



## LILY AND THE DOGS

It is the weekend and the holiday starts. The car fills up with luggage. The whole family leaves; Rita the cook goes with them. My employers, or rather, owners, as they prefer me to call them, close the door with an extra lock. They bid farewell to the dogs, hide the keys and leave. Still a child, I, Lily, am locked in the garden, now in charge of watching over the house. I am nervous, this is the first time I will be left here alone: this is my first job.

I remain calm, I wait until the car is further away and I sit on the floor. They have left me a bag with dry rice for cooking and a jar with little fried fish. I do not know how many days they will be gone. I also don't have the means to cook rice.

I am locked in an enormous garden, next to a forbidden mansion. I have to live in the garden as if I were just another dog. "You can't be seen by anyone, you can't go out onto the street, you can't enter the house". These are the orders I have been given.

There is a tree in the middle of the garden that offers a lot of shade, but I was told not to sit there so I would not be seen by people. I look for places where I can pass the time, where I can sit, where I can sleep. Finally, I spend the night in the middle of the dog cages with the dogs. I eat their food and smell like them.

One day, I unknowingly sit in front of the tree. Two women see me and point at me; I run and hide with the dogs. During the night, one of them throws me a bag with food, and this continues for four more days. They also throw me a small bag with shampoo.

They left me with the dogs several more times. I worked there for eight months. One day, I was accused of stealing and I was fired and kicked out onto the street. I was not paid for even a single day of work.

***"I thought it was an exaggeration when I found out that it was common to leave domestic workers locked in gardens while their "owners" were out. One day, I had the opportunity to see it; I saw a "Lily" sitting, holding her knees with her gaze fixed on a spot. I immediately thought of Lily; the wind moved the girl's hair and I thought of the day when an anonymous woman threw Lily the shampoo and I imagined what her long hair smelled like, the only nice thing about that mansion."***