

BIRTH

Interviewer: Tell me, how many children do you have?

Narrator: Four.

Interviewer: When did you have your first child?

Narrator: My first child, actually my oldest son turned 46 recently, on April 1st.

Interviewer: You gave birth when you were 17-18 years old?

Narrator: Yes, like that. Trust me, I gave birth to my first child at home, yes.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about it, how?

Narrator: I gave birth at home, I was pregnant, so I went to the doctors, did check-ups, he said, "You have time." When I went to the hospital, the doctor said, "Okay," he said, "You can stay here for three or four days and maybe you'll go into labor since you're from the village," he said, you know, "so you don't go back and forth, stay for a week so we can see if you're ready to give birth." A week went by, "Well," he said, "it's not time yet." They discharged me, I went home. After a week, God, I gave birth to my first son, my child. At home.

Interviewer: How?

Narrator: I started feeling pain. It was around noon, we were eating lunch. My husband's sister was there, they only had that sister, she has died now. And they said, they called her Sister because they were two brothers and only had one sister. She said, "Sister [sister-in-law]," she said, "I want to go home because I've stayed for two weeks," she said, "for a break," she said, "you didn't give birth," she said, "I would want to be here," you know, "and I'd help you." God, as we were talking, eating lunch, I started feeling pain, at that moment. I got up, I was embarrassed because my father-in-law, a man, was there. I went outside, and my mother-in-law said, "What is going on?" I said, "I'm sick." I didn't know what the pain was like with my first child, I just could tell my back hurt. They finished lunch quickly and came out. I was walking around, walking around the yard, when the pain would start, I would hold on to a tree and rest, again and again. I gave birth to my child at a quarter to five. We went inside...

Interviewer: What, can you repeat that?

Narrator: A quarter to five in the evening, I gave birth to my son. I was in pain for around two hours, in the afternoon. We went inside and my mother-in-law said, I had a lot of pain here, she was holding my

knees saying, "Maybe your pain," you know, "will slightly go away." As the pain got worse, the time to give birth was approaching, I was praying to God, praying to God. My sister-in-law was in front of me, she helped me like a doctor, she'd say, "Push, take a deep breath, take a deep breath." And I gave birth to a boy, the first child of the house.

My sister-in-law cut the baby's cord herself. She first took care of the baby, then slowly... I didn't know what was happening next, she said, "Sister, you have one more difficulty." "Yes, what is it?" She said, "You have to push out the amniotic sac of the child." And she said, "Blow," you know the water pots made out of clay that we had back then. "Blow," she said, "this hard and the amniotic sac will come out." I blew three times and I was relieved. That was also a problem because, "If it gets swollen," she said, "you could die." And God relieved me, he cleared me. (laughs) I laid down in bed with my son, and since then I have never had any problems.

CHILDHOOD & EDUCATION

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little more about your childhood, what kind of childhood did you have?

Narrator: I was born in Batllava, my family lives there. Well, I do not have my parents, but my family, my brothers and everyone else. We had a good childhood, it was good. With what they had, the parents as well as the children, it was good. We didn't live in very hard conditions because you know what it was like then, but it was okay. For example, you finished your classes, went home, did housework which our mother assigned us, but she didn't make us work too hard like other mothers did. Not like some mother who just gave all the work to their children, "You have to do this. But if you want, if you don't..." But we were interested and our conscience didn't allow us to stay and look at our mother or someone else working. We did chores whenever they assigned us chores. We did chores, and we came home on schedule. We were never late, everything was okay.

Interviewer: What kind of work did you do?

Narrator: Housework, but I also worked the land, for example, you might have done some gardening, you went outside and did something. You know, you helped your parents, as for going out, we didn't see the city much, because we rarely went out. No, no, because back then people talked, also the village was different from the city. And for example, the lake was nearby, we didn't see it much. "No, you can't, they will say she went to the lake, she's not good, she's not polite." (laughs) Do you understand? There were some primitive things.

Interviewer: Can you swim?

Narrator: Yes, yes, because the river was near, in the river. But we didn't go to the lake much because, "They will talk about you and we're religious, if people see you," for example, "at the lake." And we held back ourselves and did what we were told to. Because we know how it was back then, but it was all right, all right.

Interviewer: What did your father do?

Narrator: My father was a farmer, [he worked] with land, the garden, all of these. He achieved his goal and provided us with food and everything, all-natural, everything. And it wasn't bad.

Interviewer: What about your mother?

Narrator: My mother, housework, and gardening too, like everyone else.

Interviewer: Which of your parents were you closer to?

Narrator: I was closer to my mother.

Interviewer: Why?

Narrator: Well, I don't know, us women we are more sensitive and understand some things better, some more sensitive things. I had a very upright mother, she educated us, she always taught us how to do good, not bad. And we got their education and did what they advised us to do. Not, for example, nowadays, some don't like those, even though we were right. When we were told something, that's what we did, there weren't any, for example, doubts about why to do that. We tried to stick to that and that's it. But even though my parents are dead now, I'm thankful to them. I pray that God blessed them with heaven, "You have taught us such good lessons, morals..." Because I stuck to them until now and I will stick to them until the day I die, I will never give up goodness.

Interviewer: Tell me, do you have siblings?

Narrator: Yes, I have siblings, I have four brothers, two sisters.

Interviewer: Which one were you closest to?

Narrator: I was closest to my younger sister, she is 18 months younger than me and we were like twins. Whoever saw us never guessed we were not twins.

Interviewer: Are you still that close?

Narrator: Well, she got married, she lived in England for twelve years. But because of the children, they didn't want to leave them there, they came back and live in the Prugovc village. We're still in contact, of course, not like before because we each have our own obligations. But, we still have that love, that... we can't do without each other.

Interviewer: Tell me, what kind of child were you?

Narrator: A very respectful child, very polite, very educated. In school, I only finished elementary school because I had to travel, even though I was very fired-up to continue my education but I couldn't because I had to travel, the bus line was very poor. So I couldn't, but today school is a dream. I could have done it because I was a very active child and kind of everywhere. I took part in school plays, as a singer, I was the best at reciting. And this is where I am today, I couldn't reach my potential, I mean, to reach my goal, it's hard, it isn't easy. But I like women who are educated, independent, I really like it and I feel very good, very content when I see them.

MOTHER

Interviewer: Which one of your parents are you closest to?

Narrator: I'm closer to my father, because my father wasn't always home. He worked in construction, but back then they sent him off [to work] all around Kosovo. Sometimes he wouldn't come home for a month and we missed him. And he never said this, or... My mother was very nice, very strict and I'm thankful, because every mother should have a limit that they should teach their children about, and not let them step out of normality.. So, I'm thankful because she taught us well, very well.

Interviewer: What did you learn from your mother?

Narrator: Everything, everything, and I keep learning even today, because regarding cooking, handicraft, my mother was very good at it, she still is even today. Her eyesight is still good and she can work, she can do everything. The seams my mother sewed, now there are machines, now there are all kinds of machines that can't do it as well as my mother. Many women in our village came to learn from my mother, even though she didn't have an education, she was very, very skilled. My mother also learned writing and reading when she started taking the children to school.

Interviewer: How did this happen?

Narrator: For example, when my oldest sister started school, together with her. She learned all the letters. Now she writes, she reads a lot, she doesn't lack anything, even though she didn't get an education. She loved school and she tried to push us forward.

Interviewer: Why didn't your mother go to school?

Narrator: Well, my mother, a long, long time ago, they didn't take girls to school then. There was a village in the Municipality of Podujeva, none of the girls there went to school. For that reason, actually they even hid their daughters, whoever had daughters hid them, "We don't have girls." Just so that they wouldn't have to take them to school. The boys, yes, the girls, no.

Interviewer: How old is she?

Narrator: My mother is 72 years old.

PARENTING PARENTS

Interviewer: What did your parents do for a living?

Narrator: Actually, my father worked at Ramiz Sadiku, but he got injured at the workplace.

Interviewer: What did he do at Ramiz Sadiku?

Narrator: He worked at an enterprise, he carried [stuff] from one place to another. He said it was some irons, some... at that time. And there was a child in the carriage, horse carriage as we call them, and as he was walking the horse got scared, he had gone to a store to buy something, it hurt the back of my father's brain.

Interviewer: The horse?

Narrator: Yes, the horse. And from then, my father was injured for over 30 years. He fainted all the time, the most I took care of him was [when he was out] in the streets. When my father went out of the house, I took care of him. I was younger, my brothers were in school, my sisters were married. I took care of him, I was scared he would get run over by a car so I always went after him. He was disabled and carried a cane with him, sometimes he could've been run over. But thank God nothing happened to him in the streets. At home...

Interviewer: Tell me a little about your mother, what kind of a woman was she?

Narrator: My mother was very hardworking, very hardworking, she wanted to keep everything clean. As the youngest [of the children], I mean my sisters did housework and everything. She would say to

me, “Women should take care of their personal hygiene, as well as that of the house, that’s where they’re needed the most.”

Interviewer: What did you learn from your mother?

Narrator: From my mother (laughs) [I learned how] to clean the house, cook, make homemade bread, we made homemade bread then, we baked in the wood-fired oven, with metal lids. When my mother went somewhere, since my father was sick, I had to take care of him. It was a little difficult for me, because you know the fire and metal lid are harder to cook with. But she wouldn’t take long very often, rarely, because she was stronger, but because of my father I had to be interested, taking care of him.

Interviewer: What did you learn from your father?

Narrator: From my father, my father would say, “The most important thing is school. Study in school, because I want you to become a doctor” (laughs), my father always wanted that for me. But it happened so that my mother got sick, she had her appendix surgically removed, and I had to take care of my mother. At some point, some time passed, I went to school until the sixth grade, I couldn’t go for any longer.

WAR

Interviewer: Do you ever think about the war? How did it...

Narrator: Me?

Interviewer: Yes.

Narrator: I think about it because I experienced it. During the war, I gave birth to my oldest daughter, when I gave birth, I gave birth to my oldest daughter in the state hospital. Not many people dared to go to the hospital. I don’t know where I got the courage to go, but I went. But when things happen fast you don’t have time to think about where you’re going. I always wanted to go to, in Vranjevc, there was Nënë Tereza [hospital], they provided baby deliveries there. But I don’t know, it happened out of the blue and [I went] straight to [the state hospital], it was my first pregnancy and I didn’t dare [to go to Nënë Tereza], because more severe cases were taken from there to the hospital, and in the hospital, they would not deal with you when they saw where you were coming from.

I went straight to the state hospital. I went at around 8 AM, and until 11 AM, no one cared that someone was giving birth. No one, at all, you couldn’t hear anyone at all speak Albanian. I stayed in the hall, it was a quite cold September, quite cold. I was a little scared, a little nervous, you know, you could feel

the cold. At some point they came, when they remembered that they saw me there. They came and took me, "Why are you here?" I said, "Well, to give birth, I didn't come here to hang out." They took me and examined me, they said, "There's no time." When they saw that it was time to give birth to my daughter, they took me to the room.

There was a nurse or a doctor, I don't know, what was she? I don't know. I heard her talking in Albanian. I said, "Please," I said, "Can you stick around because I don't speak Serbian." I understood it a little, but not much. She said, "Yes, don't worry," she said, "at all." And I never saw her again, she didn't come, my daughter was born, even if I had gone to Nënë Tereza, there wouldn't have been any complications. They didn't ask you there, I even heard them saying, "Cut her," they said, "who cares." You know, like that. They made a small incision, but there was no need, they didn't cut me any more, and my daughter was born and they took her. Because back then they didn't let them near you like they do now, they took my daughter, I just heard her crying a little and I didn't see her anymore.

They left me uncovered, I was freezing. It was so cold and at that, at that time, you're cold, even if it's summer. Oh God, I saw one of those, I said, "Please just bring that closer to me," I couldn't reach the blanket. I didn't dare move, "Come on," I said, "bring that blanket closer to me." They brought me the blanket, how do I say it, they gave us some bad, black blankets as aid and it was soaking wet. It didn't help, it actually made things worse, [I stayed] four hours like that. I don't know how I remained healthy and didn't catch a severe cold from that, but maybe God protects you when you have no other options. They took me from there and took me to a room, or where did they take us? I didn't get to see my daughter until the next day, I couldn't wait for that moment. Not only did I not see my daughter, but they had also told my family that, "She needs a lot of medications, infusions, because she is very sick." They didn't let anyone come in to see us.

They, I feel bad because they had spent a lot on medications, but they [the doctors] didn't give me anything, not even a paracetamol pill, let alone anything else, because I didn't, I didn't need it. Until the next day I didn't have any water to drink, they didn't want to [give me water] because they were all Serbs, they didn't want to... Only when the inspection came in the morning, they'd get scared, and then they would come and fix our beds, check up on us. That was when they saw how wet I was, how... and friends among each other, those who had come earlier that had something to drink. One of them, I forgot her name, gave me a box of Plazma [cookie brand] and some juice, I think it was blueberry juice, you know, I am in... She gave it to me and I drank it, from evening until morning [I only drank] that.

The next day when they brought my daughter, God, it seemed like I knew which one was mine, she had black hair, very beautiful. When they brought them... because they put them in a big, like that table, they put all the children there. They all had their own numbers. Her face was ice cold, because she was fully uncovered, ice cold. I took her and held her near me, but she didn't drink, she didn't drink at all, but she slept immediately. Then I felt bad for her that she didn't drink. I thought, are they feeding her? They fed them. I felt sorry for her when they took her from me.

You know, they left them with us for a half an hour, until it was their time. I stayed there for two days, I didn't want to vaccinate her there. People would say, "They're giving them something bad, harmful, they're harming them for sure." And I refused, I said, "I don't want to give her the vaccine, I'll do it later." Then I took her to the ambulance to get her the first vaccine. Those two days seemed so long, no one was taking care of her. We were still in their hands, we had to do whatever they asked us to.

Interviewer: What year was your daughter born in?

Narrator: My daughter was born in 1970... '97, 1997. A day before I turned 25 years old.

EVERY HOME IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY

Interviewer: When did you start working?

Narrator: I first started working in 2007 and never stopped. But I started working only once a week.

Interviewer: What did you do, what kind of job?

Narrator: I worked as a housekeeper because I had no other choice, my children were little, actually my husband worked, but not too much.

Interviewer: What does he do?

Narrator: He works at an insurance company, at Hortikulturë. But back then, they had very low wages, when we moved to live in our own house, he got 80 deutsche marks, marks were still being used, 80 marks monthly salary. My uncle's daughter got me my first job.

Interviewer: Tell us how.

Narrator: She worked there herself. We met at my brother's, it was his children's birthday, their first birthday, he had twins, he still does. And she was working there and she got engaged and her husband didn't want her to [work]. "We don't need it, you don't need to work." She told me, "Will you go work there, why don't you work?" "Yes," I said, "I don't know where and it's difficult to start out alone." "No," she said, "I'll call where I work and we'll see, and then you can go." She [the employer] immediately said, "Yes, she can come." She took me there, I went there once a week for one month, I didn't tell anyone that I was working.

Interviewer: What was it like to go to someone you didn't know before?

Narrator: It was difficult, very difficult. I don't know how to explain it, when you go somewhere for the first time, like [going to] a foreign country. I don't know, because I've never been abroad, but it's the same as going abroad where you neither know the environment nor... starting [to work] here, starting from zero is quite difficult. But looking around, asking, "Where, how? Do you like it here or there?" The first day, when I went the next week, I started working a little every... it's not that I didn't know things, but in someone else's house you don't know where everything goes, but she was satisfied with me. And I started helping at home with that salary, not that it was much, but it was quite good for me because I was at home all week, except the one day I was working. When you know how to manage it, you have to, it takes some effort, but it can be done.

Interviewer: What were your tasks, what did you have to do?

Narrator: What were my tasks, everything that I saw, from...

Interviewer: [Describe it] a little...

Narrator: Starting from the windows, doors, floor. Everything that was in the kitchen, all there was. Except for the food, I never cooked but I did everything else. I had to iron... all the housework there was, there was also a small yard, I had to go outside and clean it, but I didn't mind, I just wanted her to be satisfied. And I wanted the money to be, as they say, as halal as possible because I had to raise and feed my children with that money.

A friend of hers came, she was German and she saw me working and liked my work, she said, it was around November, she said, "I'm going to Germany during the holidays, end-of-year holidays, but when I come back, could you also come to my place?" She said, "You have to come twice a week." I said, "I will try." I felt sorry for my three-year-old daughter, for leaving her. You know, I could hardly wait to finish the work and go home to my daughter, because I was still feeding her.

And she came back and called me, and I went to work at her house twice a week. One day from 9 AM to 4 PM, the other day from 12 PM to 4 PM, but she paid me very well. And she was very satisfied and her children were the same age as mine and she was very nice. Her daughter was as old as mine, she would buy my daughter whatever she bought hers.

I didn't mind working, I did everything. She would say, "I've only seen Albanians clean the windows weekly, on the inside, fine, but don't clean them outside because the rain leaves spots anyway." I worked there for two years, almost three, and she had to leave. And she said, "I feel so bad that I'm leaving you unemployed, there are people who aren't hard-working and have jobs. While you work this hard and will become unemployed."

She said, "I'll give your phone number to UNDP, I have a friend there," she said, "at first I think they will call you only when they need a substitute." Trust me, I didn't believe her, I thought she's done with her work and is going to leave, and no one will think of me. But fortunately she was very nice and they called me once, as a substitute for a month. The pay was very good at UNDP.

I worked for a month, until the woman who was on her leave came back, she came back to her job, they liked my work there a lot. Many people said, "Will you come [work]?" But the week only had seven days, not more. It's a very tiring job, it isn't easy, there are all kinds of experiences. There are some very nice people, then there are, so to say, bad people, they are, it's hard to say, but there are also people like that. Maybe it isn't easy for them either to welcome strangers into the house, it isn't easy for them either, but it still is harder for us to go to a stranger's house.

For around three or four months, I don't exactly know how long, but it feels like [I worked for] a long time, I worked at a house in Velania, I won't mention their name, who they were, their daughter-in-law hired me, she was very nice, but she had a very rude mother-in-law. She liked my work, she'd say "You work very well, but too slowly." But, you can't have it both quickly and well. I had to work from 9:00 to 13:00, you can't finish all the housework from 9 AM to 1 PM and leave, I wanted to do everything well and I stayed longer, a little longer.

But I didn't mind the salary, I just wanted them to be satisfied. The wife would tell me, "I don't know what I would do if it weren't for you, you are doing such a good job." I couldn't wait to find something else and quit, trust me I was very reluctant to go there. There are many places where I work now, I go there as if I were going to a friend, or to my sister or... I'm that comfortable. I have the key, I go inside, I work, I leave. Even if I don't finish [everything], it doesn't matter.

"You put stuff in order, do whatever you want." They're very nice. But I went there very... I was so happy when they called me at UNDP as a substitute. I felt so bad to tell their daughter-in-law, tell her, "I can't come anymore." I was happy that UNDP called me, and I quit and didn't go there anymore. It's a very, it's not a very good job because there's no insurance, no pension. If you quit tomorrow, you're left with nothing, it doesn't show anywhere...

Interviewer: That you worked.

Narrator: That I worked. And now...

Interviewer: Until now, you've never had a contract?

Narrator: Back at UNDP, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, what about the others?

Narrator: At the others, no.

LIFE OF A NANNY

Narrator: Before getting pregnant, I babysitted a child. And it was the child of, the daughter of a friend, she was six months old. And when she turned six months old she called me on the phone and said, “I have to go back to work, can you babysit for me?” I said, “I’m not used to [taking care of] children this young,” I said, “I’m scared.” I was scared. “No, I can’t trust anyone with my child but you.” “Okay,” I said, “I will come, just keep in mind that in case I am not able to, don’t get too comfortable that you found someone,” I said, “because I might not be able to, I might be scared or something,” I said, “And I might have to leave.”

Interviewer: What scared you?

Narrator: She was little, I was scared I might hurt her or that I won’t know how to feed her, that I might choke her. I was scared, this is what I was scared of. But somehow I got used to it immediately. She seemed like a chubby baby to me, chubby and small. Even though I only went there to babysit her, by nature, I can’t stay in one place. The moment she slept, I would go about and clean, I would do something, even though I wasn’t obligated to, but I was used to cleaning and not seeing any mess and so I would get up. Then I also started doing housework.

Interviewer: How many hours would you be there?

Narrator: From 8:00 in the morning to 16:00.

Interviewer: How much did you get paid for this shift?

Narrator: 200 euros.

Interviewer: For a month?

Narrator: Yes.

Interviewer: Five days a week.

Narrator: Six, Saturdays also. There were cases when I didn’t go on Saturdays. Sometimes she took her to her parents, but mostly yes, Saturdays too. The bright side was that I got used to [taking care of] children. I realized that working with children isn’t hard, but it’s delicate.

Interviewer: What would you and the child do, I mean when she didn't sleep, what would you do in that free time?

Narrator: She was little, six months old, I would try to sing some songs that we knew from when we were little to put her to sleep. I would feed her, she had her own fixed schedule, for the food too...

Interviewer: Did you create the schedule or did her mother do it?

Narrator: Her mother. I just stuck by those rules. I would prepare the food in the blender, feed her. She was a very good child, she slept when she was supposed to, she had everything scheduled. As if she were programmed, wake up, wake up, sleep, sleep. I don't know, it wasn't hard for me to deal with her. Except if she was sick, she happened to be sick twice, which is normal. When children are sick, they're a bit more... Even when we adults are sick we become hard to please, let alone children.

When she was sick, I was calling her mother all the time, "What do I give her now, what do I do?" Because I was scared to make any decisions for someone else's child. Maybe I annoyed her calling, but there was nothing else I could do because I didn't dare [take decisions]. And how can you know, the child can be allergic to something or the body might not respond well to something. But in general, she was a good child. I worked a lot with her, I loved her a lot. I started getting very attached to her, and she started getting attached to me, sometimes when her mother came back from work, she would spend more time with me, she wouldn't go to her mother, she had gotten attached to me.

Until she turned nine months old, when she turned nine months old, I started painting with her. She would grab these and draw some lines, stuff like that. Just so we would do some activities, I would let her watch television for half an hour, that's what her mother told me, for half an hour she'd watch television, but she never watched it for half an hour, she would immediately fall asleep watching. Maybe because she wasn't used to watching television, the moment she would start watching it, she would fall asleep. So, I found the method to take her to sleep, *tak* {onomatopoeic} in front of the television (laughs) and she would fall asleep. And good, a good job, I learned a lot about how to raise a child, I learned a lot.

Interviewer: How long did you babysit her?

Narrator: Until she turned one, six months.

Interviewer: What was that period when you had to leave the little girl you were babysitting and go on with your life like?

Narrator: Actually I quit, as they didn't want to let me go, they didn't want to take her to kindergarten, they wanted me to look after her. Because I started doing activities with her, I wanted to teach her a little. I started to teach her how to walk and so on. Actually I spent all of my time with her and... But then I got pregnant and I had a complicated pregnancy and I couldn't continue working. The doctor forbade it for me, he actually told me, "You have to stay home." And this was the reason why I stopped, because I wouldn't have stopped, at least not for as long as I would have been able to [work]. It was hard for both sides, for all three sides, for me and also for the parents, as well as for the child.

But I tried to keep in touch with her, I see her sometimes even now, she's grown up now. But somehow now she doesn't know me like back then, it's different now. When I talk to her sometimes, she steps back, she gets scared, you know, some kind of... But it was very hard and I missed her a lot in the beginning, *auf* {onomatopoeic}. There were a few times I even cried, when I recalled how she wakes up in the morning, what she does, how she looks for you immediately. But when she turned one, they took her to kindergarten, I stopped, I didn't keep going. It really was hard, luckily I wasn't separated from my son, but back then I didn't have my own child, it felt like being separated from my own child, I was used to [being around] her, I was attached to her.

FINDING JOBS ONLINE

Narrator: I remember a case, I called on the phone, a man answered, he said, "My apartment is near Hotel Sirius, behind Hotel Sirius." He explained to me where the apartment is and so, he said, "Two-three times a week, not more often." "Okay, fine." I had this thing, I've never told them I was a single parent, I didn't want to, I had this fear, and married women enjoy more respect. And he said, "You can come and live here," I said, "No, I live with my husband, I don't need to," I said, "I have my own apartment." I said, "I want to help my husband, lend him a hand and work something." "Okay."

And we agreed to meet, I said, "Where do we meet?" "We'll meet in Pristina and I'll take you to see the apartment." I said, "Can I know what exactly I will be doing?" "You don't have much work, clean the apartment, wash clothes," and he said, "Also" he said, "I have a little bone spur in the neck." He said, "Sometimes you have to give me a massage." I said, "Look, sir, next time you put a job advertisement, put one for a physiotherapist," I said, "Not a housekeeper." I said, "Because," I said, "I'm coming to clean," I said, "not massage you."

I said, "I'm sorry but I can only give massages to my husband." "But," he said, "there's not much work." I said, "Okay, it's fine, sorry I wasted your time, I don't want to waste more of your time, and you mine." "But," he said, "This is very normal." I said, "Sir, I'm not interested in continuing this conversation," I said, "I'm not interested in the job either." And I hung up. And from there, I never looked for jobs online. He was looking for a housekeeper and asking for a back and neck massage. When he said that, I immediately put a stop to it.

And when someone found me a job, for example, there are many women in my village who work like this, they clean. They would say, "Someone called me to work, can you go instead because I have a lot of work that day?" "Okay." I would go. Then I started working for a dry cleaning service in Dragodan without an employment contract. They only paid me one hundred euros, I worked six days a week. I worked there for almost a year.

Interviewer: How could you afford to work there?

Narrator: Not that I could afford it, I would pay a monthly bus pass, because if I paid for it daily, my salary wouldn't suffice. I paid the monthly pass and I only worked for four hours. Then the rest of the day, I would go clean somewhere. Then after I came to Pristina to work there, I was at work until 12:00, from 12:00, someone would call me and I would go at 12:30 - 13:00, depending how far it was and I would go there, then I would go home. This happened for a long period of time until I quit because my son would stay without me for a long time. But I quit the dry cleaning service because I insisted on being registered two or three times. I wanted my taxes and contributions to be on record. But I don't know why it was stuck in their mind that I'm on social welfare, which I wasn't.

I said, "I've never talked to you about social welfare," he didn't even know that I was separated. Even though I worked somewhere, I didn't tell them my personal life, I have a husband and a son, that's it. And I said, "I don't know why," I said, "why do you have this idea in mind, I'm not on social welfare, I'm not such a case. Why would I have social welfare?" I said, "People who aren't capable of working are on social welfare, I'm capable of working. Who said that I'm on social welfare?" "No, I don't know why I think that." "I don't know what you think. Can you register me?" I mentioned it two-three times and they had the same excuses until I realized. It was October when I quit, the end of October. In the beginning of October, first or second, I said, "I will be here until the end of the month, so you're free to find someone else during this period of time. I'm leaving."

EIGHT HOURS IN HEELS

Narrator: In the twelfth grade, because it went up to the thirteenth grade in high school, I went to the general gymnasium, I started working in the twelfth grade.

Interviewer: Where did you work?

Narrator: I worked as a saleswoman at the Grand Store. I perhaps noticed that my mother didn't get paid enough at Amortizatorë at that time. Also my grandfather's pension was very low, I don't know how much it was at that time, 40 euros, or 30, I don't know. My father worked in the private sector, in a steakhouse but didn't, they would delay his salary sometimes for a month, sometimes for two. So, he

never had a set date when he got his salary. He always got it in a disorderly way, we never knew when they would give it to him. And I noticed that it isn't, I noticed it wasn't enough for my mother, even though she never said "it isn't enough" or "I don't have money," but there are some things that become too obvious sometimes.

And since I wanted to, I told her, "I want to work." She told me, "Finish school first, then you can work." I said, "I will finish school and work." And I started, I both worked and went to school. So, I went to school from 8 a.m. when classes started until 1 p.m., at 1 p.m. I left school, at half past two I left for work and worked from 2 to 10 p.m. And it was a very tiring period, very [tiring]. Sometimes it happened that when I went home and sat down to eat maybe and until my mother put out my food, I would fall asleep while sitting on the couch. She would tell me, "Wake up, do you want to eat?" I would tell her, "I don't want food." I would just go back to sleep, I couldn't [eat food] because I'd get too tired.

Then, when I also had to study, even though I worked, I never slacked off in school. I always had good grades, I always found the time to study when I had an exam or something. Often I would wake up, I would set the alarm for 5 a.m. I woke up and studied from 5 to 7 a.m. Then I would start getting ready for, you know, 8 a.m., you know, to be at school. My school wasn't very far, a ten-minute walk, so I went. So, that time was very tiring, my immunity weakened, and the tiredness, and I got psoriasis, a skin condition. The doctor told me it formed from stress, from tiredness, the moment you get it, it appears from the age of 18 to the age of 25.

And I was exactly at that age that I got really tired and 17 years old, 16-17 years old, I got psoriasis. In the beginning, I didn't even know what it was, I just noticed my skin was reddening. Then my mother goes, "You have to go to the doctor, you have to go to the doctor," I'd say, "When I have a day off." You know, because I was also working and I'd get tired, I couldn't wait to have a day off, I didn't want to go to the doctor. I made an appointment, found the time, I started using lotions and stuff, because they said, "It doesn't go away, you just have to take care of it." But, that time was very tiring, especially the last two years because it was in the twelfth and thirteenth grade that I was working and going to, going to school. College...

Interviewer: Tell me, elaborate on it a little...

Narrator: Yes?

Interviewer: What kind of job was it?

Narrator: The job, the job, I worked as a saleswoman, I would be there, we were open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., how many hours, from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., around eight hours, right? We were standing for eight hours, we weren't allowed to sit at any moment and we were obligated to have, to wear heels,

you know, high heels. Because if you went wearing flat shoes, they wouldn't even let you inside. So, I would always take my shoes to school with me, I would put them in my backpack so that when I went there I could go wearing my sneakers, and there I could take off my sneakers and put these [the high heels] on. It was pretty hard because first from 8:00 in the morning I was tired from school, then went back again and worked for eight hours. It was too much, all of my body and legs hurt.

When I think about it today, I wonder how I could do it, maybe because I was young, you know, my young age and stuff. When I think about it today, I think I wouldn't ever be able to stay like that even for two hours. We weren't allowed to sit even for a minute. Even when we went to eat, when we had a break, they also made the food there, they had a kitchen. When we went to eat, we had to eat in a rush, we had to finish lunch in ten minutes. If the boss came there twice and caught you there, he might have yelled at you, "Why are you eating all day long?" Even if you had just started eating, you know. There was a lot of pressure, nonstop...

Interviewer: What about the pay?

Narrator: The pay was very low, very low, very low, they gave you around 200 euros and even that they didn't give you regularly, they always delayed it for five, six, ten days. Even if you asked for it, you know, you'd tell them, "I need it for something." They'd say, "I don't have it. Wait." You know, the private sector always had it difficult in today's world. Maybe now it's a little better, but at that time, back then, back then it was very, very hard to work in the private sector, because well they...

Interviewer: Did you have an employment contract?

Narrator: No, no, we didn't have contracts. We didn't have a contract, so they paid us in cash, they gave us the money however they could. You had your salary, sometimes they gave you a hundred, other times 50, once 20, you know, depending on what was convenient for them. It wasn't just me, it was the same for all the workers. The students who were in college had it the hardest because they also had the apartment rent and they had to pay the rent.

For example, it happened that... I had a friend, she told them, "They haven't paid me yet." [The landlord] he told her, "Find it [the money] because I don't care, or I will fire you. You have to pay [the rent] on this date. She was asking once, saying "Give me the money because I need it," you know, they'd say, "We don't have it." It was always the employee's fault for asking for their own money. The contracts were not up for discussion at all, no one dared mention them. Maybe most of the employees didn't even know you had to have a contract because this practice wasn't applied anywhere.

WITHOUT A CONTRACT

Interviewer: When did you start working?

Narrator: I started when I was 30 years old.

Interviewer: *Uh* {onomatopoeic} and what was it like?

Narrator: Well it was, I was very happy when I started working that they let me go for example, that my husband allowed me to. Why? Because I didn't think it was reasonable, why shouldn't I work like everyone else, why shouldn't I? I was the same person I had always been, wherever I was, I was the same person, why...?

Interviewer: Why did you have to ask your husband?

Narrator: You had to ask him because it was like that then, you couldn't go anywhere without your husband giving you permission, you weren't allowed. Because things might have gotten out of hand and we had to stay quiet and do as your husband commanded you. But I told him, "I want to work, because it's been long enough not working and all." "No," he said, "you don't need to," he said, "our women don't need to work, because we work." "You do work, but I want to work for myself, for my children, for my life, why should I idle when I like working and am hardworking." But later he realized that it's normal, you have to work, working is necessary. And he allowed me, I started working, now I don't ever think about stopping, at all.

Interviewer: Tell me, what was your first job like?

Narrator: Well my job, I was very content with it, when I started working, I was very content. I'm telling you, I always liked working, I never reached my goal and it seemed like another life, even today, it seems like that. I regret the time I spent not working. It wasn't okay, why, why shouldn't women work when they want to? I feel so much better that I work. Even though we couldn't achieve our goal of getting an education, to then work other kinds of jobs, something easier and better. But this isn't bad either, when I know we didn't work at all, we just did housework, you got married, served guests, dealt with some useless stuff, you know? For yourself, how do I say this, you couldn't even afford to go out and drink a coffee. But you did all the work, from morning to night time, you tried to respect that family, all their relatives, but when it came to going out and so you could never have fun.

I started working at my sister's restaurant, it was in Millosheva, but it was seasonal, there wasn't much work during the winter and I had to leave and find work elsewhere. They couldn't, for example, pay the workers they had, and there was nothing to do about it and we had to leave. At the restaurant, I ironed covers and I was the main person for [setting up] the bridal table, because I was, how do I say it, I was perfect at my job. I wanted to do my job right and I was the head there.

Interviewer: What kind of responsibilities did you have there?

Narrator: I had to clean the covers, iron them, and as said, I was the head for [setting up] the bridal table, I did all of that.

Interviewer: What is there to do?

Narrator: There is the cover of the table of the groom, that of the couple, behind there's the curtain, the decorations that they choose. It has happened that the family, the family hosting the wedding brought their own, they wanted their own. Not what the restaurant had, for example, but they wanted to do it better, they had the means, then I had to clean those too, iron what they wanted, whatever wishes they had I had to fulfill them.

Interviewer: Did you like that?

Narrator: Yes, I didn't mind, because we were hardworking and we made a place for ourselves. And I was very content and didn't feel tired. I'd just think how it was a completely different life, completely, such a big change, I went and came back with sheer willpower. Now it seemed like a completely different life. I said that I was never afraid of working, I said that if someone can do it, so can I. Someone else can do it, but I can't? No, I will do it too because I am myself and I will be able to do it. But some sort of stress about where I'm going, what if they say things to me, what if they do not like me even though my sister said, "Who doesn't like you?" I said, "Who knows, there are all kinds of people, you can have good intentions but they take advantage of you and perhaps fire you." "No," she said, "You belong everywhere. Because we are hardworking" she said, "we always make a place for ourselves." You know?

Interviewer: It's not easy to go into someone's house...

Narrator: It's very difficult, it's stressful, when I started at that age, at that time it was very stressful. I always wondered where I was going, but always with the recommendation of someone whose family I knew well, because money isn't worth going anywhere for. [Money] isn't everything, it will never be. If I didn't know a family really well, I wouldn't agree to go. But the woman who found the jobs for me said, "I know what kind of a woman you are and you can, I wouldn't tell you to do it otherwise."

Interviewer: Tell me how do you make the deal? Who do you talk to?

Narrator: The deal, we make the deal through a mediator. I have friends from that area, now they're married, they know someone in the city, connection after connection. Someone tells them, they ask for a housekeeper. Of course, everyone asks for a good and polite housekeeper. And they say, "Do you know someone because this and that..." for example, right now I have an offer, there are some offices

at the Arabs' buildings. My friend called and said, "Do you want to go because they said, 'We have never had an actual good worker.' Do you know anyone you could find for us? It's a full time job, she will get paid this much. If we like her, if she is the way you're saying she is, we don't even know, we will help that woman a lot." When I go there now, it's her duty to tell me about everything, what kind of tasks I have, to tell me everything on time, "I will tell you what I want, you tell me what you want, so we don't argue later because I want to be proper..." you know?

Interviewer: Yes, that's why I'm saying, tell us how...

Narrator: Well, "I want both of us to be satisfied. If you don't feel satisfied, I will leave. You just have to say, 'I don't like it here and that's it.' But I will try, you will evaluate my work and so I will start." Wherever I worked, they were always satisfied [with my work]. And I felt very good about it.

Interviewer: How many hours do you usually work?

Narrator: I usually worked for eight hours. But now I'm part-time, but they said they have offices at the new Municipality building and, after a while, after a year, it will be a year in August. "After a year, we will go there, you will work full time, you have a proper salary, and so you also have a full-time schedule," you know?

Interviewer: What are your usual tasks, what do you do?

Narrator: Well, my usual tasks include maintenance, windows, everything that needs to be taken care of, tables, I do everything that needs to be taken care of. They never had to, for example, complain to me that, "You didn't do this", instead everything was taken care of and they'd tell me, "Very good."

Interviewer: Have you ever had an employment contract for the jobs you have had?

Narrator: Never.

Interviewer: How do you feel about it?

Narrator: Never. It happened that I went to Fushë-Kosova and worked at BauMarket, I said, "Can you give me a contract?" Because all the market workers have contracts, why would I be the only exception, for example. I did my job, they liked my work and I talked to the lady of the house, I said, "Can you?" She said, "Yes, but we have to cut your monthly salary..." for example 20, 30 euros, how does it work? And I said, I didn't agree because I didn't have a very high salary and back then we had the needs of the house and maybe we couldn't have done it, just some important ones, there was no way. And I just forgot about it... I still continued working that way without documents, without...

SAFETY

Narrator: My uncle's daughter deals with it more but sometimes I tell her, "Did you ask him what kind of person he is?" Or, "Will he stay there?" Or something, because going to the house of someone you don't know, he could be any kind of a person. And we're both women, you know, we maybe don't have the strength to protect ourselves if someone attacks us or something. The other one always comes too or sometimes she makes her husband speak for us. Or he comes, when he had the time he would take us there, he would talk to them, you know, so that they knew another man was with us, because it is a little problematic for us as women on our own. Usually we go alone or something when women call us, as women, you know, there are many that come from abroad and mostly women deal with these things.

Of course, it's scary because you don't know whose apartment you're going into or what it could be or what could happen to you there. And it's not easy, on the other hand, safety wise, because for example, you have to clean the windows on the eighth floor, you have to reach outside as well, if you are tired or get dizzy, you can fall down. We don't have any kind of safety, you know, even though we don't take on very risky tasks. When we see sometimes that something is rather hard we say, "Let's not do it, 20 euros are not worth losing our life for."

GOING TO WEST ON FOOT

Narrator: That time when they left for Germany, that wave of asylum seekers, my husband and I left together. I also had my son who had turned two then. We left.

Interviewer: How did you leave?

Narrator: We left, first we got onto the bus here, we went to Serbia by bus, from Serbia, a family member found a person, they said, "He will take you and you will get on the bus in Novi Sad and they will take you to Austria, without any fuss." We got into that car and they left us at the border of Serbia, the Serbia-Hungary border. He said, "Just cross this, get on the road," he said, "I will get you on the other side." We crossed the road, got to the other side, and crossed the border easily. We waited, he didn't show up, the man disappeared (laughs), we had to walk, I don't know for how long, we got there at 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

We just walked down the road, we walked, walked, my son was very little, one and a half years old, so he turned two there. And he'd cry all the time, he'd say "I want to go back home." He knew, we walked ahead that way, he'd turn back, "No," he'd say, "I want to go back home, home." I was with my husband, my brother-in-law, and two friends of my husband. They helped me a lot, they carried him,

they tried to distract him. I was breastfeeding him at the time and, when he'd ask to be breastfed, I had to carry him *hopa* {onomatopoeic} and breastfeed him while walking (laughs). Sometimes we'd sit, rest, but we mostly walked until the Hungarian border police arrested us and imprisoned us all.

Then they took only those of us who had children, we got into a, they got us into a prisoners' van and they took us to a garage. My brother-in-law and my husband's friends were left there because they [the Hungarian border police] said, "We will take you later." They took us to a garage, it was all filled with water, they put us there. Until they took some personal data from us, I didn't know what they were doing. They brought two buses, then with those buses they took us to a prison, I don't know the name of that place, it was like a prison. When we went in there, I was so tired, so exhausted. The moment I went in, I slept and I didn't hear anything until the policeman came in the morning and knocked on our door.

They didn't keep us for long, they gave us food and water and everything, you know, we weren't maltreated or anything. And so we took those, they came and called us and took all of our personal data, our fingerprints and stuff like that and they let us go. But we wanted to get together with my brother-in-law and with those friends. We slept in a hotel for a night, it was something like a motel. And we stayed there for a night until we got together with them. When we got together, the person who was supposed to pick us up, he just lied to us, he didn't come to pick us up at all.

We took a taxi, actually one of the taxi drivers who took us was a policeman, but the price was convenient to him, because in the Balkans, in general corruption (laughs) is number one. He took us to Budapest. In Budapest we stayed in a hotel, there came... my husband's friend found an acquaintance, he came and took us to Austria by car. He took me and my child, and that man. Because the aunt of that man sent him to pick us up and they took us to Austria, in the train station, he took me and my husband out, he said, "Come with me," he said, "I'll get your ticket so they don't notice you." It was snowing a lot that day, it was [snowing] too much.

So, we had to leave for Germany at noon, we didn't leave until 2 a.m., we stayed in the station because the roads were blocked. We got on the train at 2 a.m. and got to Germany at around 5 or 6 a.m. When we went there, we didn't know what to do, we didn't know the language, the place, nothing. And we were stuck there, so we went to a coffee shop. I told my husband, "Let's go inside just so we can get warm, or do something" because it was very cold. And we went in there, we stayed for about an hour. We met an Albanian family who were refugees like us. There was the husband, the wife, and they had four children.

That man was told, "You can come, and when you get to Germany, tell me where you are and I will come get you." He had left hoping that his brother would pick him up, in fact he would call him on the phone but he wouldn't answer, he would only text him, "Go there" you know, with names. But he didn't know how, neither the man nor the woman, nor his children, they were very little, they knew

neither English nor German, no languages at all. Where would he go, he didn't even know where to get tickets, or what was happening, he was left on the streets. And we told him... because we could speak a little English and my husband told him, "Come with me." Then we met an Albanian who was a resident there, he bought us some tickets and said, "Go to Stuttgart." We were in Munich there I think. And he bought us the tickets.

Then we very often had to change trains. My husband understood stuff more or less. And we went there, we left them there, we applied for asylum at the police, I don't know what he did, where he went, he himself didn't know, well his brother had lied to him. We didn't stay there for long, around four months in Germany. We stayed, for a month we stayed at the camp, for three other months they moved us into an apartment, so we lived in an apartment with my husband and son only. A bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, it was good, we didn't lack anything, they took great care of us.

The place where we were was Osna... Osnabruck, no, another one, what was the name, I forget (laughs) its name. They said... there were some elderly women there, they said, "Even during the war in Kosovo," they said, "There were no Albanian refugees here. So you are the first who were brought here." It was just us and a man and a woman, they were a couple. So they took really good care of us, because they had never had refugees there. And then we got it [the invitation], we went to the interview, but then we got a negative response and we signed it immediately, and we came back. Because they'd say, "They're taking them home by force." My husband said, "Since I have my son and you are here too, I don't want to flee or anything" we got it [a negative response] and we came back.

WHEN YOU INHERIT NOTHING

Interviewer: When you bought the apartment, did you buy it by working or did you inherit it?

Narrator: A little inheritance, we sold a part of the land we had there and paid with that money, we have been paying off the other part now, it will last for eight years.

Interviewer: How much do you pay?

Narrator: 300 euros per month.

Interviewer: Is it too much for you?

Narrator: It's all right, we are doing well for now, but it's a little too much.

Interviewer: What was this pandemic year like? Did it change your life in any way?

Narrator: Well, yes, especially when neither me nor my husband worked for three months. The government money that came in, didn't come in on time, it was delayed. Now again that we closed down for two weeks, you know, a little, of course. We couldn't pay for like two months, but we didn't pay through the bank, we paid the landlord directly, and he showed understanding. We didn't pay for two months, now we pay it as per usual.

Interviewer: Do you have your parents?

Narrator: Yes, yes, I do.

Interviewer: Are they still...

Narrator: Yes, they live in Emshir, yes. They're alive. I have my brothers, they're married, four married brothers, they live in their own houses. They have their own houses.

Interviewer: There in the same place?

Narrator: In the same place. We had ten acres of land, and they built their houses.

Interviewer: Just for your brothers, or for your sisters too?

Narrator: No, not for my sisters, there's not enough space. For my brothers, all four of them are there.

Interviewer: Did your parents give anything to you, their daughters or not?

Narrator: No, so far no.

Interviewer: Is there a plan to?

Narrator: My father said, "Yes, there is [a plan]." But right now, based on the living conditions at the moment no.

Interviewer: How did you decide to go to Fushë-Kosova and live there?

Narrator: We decided to do so because here it was a little expensive, and of course we had no state jobs or something [to get a loan], we couldn't buy it here in Prishtina. And in the end we decided to buy it in Fushë-Kosova.

Interviewer: What about Fushë-Kosova, what is it like living there?

Narrator: Good, in the beginning, it seemed to me like it was hard there too until I adapted to it, but it's good, it isn't bad.

Interviewer: What bothered you?

Narrator: The air bothered me, the air in the evening from Obiliq, it smelled a little in the evening, that bothered me a lot. Now I have gotten used to it, and I don't go out in the evening, you know, the windows are closed. Perhaps I got used to that too, you know, but now it doesn't seem bad to me, in the beginning, it seemed a little bad. Maybe also when I changed the environment, you know. Moving from the countryside to Fushë-Kosova is, it is different, of course. There the air is very clean, here the air is more polluted.

Interviewer: What was it like for the children?

Narrator: Well, for the children it was kind of the same as my son is a little older. My son likes it there, to go out in nature, in the village. He always goes there during the weekend, he goes to his grandmother there. My father-in-law died last year, so he goes to his grandmother, to my brother-in-law. He goes there almost every weekend.

MARRIAGE

Interviewer: When did you get married, how old were you?

Narrator: I was married in '97.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Narrator: I was 24 years old.

Interviewer: How did you decide to get married?

Narrator: How did I decide, I was indecisive, even though we were known as women who were polite, from a good family. I was very indecisive, because I thought your soulmate, the person you spend the rest of your life with, is very important right. This was the most important thing in a person's life. I always hoped I'd find someone like me, maybe not like me, but approximately, a man who... But it's not bad, most importantly moral over everything else.

Interviewer: Did someone introduce you to him, or did you meet him yourself?

Narrator: He is my best friend's cousin, and it wasn't that I liked him all that much, I mean I kind of liked him, but his behavior made me go out with him and meet him... according to what she said.

Interviewer: Was it hard to change places?

Narrator: A little because I liked the city more, maybe because we struggled with some work, we were more engaged, for example, to collect grass, and this, and that, you know? And I said that... I was a very neat person, and I wanted to find chores to do inside the house, not outside, you know? And we had to do everything, and then go outside the house. And I said that it is important that he is a good person, for it to be a good marriage, to find someone like that. But I liked the city a bit more, because I knew there wasn't as much work, shortly, yes.

Interviewer: Tell me, how did you come from your family into a new family?

Narrator: It was very, very hard for me.

Interviewer: Elaborate on it a little bit.

Narrator: Honestly it was very hard for me, because we were respectful. I had to wake up early in the morning, serve coffee to all family members.

Interviewer: How many were there?

Narrator: We were seven. And I had to, for example...

Interviewer: Who was there, tell me who you lived with?

Narrator: We lived, only one of my brothers-in-law didn't live with us back then, because all my husband's family members, they all lived there.

Interviewer: Your father-in-law, your mother-in-law?

Narrator: My father-in-law wasn't there, he had died before I got there, my mother-in-law, my brothers-in-law, their children, my sister-in-law. She got married after me, I got married on May 18, my sister-in-law got married after New Year's Eve. So, we all were a whole family there. God forbid speaking, I never spoke, no matter what you saw, or if someone said something to you, you'd be, I heard - I didn't hear, I saw - I didn't see. This was how I was because my mother educated me and said, "No matter what someone might be like, you just have to say good things and treat them with respect. And don't talk." Not only were things like that at that time, but my conscience didn't let me do some

things, to each their own, and I am who I am. I grew up in that family, I have the education I got from my family and I can't.

Interviewer: Was it hard for you?

Narrator: It was hard. Now, for example, my daughter tells me about some things, now that she grew up and understands my life more or less. She says, "Mom, how could you? I myself can't do it. I know you never spoke up. Regardless of the fact that someone might have said something hurtful to you, or they harassed you, you never spoke up, I can't. You are my mother, I know what kind of a mother I have, but I myself can't do that." For example, yes.

Interviewer: Do you regret being like that?

Narrator: No, I never regret goodness. Anyway, to each their own, we have God.

POST NATAL DEPRESSION

Narrator: I was depressed right after giving birth to my son, so, when my son turned six months old, after he turned six months old, there were two deaths in my husband's family. His grandmother, who lived with us, and his uncle. So, they died within two weeks and my son was little, so one death after another, and as a bride, I don't know, I was horrified as I had never seen, you know, there had never been any deaths in my [close] family.

And I was scared in a way and, when the second death happened, the people there would talk about horrifying stuff, events, and so I got depressed. I was very depressed, I went to every doctor, to psychologists, everywhere. I was breastfeeding my son, they'd say, "Stop breastfeeding him." But I never accepted getting therapy. Once, they gave me therapy, so I tried to take it. But upon taking the first pill, I had a headache for three days, I couldn't get up from my bed. I said I will not take it again.

I had that headache after only taking one pill. And I said, "No, I will try my hardest to get through this." The only thing that gave me strength was my son. So, it was, when I was at my lowest, every time I remember this I get emotional, when I was at my lowest the moment I held him close, he gave me strength in a way (voice trembling). So much strength that, I don't know, I'd say that I would only live for him. I was always scared that I would die the next day (cries), that I wouldn't be alive. And I'd feel uneasy, anxious, I can't explain in words how I felt.

So, I felt like that for around six months. For a month, I only stayed at my mother's house. I couldn't go to my husband's, because the moment I went inside that house I thought I was going to go crazy. I stayed with my son for a month at my mother's, that's why I'm so attached to him, and I sympathize

with him about everything, because in moments when I needed it the most, he was the one who gave me strength.

I'm always taking care of him even today, and sometimes I think maybe he also, I thought that I fed him with milk when I was depressed and my son is... I mean I breastfed him, and my son is always anxious like... he still has that feeling, he isn't a child that... he is very quiet, too [quiet], but he is scared of everything. So, when my grandfather died two years ago, my son was also something like that but he was a child, maybe he couldn't explain what he exactly felt. Maybe he was scared because he didn't see him [the grandfather] or anything. I came back after three days, he was asking for my grandfather because he loved him a lot.

And back then he was at the age of... he was in the first grade but he understood some things more or less, and he would wake up at night and ask me, "Mother, will you die like grandad?" That's what he called my grandfather. I'd tell him, "No, Honey, no, people die when they get old." My husband was working, he traveled to Germany for work to attend a training on blueberry cultivation, and, at that time, I stayed at my mother's house for a week. When he came back from school, he'd say, "Mom, I want to go buy a toy, I want to go buy a toy." You know, he cried. I'd tell him, "Let's go out and buy it." The moment we left the door, it was just the two of us.

I'd tell him, "Lon, did you really want to buy a toy, or did you want to go out?" "Mom, I just wanted to get out of the house because I feel like crying, will you die?" So, he had it in his head all the time. We both went crying, when we came back, he would get distracted by the toy, I would still come back crying. It hurt here, some kind of pain, and I thought to myself, "If I were to die, what would he do?" You know, I was so scared that, so much that, every morning when I would wake up, I would touch myself, am I alive, or am I dead?

Until I had a dream that maybe was a sign from God (laughs), I had a dream one night that I flew, I flew and fell into a hole, and I was holding my son and the angels were telling me, "We have to take you with us." I'd tell them, "Don't because my son will go crazy, he can't live, he will go crazy without me." Then the other angel said, "Leave her because her child can't handle it." And they went away and I woke up then, from that moment on all that fear went away. Maybe God sent me a sign to stray me from that kind of bad habit. But these were two of the hardest periods, because humans can handle anything, but depression is very bad.

DIVORCE

Narrator: After giving birth to my son, I had serious health issues, and I didn't have the support of my husband or his family. I lived with my husband and his parents.

Interviewer: Where?

Narrator: In Pristina. Even after I gave birth to my son, I continuously had health issues. Issues began from pregnancy but were more visible after giving birth to my son.

Interviewer: What kind of issues were they?

Narrator: Maybe not much during pregnancy. Some things that were said to me, some... psychological and such, because I did not experience physical violence. But sometimes psychological violence hurts more than... a word hurts more than a slap. For example, I didn't have the right to make any plans with my husband, because we always had to ask his married sister, should I or should I not do it? If I ever made a plan, actually if we made a plan it always failed. So, the biggest issues came up after I gave birth. I had health issues because of their negligence. I am aware of what I am saying, they didn't allow me to go to the doctor.

Interviewer: Why?

Narrator: Because allegedly, "She's just faking it, she doesn't have anything. We all gave birth, we all were in pain. We all had this, we had that." And...

Interviewer: More specifically, was it depression after giving birth?

Narrator: No, I had breast abscess, from which they told me it had become cancer. Since they didn't let me go to the doctor and get treatment, it has grown. When I started going to the doctor, if I'm not wrong, my son was two weeks old. After my son was two weeks old, I noticed they didn't ins... not... I insisted on going to the doctor and they still went on with that, "It goes away, this happened to everyone. It will pass." And I insisted on going to my father's house. Not to go to father's and separate, but I said, "I miss them, I want to go there for a while." And okay, his mother said, "Take her!" He took me to my father's house. And the night I went to my father's house, I fainted. Then my brother called him on the phone and told him about my condition. And he said, "If you don't come and take her to the doctor since she's your wife and in the condition you brought her, we will take her." He came and took me to the doctor.

When we went to the Family Medical Center, they sent us to the hospital. And in the hospital I had my first surgical intervention. Everything happened there without anesthesia, without anything, because the body was filled with pus. And they said, "Even if we give you anesthesia it will not make you numb." So, all those cuts, they were all done without anesthesia. The doctor's words, "You should have brought her in earlier, not have her get to this state. But thank God you brought her, she could have died. All her organs were about to get infected." After five weeks, I had to do more detailed tests, where

they said, "You have breast cancer and you have to get operated on and remove the breast." So, I was in the fourth week of treatment when we separated.

Interviewer: Fourth week of what?

Narrator: Of treatment, when we separated. I woke up in the morning and went to the doctor, he was going to stitch my wounds that were still open, open for three weeks. The stitching was also done without anesthesia and I went back to the apartment. We ate Eid lunch and everything was as usual. Then my husband's parents went to their parents to wish them a happy Eid. My family called me, my brother, they said, "We want to come and wish you a happy Eid." Everything started here.

I told my husband that and, "Okay, fine." And I went to my son's room. Then her sister influenced the turn of events. When I went in, they were talking, I said, "What is happening?" "They have no reason to come here, why would they come when my parents aren't home? You're not the lady of the house. How dare you bring your family here when my mother isn't here." This is where all of it began, they started saying things to me for no reason.

I didn't want there to be a conflict between the families, because my family members respected them very much and I wanted to keep that relationship always. Whatever happened, I didn't want to tell my family about the problems I had with my husband. I wanted them to respect him, love him the way they did.

Interviewer: Have you ever talked to anyone?

Narrator: No, never. Never. And I texted my brother, I said, "Don't come, his parents aren't here." And my husband got a bit mad, "Why did you text him?" I said, "You're not welcoming my family." I said, "This is normal, it's the same if they had come to the door and you had closed it, the same as saying to them, 'Don't come.'" I said, "He didn't say they would come immediately, he just said, 'We will come.'" I said, "I don't understand why, what's happening? They're not the kind of family that would come here all the time." They're not the kind family that goes anywhere unannounced, if they were like that, I would find his request reasonable. But, regardless, parents are never unwelcomed.

And I even said, "It's not out of the ordinary," I said, "but it's okay," I said, "you decide." I said, "What you do in your own home, you decide. There's nothing I can do!" And I got up and went to my room, and since I had talked back to his sister, he came to the room and we started having a bigger fight. Then my brother called, I was crying, and when he called, I told him everything on the phone. When his parents came, I was too shy to come out and tell them what had happened. I am a shy person. And I went there, I sat, I tried to gather the courage to tell them what had happened.

At some point I knew that if I didn't start talking, my brother would call them. And I sat, I said, "Father [father-in-law]," I said, "I have to discuss something with you if I could?" I said, I told him, I said, "My family wanted to come visit," I said, "They didn't agree." I told him everything and as he was laying down, he got up and said, "I was against your relationship from the beginning." I respected him a lot, I can't say I loved him like my own father, because I can't love anyone like my father, but I can say that I loved him 80 percent like my father. The only person who if I heard coughing in the other room I couldn't stay still and ignore it.

I respected him, I respected him a lot. When he said that word, I don't know, I can't say I was surprised, but he shocked me. And I said, "Why, what happened? Why are you against me? Why are you against our relationship?" I said, "I know it's over, but I just want to know this, I want to clarify these things so I can have a comfortable life, because I can see it now that I don't have a comfortable life. What do you have against it? Why were you against it?" "No," he said, "I have nothing against you. I can see you're nice, polite, I was just against the relationship." "Why against the relationship? Do you have anything against my father?" Because he knew my father.

"No, God forbid. I always said we're lucky to have his daughter in our home." "Then what were you against?" I said, "I don't understand." "Just," he said, "I want my son to marry someone educated and employed." "Okay," I said, "I am educated, I've finished university, I'm not working now," I said, "We got married, I became a mother, not everything can happen at the same time." To be honest, those words hurt me, his son had finished two universities but he was unemployed. I didn't understand why, why it is always the goal for the woman to work, to take care of the family, men should also do that for the family. I understand that the woman should work to offer support to her husband, but it's not her obligation to take care of the family.

I talked to his father there, "I," he said, "never liked you." "Okay," I said, "Before I got engaged to your son and before our relationship got more serious" I said, "We have met, and if our relationship is affected by your opinion, you should have said, 'We don't like her, she's not suitable for our home.'" I said, "I would have simply backed down." I said, "I just want to let you know of this, before you don't ruin someone else's life," I said, "Because you have put a stop to many things in my life with this." And then he started, he said, "Take," he said, "take her clothes, get her out of my house," he said, "I don't want to see her, I will find someone much better for you."

"Okay," I said, "You have decided?" I said, "Where I come from we say, this death happened and we saw each other. Now I'm saying this situation happened and I see where I belong," I said, "Or more accurately that I didn't belong in this family. And I would have never belonged here, no matter how much I would try." And I laughed, I literally laughed. And his sister said, "She's," she said, "she's not sane, she's laughing." And I got up and went to my room because I thought they were just angry and talked in vain, they didn't know what they were saying. And when I went to my room I heard his

mother saying, "Everything she has, I don't even want her socks laying around here, get them out. Immediately get them out. Out!"

And he came and said, "Get your clothes ready, I'll take you to your father's house. I said, "Okay, you want to take me to my father's?" "Yes." "Do you have an explanation for my father, what are the reasons?" "I'll just say it isn't working." "You can't tell my father it isn't working, it worked until now. How is it not working now?" And I told them, "Can we wait until my brother goes home?" I said, "My father is alone," I said, "I don't want to, give him time to prepare him a little." "No, no, let's go immediately!" "Okay," I got up and took my bag and he asked his mother, "Can we give her the baby's diapers, or not?" There was a package of diapers he had just bought. Now, should they give them to me, or not? She said, "Give them to her, she can take them."

I went to my parent's house. I went in, it was only my father and my little sister. Out of all of this, that might have been the hardest moment. When I went in, they stayed at the door, my ex-husband and his father and asked my father outside. I went inside, when he saw me with my son he opened his arms, "Who came to see me." From happiness, he hugged us. The moment he hugged me, I started crying. The moment he saw me crying he knew something happened. "What happened?" I just said... I couldn't talk. I said, "They're waiting outside." "No," he said, "I will not go out if you don't tell me what's wrong. You matter to me, it doesn't matter who's waiting outside. You're important, what happened? Calm down."

And I stopped, I tried to calm down, but my voice was trembling, I couldn't speak clearly. And I said, "Father," I said, "this is what happened, they're waiting for you outside, I can't talk more, can you go outside?" I said, "They're waiting for you, they will tell you," I said, "If they decide to tell you." "Okay." And my father got out, "Okay," he said, "calm down, I'll take your son." And my father got out, when my father got out, my uncle was saying goodbye to some guests. My father said, "What's the problem?" He said, "I brought your daughter." "I can see you brought my daughter, but why? Did you bring her for Eid or what?"

"No, it's not about Eid," said his father. "Talk to your daughter," and he doesn't tell him anything. And my father said, "Okay, I will talk to my daughter, but I will tell you one thing, I will pray to God day and night that my daughter is to blame a little, but knowing what kind of child I have, she isn't to blame. I will pray that it's her fault and this doesn't get more complex. I'm telling you, you better know what you are doing, otherwise prepare for what is coming for you." Then my brother came, my mother, my sisters and I told them, I told my sister. She said, "Tell our father everything." I said, "I don't know if I can," I said, "that's why I'm talking to you," I said, "Because I know when I'm in front of our father I won't be able to speak," I said, "my voice won't come out." "Okay," she said, "Don't look at him, just say everything you have to say."

Then the next day I told my father, I sat, maybe God helped me and I talked with ease, I managed to tell him everything to the end. "Okay," he said, "what about your son?" I said, "He is my son." "I understand," he said, "that he is your son, he is my grandson, but what did they say about your son?" I said, "Nothing. They just said, 'Take your son.'" He said, "Didn't they say, 'Leave your son here, you can go?'" I said, "No." "Nothing?" I said, "No." "What, didn't they hug him?" "No" I said, "Not just them, even his father didn't hug or look at him." He said, "You don't have to tell me more."

He had no news of his son for two months. Nothing. Even though time after time, I sent him pictures. Not for any reason, but I felt sorry, I thought he would see how his son is doing. And when we went out after two months, we sat face to face, I was actually in front of his father. And as we were going there, I said to my father, "Father," I said, "if you think I haven't told you something, ask me now." "No," he said, "if you have forgotten to tell me something, tell me," he said, "because we're human, we can forget." I said, "I don't remember that I've forgotten anything," I said, "But if they say something, I have forgotten," I said, "will tell you that I forgot." You know. "Okay." And we went to meet them, all well.

They started joking at first, "How are you, what are you doing?" As usual, as if life had continued normally. Then my father said, "Let's get to the real talk now, because we didn't go out to drink coffee for fun of it," he said, "but we went out to find a solution for a problem," he said, "which is quite big," he said, "that will cost our whole life." So he addressed his father, "Now, I have more to talk with you," he said, "not with your son, or my daughter, because they're children. No matter how old they are," he said, "they're children. For me my daughter is still a child. Children are always children. So, I have to talk to you man to man. What did my daughter do to you?" "Nothing." "Has she ever offended you, or disrespected you?" He said, "No, she respected me."

"Hasn't she been attentive to you?" "No, there was no need to ask anything of her, because she did everything." "Then what, did she offend you?" When he asked, "Did she offend you?" He gave a response that knowing my father I knew he would be suspicious. I interrupted, I said, "Father [father-in-law]," I still called him Father, "Father [father-in-law], sorry to interrupt, but my father asked you a question," I said, "I would ask you please answer him honestly." I said, "Because the way you answered my father provoked suspicion." "What," he said, "to answer?" "My father is asking you if I ever offended you?" He said, "Your words can't weigh enough to offend me." I laughed and said, "This answer is enough for me, and I believe for my father as well" My father said, "Why isn't she good enough?" He said, "You can't imagine how potent her words are."

I went out, my father always called me by my aunt's name, she was always very quiet and she suffered a lot. When I got engaged, I'm going back now to when I got engaged, he said to him [the fiancée], "I worry for her," he said, "she might suffer, because she holds it in, she doesn't express herself." And he said about my aunt, "She is just like Mirvet. She always endured," he said, "she was silent, she held it in. Now," he said, "she's fine. But her body has suffered," he said, "her life went to waste. Now her life is on point, her life is okay, but she suffered a lot." He said, "I feel sorry for my daughter too, because she

doesn't talk. Talking to me is different," he said, "But she doesn't even talk to me, or anyone else. I worry for her. So, please the moment I see that she isn't doing well, I will know you are the problem."

And my father tells him, "I have always compared her to my sister because she is also like that," he said, "Out of my five children, if someone says anything about her I won't believe them. Not you, but my own wife," he said, "I wouldn't believe it, let alone you," he said, "Because I know what she's like." "No," he said, "I don't have any complaints either." He said, "Then what? Do you know when one leaves one's wife?" He said, "Do you know?" He said, "There are three reasons." He addressed my husband, "Have you caught her doing something she shouldn't have? "Professor," because he called him Professor, "God forbid!" He said, "How can you even utter something like that?" He said, "I can let her go anywhere by herself and I would not suspect her." "Did she lie to you?" "No." "Did she steal from you?" "No." "Then what? Quit these childish things. Are you a child? Weren't you capable of creating a family? If you weren't ready for a family, why did you do this to my daughter? Why didn't you do this to someone else, but my daughter? What did she do to you?"

When they saw they could not spin this, then they were less aggressive, and everything we talked about was the way I told my father. I said, "I've always decided on my own because my father supported me," I said, "This time, I want my father to decide and I will support him." "How," he said, "your father will decide for us?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Where have you heard something like this?" I said, "The same way your mother decided for us to separate." "Now," I said, "my father will decide for us to get back together." And I looked at my father, he said, "She decided, not me," he said, "she is giving me that right, but it's her life, not mine. I," he said, "I can't trust you with my daughter in your house, you did this now, what about next time? Just because she was sick and you have to take her to the doctor, give her treatment? Treat her? And now that she is feeling better you want to take her back? When she isn't feeling well, we will take her to her father's, when she's well, we'll take her back to ours?"

He said, "What is the reason? In addition to that," he said, "even if she comes back, she needs two-three other months to pick herself up, she's still using treatment, she's still in therapy until she's done. Then," he said, "we can talk. Though," he said, "you have the opportunity," he said to his father, "to gather the men, and you can come to my house with them," he said, "and when men deal with this then," he said, "my daughter can come there." "No," he said, "we didn't start this with men, we will not deal with this with the men." "No," he said, "we didn't start it, but you brought it to this point," he said, "because we started off very well. We wanted to have a good relationship." And his father said, "I will never gather the men. Never," he said, "I will not gather the men." And there, "If you think this is men-to-men," he said, "Come, here he is." My father said, "I can do those things easily," he said, "but I've finished," he said, "school," he said, "I want to resolve things by coming to an agreement, not violence," he said, "because violence comes first. Immediately."

He said, "You wouldn't have talked if I chose violence," he said, "I wouldn't have waited for you for two months." He said, "But I can see that it isn't worth talking to you anymore. The other thing," he said, "that I've noticed," he said, "We've been sitting here for two hours, and neither he as a father nor you as a grandfather are capable of asking how the baby is doing. Does he have enough to eat, drink? Does he have diapers? Is he laughing, crying? Is he sick, is he okay? Neither one of you asked. Don't joke around. My grandchild is part of my daughter, part of me, he will grow up the same way my daughter did. Actually my daughter lacked some living conditions, he will not lack anything. I feel sorry that my grandchild will grow up without the love of his father, he will lack this. I will give him a grandfather's love, he will not lack grandfather's love, but his father's, yes." These were the last words and we separated. He went in his direction, I went mine. He said, "The door is open if you want to come back." But I never wanted to go back.