



WHERE IS HELL?

Katy fell in love with the perfect man: good-looking and romantic, he captivated her and her family. She met him through the internet; she thought that she had finally met a man who had read her soul. Shortly after, he travelled to meet her and as soon as he saw her, he treated her like a princess: he captivated everyone with his blue eyes, his accent, his dating invitations; he was very attentive.

They got married, and she left her job and sold all her possessions to leave and live with him. She packed up her life and dreams in a new suitcase gifted to her at her farewell party at work. She travelled hand-in-hand with him.

The first couple of nights, Katy had nightmares: he would push her into an abyss where she would fall and fall and she would wake up with the lingering feeling of falling. She shared her nightmare with her husband and he responded by saying, "Ok, now we start."

Little by little she began to see how everything was changing drastically. He began to be violent during sex, then he would rape her. Her door was always locked with a key so that she would not get lost. As days passed, she began to realize she was a prisoner. She could not stand the routine: she would wake up with him on top of her, then he would take her to the bathroom. First he would bathe her with very hot water and then with very cold water. He enjoyed this. Then, there would be the sound of keys locking her door and his parting words of, "Goodbye, I love you!" The refrigerator was empty. Then there would be beatings, shouting and silence.

Skype with her family was initially once a month, and he would be in charge of writing and replying to the emails. She found this out one day while opening Skype: he sat down with her while holding a knife. There was an order, "Thank your father for the money he sent me." He disconnected the internet and would reconnect it to feign a bad connection. The last thing she saw was a chat, "we will not have the internet for three months and will be working in the fields to move the business forward." He wrote it as if she was the one writing it.

The knife, the internet, the signal, the beatings, the interrupted dialogues, the emails he would write in her name, money her family had sent. She realized at that moment that she was in hell. She was his prisoner, and he was taking advantage of her family. She decided that she needed to escape, she looked for her passport, she did not have it. He had given her the suitcase. She opened it to retrieve the money she had hidden inside it in case of an emergency, and saw that her bag had been destroyed inside, he laughed and peed inside the luggage bag while she looked at him with fear. He beat her, destroyed her mouth and left her with three teeth missing. He ripped the bloodied clothes she had on. Katy lived through hell.

“Everything Katy told me would bring me more sadness, I would cry and she would console me. She would tell me that it was now over. Katy was able to escape: a neighbour of hers helped her. Subsequently, a friend of her neighbour’s helped her, and then she was helped by a friend of the neighbour’s friend. Rebuilding was very painful: every decision was painful. It was not a case of

beginning from somewhere, it was worse than that because there was no point from which to start. But she managed it. I met her when four years had passed since the day she escaped. She taught me that it was possible to rebuild one life from the ashes of another. She is now living happily with her partner, her daughter, and her fears. Only two people know her whole story. I am one of them; every time I remember her story, I throw soil over it, not to bury it, but to allow it to germinate and flourish.”