall? She asked me again embarrassed.

-That's a matter of age, you'll see when you reach your twenties or thirties, whether you like it or not you're going to have to wear a bra if you want to keep them up.

-But they say that breastfeeding make them fall earlier.

-There is nothing wrong with that, believe me, as I said, for all of us, I repeat, all of us, the time comes when they don't stand up anymore, it depends on each person if it will be earlier or later, for some it may be while raising child, others might be because of wearing too tight bras or simply because of the pass of time.

- Does it hurts as much as you see in movies? She asked uneasily.

- The moment of delivery? I asked to be sure of her doubt.

-Yes she answered while nodding.

-Well, it hurts a lot, but that's what the child birth exercises are for, you are been taught how to dilate and breathe at the same time, then it's just a matter of effort and a lot of pushing.

-But does it hurts? she insisted in this question.

-It hurts a lot, but you later forget about it, I said fondly.

- How do you forget? She asked surprised.

-Yes, of course, my gynaecologist explained that before the moment of contractions, the brain has a mechanism of erasing those painful memories, because if this wasn't the case, no one would ever have more than one child as a result of the bad memory that moment gives but this is not like this.

-Well, I don't even know if I want to have my first child, so I don't consider having another, she said thoughtfully.

-Don't hurry, everything will come if you and your partner want it, I said with a sincere smile.

-But ..., what if he leaves me? What am I going to do? What if my parents don't like this and reject me? How am I going to live? She asked scared.

- You see, first you have to decide whether telling your parents or not, make them understand the situation, and that they give you their support as their obligation as parents.

Then talk to your partner, who will surely be excited to know that you will have his child. But as always you have to respect his freedom, if he decides to leave you don't worry, it will be a sign that he doesn't deserve you- I said calmly.

-I don't know, if you say so, and you have already gone through this, it seems fine by me, although what worries me the most is that everyone noticed and that I cannot disguise it with big clothes.

-You don't need to hide it, it is not something you should be ashamed of, it is a great blessing that you have received, to be able to participate in the miracle of creation - I said with joy seeing that my words made an effect on that girl who was now calm.

On my way after leaving behind that nice woman with her child who played football in the park, I was repeating to myself everything she had told me, especially that part I liked that I was a contribution to the task of creation, I had not seen it this way before.

That woman, without knowing me, had solved many of my doubts about pregnancy and the effects on my body, even though I was still looking at my body to be too flat to be able to have a child.

I have been used to seeing well-formed women with big breasts feed those huge babies, how would such a baby fit inside of me? I don't have the conditions of having a baby.

Despite what that lady had just told me, I panicked, but I didn't listen to it, I went back home, went to the kitchen where my mother was preparing dinner and said,

-Mum, I have a good and a bad news, which one do you want first?

She had already heard me speak to her that way before and did not pay much attention to me and after a moment of silence that seemed eternal, I told her,

-I'm pregnant.

She heard this and what she had in her hand fell off making a big noise on the plate. That scared me, because I thought that my mother could hit me or scold me, I was scared so I took a step back, but instead, she approached me with a big smile, hugged me and said,

- My little girl, who has already become a woman, how come I didn't realise that you have grown so fast?

I was still feeling insecure about the situation, because I wasn't sure if this was a sign that she agreed with what I said or she felt sorry for my situation, so I asked her,

- Aren't you angry?

-No, not at all, my girl, she said, kissing my forehead.

I returned a big hug, feeling calmer now, still afraid of the future ahead of me, I didn't even know if my partner was going to accept what I had inside, but now I was sure that I had the support of my mother.

-Let me be the one to tell your father tonight during dinner- she said in a soft voice.

-Is it necessary? I asked uneasily, looking her in the eyes.

-Don't worry ,I'll be delicate when I mention it -she answered winking at me.

I was much more relieved after telling my mum, although I had not been too subtle but I preferred to be blunt because of the importance of the topic.

I went to my room, undressed to change and took the opportunity to look at myself in the mirror; I looked at myself from the side and did not notice anything, I placed my hand on my stomach, trying to figure out where that small being was but I didn't feel anything.

I took a cushion and put it on my belly, then I put on a blouse and I looked at myself again in the mirror, I didn't like that silhouette, it made me look fat and I'm sure it would weigh too much.

I had always measured my eating, avoided fats and bread so as not to get fat, and now my figure was going to change so monstrously and I wouldn't be able to do anything about it.

I'm sure when this advances I will not be able to practice as much sport as I like, run in the park or to do an hour of static bicycle; and when the doctors send me absolute rest in bed, I will get much fatter, besides that it is very bo-ring.

Now I remember I have not said anything to my mother about who the father was, she had assumed that I had a stable partner and that it was his, although I did not want to contradict her at any point I will have to tell her the truth.

This was strange, I felt guilty for having something inside me that no one had prepared me for, when I got the loving acceptance of my mother, she had made me stay calm. I finished dressing up and I went to the dining and when I finished my dad said

-Hello to the whole family, you must know that today I am a lucky man.

- Why do you say that? my mother asked, surprised at his joy.

-You should see the lottery man, he was plethoric, he guaranteed that today he felt happy, and that this could be a sign that he was going to distribute a prize so I bought him two numbers.

-Two for what? I asked with a smile.

- One for your mother and one for the home.

-For the home? I asked, surprised.

-It spends as much as your mother, with all the bills we have to pay, he said, nodding and guiding my mother's eye.

-Well, well, sit down, it seems that you're right and I'm going and you are going to win the lottery -said my mother when she turned around and smiled at me.

I understood what he was referring to, my mother was softening the situation to tell him, I was very quiet during dinner, although my father did not realise until a certain moment when he said,

- Daughter, you look radiant today, did anything happen to you?

- No really dad, well to tell you the truth when I was walking in the park back from school I sat for a moment and there was a lady with her son, and I don't know why she transmitted a lot of joy to me.

- It would be good to meet such people every day- my father remarked.

We continued having dinner, talking about banal issues, it seemed to be coming to an end and my mother had not told him yet, so I made a sign with my head to tell her and she answered with a nodding of her head. My father realised and asked in a suspicious tone,

- Do you have something to tell me?

-Well, it's more about mommy -I answered looking at her.

-Me? She asked, surprised by my response.

-Well, I mean it's about me, but mom is going to tell you, I said rectifying.

-Well... yes ... she said haltingly. Let me see how to tell you.

- Go straight to the point, please, it's late and I'm a bit tired, and although I'm happy about the lottery, I'd like to rest watching a movie before going to bed.

-Don't worry I'm not going to take away too much of your time

I simply think that you have already won the lottery- my mother said quickly, almost without being understood.

-What do you mean ?, it has not been played yet, until nine o'clock the lot is not going to be held, replied my father, surprised.

-No, it's another lottery- my mother said in a low voice.

-What other lottery? ... don't tell me ... that you're pregnant.

My mother was surprised by her husband's words and quickly said,

-No, no, it's the baby.

-The ... baby ... -he said with surprise.

I did not say anything, I just smiled at him. He seemed confused or rather scared, a little disconcerted, as he got up from the table and went around the room and after a while he came back and asked my mother,

- Does she know?

-Sure, dad, it's me who told mom, I said with a smile.

- Ah, of course how else, he said clearly affected. But ... how? ... no don't tell me.

-Quiet, you knew that sooner or later I was going to happen, she is a woman- said my mum supporting me

- Right ... well ... yes ... but I thought it would happen in another way, that she would find a boy, get married and start a family, just as we did.

- I have someone who loves me, I said, believing that it would make him happy.

But nothing was heard for a moment, it was a strange situation, because we all seemed happy for one reason or another, and what I thought was going to be the cause of anger at home did not go beyond an initial fright and little more.

Now my parents were thinking about how to face the new situation, without worrying about what the neighbours or society would say .

Before talking to that woman in the park, I thought that having a child was a tragedy, that it hurt a lot and marked your life, limiting it and making you al-most a slave to your child, with no time for yourself.

But that woman had told me about all the positive aspects of being a mother, besides she looked very happy with her son.

What I now feared the most was that the father of the child would go away from my side when he found out about the news, although remembering the words of that woman at the park it had become clear to me that the man who flees does so sooner or later and does not need excuses for it.

The truth is that now I felt strangely calm, because I saw my two most dearest things to me, my parents, accepting what I thought would be a shame for them; even my father, who was more conservative in his thinking, had not recrimi-nated me at all.

While in these thoughts my father said,

-I need a family hug.

The three of us hugged each other strongly and I felt strengthened in my situa-tion, they might not like the idea or they needed more time to assimilate it, they might know what would happen to me in the future, but they accepted and supported me with that gesture , which was precisely what I wanted most.

-Well, we'd like to see your boyfriend, we have to talk man to man -said my father after a few moments of hug.

-But I don't know if he would like to meet you, - I said hesitantly.

-Why not? -Asked my mother surprised.

-Well, he has a modern thinking and he believes that knowing parents is not until when you want to get engaged so in the meantime there is no need to.

- You have not told him yet? -my mother asked seeing my excuses.

-No, I wanted to see how you would react first, before facing my boyfriend-I said nervously.

- It's important for him to know - said my father said in a reassuring voice.

- Okay, give me some minutes to call him- I said as I went to my room.

From there I called the boy I had been dating only a couple of years, but I thought he was the love of my life, I felt that way and I had told him many ti-mes.

-Hi, sweetie, how are you?

-I'm fine baby, tell me, what do you need?

-I just wanted to hear your voice, tell me, when are we seeing this week?

- You caught me very busy, you know, I'm with guys here in the workshop, we're preparing a new bike to see if we can win the local races to qualify.

-That's okay, but I'd like to tell you something.

-Well, tell me, I'm all yours.

-It has to be in person, it's important.

-I don't know baby, look, if you like I have a little bit of time now, but I want it to be quick, so nobody complains.

-All right let me tell my parents and I will be right there.

-I'll be waiting for you, precious.

- See you love.

I hung up, left my room to tell my parents, they thought it was okay and they were happy for my courage, I don't know if it was such or just the need to share something so beautiful with the person I was in love with.

I got to the passage in a hurry and I met a neighbour with her small dog, this was a sad lady who we barely saw in the street, because she preferred to go out in the afternoons to take a walk with her dog, and did not keep too much contact with the other neighbours .

-Good afternoon, I said with a smile as I held the elevator door.

-Hello girl, where are you going in such a hurry? She replied as she entered.

-To see my boyfriend -I answered with a smile.

-Youthfulness, blessed youth age, I still remember when my husband went to work and I stayed at home preparing food waiting for him to come back home to give him a great kiss

Have you been together for many years? I asked surprised to know she had a partner.

- Almost twenty years, before he had the accident.

- An accident, I'm sorry, I said with regret.

-Yes, since then things have not being the same and then, little by little I was losing him.

I did not understand what she was meant, but I preferred not getting deep into it, knowing that it was painful, at that moment the dog began to bark and as it was a small space it resonated in the cabin.

-Be quiet, beautiful, Be quiet, the owner said to her dog.

-What's wrong? I asked surprised.

-It is very sensitive, it quickly perceive women that are pregnant.

That disconcerted me, I had never heard anything like it. I did know that dogs that work in customs detected smells of bombs or drugs, or in the army detected badly wounded people buried under the ruins of an earthquake, but never heard of something like this. I must have turned red, because the older woman told me,

-Don't worry, it's a blessing, we waited for it so long and it never came. If I had had at least one, I'm sure that my life would have been very different.

That saddened me, because it is true that many couples, for one reason or another, even wishing to have them they can't have children, instead, me without expecting it I was going to have a new being in my arms, which at first had seemed sad for me but now I was very happy to see how it was something positive and desired by others.

-Well, tell me, girl, have you already given her a name?

- No, ma'am, I just found out I am pregnant and I still do not know if it's a boy or a girl.

I had not think about it, I have been too worried waiting for other people's reaction, my parents and my partner, that I had not taken time to think about the baby, which after all was going to be the most important thing in my life for the next nine months and in the following years.

-I don't know, it looks like she's a girl, a beautiful girl, the older woman told me.

-How do you know? I asked, stunned by her comment.

-You know a lot of things at my age, it shows on your face- she replied with a wink.

I did not know how that woman whom I would have seen many times, but have spoken to her only once or twice in my life, now knew so much about me, maybe as she said it was all written on my face, and only those that knew how to read it would know. We got downstairs and the old lady came out saying

-Take care of him, for you have received a blessing, give him all the love you can for he will give it back to you back times ten.

That been said, I went with the dog to the park, the truth is that I felt good, that little girl had given me a great joy, because she looked so clean and innocent.

I would have wanted to be like her when I got married, but those were difficult times of economic crisis when we had no luxury and I think that was why we didn't have any children.

My husband and I were always talking about the same thing, about how expensive it would be to have a child in such a difficult time, we would talk about the expenses that it would generate us and especially about how we would see the child, very little as we both were working.

I think that was why we did not have a child, neither of us were willing to give up a part of our lives to have a little time and dedicate it to caring for a new member in the family.

At that time I had no dog, neither the means to take care of it, because I would wake up very early, even more than my husband, I would prepare his clothes and make breakfast, we had breakfast together and then he went to work at the factory and I to the hairdressers.

The amount of hairs that I had cut, unraveled curls and dyed wicks, this despite occupying a large part of the day made me happy, because that was where I would talk to my friends, also when I was fortunate of having a cheerful customer that made the hours shorter.

This is how I learnt how to find out people's secrets by their faces, since this after all is a reflection of who we are, what we want and also what we hide.

So many hours listening to the customers, observing their faces in the mirror to see if I made a straight cut, that it made it easier for me later to guess if they had a good or bad day as soon as they entered the door.

Later on, my subtlety increased and I could know without her telling me anything, if she had quarrelled with her husband or son, if she had a new love or if he had left her.

It's so much that my colleagues named me little witch and it was me who some customers came looking for, even if they had a beautiful hair, they wanted me to take care of their hair and thus use the opportunity to tell me about their lives.

Little by little I acquired that skill also on the street, although I never wanted to ask people if what I saw in them was true.

In spite of that, it has given me great joy to know that it still worked for me, to be able to know what was going on with this girl that I crossed in the elevator and that she later confirmed.

To tell the truth, at first I did not expect someone so young could be, but I had seen it so clear, I am truly happy for her.

With this joy in my body I kept walking my dog, focused in my thoughts, when it finished running around a bit and doing its business, I tied him again and we went up to the apartment. The dog despite being small made me feel quite big, though sometimes I had wanted to move and leave this place, I thought it was more about cowardness than a necessity.

I knew that in any other place I would find myself better than where I was now, but I also knew that I would miss it so much that I didn't want to live far away.

It was the house that we had when we got married, the only one we have ever lived in after leaving my parents' house, I had always wanted to travel and know the world before getting married, studying and having a good job were my goals in life, but circumstances ruled and they were very different from what I wanted.

A good man one day came to me after mass, he told me that he had been watching me and that he wanted to meet my parents. In spite of how unusual that was it did not bother me, so I introduced him to them, the man after making himself known, said he was interested in me and asked for permission to talk to me.

That was a great joy for me, because although I had fantasied a lot and flirted around with one boy or the other, never before had a man noticed me as a partner.

My parents, at first suspicious of his young age, asked him about his studies and his family. As best as he could, he got out of that trap and did it quite well, as he was then given permission to see me.

Those were difficult times for a relationship, not like now that you just agree to meet and that is it, then, a family member or a friend had to join us so that we would not be alone and so we would not misbehave.

But after seeing each other two or three times, we figured out a way to be out alone, he brought a family member and I brought a friend as companions and they fit and got along so well that one day we told them,

-If you like we can give you time to be alone while we leave.

And that's how we got to have our first moments alone, by the way, my friend and her husband are happily married, although it's been long I heard of them since they moved out of town, but last time we saw them, they had two precious children.

I went to the kitchen to get something to eat, the truth is that I hardly ever felt like eating anything, despite forcing myself every day, because on more than one occasion I had to be hospitalised as a result of anaemia.

After having dinner while watching the television, I put on the radio for a while, although I did not listen to it too much because I was not interested in what was said, it served me as a company.

It was nice to hear human voice in that house, although I did not get to do as others did, talk and reply the radio announcer as if he were there.

We shared many years and also much suffering here was contained, some of my friends told me it was like a mausoleum, because I kept almost everything just like when my husband was still alive, but what they did not know is that in one way or the other I was still waiting for him.

After the car accident and the subsequent rehabilitation, my husband had been affected by a concussion, from time to time he had memory gaps, as the doctors said, and he did not remember the past, but the most serious thing was when the time lapse started in the present, he forgot where he was or who he was with.

That was very hard, because it was a daily struggle for him to remember me, renewing the love with someone who barely recognised me.

I suffered a lot in silence, thanking God for the luck of having him by my side despite his sickness, but one day he did not return. He walked out the door one weekend when we were about to eat and I didn't hear anymore of him, a few hours later I called his friends and nobody knew where he could be and I became afraid, I called the police, hospitals and all the places that occurred to me but nobody knew anything about him.

A day without him, then a week, a month, a year and that's how my life has been since then, waiting for him to come back, hoping he would say that "honey, I'm home".

With time I got used to being alone, until a friend gave me a puppy, it was so small and so beautiful that I could not say no and so I looked after him as the child we never had wishing that my husband would see it if he ever returned.

The truth is that I did not feel sad, that stage of my life had already passed, now I was quite calm, full of vitality, I don't know why that girl had filled me with love, I think that was it, what she herself felt for her son, it was what I had in me.

I turned off the radio and lay down to rest with a big smile on my face, the truth is that it was the best ending of day I had ever had in many years and with a smile I fell asleep.

CHAPTER 2. SECOND DAY

I knew that I only had two days left before leaving the city, and yesterday I had done very little, only get on a bus to explore its streets and know the place.

Now I had the most difficult task, to reach the largest number of people, before leaving, so that the effects on these people would expand as if it were a virus, but this time it would be a positive virus, happiness.

I knew that my mission was important and that time played against me so I left the motel and went to the bus stop. After waiting for a long time sitting down, a labourer passed by who was holding a wheel rim and he said,

- You are waiting in vain, haven't you heard about the riot ?, The the whole centre has been shot down, no vehicle is going to pass by here today, it is better you stay at home.

That seemed incredible to me, I do not know why whenever I went to a city, for one reason or another, it seemed that the circumstances were allied to make my job difficult.

I still remember when in a city there was a Tsunami simulacrum, it was a very quiet coastal city where there was little to no chance of such a situation to happen, but for the first time in the history of that city, they chose the day I was in the city to do the simulacrum.

Like that time fire broke out in the old part of the city and a good part of the main artery remained closed for circulation, as a result of the fear of the flames spreading through the adjoining wooden buildings.

There has almost always been an understandable motive, but unexpected, as if someone didn't like the work I did, or that one time a group of motor riders, as if it were a pilgrimage, collapsed the entire city .

Personally, I did not care if there were a lot of people, because it made my task easier, because it expands the effects earlier, but it's a different thing when I cannot touch anyone because they are on a motorcycle.

Then I can not start my task, it is like a piece of domino that transfers one after the other, and the more people, the more people get infected.

I just needed to touch someone who voluntarily accepted my gift, and then all is settled, because that person would transmit his or her happiness to everyone they find or was close to them less than a metre of distance. I was surprised but the fact that I could not reach people, but knowing that my fate was to walk, I decided to do so when I heard,

-Don't act like that, the man said, dropping the tire on the floor. If you're such in a hurry you just have to tell me, and I'll take you.

-You would? I asked in amazement.

-Of course, that's what people of good will are for, to help each other when they need it, wait a minute.

Right after he went down a narrow street, and after a while he came back with a pretty old car, which was falling apart. The man opened the passenger door from inside and said,

-Excuse my oldie, is just that I am repairing it little by little, but don't worry in a few years I will be just as new.

- I hope it does not go very fast - I said to him jokingly.

- Don't worry that it doesn't go over forty, otherwise it starts bringing out smoke, and we will not be able to see anything, by the way, where are you going?

-I am looking for a church that is open, do you know of any?

- Oh my, all the ones I know are behind the manifestation, all ... except for one. It is old and small, but it was my favourite one, I have not been in that area for a long time. I was born there nearby

you know, and I was baptised in that church. I did not do the rest of the sacraments, but God is not going to find out, right? He asked jokingly.

-He is supposed to be everywhere, I replied without laughing at his joke.

-Well, yes, but do you think he is going to pay attention to a humble mechanic whose only ambition is to repair a tacky car?

-Good man, I pointed out.

-Well, I do what I can, but as I say, church does not suit me.

- You don't have to apologise, we all have felt hurt sometimes or betrayed when plans do not come out as we expect.

-Yes, indeed, you wouldn't understand.

-Who is it? I asked expectantly.

- What?

- Whose loss do you feel sorry for?

-I don't know if it's a pity, sometimes I think it's rage or impotence, the man said, squeezing the steering wheel very hard.

-But God is not guilty of it, he only lets his creatures act, he does not choose the moment.

-That's not enough for me, I prayed a lot, I even asked him to take me and leave my love behind. He did not even give us time to get married, even though I wanted it.

- Why didn't you?

-She fell into a coma, after a high blood pressure, she was diabetic and nobody had told us. It was a hot day, I can still remember how the air seemed to burn. We had the windows of the house wide open, I was waiting for her parents to visit, so I could ask them her hand in marriage.

She wanted to come home earlier to prepare everything because she wanted me to make a good impression on them. She went shopping, and that day the lift wasn't working, so she had to climb the stairs.

Arriving home, she left the groceries in the kitchen, gave me a kiss and told me that she was going to relax a while, that she needed to rest.

I was preparing some canapés, and putting the groceries in the refrigerator, and when I finished, I set the table for lunch, and in the small living room where I had the TV and my in laws would sit, I put some trays with something to eat.

Everything was ready, and I was surprised that my wife did not come back because that's how I considered her despite that fact that our engagement was not yet official. I went to look for her in the bedroom, and I saw her sleeping peacefully, I went out and left her a little while longer, until her parents arrived.

I opened the door for them, and knowing that they would take some time until they came up because the lift was not working, I used the opportunity to call her, so she could prepare, but she did not respond.

-Come on darling, you have to get up, they're going to come up at any moment I said trying to make a hurry.

But she seemed deeply asleep, I approached her and with a kiss I tried to wake her, but she did not move either, so I shook her gently, and not even at that. What worried me the most was that her breathing did not change and seemed very soft and weak.

I got scared and started to shake her harder, I called emergency, and the next thing was that the emergency doctor told me that she was in a coma.

I didn't understand how this could have happened, I told them she was a healthy girl, that she exercised once in a while and ate very well.

-That's not the problem, her body was not working well, and she never received treatment, said the doctor.

-But we did not know anything, at least she never told me.

-This type of case is very common, the discomfort of diseases, sometimes ca-mouflage adapting to the rhythm of life depending on own's possibilities, and thus without any effort it seems that everything is fine.

-So, she could have been ill for a long time?

-I can't give you total assurance, but I think so.

- And why did this happen? I insisted in asking.

- Do you know if she had breakfast this morning?

I asked her parents who had followed me, and as me, were devastated by the shock, and they told me that she didn't eat anything that morning, nor at noon, because she said that she was so nervous that her stomach was empty.

The doctor told me even before I could ask him.

-That could be the cause.

-And the lift? Said her father.

-Which lift? Asked the doctor.

-It was not working today, we live in the eighth floor and she had to climb with the groceries.

The doctor lowered his head and said,

-I would not be surprised if what happened was the conjunction of these two or more factors.

-And now what? -I asked.

-Now it is a matter of waiting, we have given her treatment, with a little luck her body will recover.

- Will she not have sequels? Asked the father.

-We cannot know yet, it's very soon, let us study her a little more and we will inform you of the results.

That's how it all ended, at that moment I felt very guilty for not giving her all my attention when she came back home loaded, if I had given her a glass of water, maybe she would be alright now, or simply if I had changed our en-gagement day to another day when the lift was not broken, it would have been enough. And the food..., because she had not eaten.

We had already spoken about everything, and her parents agreed, it was just a formality, to meet and eat some pasta and nothing else, why had she not eaten anything? She did not tell me she was nervous about anything, nor did she tell me she was feeling bad when she arrived.

I gave it a lot of thought, but above all the idea of wanting to marry her any-way possible. I knew it was not the best time to talk to her parents about this subject, butt I thought that could help her recover.

I had heard of people who had come back from the coma, after listening to their favourite singer's song, or when a dear person spoke to them, maybe, if we got married, and she listened to the words of the priest, she would react, if only to say, "Yes, I do".

The idea seemed absurd to me, but I could not get it out of my mind. I ap-proached her father, and I told him how excited she was for our commitment and that she would have loved to get married soon.

The man started crying as soon as I mentioned her, so I preferred not to say anything. I asked a nurse, where the chapel was. And I went to sit down, it was a small room where there were some benches to pray.

So I did, and I prayed for her, and I offered my life in return and whatever else I had or could do. When I was calm and that moment the priest was coming in, I took that opportunity to tell him about the situation and what I had thought and he told me,

- Son, it's not going to be possible, as long as she's in that state, she does not own her will, so I cannot marry you.

-But ..., what if that saves her?

-If she does not give her consent it has no validity before God -that been said he picked up something and left the place.

I was somewhat annoyed at the priest, for denying me what I most wanted, and I asked for the same thing again in my prayer, adding that he should let me marry the person I loved, but I received no response.

After a moment I got up and went to the waiting room where I had left her pa-rents, but they were not there, I was surprised and I asked a man there after them and he told me that a doctor had called them in a hurry.

I went in, but a nurse asked me,

- Where are you going?

-I don't know, I was told that something has happened to my wife, because they hurriedly called my in-laws.

-It must be the woman who was in a coma.

-Yes, she is, when I heard that, my heart sank, because I understood that she was already out of the coma, where can I find her?

-You will have to talk to your doctor first, follow the passage straight and then the door at the left.

So I did, and before arriving I saw her parents crying, I approached and I wan-ted to ask them, but they made a gesture of not wanting me to get close, so I respected them. That reaction surprised me. I did not understand what was going on if the nurse had told me that she had recovered. Why were they beha-ving like that?

I entered the room and saw the doctor filling out a form at the foot of the bed, and a white sheet that covered my wife from her feet to her head.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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