

## **THE Moroccan Dream.**

It was by early morning that Amal arrived at Casablanca airport. Waiting for the flight to Paris to join her husband, the young woman seemed unusually uneasy and visibly irritated. She was quite confused for though she immensely longed for that moment and endured many hardships to reach France, Amal bitterly felt that she was going to lose a part of her soul by leaving Morocco. Ironically, she finally recognized how much she was attached to her country though she had never found rest in it. Amal tried hard to relax and to alleviate those hours of waiting by talking to her eldest sister Amina and her brother Ahmed who were amusing her but without effect.

Sighing, she glanced again at her watch, praying that her stay would be short-lived for she could no more bear that deeper malaise that suffocated her. To her relief, she heard her flight's number. Amal stared at Ahmed and Amina painfully as if it were the last time she would see them again. In fact, the farewells were not that simple. Her face displayed marks of grief and her eyes were filled with tears as she hugged them so tightly. Leaving them, she faked a smile and wiped away her tears.

Once on the plane, she tried hard to sleep but to no avail. She could not help recalling all the events and feelings from long ago that affected her life deeply and pushed her to leave her country in pursuit of a better life. She gave a faint smile when remembering her native town Taounat in which she spent her childhood. Her middle class family composed of four brothers and three sisters was a source of tenderness and stability till the day her father, Haj Mohammed, decided to have a second wife. The small house full of laughter and energy turned into a living hell. Haj Mohammed became so distant and tough on his children. He spent all his money and time on his eighteen years old wife. Worst of all, he started regarding

his daughters as nothing more than a burden he should carry till they got married. Amal bitterly loathed her father's selfishness as well as her helplessness to save her mother and herself from their misery.

Fortunately, Hajja Malika was a wise, strong-willed woman who could bear hardships stoically. She was always there for her children to push them to succeed in their life regardless of their daily nightmare. She devoted herself to her children and did not mind so much what her husband did. Though illiterate, Malika was aware of the importance of education so she was always encouraging Amal to go on further and further in her studies. The young girl was determined to work hard so as to be able to support her mother and to make the world glow again for her.

Amal moved to live with her brother Ahmed in Taza, where she could pursue her secondary studies. Her teachers, friends and family agreed on the fact that she was a bright student and thus had to continue her higher education. The young girl enrolled in Fez faculty of Science and chose Geology as a branch.

Despite her hard conditions, Amal excelled in her studies. In fact, her four years in the faculty were not easy at all. The scholarship was insufficient and her brother Ahmed had to send her a small amount of money each month despite his low income. The generosity of her brother made her more willing to work harder so as not to disappoint him. Besides, the five girls with whom Amal shared the dormitory were unbearable. They were always laughing at her when they saw her assiduously working. So she spent most of the time studying at the library to spare herself from their insults and noise.

With time, Amal's personality changed. She became more social, self-reliant and stronger but still she felt an intense boredom. Her days seemed to be alike till she met Youssef, a student at the faculty of Law. At first, Amal's viewed all men as selfish and cruel as her father. That is why she was reluctant and unwilling to let any one enter her life. Yet the

warmth and gentleness of Youssef's manners made her gradually attached to him and finally he succeeded in winning not only her trust but also her heart. In his presence, she began to smile again, to live again.

In 1994 Amal got her BSc degree and her brothers and sisters were proud of her. Nevertheless, the death of her mother whom she cherished the most shattered all her hopes for happiness. For weeks, Amal had been numb with grief, unable to believe that her mother was dead and she was alone in the world. This was a hard truth to take but still she had to get out of the shell she wrapped about herself so as to survive.

The young woman decided to look for a work to assert herself. She sat for many exams to get a job but to no avail. However, Amal continued her struggle and moved to live with her sister in Rabat hoping to find there better conditions. She worked in many private companies and schools which she compared to "blood suckers" which didn't think of anything but exploiting the employees and enslaving them for low incomes.

Youssef encountered nearly the same problems. He didn't manage to find a job with a good salary to marry Amal. Under the pressure from her family, the desperate woman was obliged to leave her first and everlasting love. The break up was almost unbearable especially that their relation lasted for about two years.

As time passed, her wounds healed and she came to the conclusion that their separation was the best decision for both of them because of their poverty. One day, while Amal was going to the private school where she was working, a beautiful elegant woman called her. The lady's voice seemed familiar. It was Jihane, one of her roommates in the dormitory. Jihane was a playful girl who was never serious about her studies. Amal was really astonished because her friend had completely changed. She became rich and more beautiful. She said that she got married to a rich handsome Italian man and went with him abroad.

That event was a turning point in Amal's life. She realized how much she loathed her monotonous job as a teacher which had nothing to do with her ambitions and she became obsessed with the idea of crossing borders to put an end to her loss and misery. She couldn't accept her failure. She was a bright student but she couldn't find a job which matched her interests, while some of her old classmates could assert themselves either in Morocco or abroad. She felt that she was getting older without anything important being materialised in her life.

In fact, the idea of going abroad stemmed from her fear from the future; she was always wondering how long she would live with her sister in Rabat and she knew she could not stay with her forever. The nostalgia for her bygone days with Youssef sharpened her feeling of loss. She decided that if she couldn't be with the man she loved, she should at least succeed professionally and materially. She also wanted to escape from her friends and family's eyes full of pity. For her, the only way to make the dream come true was France.

Ruminating for weeks the idea of leaving Morocco, Amal had eventually decided to get in touch with one of her old classmates Imad who was living in France. Amal had always believed that he would achieve a great status. In fact, his tact and charm were not for nothing. Imad managed to win the admiration and the love of a French tourist whom he met in the hotel in which he worked as a waiter. They got married and left with her to France.

Though he was much younger than his wife, Imad still considered himself lucky in the sense that he escaped poverty and joblessness that he endured for years in Morocco. Now he could at least support himself and his poor family.

Imad also managed to do a bit of match-making by introducing one of his friends to a French lady who accepted to marry him. Amal appreciated this kind of solidarity between Moroccans who succeed to go abroad and those who are still waiting for a hand to pick them up from their despair and anguish.

The desperate woman begged Imad to help her find a way to enter France. This latter asked her if she would accept to marry one of his friends in exchange of money. Amal was stuck and didn't know what to answer. In fact, this offer or rather this bargain required reflection and serious thinking.

As her desperation and maze grew day after day, Amal became convinced of the proposal which was so far the best solution that would enable her to start a new life and to realize her smallest dream. The young woman started thinking that poverty in one's country is in itself an alienation so it would be better to work her way up somewhere else.

However belonging to a conservative traditional family, Amal was totally aware that her father and brothers would not give her their consent. For them, there was no room for cheating or deceiving in this sacred holy union which should remain for life.

Though Amal had a clear idea about the dangers lying behind such a step, she was not really disheartened. If everything went as expected, she would reach her destination, but after some time she would find herself there as a lonely divorced woman. Thus, she should start from scratch to support herself. Besides, her family would object to her staying there without a man to preserve her honour and reputation.

Yet Amal was fed up with what people would think of her. She started to believe that one should be ruthless and selfish to succeed in this life. Besides, she was not the first to resort to such solution.

One of Amal's best friends went through the same experience to reach Spain. She got married to a Moroccan living there. It cost her two millions to achieve her goal. After some time, they got divorced and she struggled to make ends meet. In fact, she endured many hardships including living in shelters but she eventually managed to get a well-paid job. Now, she leads a settled life with her new husband.

Such happy endings, encouraged many girls like Amal to go through this risky adventure. Finally, she called her friend Imad to announce her consent but she couldn't hide her fears about this step. Imad assured her that the man was trustworthy and that everything would be all right.

Three days later, Imad told her that the man asked for three millions to accept that bargain. Amal was flustered and enraged. She felt that his friend was exploiting her. Besides, if she had that sum of money she would have never thought of migration, rather she would have started a project in her own country. To her relief, Imad managed to reduce the sum to two millions after long negotiations.

The first initiative that Amal made to get the money was to visit her well-off brother Moukhtar in Casablanca. Though she had never appreciated him for he had always been arrogant and extremely selfish caring only about his welfare, Amal believed that she should doggedly seek his help. There was no time for hesitation or procrastination.

Amal told her brother that she was in need of two millions to start a day care project with some of her friends. She gave him her pitch about the importance of such lucrative project. Lying to her brother was not an easy matter yet Amal was determined to get the money by any possible way.

Much to her surprise, Moukhtar accepted to lend her one million and asked her to write a warranty cheque. This step offered a glimmer of hope to the struggling woman and encouraged her to ask her father for a loan. The latter's response was sharp and tough as usual. He told her that he had large expenses; his two children from his second wife were a heavy burden he could barely carry. Amal proposed to him to sell a piece of his land so as to help her start her project. Enraged and irritated, Haj Mohammed told her that under no circumstance would he give up his lands. Like most of land poor, this valuable heritage was his "Raison d'être."

Once again, Amal found herself stuck. No matter what she did, she would never realize her cherished dream. Like many people who keep pursuing happiness but never achieve it. A great grief overwhelmed her soul when thinking that she would spend the rest of her life working as a teacher with a low salary that could barely cover the transport and the illness charges. If only she had someone to support her, she would have continued her higher studies then she would have a chance to get a good job. Unfortunately, her sisters and brothers could barely manage to eke out a living.

Amal returned to Rabat the starting point of her adventure and kept on working in some private schools. However, she started thinking seriously about the day care project. After all, it was a remunerative business that would save her from poverty and reliance on others. Moreover, her brother Moukhtar was asking her constantly about the project's progress.

The summer 1997 brought fortune and luck to Amal. As usual she travelled to Taounat to spend her holidays. This season is well-known for the large number of migrants coming back to their home country for vacation. Their fancy cars and all the money they bring trigger off the youth's desire to cross borders to achieve the same status.

Amal tried to forget this dream. At that time, she was interested in studying her project and searching for enthusiastic partners. One happy day, Fatima the cousin of Haj Mohammed came for a visit in the company of her son Taoufik who was living in France. This latter got recently divorced from his French wife. Taoufik showed great interest in Amal who appreciated his eloquence and manners.

After three days, the man came for another visit but this time it was to ask for Amal's hand. Surprisingly, the young woman could not hide her happiness. She could finally reach France in a legal way. Besides, Taoufik was a gentle respectful man with whom she could lead a peaceful life. And so it was, Amal and Taoufik got married.

After her husband's departure, Amal started preparing all the documents necessary to join him which took her a long time but still she was extremely happy for all these months of waiting were worthwhile.

It was on a windy day of mid October that Amal travelled to Casablanca to submit her visa application and to do medical examinations in the French embassy. Though she was there by early morning, she found a large queue of about one hundred persons, many of them were there a night before, sleeping on cardboards and enduring the hard weather conditions. Like Amal, all the applicants were worn-out but still there was something special on their faces that displayed happiness and hope for a better future. Instantly, Amal recalled the dangerous bargain she was intending to do to enter France and she started laughing at her impulsiveness.

After hours of waiting, her turn came. Amal went through a thorough meticulous physical observation. To her intense relief, the doctor pronounced that she didn't have any health complications. Then, she was interviewed to make sure if her marriage was a genuine one. They asked her how she met her husband, if he was a member of her family and so on and so forth. In fact, all these questions were formal because they had already made an investigation about her. Though her paper work were all legal, Amal was slightly uncomfortable. She was afraid that some hitches raised and that everything would fall apart again. She came to believe that happiness was but an occasional episode in a general drama. Indeed the hard time of tears and sorrow she endured for years made her pessimistic and cynical about everything.

Hopefully, after all these tiresome procedures, Amal was delivered the precious visa. An intense happiness overwhelmed her soul. She was full of joie de vivre, a feeling she had not enjoyed for a long time. Now she could classify herself among the fortunate and she could start a new life.

On November the third 1998, Amal arrived at France. She felt more comfortable and secure in the presence of Taoufik who was understanding and extremely nice .With his help, she tried to erase the hoplessness which engulfed her for a long time. Luckily, Amal quite liked her new house in Clermont Ferrand. She spent the first months exploring this new world which she found incredibly wonderful.

Unlike in Morocco, everything is well-equipped and meticulously organised. Additionally, Amal quite appreciated the good manners of the French who are extremely polite and helpful even with strangers. As expected, France is a modern fascinating country that respects human beings regardless of their origin, language and colour as its motto indicates: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

After some months, Amal became more familiar with the new environment. She made friends with an Algerian woman who lived in the adjacent flat. From time to time, she went out with her for a walk or to do shopping, which allowed her to fill up her days. Further, Amal and Taoufik usually made a visit to his sister Aicha who was living nearby.

Aicha was middle-aged, she had been living in France for about twenty years. She got married to an Algerian who died five years later. At first, Amal felt a great sympathy towards this woman who endured many troubles to support herself and her son after her husband’s death. She was obliged to enter the work sphere and being an illiterate woman, she was allowed to do only tiresome jobs with low income. She worked as a house keeper, a cook and now she is the baby-sitter of a French family.

However, Aicha was distant and careless about Amal though this latter tried hard to seek her love and friendship for Taoufik considered Aicha as a mother but this latter was arrogant and very hard to please. Finally, Amal tried to stray away from her sister in law to spare herself from problems and troubles. She was intending to lead a happy life with her husband and she would not let anyone cause her other miseries. Yet Aicha who was used to

nose into her brother's life, kept on making visits to the young couple. She spent hours and hours gossiping about her family members and Amal's Algerian neighbour with intent to alienate her from everyone. Further, she interfered a lot in Taoufik's private life the thing that Amal didn't appreciate at all.

The young woman was wondering how could a person who has been living in France for years to have such an old mentality. Amal's anger was real, she felt she had no control over her house. Besides, Aicha's rude remarks on Amal's way of behaving and talking irritated her so much; because she knew that, underneath, she was having fun at her expense.

No stranger to hardships, Amal tried hard to keep patient but Aicha, who regarded her as a foe, kept humiliating her. The young woman collapsed into a state of defeat. She could not believe that she would continue living in that suffering so she didn't hesitate to talk to Taoufik about his sister's mistreatment of her.

Against all expectations, Taoufik was on Aicha's side . He trusted her blindly; for him, she was a great person who endured many troubles for her family. Besides, she always backed him so he could never disappoint her and as Aicha had more experience than Amal so it would be no harm if she accepted her remarks. Taoufik seemed so careless about what affected his wife deeply. Worst of all, he told her that she should be grateful to his sister for she was the one who recommended to him to marry her. In other words, she was the one who rescued Amal from poverty and joblessness.

His declaration shook her to her roots. Amal wished she were dead rather than to hear these hurtful words. She thought that Taoufik was in love with her and it was difficult not to give way to the tears of humiliation that were pressing burningly against her eyes. She felt that she was a weak-willed creature because she allowed herself to be trampled and belittled in such a way. She realized that Taoufik was a marvelous actor and that a woman could never judge a man by any criteria but her own experience of him.

For the present, at least there was nothing she could do. She couldn't leave him because she didn't have somewhere else to go. He held all the cards for he had the power and affluence on his side. Taoufik kept distant from Amal as a way of punishing her and making her aware of her mistake. The poor woman got so homesick; she began to miss her country and her family wishing she had never left them.

Looking back, she can see that the past moments of warmth had been with Youssef with whom she felt secure and valued but now she was living with a man who puts what he wanted first and never gave an importance to his partner's needs or feelings. Besides, she discovered that he suffered from a superiority complex, and that was why he divorced his French wife.

Now was the time for Amal to be strong. It's not worth weeping any single tear on Taoufik or any other man. So she decided to search for a job for life guarantees nothing. After long negotiations with Taoufik, this latter allowed her to work. Amal started a training as a cashier. She had six weeks to prove she could do the job properly and being strong-willed she succeeded easily.

As time passed, she got used to her life with Taoufik although their marriage was not passionate. She started thinking that maybe she was too much romantic and that men aren't like women. They soon tire of people, places and wives!. So she tried to adapt herself to these circumstances.

Each summer, Amal visits Morocco in the company of her husband. She came to accept that it was her destiny to live abroad. She couldn't help laughing when she saw how much she was envied by her friends and relatives who wished they had the same chance as her. The struggling woman was intending to continue her higher education. Yet the coming of the new baby who was a sheer bliss changed her life as well as that of Taoufik who, luckily,

became less authoritative and more understanding but still she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen.

From that time forward, Amal leads a more settled life. She devotes all her love and time to her son whom she named Youssef in an attempt to live, though in her imagination, these spoiled moments she has dreamed of with her true lover.