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Stories 4 Wings

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Teamworking

Her Name is Luz





I was twenty-five years old, had just finished my hairdressing and beauty module exams, and was doing an internship at my aunt's hair salon, two streets away from my house.

I wasn't an exemplary student, but I managed to pass the theoretical part, and now I was realizing that I had made the right choice; I was really good at this profession and enjoyed working there. Aside from shampooing, curling, dying, and blow-drying (cutting hair would come later), we had set aside two afternoons a week to do some beauty treatments. My parents had given me a treatment table that we brought to the salon, so I could start practicing.

My aunt was quite strict, but she was nice to me, and above all, she was willing to share all her knowledge with me, so I learned very quickly, and soon she began to give me more responsibilities. One day she told me that, if I wanted, I could stay there full-time when I finished my internship. That made me very happy, and my parents even more so.

Around that time, I started dating a guy I'd met on a night out with my friends. He lived on the other side of town, but we managed to see each other at least once a week. We were in that phase of falling in love where we would have liked to be right next to each other all the time, but he was studying at university and I was having an internship, so as we lived so far away, that was all we could afford. Some weekends, his parents went to the village to see his grandparents, and he and his brother were left alone at home, so I told my parents I'd sleep over at one of my friends' houses so I could spend the weekend with him. I was ecstatic, excited, deluded, and very much in love.

One day, I started feeling sick, very dizzy, and very sleepy. Some days, I even threw up when I woke up. My aunt looked at me with a sour face, but didn't say anything. I didn't know what was wrong with me, but it was clear something was wrong with my body. "You're pregnant!" my best friend screamed when I told her. "How is that possible? We take steps and are careful (almost) all the time." "When was your last period?" she asked. "I don't know, it's been months. You know I have a very irregular cycle, and it always disappears for a while and comes back whenever it wants. I'm supposed to go to a gynecological checkup, but I can't find the time."



While my friend went down to the pharmacy to buy a pregnancy test, I was throwing up in her bathroom. It couldn't be true. It took her a while because she didn't want to go to the nearest one, so when she came back, she found me lying in her bed, exhausted and half asleep. We took the test, waited a few minutes, and looked at the result (together, holding hands): Positive.

At that moment, I felt like I was collapsing... It couldn't be true. I couldn't continue with this pregnancy; I would have to terminate it before it was too late. I was still very young, just starting my life. Not to mention my family; they didn't even know I was dating this guy... they were going to kick me out of the house. My friend reassured me while she searched the internet for the next steps we should take. She got an appointment for 8 p.m. in two days, because I didn't want to miss work to avoid my aunt suspecting anything.

I met my boyfriend a couple of hours before the appointment because I needed to tell him. He seemed calm. He told me he supported my decision and would pay half of whatever it cost. But he said he couldn't come with me; he had to go to training, and that he'd call me later to check on me. Suddenly, I felt my heart break a little, but I was so scared of what I was about to do that I didn't pay much attention to that feeling of abandonment. Thank goodness my friend had promised she'd be there with me at the scheduled time.

When I arrived at the clinic, they were all there... When I saw them, I burst into tears of emotion, and I suppose also from the fear I felt. My friend had told the group and they had all decided to accompany me through what was going to be a very difficult and painful time. We had been friends since childhood, and to me, they were like sisters. We didn't see each other as much anymore, but we were still very close. After much insistence, the doctor let us all into the office with them. The doctor was a little confused, but she looked at us tenderly.

She asked me several times about my last period, but I had a hard time remembering... "three or four months." She couldn't believe I hadn't noticed it sooner. Maybe it was because I was a little overweight, but the fact is that apart from a slight weight gain, I hadn't noticed anything unusual until the nausea became constant. I cursed myself for not having gone to the gynecologist sooner...



She shook her head and went back to looking at the screen and measuring a dark spot. Then she looked at us all and said, "We can't do this. It's been more than 15 weeks. It's too late."

There was silence. Two of my friends held my hands tightly. Another stroked my head. Another, a little further away, looked at the floor and asked, "And your father?"... They all knew what my father was like. They knew, without a doubt, what was going to happen: I would be kicked out of the house, and my aunt would fire me from my job. I felt completely hopeless.

The doctor gave us information about an association that provided support to single mothers, although she told us they were severely underfunded and tended to prioritize those who were completely alone. Then she politely invited us out, as she still had several women waiting in the waiting room, many of them sad, all of them scared. As we left, I asked my friends to wait for me for a moment; I had to call my boyfriend. I called him, but he didn't pick up. I texted him: "Call me. It's important. I haven't been able to do it."

We went to the house of a friend who had lived alone since she started working as a waitress at eighteen. They all had things to do, but none of them wanted to leave my side. Despite my anguish, their simple presence comforted me. They told me they would be there for me, that I shouldn't worry. I could barely speak, but they began to plan the next steps we had to take: first, I would sleep at my friend's house that night because I needed to have the strength to break the news to my parents (luckily, it was Friday, so that wasn't a problem). Meanwhile, my boyfriend didn't call or write. I felt myself shrinking inside, and a pain in my chest grew worse. I was overcome with a tremendous sense of hopelessness, and I feared the worst. I called him several times, but he never called. I didn't hear from him that night.

My friends went home, and we agreed to meet the next day at my parents' house at noon. When we woke up, my friend and I went there, went into my room, and started packing my things: how sad it was to know what was going to happen. Before two, I went out to the living room, where I found my father cleaning the canary's cage and my mother talking to her plants. I told them what I had to say, straightforwardly and much more calmly than I could have imagined.



What I had undoubtedly expected happened: my mother didn't look up from her plants and continued whispering to them, and my father said to me without raising his voice and with a look full of contempt: "You're not my daughter anymore. You're another whore like your sister. You know what you have to do. Get out of my house."

When I left with the essentials, everyone was waiting in the doorway and accompanied me to my aunt's hair salon. I hadn't been to work that morning, yet when I entered, she didn't scold me. We went into the back room, and she asked, "What's wrong?" Again, with a composure I didn't even recognize in myself, I told her I was pregnant and that I'd been kicked out of the house. I expected the same reaction from my father, since they were brothers, had the same upbringing, and essentially lived by the same values, but this time I wasn't right... She looked at me for a moment, and a silent tear fell down his cheek. She hugged me like she'd never done before and said, "I'm not willing to lose another niece."

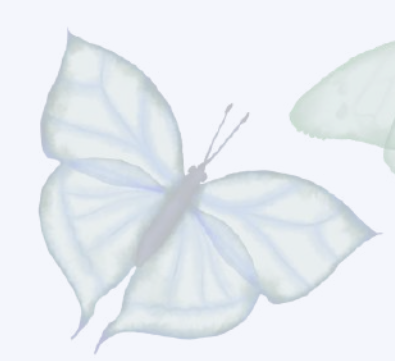
I went to live with a friend and continued working at the salon until the last day of my pregnancy (my father still doesn't speak to his sister). Then my daughter was born. She's healthy, strong, and happy. My friends haven't left me alone for a moment; they take turns caring for her so I can continue working at the salon. My little girl has five aunts who help me raise her. This wouldn't have been possible alone, neither practically nor emotionally. It's nice to see how each one takes care of something; one likes to bring us food from time to time, another takes her to the park every afternoon, there's the one who always offers to drive us on errands in her van, or the one who always comes to lend a hand at bath time. I feel like we're a team, like we're a family.

My ex-boyfriend never called and never responded to my texts. He just disappeared. He blocked me. He got out of the way. It was his choice. I don't hold a grudge.

Today, my daughter turned three.

Her name is Luz.





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