

Crossing the valley of death

It was a dark and warm night in Tijuana, Mexico.

Manuel was fast asleep having a terrifying nightmare. He was breathing heavily and sweating profusely. This woke up his beloved wife Gloria and filled with curiosity and terror she woke him up. Manuel told her everything about the dream, which made his wife even more scared. She told him that for the safety of their family and their two kids: Adriana and Antonio they had to move away.

Manuel disagreed because Tijuana was home and getting a visa nearly impossible. Both of them went back to sleep thinking about the dream.

Next morning both of the parents were pretending nothing happened: manuel went to work and the

two kids went to school. Gloria stayed home. She was thinking about the strange dream her husband had last night when the phone started ringing. She was curious to know who was calling. She picked it up: „Hello?“ „Hi, my name is Thomas beggs and I'm a doctor. Is this Gloria Gonzales“ „Yes, why are you asking?“ „I'm so sorry to tell you this through the phone but your brother was injured while standing at a bus stop during a shootout between two drug cartels. Unfourtenetly, he passed away as a result of his injury. Crime in Mexico is increasing so be safe and good luck!“ Gloria hung up and broke down in tears. She couldn't believe this just happened, her husband's dream became reality.

„I heard the sad news about your brother, I'm really sorry.“ Said Manuel when he got home from tiring work. „Between your nightmare and my brother's death, for the safety of our family we have to move away.“ With a heavy heart he agreed. The following day Gloria and Manuel went to the U.S. consulate where they found out that they would have to wait approximately a year to get the visa. Both of them decided waiting this long wasn't an option and they would have to do the unthinkable: cross the borders illegally. They knew that sooner or later they would have to tell their kids.

„We have to do this kids, there's no other way.“ Said Manuel. „Yes dad, I understand. I know this journey is very important and will change our lives

but I'm scared." Replied Adriana „Me too“ said terrified Antonio. Manuel took a deep breath and he promised that he would take the best care of his kids he could. Manuel started asking neighbors about traffickers that could get them across the border. After a few days a trafficker contacted manuel. He said he could get them to the U.S. for then thousand dollars. Manuel and Gloria thought that was too much, but then they agreed.

Manuel was standing in front of the door, deep in thoughts about leaving home and the long trip ahead. Gloria interupped his daydreaming and told him that it was time to hit the road. The neighbors were kind enough to drop off the Gonzales family at the meeting point with the traffickers. When they

arrived at the meeting point, they saw a small crowd gathered around the traffickers. Once all the migrants were there, one of the traffickers said: „No time to waste, if you don't have enough water, you'll die. If you get lost, you'll die so stick with us!“ The migrants started having second thoughts, but they knew that if they come back, they would die in the hands of the drug cartels.

The first steps were easy, but when the sun got hotter and the temperature was about fortyfive degrees, the family got tiered. They wanted to drink up all their water, but they knew that they had to save it for the long trek. When the sun set, the group set up camp. The traffickers drank plenty of Tequilla and started scaring the migrants by saying

there was a lot of skorpions and snakes. Although they were exhausted, the migrants couldn't sleep.

Come dawn, the migrants continued trekking.

Manuel and Gloria were fine but one of the kids:

Adriana started having strange feelings. She started drinking a lot of water and couldn't stop. Gloria reminded her that she should save the water.

Adriana promised she will, but she was getting worse and worse inside. The family continued marching through the hot and dry desert.

When the group was in the middle of nowhere, the traffickers stopped. They whispered among themselves and then announced, „Time to re-negotiate our fee. Give us an additional ten thousand dollars or we'll leave you here in the

valley of death.“ The migrants were aghased. However they knew that they had no choice, they were forced to give the traffickers all the money they had, but Manuel dissagreed. „I’m sorry but this is not what we agreed to and I don’t have ten thousand dollars.“ „I don’t care. Give me all you have.“ Manuel was well aware that he had no choice, and handed over all his family’s money to the traffickers. All other migrant salso handed their savings to the traffickers. That was the price to continue on their journey.

As they were approaching the U.S. border and the end of their walk, the migrants heard a loud thump. Adriana had fallen to the ground. She had fainted from dehydration, Gloria and Manuel were

in shock. Manuel asked the traffickers where the closest hospital was. The traffickers instructed Manuel to run north for an hour if he wanted to save his beloved daughter. The family started running except for Adriana who was carried by her father. After running for an hour without a break, they finally got to the hospital. Manuel, Gloria and Antonio ran into the emergency room and begged the hospital staff to save Adriana's life. The hospital staff were kind enough to immediately take Adriana and try their best. One hour later a doctor came rushing towards Manuel with a serious face. Manuel was terrified to know what happened with his daughter. "Hello mr. Gonzales, I have surprising news for you! Your daughter is alive!" Manuel was

so happy he started crying. The Gonzales family had made it to the U.S. and they were now safe from dangerous cartels. But with no money left, all they had were their hopes