

Amal 16 years old (the protagonist)

Aisha 17 (sister)

Asma 18 (sister)

Assef (the father)

Sundous (the mother)

Ahmed (the husband of Amal)

“The Black Sheep”

Chapter 1:

Winter 2015.

Look into my eyes, look at it, we are not giving up on our rights do you understand me Asma? please understand that we are not going back to Yemen, I do not want to be a sacrifice anymore, I want to be seen, heard, respected and accepted as a woman from the Middle East, do not leave me, you are my older sister. We will go through this together. I promise all this will be gone one day, we will not live in a tent, we will not be refugees. We will live in a small house, we will hear the sound of the birds, we will see the sky and we will shout loud “we are free”.

Chapter 2:

Summer 2013.

Daddy is here girls, take the food from his hands, let's prepare the dinner.

“How was your day?” Sundous asking.

“I am tired, I wish I had a son, a man who can help me with the work, who can take care of his three sisters” Assef replied.

“It is all right, we have been blessed with these girls, today a woman came to ask the hands of our youngest girls, Amal. The man is forty-eight years old, he is rich and he can help us to go through this, what do you think Assef?”

“That is fantastic, we need the money, I think it is a great idea, call the girls so I can talk to them about this and something else”. Assef replied.

“Girls, your mum and I have something to tell you. But first I have to make the new rules since all of you are getting older, from today no one can be late more than 5 pm, all of you will stop going to school, you don't need education. If you want to buy something then you have to take your mother with you, you cannot meet with any friends, we don't have girls who leave their house anymore. You have to stay in the house and help your mother with the cooking and cleaning, especially that Amal is getting married soon”.

“Married?” Aisha. With a look of jealousy in her and Asma's eye.

Me?

“Yes Amal, you are sixteen years old now, you will live in a big house with someone who knows how to take care of you, from tomorrow you will learn how to cook, you have to prepare for your husband every day the meal”.

Chapter 3:

After a couple of months...

“Our sister is wearing the white dress, we have been dreaming of this moment, we will get married soon also Aisha, everyone is calling us maiden” *Asma chatting with Aisha.*

“She will go with this man, she will have money, she will have a lot of clothes” *Aisha.*

“We shall do something to fix it, do not worry, we will plan something” *Asma replied.*

Chapter 4:

“Did you prepare for my dinner?” Ahmed asking Amal.

I did, but I forgot it and it got burnt .

“What are you saying? What am I going to eat right now? You are a stupid girl who does not know how to do anything, you will never be successful in your life, you are a complete failure as a person” he grabs her hair and starts to hit her.

Suddenly, I can not see anything. I can not cry, I am beyond tears. I don't feel my body. I can not breathe. The smell the Alcohol in the air. I do not want to stay here with this stranger anymore.

My father said Ahmed will know to treat me. I don't understand this.

Chapter 5:

After two years..

Summer 2015, The Houthi movement started, the Shi'a minority against Saleh, the president of Yemen currently. Houthis are taking control of the capital Sana'a and trying to get another president, Hadi. Saudia Arabia and other eight Sunni countries flee to do bomb and kill all the Houthis in Yemen.

“Run. Run. Run. Run. Run” Ahmed to me.

“The house is falling, hurry up we have to leave everything”.

I entered my room, looking to take something with me, I opened my wardrobe, I saw all the fancy clothes Ahmed bought them for me, I saw all the jewellery he would give me after hitting me as if it was sweet, I saw the new laptop he bought yesterday for me. Everything changed from yesterday and today. I realized that who we are today tomorrow we are not, and what we have today, tomorrow we don't.

I ran.
I came back.
I looked again.
I stood and looked at how the house is big.
And I hear the house vibrating.
It is falling.
The window is falling.
The glass is breaking.
I wanted to take something valuable but I realized nothing worth in the room just myself. MYSELF.
All my fantasy, all that my dad forced me to do, marrying Ahmed for the money. But, I realized that money will not define us, Clothes will not define us, Country will not define us, Not either family. We will define ourselves. We will be defined from our kindness, our humanity, and our respect for each other.
We ran into my parents' house. All that I saw is nothing. The house is gone.

Chapter 6:

MUM? DAD? AISHA? ASMA? Where are you? WHERE?

“Do not worry, we will find them!” Ahmed said to me.

“Can’t you see? The house is on the ground, there are not here, there are gone, where is my family, where are they, can you hear me, God? Where is my family? I am alone, I am totally alone.”

Her phone rings ...

HELLO Madam Amal, can you come to Sanaa hospital for taking checking your family....

“I cannot believe that Ahmed my family is alive, I am going to see them.”

“Yes, but you are not going, you are staying with me, you are mine” Ahmed shouted.

“Ahmed, I have to go and see my family, please let me go, please.”

“I am saying no, you are coming back with me” he replied.

AHMED I will do anything you want please let me go please just for half an hour, just for ten minutes. Ahmed please I am your wife. Please. Please. I was kneeling down slowly while I am begging him, I took a rock and I hit him in his head.

I see myself running and leaving Ahmed, he is barley catching me, he is old, he cannot run.

I am so happy.

My heart is jumping

I am finally going to see my family after a separation of two years.

I am finally going to tell my mum everything.

Everything he has done to me.

All the nights he touched me like an animal.

All the broken bits in my bones.
All the falling hair from my head.
All the blue bruises I have on my body.
I will tell my mum that her little girl has been broken. I will tell her that he has taken my innocent view of the world.
I will tell her everything.

Chapter 7:

I am searching for my family, they came here, they have called me, where are they, can I see my mum?

“Room 303”

I am running. I can feel my heartbeats dancing. I am tearing up. Did they grow? How are my sisters look like now? I bet they are so gorgeous and beautiful.

I opened the room. I am walking. Everything is slow for me, even the air I am taking into my lungs is very slow entering my body.

I am seeing...

seeing, four beds but... but two are covered. And two are open.

I fall.

“Ma’am... Ma’am... Ma’am, we are sorry, we are very sorry, your mum tried but she couldn't make it in the end”

I wanted to tell her everything why didn't she wait for me? Why didn't she wait? GOD? WHY DO YOU DO THIS TO ME?. Why? Okay, okay, what about and Asma and Aisha? How are they, are they all right?

“Yes ma'am, they are in a small coma, they will be awake very soon, we are sorry for the loss of your parents”

Why does war happen? I questioned myself. Is it to show how corrupted the world we live in? Is it a reminder for all the world to realize that we must stop, we must stop sharing hate. We must start to share the love. Love is what keeps us all connected.

Chapter 8:

Time passes

Tomorrow we are leaving the country, I have prepared everything, I have booked to Turkey, from Turkey we will talk with a smuggler, we will pay him, he will take us in a plastic boat to Greece with other groups of people. From Greece we will go to Macedonia borders, from there we will escape, we will walk, we will take busses and trains in order to arrive in Germany, all right? We will finish our education. We will build a life for ourselves, do you understand? Ahmed is dead so we can not stay anymore here.

“Why can’t we just stay,” the sister said.

Because we are alone, we are women, society will judge us and will not leave us alone. Let’s start something new away from here.

“I don’t want to leave Yemen” Aisha

Yemen is the poorest country right now, Ali Abdullah Saleh has been killed in his own house there is no more safety.

Saudi’s are doing a lot of bombs, and the US is supporting the attacks by targeting Houthis and air refuelling. Even mosques, they bombed a mosque from the planes. There is a lack of basic services, there is an economic crisis and broken governance. There is no health, no education, and there is no judicial system. There is no longer life here, there are no human rights.

We left.. We left Yemen, it will always be my beloved country, it will always be in my heart. But for the sake of having a better life, I will sacrifice myself again, but this time is not for the sake of my family, will be for the sake of myself, and my education.

Chapter 9:

“How much is she paying him for the trip to the boat?” Asma.

“We worth 800 Dollar” Aisha.

The smuggler said because we are women he will help us with the price. He seems to be very nice. He said that we should go with him, early in the morning we will leave Turkey illegally.

We left with him, entered a house full of refugees, just like us, escaping, we were not the only one, we were not alone.

I am seeing men looking at us in a very disrespectful way.

Men harassing us and saying “why are alone without a protector”.

I don’t need a man for protection, I only need myself.

I see him looking at us, someone sitting in the corner, we are in a big house full of rooms, mostly men.

The smuggler is looking Asma, like an animal. My mind is exploding, why are we here, in a room, alone with this stranger.

“I am not comfortable Amal” Asma whispered.

We slept.

Late in the night.

I could hear whispers, “come with me, I won’t hurt you” he is telling her.

“Come with me, you are very beautiful, I will introduce to some friends downstairs, they would like to get ten minutes with you”.

What do I do now? I am hearing everything. I am listening to it happening. I know how she is feeling. He is an animal. I am helpless

Chapter 10:

Early in the morning the same day.

“Asma, what is happening to you, your eyes are swollen” Aisha.

“I am all right, we are finally leaving. Amal, how we will go to the boat?”

We are now going on the bus.

I did not expect going to the bus will be that hard.

“Run everyone, the police are following us, bus number 7914 is our bus, run run run.” smuggler shouted.

Everyone is running, I am running but observing, I am looking at my sisters, what I am doing, why did I do this. I regret it. I regret this. I just want to go home.

After seven hours, we arrived in the mountains, we are walking and searching for the plastic boat.

We finally arrived. I am looking at the sea. Is this going to be my last day? Are we going to sink as thousands of refugees sunk in!.

The sea has a mouth. I am imagining all the people who were eaten up by it.

Another smuggler was waiting for us to enter the boat. He started carrying people and throwing them in the boat. I am seeing him throwing my sister. Like a piece of object. Like garbage. Is that how refugees should be treated? I am hearing the noise of the kids crying. The boat had seventy-seven people and we supposed to be forty.

Four hours later, we are finally in Lesvos Island. We are taking buses to go to Macedonia borders.

We arrived at the borders.

I did not like what I saw. Because from this moment we will be living in a small tent waiting for our turn to escape the borders.

Chapter 11:

I have to wake up at 5 am tomorrow for the food, It is a piece of bread, but we are starving and it will keep us surviving.

Aisha has some illnesses and bacteria from the dirty bathroom that is here, she is not in good condition, she is sleeping a lot.

We are at least cosy in this tent.

“I am sick Amal,” Asma said.

I know

“It is all because of you and because your stupid idea to come to Europe, look at us, can’t you see, there is no food, we barely eat. Let’s go back, please Amal let’s stop this. Men here are disgusting, I am suffering”

Do you think that only here men are disgusting, it is everywhere. Ahmed did not die. I lied. Ahmed abused me. Not only physically, but emotionally too. Ahmed treated me

like a doll. I did not want to live that life anymore. I wanted to see you, I wanted to be near my sisters. He didn't allow me to see for two years. Isn't it time for us to live? "I am sorry, I cannot deal with this anymore, I will go back, you can start your new life in Europe, I want to be in my country, I want to get married, I do not want to have an education, I want to die with dignity".

Look into my eyes, look at it, we are not giving up on our rights do you understand me Asma? please understand that we are not going back to Yemen, I do not want to be a sacrifice anymore, I want to be seen, heard, respected and accepted as a woman from the Middle East, do not leave me, you are my older sister. We will go through this together. I promise all this will be gone one day, we will not live in a tent, we will not be refugees. We will live in a small house, we will hear the sound of the birds, we will see the sky and we will shout loud "we are free".

Asma left.

I looked into Aisha and asked if she were feeling better.

I did not hear a reply.

Chapter 12:

After three years.

I had an amazing opportunity to get into an art college as a scholarship, in Spain. It is amazing how the world can change, we can feel rich without having money. I am finally at the stage in my life where I wanted to be. I am proud to be a refugee, I realized refugees are just like you and me, we can also be refugees in our own home, I have never felt belonging to my country, I have been a refugee my whole life.

I am an expressionist artist now. The Expressionist movement influenced me because the artists tend to refer to reality and search for a deeper meaning using art as a valve to express their inner conundrums. This can be historical and personal events and the artists use different techniques to communicate without no rules and the freedom to explore their emotions and ideas. In sum, the expressionists sought to deliver a message and give voice to the voiceless. And I will be delivering my sister's story, my story and many other women's stories, through painting.

I have always wondered why me?

Why did my father chose me to get married?

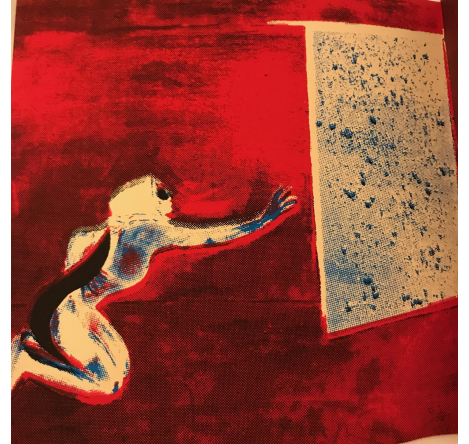
Why did my parents leave me and die in the war

Why did Aisha die

Why did Asma leave me alone? I have never heard anything from her anymore.

But everything happens for a reason. If I wouldn't go through this I would never be how I am now, I will stand up for myself. For other women.

I was the one to be chosen to get through this because I am the black sheep.



إلى النساء اللاتي واجهتهن على طول طريقي من العراق إلى إسبانيا ، التي ألهمني على إنشاء هذا العمل. أنا أطلب العدالة لهؤلاء النساء. لتحريرهن من الظلم. أطلب بحقنا في تقرير المصير واحترام قراراتنا. الحرية لتكون مستقلين. العيش لأنفسنا. حب من نريد. لتكون من نريد أن نكون. أطلب الحرية لجميع الأجناس. حرية التصرف. حرية الحب.

To the women I encountered along my route from Iraq to Spain, whose's confidence inspired the creation of this work. I demand justice for these women. To free them from injustice. I demand our right to self-determination and respect for our decisions. Freedom to be independent. To live for ourselves. To love whoever we want. To be whoever we want to be. I demand freedom for all genders. Freedom to act. Freedom to love.

