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refugee from Eritrea, at Casa Marianella. Texas, 2021

When you're starting

because you
can't come back,
you can't go back

you can't go

you can't go back again

you know that

the only where
you have to go
is different
to the next things

But you decide
whether you die
or to live
to survive

You pray for your God

In the beginning
when you're starting
the boat was normal

but after we go for like
30 minutes,
things become

the ocean

It was very dark

and the small water
it was raining
small raining
the small raining

I didn't expect
to survive that night

because the boat
you can see
is very beat by the water,
through the wood
it can beat you there,
stick in your bones

There was crying

So you call for your God

There was crying yes

Two people
I saw them,
they fell

You will never
come back again

No one can listen to you

because you are
very far from shore

very far now

So we know
when you cry,
whenever you do
you don't
have any ocean

you just only have to pray

You never see
that tomorrow to be

The sun comes

You see the morning shine

You never expected that

But
I think he creates
God when he creates
he has a reason
for everyone

So he is the one,
he knows the time
when you come
he picks up you

So
it's very hard to explain

it's very hard to explain

We arrive
like before midnight
eleven o'clock
something like that

by the woods

In the forest
there are no people

There's nothing

We know that,

we heard that
it was very hard

We pass through
those countries
Brazil
Bolivia
Peru
Ecuador

From Panama
you have
to walk the jungle

So, the smugglers
they make the troop
from different countries
like Iran, Pakistan,
Africa, Haiti

You don't know them,
you just meet them
they bring them
from different places

They steal our phone
Your phone---
you can't have
a phone
they steal your phone

You only have...
you keep the number
as something in you

You give the smugglers
only the number
and they call your
family to pay

They send a message
And they call this guy
who talks to them

You just finish with them-

once you pay
they don't talk to you

You pay them
what they ask you

Sometimes
you pay money
and the smugglers say
"no, you didn't pay"
It can happen like that too

You have to pay them
what they ask you

Sometimes
if they don't pay
sometimes for the women
they rape them

Even they can kill you

The smuggler
is a mafia
inside the jungle,
inside the territory

and you have to
pay them
fifty, a hundred
bucks each
it depends on
that smuggler

So, if you lost the boat
you will never survive,
they will die

Because you lost your food,
you sink the food
and you die there
alot of people that die
that is why

The smugglers charge
at different stops in
all the territories

There are three or four
different groups
above the smuggler
you pay that one

You lost your food
and you die there

So you need a smuggler
to show you find
the right way

But we make it
with twenty-something
people

After five days
we arrive there
at a Military Base

For some two days
you stay there

People send you
to the next camp
immigration process

You go by boat
for hours

small boat
by the woods

And after
you arrive in Panama
you follow the process

They call it camp
but there's no camp
You have to sleep

on the ground
outside
someone's house

Then they send you
to the next

again

camp

the third one

The third one
is a good one

It was better than
the rest
the ones before

There's a house
while the military base
was old

So you have
something you can eat

you can make
a little life

you are starting
your hope now

You see some
different things

there is laughing

starting,
feeling
things to see

because they
are very kind

I don't know how
to explain

how powerful
kindness is

Even after
you get your paper,
get to eat,
get cared for
they give you
information

it was good

but the rest
of the countries
they don't give a shit

From the second one
on that side--
you hate yourself

But the last one
from immigration,
that one was nice

Then you go to
Costa Rica

In Costa Rica
they are nice too
They help you

Within a day
they give you your paper
and you have one month
to leave the country

So there is something
you have
you are starting to be

In Costa Rica they are
very beautiful guys
They are nice people

And
you are starting

to feel the road

beginning for you

Then you go to
Nicaragua.

In Nicaragua,
you go through
the same things
and different things

The time I came
you have to pay
one hundred fifty
to immigration to let you go

You don't give any paper
but they let you go by bus

Which means
you have to pay
two hundred dollar;
forty for the bus,
one hundred fifty
for the immigration
then they let you go
in Nicaragua

From Nicaragua
to Honduras
is a difference

The mafia--the smugglers--
are waiting for you
at the border
between
Nicaragua and
Honduras

It's normal:
the Immigration,
all the people
they all know
They want money

The bus should arrive
but there's no bus
no other bus to go there
This is the only bus,
the one that arrives
at the border.

So when you arrive
the smugglers
they call you:
"I'll take you"
"I'll take you
to Honduras"

So you pay them
twenty, fifty dollars,
it depends on their price

Then you are
starting
at midnight

You walk in the jungle
for at least ten hours

Very difficult

It's very hard
on the west side

It is not easy
because if they
catch you,
the Honduras police,
sometimes
they shoot them

So you need

to be careful.

If you run from the police,
they will shoot you

They are
very strange people,
the police.

So you need to make it
the right way,
inside the country

If you arrive
inside Honduras,
no one flinch
but before you arrive---
the area at the border---
it's very hard

Then you go to the
immigration site downtown
You go to immigration
and you register your name

You stay three days,
four days
in the hotel
you eat something,
you rest

You're starting now,

you feel things
come to be.

You know
your hoping
starting

better than before

So when you come
to Guatemala,
the same thing:

You pay smugglers
the money they ask you

They take you
inside the car
,different cars,
two or three cars

You arrive in Mexico

When you arrive in Mexico,
there's a river
near Guatemala

That one you pay like
twenty-ten dollars
to the smuggler
and they cross you

After you cross,
you arrive in Tapachula
the city-state they call
Tapachula, yes

Then in Tapachula,
the time
I arrive it was Covid,
the Coronavirus

So,
there's no boat

there's no
anywhere

there's no
immigration

So there's no option
unless you stay there
in Tapachula
you have no option

If you stay there
the cost is high,
everything is high

So you pay
for the smuggler

who take you
by
midnight
ocean

At ten o'clock
at the night starting,

ocean to ocean

by small boat

They don't tell you
any information
when you go
with the boat

They tell you:
"oh, like three hours,
three or four hours"
they will tell you

But from ten o'clock
in the night p.m.
you arrive
ten in the morning a.m.

So

it is very hard to explain

sometimes you
hate yourself

sometimes you hate
yourself you were born
with this wallet

Things come for
you
shine

but
things still
are difficult

There's no option
to go back

The only thing left
is hope
and it is small

cause already
Mexico is here

so you are very small

but there's no way
to go back

You go the way
they give you
they offer you
when you pay them

But with a guide
you survive

There were twelve people
with me
Some Malawians
and some girls
from Eritrea
and from Pakistan,
Bangladesh too

and we arrive
in the morning,
in some city Colima
Colima.. something..
they call Colima
next to Mexico City

Then they took us
by car to Mexico City

After Mexico City,
they took us
to Nuevo Laredo
at the border
by the bus

When we arrive
in Nuevo Laredo
we pay them the
complete--
all the money
they ask us

I stay in Mexico
for seven months
because of Covid
I was waiting

the immigration
clause

Then I crossed the river

Then we are detained
for four months
and twenty days

I was detained
in ICE process center

Detention was ok for me
but only for me

only for me

because I didn't mind
anything

because when
I crossed the last river
I said,
when I taste the air,
when I crossed the river
I said

if I die today it is ok

because you feel it all

you feel life
you feel God

You have insight.

Really's really.

True is true

You see it,

you feel it.

There are so
many things
to believe

And when you
see people that are kind

this is when you know
it was difficult

you feel all of it

You accept it.

In Austin now
you are starting

to get your mercy
your justice.
You have the right
to talk
to ask anything

Before you act
play like a small dog,
an animal
They give you food
They show you
the things,
the road,
the paper

Everything
belongs to them

You ask but they never.
But here,
is everything.

More than me,
my sister
she's happy
Every day
she was crying for me,
my sister

But today
I see she is happy
She never lived
for herself
since I left my
home country

But she's starting
her own life
now that I'm ok

I say thank God I'm here

I want to make sure
to help people
People who
have problems like me
suffer so many losses

it is very difficult to
be in this place that
people come
to dream
and we have so many
pains

that even to tell someone
is very hard

to talk to someone

because sometimes
you'll be shamed
for what happened

If I tell people my story
I don't have anything
to tell for people
to have fun

My story is tragedy only

Some people,
a lot of people
you'll feel their shaming
for how things
have happened to us

You need to be strong

remember
crossing the river

All of this is a miracle

It is almost 365 days
of this journey,
almost one year