

Moon and Star*

NO! I can't stand that pain again, here it is anew on my doorstep! Why? Why? Why now that I have become an adult? Why doesn't it just leave me alone? We made a deal years and years ago, don't you remember that? I set aside happiness for tranquillity because I don't have the strength to drop everything, I told you, remember? Leave me alone! Please!

Years ago, I chose to be the prisoner of myself trading my happiness for the happiness of the others. Yes, it is just like this, the happiness and the serenity of the others came before mine. I should have given up on all that I built in 42 years of my existence, love, family, job, and unfortunately, I didn't have 'the balls' to eradicate that huge tree which had grown and had rooted in the ground with roots so deep that it was impossible to eradicate it. I didn't want to, I couldn't, I didn't have to destroy everything, for what? For a life that would have never made me happy? I knew what I would have gone through and I was very familiar with the pain and the suffering that you feel when you are free. People's words and actions cut like sharp blades and, day by day, they have left in my soul deep wounds that I sometimes feel are open still today, but by now, I know how to heal them, I have become my own doctor.

Time went by and I was growing up, but I was unhappy and that body, which was imprisoning my soul, was just a shell that still allowed me to be injured by people. "Eh, look, there is a lesbian... look!", "Is she male or female? I have always answered with a threatening look: "Have you lost something?"

I was tired of being looked at everywhere I went, but they just were people passing through who, having taunted my soul, went on their way and I would have never seen them again!

Instead, loved ones remain and when we refer to them, we refer to emotions and when the emotions are deep, you don't want to disappoint them and try to don't make them suffer for your selfishness. Yes, I felt selfish! I could hurt you, I could hurt your feelings and, who am I to hurt those who love me? After all, I am the one they call DIVERSE, it's me who is wrong! I, that baby girl who wants the others to call her Andrea, that baby girl who jumped in the fountain of the sea horses in Villa Borghese because one day during a party, someone put a skirt on me and I, to get rid of it, dove in; I, that little rascal who let her face be smashed because I refused to put a turtleneck jumper on or I, who prayed to the Virgin Mary to make aliens come to take me to their planet, make me become a boy and take me back down to the Earth.

I have grown up and now I have two jobs. I am a sous-chef in the winter and, since in the summer I don't have work for three months, I have always had fun being an entertainer in the summer camps for children.

My guitar and I were inseparable. The guitar not only made the children have fun, because I used to sing the songs they really liked to conquer their affection, but it also gave vent to my anguish, playing the music and words that were slaves of my frustrations, pains and unrequited loves.

In other words, I told my story through the music, even because no one would have listened to it and so the secret stayed between me and my guitar.

* The following self-narrative account was translated into English by Anna D'Alterio.

I finally managed to obtain the only dream I had left, the opportunity, after 22 years of entertainment, to open a cultural association and work in my own summer camp for children.

They were two amazing years with the little camp guests, even if, sometimes they asked me “are you male or female?” Of course, I answered I was a female but, in my heart, I suffered every time that I realized, or someone made me realize, this sad reality. The reality, unfortunately, was that!

It all was perfect and the children were happy with me and with my way of entertaining them and every smile of theirs was, for me, a little bit more energy and strength that my life had taken away in all those years. They were my lifeblood! Until the day when I spent a morning at home because of flu and turning on the TV, I met Miky.

Miky told his story, about when he was Michela and his tormented path for the pursuit of happiness. He succeeded, he overcame all his fears and finally had escaped from that heavy cage which he had been in all his life. He was alive, he had succeeded in spreading his wings!

A crater, a tearing pain opened my chest and I started crying with anger, fear, pain and a death wish. I wasn't as strong as him, I didn't have all his courage! The monster couldn't come out again! I couldn't throw away all that I had created for a foolish fancy!

The following day I went back to the summer camp with the desire of going back to my children who had given me so much energy until the day before, and I thought that they could have helped me to fix everything. It was not the same anymore! I was again unhappy and the monster inside me had come out meaner and more overbearing than ever. How would I be able to change everything? How would have I explained everything to the woman of my life who knew my desire but wouldn't have approved my choice? Or with my family? My family that had once told me that if I had made this decision I could have forgotten about them, my loved nieces, my sous-chef job in a new company which, by the way, I didn't really know how would have reacted to this decision, but especially, I would have had to give up this wonderful summer camp, which had made me very happy.

How would I have been able to deal with more than 90 families and tell them that the next day I wouldn't have been Emy (Emanuela) anymore, but that I would have become Andrea Emanuele? How would I have been able to do everything without abandoning what I loved? Why does life always have to make us make difficult decisions? Why can't we have our cake and eat it? Why am I not allowed to do so? Why should I choose between you and me, my happiness or yours?

I don't want to choose anymore, I am tired of having to carry a burden and, from that day, I decided that making a decision would have been too difficult. Between living and having to sacrifice everything I decided to die! I couldn't choose to change my whole life and give up on all that had given me the strength to fight. How could I have gone to all those parents to tell them that from the next day their children would have been the witnesses of my transformation? I didn't have the strength! I didn't have the courage! It is so much easier to jump drunk into a river and hope that the alcohol and the stream would help me in leaving this world without all the suffering that I would have had to bear in life. It would have been so simple, the price of a bottle of whiskey, a bridge, a river and with the complicity of the night I wouldn't have hurt so much anymore. Too much pain from the past and too much pain from the future were waiting for me. An entire night to decide what to do with my life. I turned everything off, my mobile phone and my soul to understand what I had to do. Yet Miky had

decided to live and had been able to survive his pain. Now he was a man, the hero of his own life, the one who wrote a new chapter for himself as well as his amazing book, *Resto Umamo*, which, of course, I bought and devoured to reinforce my soul! I owe my life to this man! In a matter of two hours and by looking at that astonishing moon circled by so many stars, I decided that maybe I owed something to my life, that after 42 years it was time to try to be happy! Step by step, try to be happy! Don't ask me how I succeeded because even now I don't know how I did. Step by step, one slower the other faster I have become a man and finally the hero of myself, too. Unfortunately, I had to sacrifice my beloved job to dedicate myself to my path, far away from the pain of discrimination. A lot of parents have been informed of my path and I have had to let one dream fall to chase another. The company I work for as a sous-chef has never had problems because of my chosen path and so I have worked there from it when I was Emanuela until now that I work as Andrea Emanuele. Despite the disapproval of my choice, my family has always been by my side and now my four loved nephews call me uncle. My partner for over 22 years is still by my side in spite of my decision and pretty soon we will marry. Unfortunately, I have had to choose between a dream and another one and as far as the parents of the camp's children, some of them have supported me while others have drifted away because they were scared. Scared of explaining, scared because their children could become transsexual people to emulate me, scared of the diverse; some others drifted away not from fear, but disapproval.

Soon, I will create a new cultural association whose name will be 'Moon and Star' to remember that that night the moon and the star gave me a little bit of serenity to find the clearness of mind that I needed to give some sense to my life and to make myself say "you can do it... at least try!"

I don't even know if I will be honest or if I will hide my past from the families that are going to come to my camp, but it is certain that everything is new and it is much more beautiful than before! It isn't easy to be sincere because of misinformation and the fear of the diverse and I know that fighting in this society is not easy or maybe we don't have the right weapons to do it. We should make clear that there is nothing dangerous in us and that we have only hurt ourselves and our bodies have often been the object of people's cruelty.

Today I am happy and I have slowly rebuilt this new life, step by step, meter by meter, kilometer by kilometer; I have crossed the bridge with great effort and determination, but I have finally succeeded in arriving on the other side of this wonderful rainbow.