

# Trapped!

From *This is Our Story*  
By Wendi Adelson J.D.

I'm so embarrassed that I was really jealous at first. I even remember a few nights when I woke up and saw that Ana wasn't sleeping next to me. I looked at the clock on the wall and waited 10 minutes for her to come back from the bathroom. When she didn't come back, I explored the house to find her. I didn't want to wake the Cuencas, so I tiptoed as quietly as possible. After checking a few doors, I entered Martin's room. He had Ana in his bed, and she sounded like the stray dogs in our old neighborhood, when the mean little boys would corner them and pelt them with rocks. I called her name, and she told me to go away.

I waited up for her, and heard her when she crawled into bed. Our sleeping bags were pressed next to each other, but I moved mine closer to the wall. She had already made such a large space between us, putting Martin in the middle. I felt betrayed.

I can see now why that was silly, but I didn't understand then. I didn't know that she didn't want to be with him. I only started to figure it out later that night, early in the morning, actually, when Ana went to take a shower, and Martin came to my bed, took out his switchblade, and held it tight against my neck.

"One word about Ana and I will slit your throat." He pulled so hard on my long, jet-black hair that a few strands came loose and a little blood appeared at the scalp, and then he let go with one last tug, and I curled into a ball, too stunned to cry, too scared to move.

I was too scared even to talk to Ana about it. I didn't know what to do. I spent the next few days in a daze, going through the motions of work and sleep without feeling truly awake. I had thought that Ana was a virgin, like me. We were only thirteen and fourteen, and we had been told to save ourselves for marriage. It is a sin to have sex before

marriage and Ana was not a sinner. She was a good girl from Jujuy, like me.

Ana never told me about everything that happened with Martin, and we spoke less and less every day. Several months passed; I lost track. I wondered if maybe she blamed me for helping her win the contest that brought her to the United States. It didn't seem like such a great prize now.

I woke up when she left our room every night for Martin, and on the nights that she did not leave herself, he came to get her, roughly grabbing her by the arm, and dragging her

with him. I would wake up when Ana came back in, too, and she would crumble into bed. I knew something was wrong, but I was scared to talk to her about anything anymore. I felt so lonely in that house, and the loneliness sat there like a sneaky cat in the room at night, when Ana wasn't there to be my friend and confidant any more.

A few months later, Ana got sick while we were making breakfast. I told her that maybe she wouldn't have to work if she felt bad. She

asked Señora Cuenca when she got up, but she refused. She told us that we weren't paid to be sick. Ana asked her, "Are we getting paid?" I remember that moment perfectly, painfully. Señora Cuenca slapped Ana in the mouth, and told her that we are costing her a good bit of money, and that we are paid every day as we work off our debt. Señora Cuenca said that every day with our eating lots of food, and using the electricity and the shower, we were costing her more money.

One night, when we were getting ready for bed, I saw Ana's naked body as she slipped into her nightgown. She was always thin, and her arms and legs were thinner than ever. Her belly, on the other hand, curved outward like she had swallowed a pumpkin. How I missed those pumpkin empanadas, straight from the oven, so much tastier than the fried ones

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Luis Bolaños

Maria preferred. Her stomach looked just like one of those delicious treats, and I almost went to her then. She was pregnant, I had no idea how far along. She saw me looking then, and immediately turned away.

"Ana," I said, unable to form the words to say anything more.

"Don't, Rosa, you'll just make it worse." She spoke to the floor when she did speak, always this way now. I hadn't heard her laugh in longer than I could remember.

We laid down in silence, snuggled in our sleeping bags, palms touching each other, and we both wept quietly. I cried for many reasons. I missed mami and even Maria. I missed school and our friends and my home and everything. Touch-

ing her hand I realized how much I had been missing Ana.

The door opened a crack and we sped apart, knowing it was Martin and not wanting him to see us interact. She groaned to her feet and I heard her steps on the floor as she walked toward his room. Just like that, she was gone.

I fell asleep and at some point I remember hearing a muffled scream, but I could have been dreaming. At 5 AM that morning, just like every other day, I woke up to our alarm.

Ana didn't get up.

I called her name. I nudged her. I coaxed her into the day. That didn't work. I knelt down next to her and squeezed her hand. It was cold.