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Rosa: Interactive Active Graphic Narrative as a Tool for Teaching about Human Trafficking

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Rosa: Interactive Active Graphic

Narrative as a Tool for Teaching about Human Trafficking

A Capstone Project in Support of the M. A. in Professional Writing Degree

Kennesaw State University

By Jennifer Jackson

July 23, 2019

For the Capstone, I created a Choose Your Own Adventure graphic novel-style story on the topic of human trafficking for young adults to interact with on the web. In general, educational materials on the internet that is geared toward minors is limited when it comes to the issue of human trafficking. Websites such as netsmartz.com and kidsmartz.com are fairly outdated and deal more with internet safety than trafficking. Organizations such as Students Opposing Slavery have a mission to end modern day human slavery, but even their website has not been updated since 2015 (Lincoln).

I chose to create this project in an attempt to help fill the gap in youth education in the area of human trafficking, specifically in the internet space. It is my goal that even though a young adult may not be a victim of trafficking or even a potential victim of trafficking, they will be able to use the information they've learned to a) more easily identify the warning signs of trafficked victims in their community and b) gain an awareness and deeper sense of sympathy toward the plight of trafficked victims. Stories and games are two ways that are helpful in getting learners not only accept new information, but also to

personalize it. The more learners are actively engaged in the learning process, the more they are likely to retain and use the information they have learned (Park 183).

In preparation for this project, I attended conferences and workshops, listened to first-hand accounts of trafficked victims, participated in volunteer events to raise awareness about human trafficking, and conducted internet research. The project is currently hosted at <http://philome.la/thejjacksy/rosa> as of July 25, 2019. Access via the host site is subject to change at any time. A sample version of the Capstone can be viewed on Digital Commons.

Rosa tells the story of a young Mexican woman living in America, who has become a victim of labor trafficking along with her mother and father. Her family was forced to leave Mexico to work on a ranch in Texas. Her family cannot earn enough money to buy their freedom or leave the ranch, and Rosa decides she must take matters into her own hands by entering a life of prostitution.

Unfortunately, this is the story of far too many immigrants living in the United States. Their situation goes from bad to worse and they live in fear of being found out. They are threatened and forced to endure inhumane circumstances at the hands of their victimizers. Many do not know the options that are available to them and are not in a situation where they can be educated in such matters. This Choose Your Own Adventure short story in graphic novel-style serves to shed light on the plight of the voiceless.

In a definition by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, human trafficking can be defined as “the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them” (UNODC 1). In another

definition by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Human trafficking is a crime where force, fraud, or coercion are used to compel a person to provide labor or services (Labor Trafficking) or commercial sex (Sex Trafficking)” (SOAR 1). Although there are other types of human trafficking in the world, labor and sex trafficking tend to be the prevailing two types of trafficking in the United States.

Sex trafficking is typically played out through escort services or direct solicitation. Labor trafficking typically happens in domestic work and agriculture (Polaris 1). Sex trafficking can be forced upon a person through ways such as a family member or someone promising false promises. Labor trafficking can be forced upon a person through a job offer or human smuggling. According to a report by the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), a total of 5,147 human trafficking cases were reported in the United States in 2018. Of those 5,147 reported cases, 1,399 of those were youth/minors under the age of 18. They report that the average age of human trafficking for sex is 19, while the average age of human trafficking for labor is 23.

Those who are most at risk include people who have recently migrated to the US, those who are victims of substance abuse, runaway youth, those who have mental health issues, and youth who are involved in the child welfare system (Polaris 1).

According to a 2018 report by the United States Department of State, “Populations in the United States vulnerable to human trafficking include: children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems; runaway and homeless youth; unaccompanied children; American Indians and Alaska Natives; migrant laborers, including undocumented

workers and participants in visa programs for temporary workers; foreign national domestic workers in diplomatic households; persons with limited English proficiency; persons with low literacy; persons with disabilities; LGBTI individuals; and participants in court-ordered substance use diversion programs” (Trafficking 449).

Much of the statistics used to create this story comes from the 2018 annual report of the United States Department of Defense and the 2018 annual report of the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Both of these documents outline trafficked victims statistics in detail and identify target areas for improvement with law enforcement and services provided by federal and non-profit organizations. I specifically created a youth centered story, because youth are at a particularly high risk for being exploited.

Initial plans for this project were to include stock photographs only, without the use of illustrations. However, after I created the first draft I realized using illustrations to help tell Rosa’s story would be more effective in getting its intended message across to the target audience. This is because specific illustrations be easily paired with specific text.

When I was finished drafting the story, I began the job of deciding how I wanted to lay the story out visually. I’d first intended to have a more text heavy story with 1 or 2 illustrations per page, but when I laid it out on [twine.org](https://www.twine.org) (a free interactive story maker site), the story was not visually appealing. I felt as though the message was not clear and young people (who are used to viewing short sentences or phrases on the web via social media, etc.) would not want to interact with these large pieces of text.

I decided I needed to change the format and thus created a 'graphic novel-esque' type layout. I do this, I had to divide the story into bite-size pieces where each new idea could be illustrated. There are three distinct sections to this story (the introduction to Rosa's life, the series of choices that result from Rosa deciding to stay at home, and the series of choices that result from Rosa deciding to run away from home). I further broke these sections apart into subsections. Each subsection directly correlates with the presentation of another choice. Because several of the subsections were still too text heavy to fit on an 8.5x11 Illustrator document, I broke those subsections into sub-sub sections. Each sub-sub section was determined by how many 'new ideas' would fit on a document page. Each new idea needed to be illustrated and given its own box.

In the future, I plan to create a series of Choose Your Own Adventure stories (no more than 10 in total) about trafficked youth. Each character in this series, like Rosa, will be based on a high-risk youth population. The characters will act out common research based behavior indicators for trafficked youth. It is my goal for these stories to be available for access on the web (via computer/desktop) or on a mobile device via an app. The stories would be able to be played with or without an internet connection (through direct download).

On the host site/app, I also plan to create an online chat room with topics surrounding youth and human trafficking. I also plan to have a section of the site/app that features helpful resources, both for teens who are currently being trafficked and for teens who want to learn more about what they can do to help end human trafficking. It is my

intention for this space to be a safe place for youth to learn, discuss, connect, and strategize to take action in the movement to end human trafficking.

According to the NHTH, the top two ways callers found their hotline was through a referral or through the internet. In 2018, 577 callers found the hotline through the internet. This is one of the main reasons learning needs to be available for public use and on the internet for anyone to be able to find and use, especially for youth. Although it is unknown how many youth victims are actually out there, Ark of Hope for children estimates that a total of 300,000 American youth (out of the current 1.3 million runaway and homeless children) are right now victims of human trafficking (Ark).

Minors need resources. They need to be educated in order to help themselves and to help others. The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) recognizes that although the issue of child trafficking can be a challenging and uncomfortable subject for communities to recognize and address, it is an issue that needs to be confronted.

Educators, schools, and community organizations are in a unique position to confront the issue of child trafficking. Everyone should be aware of the dangers of trafficking and arm themselves with the knowledge of how to recognize, report, and prevent it from happening in their community (NCSSLE). Tidball, Sriana and Rajaram found as a result of their 2017 Nebraska based case study that all students (elementary through high school) need to have access to and receive age appropriate education on human trafficking prevention. They went on to advise that human trafficking prevention should be incorporated throughout all areas

of a school community through clubs and organizations, posters, and even through the provision of an anonymous reporting hotline (Schools 21), and I would further this to include a community at large.

It is my intention to connect with local libraries for dissemination on their servers and also to coordinate with national NGOs (such as safekids.org) whose purpose is to further the education of young people on the topic of human trafficking. When I have completed the compilation of stories I plan to submit them to publishing companies or self-publish them for schools and youth centered community organizations to disseminate at low to no cost. It is my intention to have the stories translated and published in an array of languages in both in written and audio form. Digitally, the stories will be able to be 'zoomed in' on for users to be able to have a closer look at the pictures and text.

It also is my goal for the digital stories to be designed in such a way that users can choose to read them in plain text without pictures. In physical copies, pages will be arranged in such a way that the text is clear and legible for the 'least common denominator' to be able to read. Predominant text colors in all stories will be in black in white, in order as to not distract from the message and purpose. I plan to have the above accomplished over the two years.

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NOTE: This document is for viewing purposes only. It is a SAMPLE and is non interactive. The interactive/full version of this story can be found here: <http://philome.la/thejjacksy/rosa> as of 25 July, 2019. Access via the host site is subject to change at any time.



Sarah Grace and Katie Beth called Rosa 'Guts' because she killed so many bugs. But their daddy, Mr. Reynolds made her do it. It was Rosa's job, and had been since Rosa and her family had left Mexico to work at Mr. Reynold's ranch 3 years ago.

GUTS!

Mama's job was to tend Mr. Reynold's house. She cooked and cleaned all day, every day and into the night.



Rosa hated how Sarah Grace and Katie Beth ordered her mama around.

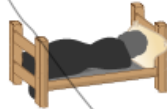
Make me a snack!

Clean my boots!

Papa's job was to work in the oil fields. It was a dangerous job. A few days ago, there was an explosion. Papa had all the air knocked out of him.



He was still recovering, coughing in his bed. Rosa was worried but Mr. Reynolds said he would call a doctor if things got worse.



DID YOU KNOW?

Agriculture, construction, and domestic work are three of the most frequently documented areas of human trafficking.³

Rosa and her family didn't have any money to get a doctor on their own. Mr. Reynolds saved all the money Rosa, Mama and Papa earned. Mama and Papa hoped to one day use their money to buy a house in Mexico and send Rosa to a good school.



Rosa felt a deep sadness wash over her everytime she watched Katie Beth and Sarah Grace leave for school in the mornings while she worked in the fields. Mr. Reynolds kept promising Rosa's family's they would earn enough money, soon. But he had been promising that for 3 years. Rosa was tired of working in the fields, tired of Mr. Reynold's temper, tired of no money, tired of killing bugs on corn and tired of waiting.



-- THAT IS, UNTIL MATEO SHOWED UP

A smile spread across Rosa's face, spreading her sun kissed cheeks side to side, as she sank down onto the ground beneath the stalks. It was cool there and no one see her.



DID YOU KNOW?

Undocumented foreign workers and those with low English proficiency are at a high risk of being trafficked.²

Maria and Pablo were not planning on a baby. Rosa had been a great surprise. They lived deep in poverty, begging on the road and always searching for food. Always hungry.



Maria watched Rosa scrub the dishes.



Maria smiled at her. She closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep, dreaming of a day when they would earn enough money to leave.



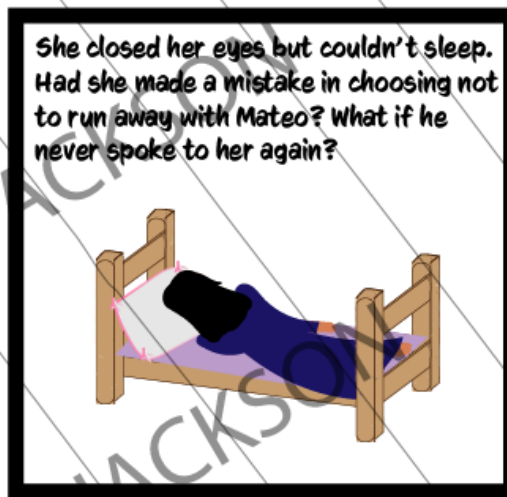
Rosa finished drying the dishes. She scratched her hand. Her finger was swelling fatter. She reached into the makeshift cupboard her papa had built and rubbed a glob of butter over it. It wasn't perfect, but it did help sooth the itch for now. She glanced over to where her mama was asleep in the old wicker chair. She glanced over to where her papa snored, on his belly. Rosa would miss them, but her family needed money.



Rosa chooses to stay with her family on the ranch.

Rosa chooses to run away with Mateo.

Rosa chooses to stay with her family on the ranch.

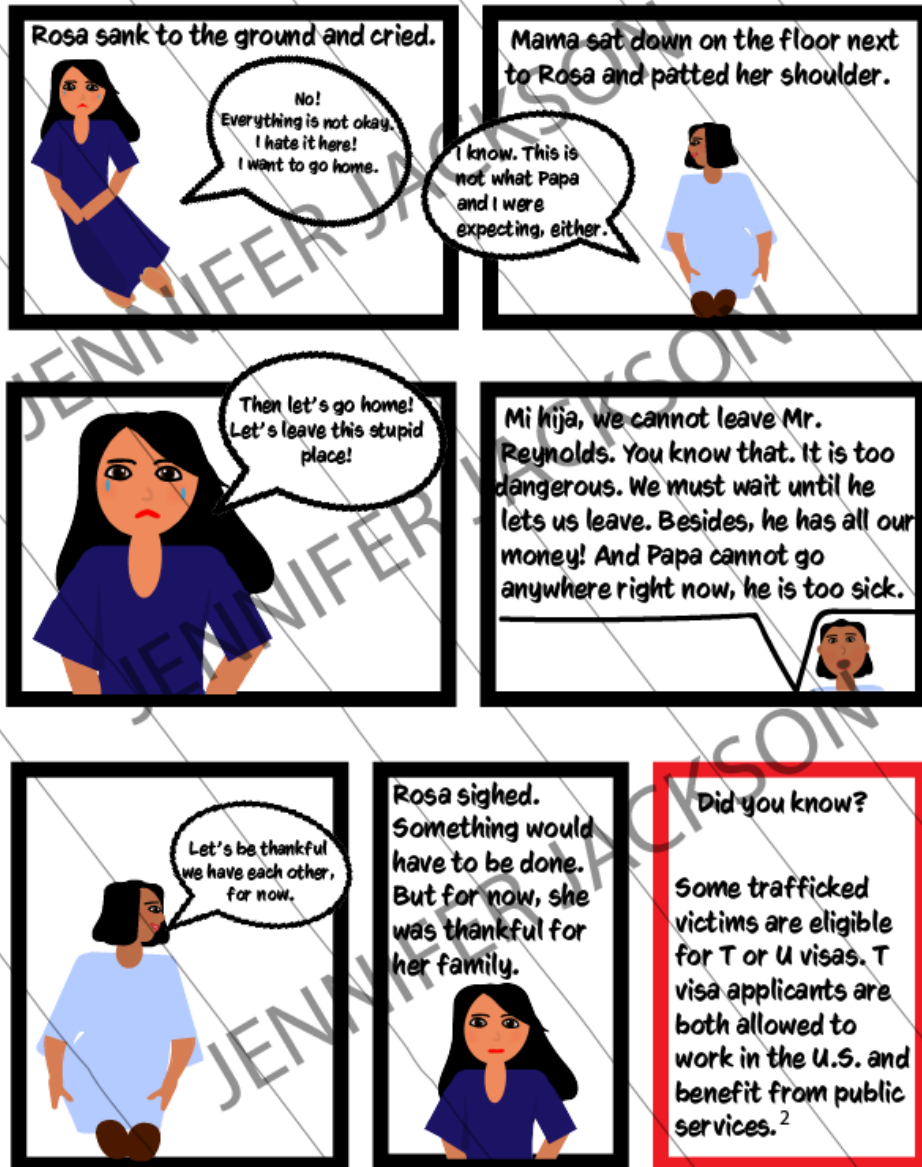


Did you know?
In 2018, 4,233 females were reported trafficked (almost 7 times more than males).¹

Rosa opens up about her feelings.

Rosa gives in to her anger.

Rosa opens up about her feelings.



An officer visits the ranch.

Rosa gives in to her anger.

"No! I'm tired of living here. I'm tired of being poor and dealing with Katie Beth and Sarah Grace. I'm tired of being John Reynold's servant. I want to go to school! I want to have friends, and I want to have a life!"



Rosa struggled up from the floor and ran out into the night. She ran, even though she didn't know where she was headed.

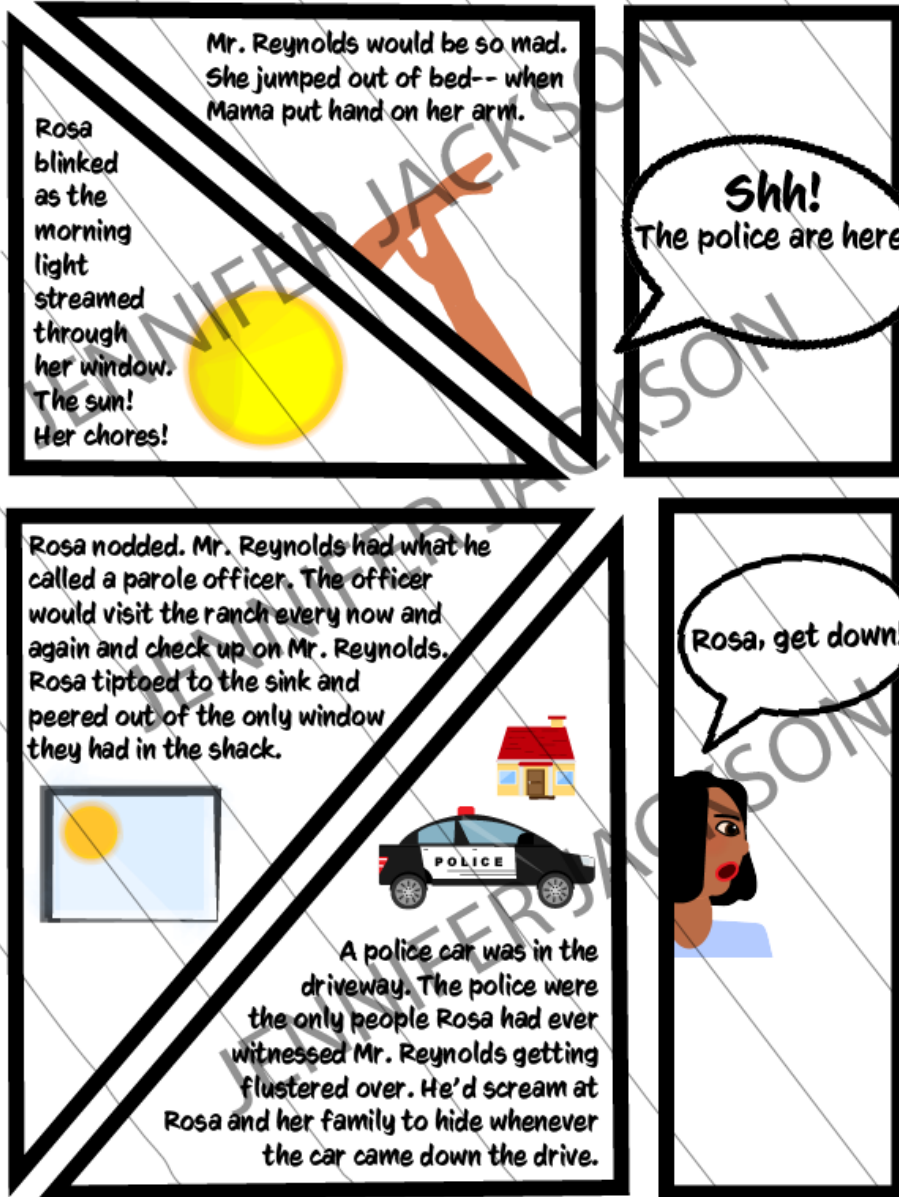


On a whim, she ducked into the corn fields but tripped over a broken stalk and dove headfirst to the ground. She beat her fist into the mud. Maybe it had been a better idea to go with Mateo, after all.



Rosa chooses to run away with Mateo.

An officer visits the ranch.



Rosa bangs on the window.

Rosa quietly hides.

Rosa bangs on the window.

But Rosa didn't want to get down. She could feel something rising inside of her, something that wanted to be let out, no matter what the consequences were. She reached her fist up and banged on the window as hard as she could.




AYUDA ME!

Mama pushed Rosa from the window, but it was too late.

Rosa, what are you thinking?

Is someone there?

What are you talking about? Of course there isn't. Look, I've let you look around. I'm not growing anything illegal. I'm not doing anything outside of my probation or against the law. Now it's time for you to leave."



BEEP BEEP!

Back up needed at the Reynold's Ranch.

Step aside, Reynolds.

Back up? Back up for what? you're leaving now!

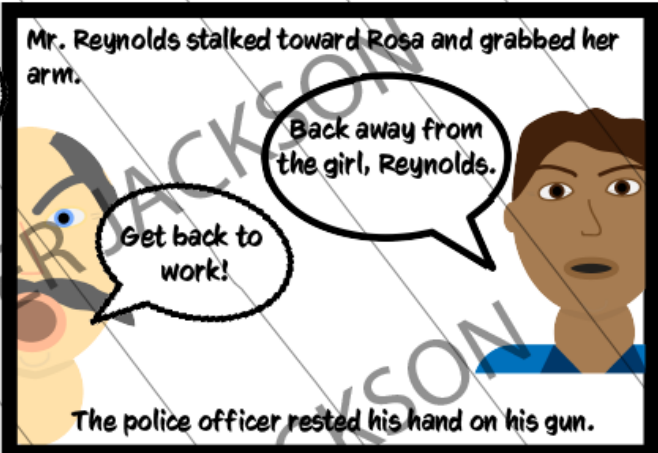
Rosa could hear the officer's footsteps draw closer to the shed.

Rosa what have you done? Papa and I will go to jail!

Mama, you don't know that! Mr. Reynolds is lying to us about our money and he's probably lying about jail, too. Please. For Papa's sake. We have to take a chance.

Rosa opened the shed door. Her heart beat fast, and she felt sick. Would this be the last time her and her family would be together?





Did you know?
Convictions of human traffickers are low because of factors such as inadequate training of law officials, mistaken situations of migrant smuggling, and threats on the victims by the trafficker

THE END

Rosa quietly hides.

Rosa followed her mama's direction and stayed down low. The last thing she wanted was for her family to be separated and in jail. And with Papa in his condition—Rosa looked over to where her papa still slept on the bed. He was looking thinner and paler than he had in these past few days. Mr. Reynolds had promised to call the doctor if things got worse. Rosa knew it was time for him to call.



Try to sneak away from your chores today and check on your papa. Make sure he has water.



Rosa nodded but her heart sunk and thudded in fear. Mama'd never asked her to sneak away from her chores before. Sneaking away might get her a beating. Papa coughed and groaned on his bed.



LATER ...

Rosa searched for bugs in the corn. She was only slightly slower than she could have been because of the spider bite. Her finger throbbed and she took the glove off to inspect it. It was swollen, blooming red and hot. She tried to forget about it, but it hurt. Her heart hurt, too. Mateo would probably never speak to her again... but more than that, she couldn't get the police officer's visit out of her mind. What if she had yelled? Begged for help? Rosa couldn't help but to wonder.





Rosa pulled off her wet and muddy gloves and stuffed them into her back pocket. She paused at the edge of the corn fields to make sure Mr. Reynolds wasn't around, then darted across the lawn and into the shed.

Papa wasn't snoring, so he must be awake, but as Rosa drew closer she could see that he was sleeping but his breathing was labored. She shook his arm. But he didn't move or open his eyes. His arms were covered in sweat. Rosa shook him again. But still he did not awake. Rosa ran out the shed.

Mama, come quick! It's Papa!



Mama flew to the shed. Mr. Reynolds also appeared in the doorway.

Get back to work!

Please! It's Pablo. He needs to see a doctor.

Mr. Reynolds peered at Papa's ghostly white face in bed.

Fine! I know a guy. Don't need my investments dying on me.

Mr. Reynolds grumbled as he stalked away.



An officer visits the ranch.

Rosa chooses to run away with Mateo.



Rosa declines and goes back home.

Rosa accepts Mateo's offer.

Rosa declines and goes back home.

Rosa's stomach began to hurt.
Her palms began to sweat.
She began to wonder what she was doing there.



"I—I've got to go," she said,
suddenly and
turned to run back home.



"What the—?" she could hear
Mateo's feet pounding behind her
and for the first time, Rosa felt
afraid. She ran faster but she
could feel the ground shaking
behind her as Mateo grew closer.
His hand touched her shoulder.



But she jerked away and darted into the corn field. She knew her way
around there with her eyes closed but Mateo had gained too much distance.
He shoved her and a corn stalk bent to the ground and snapped as she fell.
Rosa screamed. Mateo slapped a hand over her mouth, but it was
too late. Lights flew on in the distance. Mateo punched her in the
face before running off into the darkness.



Punta!



Rosa chooses to stay with her family on the
ranch.

Rosa accepts Mateo's offer.

Rosa couldn't say no to Mateo. She took it a piece and shuddered.



You're going to have a lot of firsts. I hope you're ready for that. Things are going to be a lot different from now on. You are grown up, now that you're leaving here. You're a woman. When you're a woman, you have to do things with your body.

But don't worry, I'll teach you.



Rosa felt her palms sweat but she wasn't afraid. Mateo could never hurt her.



Mateo stopped suddenly on the dark road in front of the old pick up truck she'd seen him drive to the ranch each day.



Get in, and be quiet. Can't wake Reynolds up.



The truck roared to life. In the distance, dogs howled and porch lights flew on at Mr. Reynold's house.



Mr. Reynolds ran out into the night air with his shot gun. Mateo just laughed as they sped into the night.



Did you know?

Many trafficked victims are runaway youth. They engage in 'survival sex' and become victims of pimps and traffickers.⁴

Mateo knocked on a door.



Wake up! We've made it to Houston. Buildings towered above Rosa's head. They pulled up in front of an apartment building.



The door swung open.




Mateo, hola!

Hi Rosa, my name is José. Do not be afraid. From now on you will stay here, okay?

Rosa nodded. José seemed nice. She looked past his shoulder and into the apartment. It already looked much better than their shack at Reynold's ranch.



José waved Rosa and Mateo inside and he shut the door behind them. Rosa watched as she closed the door. For a split second, she thought about running outside. Running, and never looking back. But she reminded herself why she was there.



Let me introduce you to the other girls.

The other girls? Rosa wondered as she followed him down the hallway.



José opened the door to a bedroom.



You will stay in here when you're not working. Talli, this is Rosa. Take care of her.



Talli sat on her bed and bored her eyes into Rosa's from across the room so hard, Rosa had to look away.



José snapped his fingers at her. Talli's eyes flickered away from Rosa's. She bent her head, nodded, and shuffled out of the room.

Now for some rules, Rosita. You cannot leave this apartment. I will find you. You are welcome here, Rosita but do not ever cross me."



Mateo will be back to show you the ropes.

LATER ...

Rosa sat on the edge of the bed. It was too cold in the room, and her arms were covered in bumps. She stared at her spider bitten finger. Was that really only two days ago that it happened? She inspected it closer and noticed her skin was beginning to darken and split open at the source of the bite.



Give me your arm.

Mateo wrapped a rubber tube around her forearm.

This, my little Rosa, is going to make everything easier.



Mateo pulled the ends of the rubber tube tight and Rosa winced in pain.

You aren't afraid of needles, are you?

OUCH!

Mateo tapped her inner elbow before sinking a needle into Rosa's vein. Mateo grinned, untied the rubber tube and sat back on the bed watching her.



Rosa woke up alone in the bedroom. Sunlight streamed through an open window, and she winced. Everything hurt. Her whole body--



Talli flung open the bedroom door. Okay, sleepyhead. José and Mateo said you were okay but that you need more practice. They want you working in two days. Come on and get washed up before you start again.

Memories flashed through Rosa's mind from the night before. Had Mateo really done those things to her? Had José? Tears streamed down Rosa's face.



She felt so ashamed. Talli touched her shoulder.

Don't worry, you get used to it. Then some day maybe you can be like me--José's main girl. He's a good one, you know.



Talli dragged Rosa into the bathroom and helped her into the shower. Rosa was so cold.



Talli left the room and Rosa scratched her spider bite. Blood ran down her hand, into the tub and snaked its way to the drain. She stared at the small pin prick mark in her arm and tried to remember Mateo's promises.



THE END