

Where the world ends

From the moment you woke you had a determination in your eyes, a madness perhaps, that told us nothing would stop you that day. We didn't even try.

The wall was high, I'd estimate ten grown men could have stood on each other's shoulders and still would not have reached the top. We had tried to go underneath but no luck: even a tunnel twenty feet long didn't bring us to the other side. Some whispered that there was no other side.

The previous night you had thrown rocks at the wall with all the strength you had in you. You succeeded in causing some superficial damage but did you really think you could breach it that way? Only when we saw you make handholds out of the chips and cracks you caused the night before we understood. At first you climbed hesitantly, but soon we saw you move with more confidence. The higher you reached, the more people came to watch. I am still not sure if they came to see you reach the top or to see you fall.

The long journey through the mountains had made your body lighter but you still had the trained muscles you have always had because you had carried grandma the entire trip. You didn't seem to mind that she was not our grandma, but just some woman we met along the way.

"In hell we are all family," you said. I would have agreed with you if she hadn't been another mouth to feed.

Halfway up the wall you looked down as if to say: "See? It's not that hard!". But your sweat-soaked shirt told us something different. With what must have been the last of your strengths you climbed on and at the bottom of the wall we all held our breath. When you finally managed to swing a leg over the edge a deafening cheer rose up from the crowd that stood watching.

For a moment you lay panting on top of the wall, regaining your energy, as the applause washed over you. Then you stood and waved at us. Was it a greeting or a goodbye?

You disappeared from sight and for a moment the crowd continued to cheer, as if you had conquered the wall on behalf of all of us. Immediately others ran to the wall as well to try to repeat your success. But climbing the wall appeared to be more difficult than you had made us believe. One by one people gave up or fell down. Us, the ones with too little left to even attempt the climb, stood watching the spot where we had last seen you. We waited for something to happen, even though we didn't know what that would be.

After an hour of waiting the first people started to return to what they called home here. For a moment you had given me hope, but most of us had lost too much to still know what hope is. Now only grandma and me are left. We've been waiting here a while now, even though I don't recall when it was that we have last seen you.

Why don't you give us a sign of life?