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زبانهای اروپایی

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First of January, one more day

Sources: Rebellion

Chronicle of an undocumented immigrant in the United States.

She buys the chicken first thing in the morning, the vegetables with which she will accompany the dish and the fruits for the punch, Catalina wants to make tamales, but it is a lot of hustle and bustle for her alone and with how tired she leaves work she barely has energy for the cleaning of the apartment where she lives with her two children. Juan, 12, and Guadalupe, 3. But this time it is his turn to take the laundry to wash clothes, in the building where they live there are no washing machines, he will be late in the preparation of the New Year's Eve dinner.

Catalina immigrated to the United States from Totonicapán, Guatemala. From one of his villages deep into the mountains, the first time he used caites he was 13 years old. He knew the shoes until he arrived in the United States. She is the sixth of thirteen siblings, her father every day when leaving the job of coffee picker went to the canteen of the town to ask for trust, by the time the payday arrived he already had all the salary committed. Flooded with alcohol, he came to the house to beat his wife and children. His brothers left one by one without warning, they did not endure so much abuse or so much poverty. None finished third grade, because by age they were already a good hand to help their dad cut coffee.

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The day it was her turn she grabbed everything she had of clothes: two cuts and two huipiles, put them in a plastic bag she went to make the dough and left the basin at the entrance of the kitchen, left without saying goodbye. By the age of 14 he had already worked in the wage on most of the farms in the region, picking coffee and vegetables. This time she went to work as a domestic worker in the center of Totonicapán, where she was treated worse than on the farms.

Belonging to the Quiché ethnic group, he did not speak Spanish. He was only allowed to go out 4 hours on Sunday, eating in all three times tortillas with beans, without the right to eat from what his employers ate. He would get up at 3 in the morning to clean and prepare breakfast and go to bed at 11 at night, if the skipper did not drink with his friends, otherwise until he finished that regularly it was in the early morning. He slept on a mattress that dogs used to sleep, in a room they used as a cellar. The skippers bathed in warm water, in the bathroom where she bathed there was only cold water.

The day the boss hit him with the buckle of the belt because the tortillas he cooked with car butter for the dogs' dinner were burned, he grabbed his two changes of clothes and went to live with Juan, an 18-year-old who sold brooms and mops from house to house, originally from San Marcos, he rented a room in a boarding house. She met him outside the church where she went to Mass every Sunday, he had been courting her for months. A month later she became pregnant with her first child, Juanito.

On the day of the birth of his son, Juan was lost drunk in the canteen, he had already beaten her repeatedly, when Juanito turned six months old he hit her so hard that he went to the health center and did not want to report it, Catalina grabbed her son and left him to leave one of his sisters and called his relatives in the United States to lend him money to go north. Fifteen days later he was already crossing Mexican territory in the darkness of a van full of undocumented migrants, he arrived in the country of the American dream just turned 17 years old.

With 3 jobs and renting a space where he put his bed only in a family home, he managed to pay the debt and began to save to send Juanito to bring, Catalina in those years made a meal a day nothing more, she had no time left to eat. He cleaned houses in the morning, in the afternoon he washed dishes in a restaurant and in the evening he cleaned offices. Days

he slept and others he barely hit his eye for a few hours. At the restaurant he met Shuba, an indigenous man of Zapotec origin originally from Juchitán, Oaxaca, separated and with three children in his country. They went to live together renting a room in the basement of a house, this time Catalina did not get pregnant so quickly because her priority was to send her son to bring.

Finally, after 10 years saving she managed to get Juanito to be with her, she had to pay double to pass him along the line, between Sonora and Arizona and not be in danger swimming rivers or crossing deserts. In total he paid fifteen thousand dollars. That day she was so happy, to have in her arms a son who knew her only by phone calls. That same year she became pregnant with Guadalupe, she was put in place for the Virgin of Guadalupe. Lupe had to leave her at two months to the nursery to work. With two jobs, cleaning houses in the morning and in the afternoon washing dishes in a restaurant, while Shuba got a job as a baker in a Polish bakery and also had a part-time job as a driver for an Anglo-Saxon elderly couple.

For the first days of the pandemic, the gentlemen for whom Shuba worked fell ill with coronavirus, both died in the hospital, for those same dates Shuba fell ill who died locked in his bedroom, frightened by the hospital bills that were seen in the news that were millionaires and for fear of deportation did not want to go to the hospital, he did the quarantine in his room. It took Catalina a year to gather the money to cremate him and send his ashes to his relatives in Oaxaca, helped with donations by several members of the church and acquaintances of the work. They could not send the body because for reasons of national security anyone who died from the virus had to be cremated.

Since Shuba's death, Catherine has been working at night on a trail, cleaning up the blood. He wears an astronaut-like uniform and thick gloves that weigh one pound each, boots three pounds each. He wears the mask and on top of that a helmet that barely allows him to breathe. He enters at six in the afternoon and leaves at six in the morning, he does not drink water after four in the afternoon so as not to have to go to the bathroom and take off his uniform, because they only give them ten minutes at work and that time is not enough, if they take longer they disquote that time of payment. The hose he uses is like that of firefighters with a water pressure that is not well stopped flies through the air.

The smell of blood is already impregnated in your clothes and on your skin that, even if you wash it with the strongest detergent or bathe several times, it is not removed. She leaves her children sleeping in the apartment and pays a neighbor's daughter to sleep with them when she arrives in the morning.

It's December 31, Catalina prepares the chicken, makes the punch and gives her children dinner, goes to work. A working day like any other, with mostly undocumented co-workers, Mexicans and Central Americans who are the ones who cut the meat and clean the blood, with European and black bosses who only check and write down on a paper. The doors open and Catalina goes out to the cold dawn of the American winter, to a new dawn, it is the first of January, one more day.

Author's blog: <https://cronicasdeunainquilina.com>

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