

Shocked by a Donkey

Something in me has been reawakened, I felt a surprise after touching the donkey for the first time and I realized, immediately, it was a critical point in my life.

Elisa was on the train from Madrid to Málaga, looking at the countryside through the window. It was just the same trip she had done before, but how different it looked all around this time: the hills, the trees...; all seemed to be alive, just like herself.

Three months ago, Elisa was suffering from deep depression; she didn't sleep, eat or speak much. Although she was very good at studying for her degree in a Marine Biology, she dropped out. Though the doctor had changed her treatments several times, none of them seemed to work. It made her parents even more worried. When she was invited by her aunt to spend some time in the family country house, Carmen, Elisa's mother, thought it would be good for her to have a change and a breath of fresh air. 'You must go,' said Carmen to her daughter, 'your cousin Lola is the same age as you and you have always got on well'. It was hard for Elisa, but, in the end she agreed to go.

On September 14th, Elisa set off very early to get to Málaga by train.

The family house, situated on the outskirts of Monda, was large and comfortable. Elisa was accommodated in a very pleasant bedroom, with stunning views, but, unfortunately, she didn't notice it at that time, due to her sadness.

Even the dog was pleased to meet her, so Elisa tried to be as kind as she could and did her best. At lunch time, she made a special effort to talk and eat. However, in the afternoon, as soon as her cousin Lola left to go to work, she felt lonely and worse than ever at this house, which wasn't her home and she didn't know what to do. It seems that Cuca, the lovely dog, noticed her sadness and jumped on her legs, asking for attention. 'Do you feel like going for a walk?' Elisa said. Afterwards, Elisa told her aunt she was taking the dog for a walk. She agreed and advised her not to go too far away and to keep the dog close to her, in case they had to face wild animals. On her way back, at one side of the path, Elisa saw a big animal with its head bent and eating grass from the ground. At the

first sight she stopped with fear, wondering if it was the wild animal her aunt was talking about. However, she quickly realized it was only a donkey. 'It is the first time I have seen a donkey,' she thought. Of course she had seen pictures. At that moment, the donkey lifted its head and looked at her in such a kind way, she felt the need to stroke it. Just when she was about to touch the donkey, she didn't feel brave enough and stepped back. Cuca looked at her strangely and continued.

Elisa reached back to the house just in time to meet her cousin, who was parking the car under a tree. They greeted each other happily and while they walked together towards the house, with Cuca jumping around, Elisa told her all about the donkey. 'Don't be silly, cousin; there is nothing to be afraid of,' said Lola. Manolo isn't going to hurt you at all.

'Who is Manolo?' Elisa asked.

'The donkey,' replied Lola, enjoying the situation and added: 'trust me, don't waste your time with the donkey, you should be interested in Manolo's owner, José. He is lovely. His house is the white one at the top of the hill. His parents run a goat farm with a cheese factory and he helps them in many ways, in fact, he is a hardworking young man. But in the winter he lives in Málaga, where he studies I.T., and achieves exceptional marks. By the way, my boyfriend gets along with him, I wonder...'

'Don't go further,' Elisa said, 'I can see what you are thinking about, let's go inside, your mum is waiting for us to help with dinner.'

The next day, Elisa helped her aunt to tidy up the house and had a swim in the pool. As the day before, in the afternoon, she took the dog for a walk, but this time hoping to touch the donkey and she did. She was brave enough to stroke Manolo. How happy she was feeling alive again, but, unfortunately, it didn't last. She didn't see a hole in the ground and put her foot inside it, falling down and hurting herself. Although she managed to stand up, she couldn't walk because of the pain. Suddenly, Cuca ran happily towards a young handsome man who came running to help her. 'Are you hurt Elisa? What has happened?' he said kindly.

'My foot hurts. How do you know my name, but I don't know who you are?'

'I live nearby, my name is José. First things first, I'll bring you to the emergency. My car is over there, the donkey will help us,' he said, putting his strong hands around her waist, lifting her on to the donkey. The car was not far away. When Jose picked her up for a second time, Elisa, who was delighted, forgot about her painful foot and pushed her body towards him as hard as she could.

A short time later, after having checked her foot, the doctor said it was only a sprain. 'Put a bandage on your ankle, don't put weight on the foot and use crutches to walk. Your boyfriend can help you to walk now.' Elisa hesitated and said he was not her boyfriend and blushed at the short answer from Jose:

'Not yet'.

Although they were embarrassed to speak for a while, they could not stop looking at each other. Only when they reached the car, with the poor bored Cuca waiting inside, did they start a conversation. They were more than comfortable talking to each other, besides, both of them felt a mysterious brightness in the air.

Elisa's parents arrived to Monda to pick her up the next day. They went back to Madrid quickly, because of her father's work, without time for saying goodbye.

'I wish I had asked him for his mobile number,' Elisa thought with an aching heart, when she returned home without seeing him for another time.

Two months later, Jose bumped into Lola in the street. First of all, he asked for Elisa and added, 'I admire her greatly, would it be all right to call her?'

'Of course it will be all right,' said Lola. 'Don't wait any longer, she will be delighted,' she answered giving him her number.

I know this is a high speed train, but I wish it was quicker. I am so anxious to get there. Oh, a whatsapp from my cousin: 'I am already at the station.'

'Are you alone?'

'No, there is someone with me.'

Oh my God, it might be him. Maybe I am dreaming and he is not interested in me at all. But he has sent me many whatsapps asking about my studies and he said he would like to go out with me on New Year's Eve. I cannot make up my mind, in fact, I am as mad as a hatter. I don't know...

At the station, Jose was waiting impatiently with Lola for the train to arrive, as anxious as Elisa was. Jose had already agreed with his father to continue his studies in Madrid. Then the train arrived.