

IN A MINUTE

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Characters

Amal

Elvira

Matías

**Anything that appears in brackets [brackets] is added by the translator, for an enhanced understanding on the part of the reader, director, actor, or spectator.*

I

Amal

Today I armed myself with strength

and I went out to meet her.

I got so nervous, even my eyeliner was trembling.

I've wanted to do it for days and I can't.

It makes me feel ashamed, and additionally, she's listening to music and maybe it bothers her if I interrupt.

She has a frightened look on her face, since I met her that same look, as if the world were going to do something bad to her.

But at the same time she has such a pure, crystalline look, like the sea in my town, that's why I like her, that's why...

today I dared.

Elvira

She caught me off guard, on the corner.

Before reaching my house.

She put her finger on her mouth.

I was walking, listening to my music, when I'm depressed I can listen to the same song a hundred times.

And I was afraid, what did she want me to do?

Her dark eyes were calling me.

Her hand stretched out, like this.

Matías was right: it's scary, that scarf, those eyes, that dark skin.

After what happened, one looks suspiciously at everything that seems a little strange to us.

She told me that she wants help.

Help?

So many things jumped into my head: My God, why would she want help?

Why from me?

There are so many women like me in the building.

Amal

I felt her tremor and my own.

And that gave me strength.

Her fear and mine brought us together.

I took a deep breath, to get my strength from deep down inside me.

The last glimmer that I had

I had tried so many times.

I think that this time would be the last.

The last time.

Elvira

I looked all around me.

One has to reassure oneself that someone can see you in such a moment.

She approached a little more.

She was shaking, me, too, and I tried to run.

But I felt a strength that was coming from the ground that stopped me from moving.

Run! My head was telling me, but my feet stayed right there.

I couldn't move! My God! What am I doing, standing here like this?

I could only put out my arm, to stop her from coming closer.

She lowered her eyes.

When she stepped a little closer, I was frightened and I lowered mine, too.

Amal

I approached.

She stretched out her arm like a wall.

I am so used to walls that I grabbed her hand and **caressed it**.

I want to make a connection.

To integrate the Arab women into the neighborhood.

So that they learn your customs.

So that their children can play with yours.

So that...

Are you listening to me?

What did you say?

Elvira

I wanted to say: Don't get closer, but she grabbed my hand and **caressed it**.

I pulled it away in disgust.

I wasn't listening to her, what is that crazy woman saying?

The words flew uncontrollably out of my mouth, like spit.

Ha! That's what you do on Wednesdays at 12.30 at night.

I was ashamed of what I said.

It was as if Matías had spoken from my mouth.

Matías makes a note of everything.

Matías keeps an eye on her as if she were a terrorist.

He knows all her schedules.

She secretly leaves at 12.30 at night on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Watch her! Watch her!

Without a veil, what did I tell you?

Amal

I left.

Maybe she didn't understand me well.

Maybe it wasn't a good idea.

Maybe it's only a dream.

A dream of a crazy Arabic woman who doesn't know where she wants to go.

Who believes...

Believes in what?

Elvira

I wanted to tell her I'm sorry, but I didn't say anything.

I wanted to say that it was a precious idea.

But I didn't say anything.

I work in a nursery school and I know what integration does.

Integrating children is my job.

Columbians, chinese, blacks, traits, eyes, hands, skin, color, above all I focus on the color.

I teach them songs and they look at me surprised.

And her, why not help her?

She has traces of pictures on her hands, dark hands that approached almost trembling.

It really frightens me to touch her.

Amal

She had fear in her eyes.

She looked at my hands with disgust.

I was going to tell her that it was henna, a custom.

I was going to show her my ankles.

But she told me

That's what you do on Wednesdays at 12.30 at night.

And then I didn't know what to say.

II

Matías

I know her schedule by memory.

Since they moved here, I have been keeping track of everything.

I see the door from my window, their living room, too.

And the peephole.

The peephole has become my helpful camera.

Three notebooks with all of their movements.

When I can't take notes, I tell Elvira to do it.

“national security” or have you already forgotten about what happened

People come and go all day long

leaving their foul odor all over the stairwell.

In the afternoon the house is filled with women.

Women with colored veils.

Shouting women that don't leave me in peace to do my crossword puzzle.

They break my siesta and my peace.

I hear them without understanding anything and that puts me in a bad mood.

Surely a plot.

“Al Andalus”

Under their tunics, their veils, surely they hide something.

Elvira

But what could they be hiding?

What?

Matías

Take notes, just take notes

And let me make the conclusions.

Amal

They come and they ask me questions.

They want to know.

To know what is eaten here.

What their daughters will study in school.

If they have to wear their veil or not.

What is that about the gym.

I would like to know, too.

To know why they ask me.

Why me.

Why is there a man always looking at me from the other side of my window, writing
down all that I do?

I ask them to lower their voices

but they sit without seeing me and sing songs that remind us of our homeland.

And we eat our candy made of honey and pistachios that we bring hidden in our tunics.

Some sweets that remind me of the golden sun of my country when it sets in the
mountains.

Matías

Today Elvira was three minutes and 30 seconds late off her regular hour.

Good God, almost four minutes!

The tea is surely cold now

what could have happened to her?

Elvira

I had to have explained it to her.

Listen! I can't get home late, my husband.

If Matías sees me with this woman, he'll kill me.

How many times has he told me not to approach her. How many!

But when she looked at me.

But when her eyes and mine crossed, I thought, “She’s just like me!”

What am I saying!: her skin is rough, a little darker.

Quite a bit darker!

But her look is warm.

She can’t be the same as me!

Matías says that they are...

But now in front of me...

Maybe that’s why I said it to her

Surely Matías knows that I crossed paths with her!

Amal

I teach Spanish to Arabs in an academy.

Since I was little I have liked Spain.

I always looked at the sea and I saw myself taking a gigantic leap to get here.

I leave at six and a minute because the bus comes by at ten after.

But today I wanted to leave earlier to cross paths with her.

I had a feeling.

I spent days waiting for this moment, this hunch.

And today I had it.

Sometimes **I see her** coming from the other sidewalk.

We always look at each other out of the corner of our eyes, she likes me.

That day **I waited for her** on the corner.

I grabbed her by the hand.

Her skin was soft.

Her face full of fear.

I put my finger on my mouth and I whispered:

I need help.

Elvira

Help?

I was frightened upon seeing the time.

I was late and I forgot to cross the sidewalk, I was walking with my head in another place.

My God! Matías must be waiting for me, I thought.

With the tea already prepared.

The notebook, the watch, the crossword puzzles, and those binoculars that catch nothing but arriving from work.

Nothing, I was occupied, I told him without looking at him.

A wearisome mother. Her child did not stop crying all day long.

You already know, explanations, reasons.

Her child is not adjusting to the nursery school, he wants to be with his mother.

I insisted to her: Give him some time, ma'am, you'll see.

But I don't know if time serves a purpose.

Matías

But you're upset.

Your face is distorted.

The tea is cold now.

You know I'm waiting for you.

I looked at her fixedly.

Her odor of frightened little bird reached me and I understood.

Shit! You've met up with that Arab woman!

See how I cannot leave you alone!

Elvira

But, what are you saying?

I twisted my expression, my mouth, my anger.

My gradebook feel to my feet.

You have no idea what it is to listen to a child cry all day because he doesn't feel comfortable.

Because he can't find his place.

Because he can't integrate.

Why did I have to say that damned word?

Matías

She left, then you entered.

On the corner, right?

You know that she leaves at six and a minute.

Don't you know that?

You know that.

Elvira

I couldn't do anything else.

Every day I cross the sidewalk: Like you asked me.

And you know that I always look to the other side.

I look, like many of the female neighbors look.

To the other side, simply.

But what is so bad about crossing paths with her?, I thought.

Yes, today I passed by closer but I also looked to the other side, isn't that what you wanted? Tell me, isn't that it?

You have always said that you would like to see her close up, no?

Matías

Of course! I am the one that makes notes, that takes notes.

If something were to happen to you.

Any day she could give you a package.

And then, what do we do then?

Elvira

But I only passed by her!

Nothing else happened!

The drawing by the boy who cried all day stayed on the ground.

A sad drawing, a dark sun, some gray clouds

I saw myself there, reflected.

Matías

But you looked at each other, right?

You couldn't resist it, in spite of...

Fuck! Look, I've told you many times.

Do you know who I'm doing this for?

Look at me! You know who I'm doing it for, no?

Elvira

I wanted to sit by his side, like every day.

But his expression was no longer the same as always, the tea was no longer the same as before and his crossword puzzle was stuck on a letter, a word that he crossed out with anger:

On my feet, looking at him, I opened my mouth to tell him: If you saw how pretty she is, very pretty!

But I looked at his crossed-out crossword puzzle and I kept quiet.

Matias

I don't want to know about it, damn it!

Don't tell me.

You already know that I don't like it when you give me the words for the crossword puzzle, it bugs me that you do the list with me.

Of course she seemed pretty to you,
you're a fool!

And you haven't noticed how she smelled, right?

Her odor reaches me from the other side of the window.

The odor of her hands cooking, of their dark bodies, the odor of her...

You wouldn't understand it!

Go on! Come, sit next to me.

III

Amal

Another day went by without an answer and the women kept coming to my house.

Women who want to integrate without losing their customs.

If only I knew how to do that!

I would have wanted to tell them that sometimes I felt like taking it all off, the scarf, the tunic... put on a short skirt and a t-shirt and take in the sun on all sides.

But how am I going to say that!

Then I cover my ears so that I cannot hear their laments.

So that I don't hear my own.

And when I calm down, I talk to them about the sun and I tell them that the swings in the park help their children to dream they're the same.

And they are quiet and they look at me, surprised by what I tell them, but happy to have an answer.

Although it useless.

I believed that my house was going to be called the house of tears, but in the neighborhood it began to be known as the house of hope: Amal.

Elvira

I counted the days since our encounter.

Matías has increased his vigilance.

And when he looked at me he made me feel at fault.

Don't mix with those people Elvira.

I know why I told you it.

Don't you realize how they live?

You don't have to do anything more than sit here and watch.

Their words and the drawing of that dark and sad sun that sat for days on the table in the living room were my advisors.

Amal

Since our encounter

the man in the window has followed me with his watching everywhere.

I felt his nose on my body.

His hands on my skin.

His eyes on the nape of my neck.

And it disgusted me.

She was sitting by his side, with a lost look.

And I thought that I was mistaken by asking her for help.

When I passed near the window, my father angrily shut the curtains but immediately I opened them because for us, light is a balsam against nostalgia.

Matías

Although you close the curtains, I know what you're doing:

The smell of your pipe keeps reaching me.

The sound of your prayers keeps making me dizzy.

The smell of your women opens my nostrils

like when I was walking with my dog through the country and a prey appeared

and I note the days and the times
the minutes in which everything happens
and I construct a history, my history
The History of those who think like me.

Elvira

Hidden

like a poacher, I read his notebook
where I had seen the women singing songs, he saw messages in code that they were
passing amongst one another
when I heard tenuous prayers, he incendiary proclamations.
What was it that he saw? What was it that I saw?
I felt that something was separating me from Matías.
Something that was moving me away from that chair, from that window, from that
notebook.
And I thought about the corner like a refuge against my pain.

Amal

But that day it was her.
She was the one who waited for me.
She was the one who put her finger on her mouth.
I felt her eyes.
I felt her cold hand on top of mine.
My face full of surprise, from her proximity.
The rain drops made our bodies draw closer, forming a strange parentheses of time.

What would she want me to say?

“Insallah” [Thank you].

Please! Tell me yes.

Elvira

I didn't say anything, I couldn't

I caressed her hands and I left.

I was going to tell her

Please, leave me in peace, stop looking at me, even though you're not looking at me!

Stop talking to me, even though you're not talking to me!

Don't you see that I can't do anything for you!

But her eyes had that clarity of the sun on a tepid morning.

And mine...

I said nothing.

I caressed her hands and I left.

And the raindrops formed a dark trickle under my fingernails.

Then I felt that the black sun that was in my eyes was capable of smiling.

And frightened, I ran off towards home.

Matías

Are you okay?

Lately you've been coming home upset.

You've been avoiding my look.

Don't become interested in that Arabic woman because of my investigations.

Look at everything that I wrote down.

Today is Wednesday, are coming with me to the window?

At 12.30, remember?

The day that they catch her...

Where do you think she can be going at this hour?

I can tell you, with no fear of being wrong.

Elvira

Amal, I wanted to tell him, her name is Amal.

She told me it the first day, but until now...

Amal means Hope.

Hope of what?

I have no idea.

But I withdraw my look and I tell you that I'm tired.

That the children are exhausting me.

That I'm making an enormous effort to make that child stop crying and start enjoying.

That one with the drawing, I tell him.

I must be a liar!

And I don't know why I'm lying to you, Matías.

I swear that I love you.

I love you Matías!

IV

Elvira

At three days I was able to smile.

I didn't say anything, but I smiled.

I touched her painted hands.

Her dark skin almost rough to my touch.

And I ran towards home.

On the fourth day, she gave me candy.

Amal

Her white hand and a drop of my henna on the horizon.

My dark skin and a little bit of her make-up that lightly touches me.

On the third day when she smiled, I realized what I had to do.

The honey and pistachio candy.

It was just in that moment, in those seconds in which she smiled,
when I should have given her the candy.

One second later and they could have fallen to the ground.

Just as fragile as we were.

I stretched out my hand and breathed.

She had grasped them!

Elvira

She could have given you a package!, I thought of Matías's words, and then what?

A package! I shook.

But between her smile and mine there was no longer space for rejection.

The package stayed glued to my hand and I felt something bitter rising to my mouth.

Then I ran and ran and ran, while the tears flooded my eyes.

Why, why?

In the darkness of the foyer I looked at it.

I couldn't go upstairs with that package!

And what if...?

If Matías saw it...

All the nice moments that had happened on that corner came rushing into my head.

Our corner, our refuge.

A package...!

I collapsed: I believed that we were friends.

Matías

She got home and threw up.

Elvira, are you okay?

Is it possible that you're...

And me sharp, I'm a fool.

Darling!

Elvira

When I opened it in the bathroom, a ray of light came out of the package.

The glow of a fire.

And I shouted.

The I realized.

It was the afternoon sun shining on a some small honey candies.

I laughed and I cried at the same time.

Matías

Elvira?

Pardon me, Elvira, I spent the whole day at the window and you...

You...

You were laughing and crying at the same time

and I was listening, shaking, on the other side of the door.

Is it what I am thinking, my love?

I read in a magazine that pregnant women laugh and cry at the same time, is that true?

I could never do it.

Elvira

A false alarm.

That's all.

Matías

Love!

I tried to hug her.

Elvira

He tried to hug me but

the notebook, the many colored pens placed methodically in his shirt pocket, the

binoculars and the... overcoat that I put over my stomach like a barrier

prevented it.

Matías

I tried to hug her.

To tell her, don't worry, Matías Jr. will come soon enough.

It wasn't the first time that we tried.

But the binoculars, the notebook, the colored pens in order in my shirt pocket and her tense hands over her coat, as if they were squeezing something against her stomach, prevented me from it.

Maybe, if I had moved the binoculars.

But, I didn't dare, I didn't want to know what the painful loss was like, of something yours that's going to be born.

Elvira

I would have, I would have...

My God, I would have ruined those marvelous sweets that look like little summer suns!

In the mornings, I kept a few candies in my coat pocket.

Yesterday, in the rain, a piece of pistachio and honey candy was like a sun traveling through me.

Today, in the shadow of the doorway, it was a piece of wire that scratched me from within.

Tomorrow

tomorrow, perhaps it will cure this wound that has opened inside me.

And then I didn't know what to say.

V**Amal**

It surprised me to discover that we were the same.

She lies, I lie.

She keeps quiet, I keep quiet.

I only have left to learn where she carries her veil hidden.

Elvira

I wanted to tell him yes, but I couldn't find the strength.

And I also couldn't stop seeing her.

That day **I waited for her** a bit further from the corner.

From behind the newspaper stand **I saw her** coming.

I touched her shoulder from behind.

She gave a start, I got frightened.

I was carrying a barrette for her in my hand that fell to the ground.

Some of its stones jumped towards her feet.

Amethyst, I told her.

Amal

I got frightened.

I think that my father has sent someone to follow me.

Someone to watch my steps.

Someone to tell him what I do when I'm not near him.

My books fell to the ground, someone shrieked behind me and then I understood.

It was her.

When I came around, something was shining at my feet.

Amethyst, I heard.

Our hands came together on the ground and then I saw her shoes
they were exactly like mine!

Suddenly I really felt like laughing.

She told me something about a stone that she kept in my pocket.

I stretched out to her a book that I was carrying and I left, I didn't want to get her into
trouble.

Elvira

Amethyst is a protective stone.

There, below, crouching, life has a different value, I thought.

I also laughed when I saw her shoes next to mine.

We are so different and seemingly with the same taste in some things.

How terrible!

I put the amethyst into her pocket, and I kept another one of the same stone in mine.

It is protective and transforming, I reminded her in that no-man's-land.

That space that we had created for ourselves.

Where in one minute you can say so many things...

Then she offered the book out to me and left.

Wait! Don't go!

I want to answer you, but I'm not capable, I would have told her.

But I looked at the book, I read: "Maroc."

Amal

But immediately I retraced my steps.

Morocco, “Al Maghreb Al Aksa”

My land.

A book so that she can know me better.

And a piece of paper.

Elvira

A paper that marked her favorite picture.

It’s pretty.

Amal

I approached.

It’s my city.

Elvira

Your city?

I remember...

Amal

And right there, at that moment

Everything fell.

Her resistance and mine.

Elvira

I passed my hand over the picture, over its colors.

There was something about that light that reminded me of my parents’ town.

Pure Mediterranean.

And I laughed anew.

Her, too.

We joined hands and at that moment I knew what was going to happen.

My heart was beating strongly, I don't know why, but beating as it had before.

I didn't want to think anymore in that moment because surely I'd return to feeling fear.

And fear... what the hell does it serve?

Amal

I played with the stone in my hand all day.

It shone with the sun.

Amethyst, I remembered her words.

I squeezed it against my chest.

Thus it gave me courage, security.

I needed to believe.

I felt a tepid heat.

The same heat as when as had looked at each other and smiled.

And if I was mistaken?

Doubt returned.

Then newly the heat in my chest.

I trembled.

I played with the stone in my hands

until the sun set and again darkness returned to my thoughts.

And then I didn't know what to say.

VI

Matías

Elvira was transformed.

Ever since that stuff with the little boy, her face is was that of another,
it had light, it was shining and I didn't understand why.

But are you really okay?

I asked her again and again.

Her answer, a clouded look.

I concentrated on the Arab woman.

Wednesdays and Thursdays I didn't go to bed until she returned from her nighttime
excursions.

The nights were long and meanwhile I drew a woman's pregnant stomach or I imagined
the laughter of a baby

or I painted a cradle that I crossed out the following minute with anger.

From time to time I went to the bedroom and kept watch over her sleep.

She seemed tranquil.

I felt that something had happened and that it was all there,
at that window.

I needed to find the reason behind my investigations.

A sign.

Something that indicated to me that all these months have been worthwhile.

But the only sign I got was a greeting with her hand, one night in which the Arab woman entered the door.

Her face and mine.

Her eyes and mine.

And her complicitous hand that sent me a sign.

Why complicity?

And I felt like a thief of something, but I didn't know what it was then that I began to worry.

Because of a gesture?

I noted it down in my diary with the date, as if it had been the beginning or the end of something.

Elvira

Matías.

I'm sorry, but I can't tell you that I really enjoy being with the Arab woman.

that it was me that stopped her a few days ago.

That now I meet up with her one day and others, too.

That we wait for each other hidden.

That we talk hidden.

That we laugh hidden.

That in one minute we have time for so many things!

Not even I understand it.

How am I going to explain it to you?

I would like to tell you about it.

Matías...!

To tell you that I miss when we used to sit together in front of the television.

Or when you came to help me prepare a sandwich for supper.

Ever since you've been at the window, now we hardly ever see each other.

And now I'm the only one that I have in my head is Amal.

Amal, who tells me why she paints her hands.

Henna!

I like henna.

I'd like to paint my entire body in henna with those flowers that cross from one side to
the other

spirals that come and go

curves that enhance her curves that climb up her feet and her hands

and lace up her ankles.

To tell you:

Do you like it Matías, do you like my body painted with henna?

But I already know what'll be your answer.

Amal

When she doubts, I doubt, too.

When she laughs, my heart relaxes.

Therefore we join our hands, therefore I ask her and she replies

therefore we wait for each other one afternoon and another.

Hidden.

Like adolescents.

And I don't know if it's she who has to help me or not.

Or if I need another type of help.

I have fallen in love with a Spaniard, I told her.

We see each other on Wednesdays and Thursdays after 12.30 at night.

In that moment is when the other Amal is born,

the one that fears nothing.

Not even being seen without her veil.

Elvira

You're crazy!

You go out without your veil?

Amal

Crazy, why?

You don't wear one.

Elvira

It's different.

Will you let me see your hair?

Amal

My hair?

If something happens to me.

Elvira

What is going to happen to you!

I felt the tremble in her hands, in her mouth.

Amal

If something happens to me, please don't forget about me.

Elvira

I thought about the veil I carried over my heart

And the strength that was Amal for having taken hers off for a few hours.

And then I didn't know what to say.

VII**Matías**

Late again!

cold tea again

another crossword puzzle I don't finish, stuck on another damn word.

She will have had to cross the street so that she can't meet up with that Arab woman, I think.

And once again the gesture of that woman in my head.

It was in that moment that I understood.

I understood why she no longer wanted to sit with me in front of the window.

Impossible, she cannot betray me!

Her sweet eyes, her mouth...

She never says anything inappropriate.

No... or yes

Why is she avoiding me.

Why does she go to sleep and leave me alone.

Why is she no longer my ally before...

My ally before what?

And I was afraid of never again feeling her laughter in the morning.

Or her warm look when she used to tell me the coffee was ready.

Elvira

Matías had changed.

He was looking at me with different eyes.

He was treating me differently.

I was so preoccupied about Amal,

to understand her and to understand myself,

waiting each day for one minute after six to arrive,

that I had forgotten about Matías.

I was someone else and he had noticed, surely!

I must be a fool!

I should have been more careful,

should have pretended.

Matías

I had to do it.

I didn't like it, but it was necessary.

I hated myself for what I was thinking, but...

If she finds out, she'll never pardon me.

I looked for the place from which she wouldn't see me.

Hidden like a vulgar thief.

Who would have said it!

I called myself a pig, but I stayed there, very still.

And I waited.

I waited until one minute after six.

I felt miserable.

I saw Elvira go by.

God! She waited on the corner.

It was what I suspected.

She has betrayed me!

My God she's betrayed me!

I contained my anger.

My heart was jumping

Then she continued.

She looked to all sides and continued.

Amal didn't appear.

She looked back just once.

Could I have been mistaken?

I sped up, I didn't want her to be suspicious.

Elvira

The following day I waited for her on the corner.

I had to warn her that Matías was suspicious,
that we didn't have much time.

Therefore in my hand I carried a piece of paper on which I had written "Yes"
that I wanted to help her.

Integrating children is my job, I wanted to tell her, I know what you're talking about.

At six and one minute.

But she didn't appear.

It had cost me so much to write it.

Next to the word a large stain of honey was the faithful witness to my insecurity.

But she didn't appear.

And I doubted.

Maybe...!

I doubted.

Again I turned my head, to see if she appeared at the last minute.

I wanted so much to give her my answer!

I was carrying it in my pocket for a few days!

I turned my head because I had felt eyes on the nape of my neck and I thought that it
could be her.

Your secret is safe with me.

But it was no one.

Nobody.

And I ran toward home.

Amal

That day I left late.

I had argued with my father.

I told him that I knew who was following me and he laughed.

It's all the same to me.

What had I done wrong?

Maybe I shouldn't have told him.

Maybe I shouldn't have confided in her.

Maybe it doesn't even make sense now for her to help me.

I had placed so much hope in it, so much desire, so much effort.

Six and two minutes.

Not even Elvira's face.

My heart clouded over.

I really wanted to tell her that perhaps... that if by chance.

For one minute, nothing more.

How much is a minute worth?, I thought

and I didn't look back.

Elvira

That night Matías didn't say anything to me.

I had thrown up and he let me go to bed.

The paper in my hand.

The emptiness in my heart.

How was he going to suspect that that vomit was anger.

Matías

She threw up.

Upon entering the door.

I had arrived running, altered and I didn't want to look her in the eye.

I didn't have the tea prepared.

She came in and vomited at my feet.

Now I didn't believe anything.

I was disillusioned.

Well, there was a second in which I thought it again.

And then... it vanished.

A broken dream.

How do you look at your wife after having suspected her?

I accompanied her to bed.

I felt like shit.

What had happened?

How can everything change so much in one minute.

Elvira

Two days without seeing Amal.

Her father caught her on Thursday when she went out at night.

She has a purple eye, several bruises.

And a leg in a cast.

I miss our minute on the corner.

Our half words, our desires.

The answer on a piece of paper that rotted between my hands.

Yes, yes, yes!

A broken dream.

A Yes.

Matías

I saw everything from the window.

Like a scene from a silent movie but I truly felt it in my body.

I would have wanted to shout that he stop.

I drowned.

I covered my eyes, but I didn't move a single muscle.

I twisted my hands and I kept quiet.

Just as the worms stay quiet.

Something was beating within me.

Something I know not what it is.

It got me in the chest and I cried because I hadn't been capable of calling the police.

Amal

Please, if you can see me.

Do something!

Please! I know that you watch me from the window.

I glued my hand to the glass, so that he wouldn't forget.

I'm here!

But in the end

I can only curl up until the hitting stopped.

Elvira

You saw everything, right?

Matías

I kept quiet.

Elvira

You saw what happened, you were watching from the window that night and you didn't tell me!

You're a damn bastard!

National security!

Matías, what have you done!

She's in love with a Spaniard and she sees him on Wednesdays and Thursdays after 12.30.

That's where...

I remembered Amal's words and I swallowed saliva.

My God! That's when the other Amal is born.

Damn bastard!

Matías

I kept quiet.

I kept quiet three times, just like some Saint Peter.

The cock didn't crow but I felt its sharp beak reminding me what it was.

And I realized that maybe I had lost forever that which I had loved most in my life.

That night, sitting in the same place as always.

Observing the same street as always.

I knew that greeting that the Arab woman had sent me and that I had interpreted was a sign.

It hadn't been for me.

It wasn't directed at me.

And the laughter returned to my mouth and the blood to my heart.

And then I didn't know what to say.

VIII

Elvira

Ten days without seeing Amal.

The corner makes me feel empty.

In that piece of glass that separates me from her, I found the answer.

In the abyss between our two worlds.

In the nearness of our hands.

On the fringe of something that you can't explain because you don't recognize it and it stays dormant.

At the window, I thought.

And the Yes remained broken by the side of the chair where for so many nights Matías had sat.

Matías

The following Wednesday I went down to the street at 12.30 at night.

You were sleeping.

Within a few minutes

A young man came by smoking, his expression sad, his eyes.

His eyes trained up at a window.

Can you hear me Elvira?

Didn't you want to help her?

I spoke to him, I told him.

She spoke to me, she told me.

It was him, of course!

The tears rolled down his cheeks and I understood that he truly loved her.

They're in love, Elvira!

You are not going to believe who the boy is, he's from the neighborhood!

You've seen him hundreds of times.

This girl is a specialist on the corners, don't you think?

Amal

When I calmed down, my father forbade me to go to work.

To leave the house without a companion.

It was useless to beg him.

My mother who never says anything, said something like, "Shut up!"

Thus I stayed: tightlipped in front of the window.

But the window makes me so much smaller compared to the world that we had created on our corner.

She had never looked behind her in that way.

Now it was me.

Me, the one that gossiped, the one that took notes.

In reality I had very little to take down.

Elvira seated on the chair from which her husband used to watch me.

Elvira with the absent look.

Elvira who didn't see me.

A cup of tea getting cold by her side.

A shawl on her shoulders.

The atrocious silence that falls with the night.

And Matías.

Matías who no longer takes notes.

Who sees nothing.

Only his wife, with a desperate, almost infantile, gesture.

I also want a shawl on my shoulders and tea, even if it stays cold.

I also want a kiss on my forehead and the heat of some hands.

I also love

my world, which is drowning, breaking, dying.

Matías

Fridays are the easiest day.

Do you understand, Elvira?

It's their day of prayer.

Her mother doing the shopping, her father at the mosque.

Everything noted down.

They repeat it Friday after Friday, without fail.

You see, pure statistics.

What do you think?

And lately the women don't come by, never on Fridays.

It's simple.

Aren't you happy?

The tickets are already bought.

Elvira

Why?

Matías

It's been her idea, I only gave her the trail.

A long skirt, maybe some sunglasses to hide her.

I imagine that you want to say goodbye.

One minute on the corner, on your corner.

Will you help me?

Elvira

And I remembered.

Amethyst, I told her.

A protective and transforming stone, and I brought her hand to my stomach.

That hand, that one day disgusted me now I felt it hot and with strength.

Amal

I'm sorry...!

Elvira

But if still it's not even moving!

I laughed.

Amal

But I feel the life that's growing.

I'm happy for you!

Elvira

In that moment that her hand and my hand caressed the top of my stomach, I felt the desire to tell her so many things.

But my mouth went mute quickly.

I looked at Matías.

In one minute you want me to tell her everything that I haven't told her until now?

Matías

We don't have any more time.

Maybe it's not necessary to say anything.

Elvira

Do you think so?

And then I didn't know what to say.

IX

Elvira

And what did she say?

Matías

She didn't say anything.