



LEARNING TO SPEAK

A radio gave her back her voice. But Juana regrets that Trinidad Apaza, her mother, could not hear her. She went to her grave without knowing her daughter's voice because on January 2, 2005, fourteen years before the radio broadcast, she was buried together with her cancer.

Juana, mute in body and voice, was in fact able to speak. But she wasn't the one speaking, her mother was. Trinidad Apaza had put her own body and her own words on her daughter. "When the man sends for you," she would tell her, "you have to bend over a little, like this, look at me, only your head, not your whole body, and you have to respond: yes, Don Gustavo, of course Don Gustavo, that's fine Don Gustavo. That's what you have to do, do you understand me, daughter?" And Juana nodded: one upward movement, one downward movement. But Trinidad Apaza didn't like that. "Ah, this imilla [girl]" she would say again. "I am telling you; you will be like me; you will say what I say. I want you to answer me with your mouth, do you understand?" So, Juana would answer, "Yes mom, of course mom, that's fine mom."

Later, Juana would say on the radio that this was a way of learning to be silent.

After imitating each inclination of the body, after repeating each intonation of her voice, after holding



the mops with the same effort, after folding the clothes to reproduce the same order, Juana became her mother. And on January 2, 2005, the copy came to an end. When Trinidad Apaza died, Juana was left in charge of Don Gustavo's house. One day, taking advantage of the mother's absence, the old man stood in front of the daughter and asked her, "Do you have any sisters?" "No, Don Gustavo," Juana replied. "What a pity," the old man continued. "You indias, cholas, work well, I think you are born to be servants, aren't you? In one month my son will leave home and live alone and I want someone like your mother, someone like you, for his house. So, think, you must have a cousin, a friend." Juana kept silent.

Later, on the day of the broadcast, she would say that this was a way of losing her voice.

Almost ten years after her mother's death and four years before the radio broadcast, Juana, who was nineteen years old, decided to leave Don Gustavo's house. She left one night, the night that the old man's sweat entered her body for the first time. Trinidad Apaza had not taught her anything about this. Juana, while putting the few clothes she had in a bag, was thinking of her mother. You too, mom? You too, just like me?

Later, modulating her anger with the microphone in front of her, Juana would say that the pain made her lose her voice and also her body.

Trinidad Apaza's daughter left that night. And as she walked, she realized that she was not only escaping a house, but that she was also escaping from a mother and escaping from herself. "You will be like me; you will say what I say. Ah, this imilla," remembered Juana. But now, mom, what should I do? What have you done? Have you also left? Have you come back?

She wouldn't find the answers that night, nor the following ones. One afternoon, after four years of studying at the university, Juana was sitting in the office of a radio station with a microphone in front of her. At her side, there were other women like her. After a brief introduction, the radio host said, "Here we have Juana, she is a communicator and has many things to tell us. Juana, tell us about your experience." "I was also a domestic worker," Trinidad Apaza's daughter said, "and I can tell you that only now have I learned to speak."

MARCIO AGUILAR JURADO

