



**ANANKE**  
**Bodies for sale**

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TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH  
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ANANKE. BODIES for SALE

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*May this novel show my  
recognition to the brave women  
who never stopped fighting for  
their freedom and to those who  
dared to report crimes made  
against them. Silence makes us  
accomplices.*

*Likewise, my recognition goes to  
all women who work at the  
Human Trafficking Unit of the  
Mexico City Attorney General's  
Office for their continuous and  
selfless hard work against the  
slavery of our century.*

# 1

The door shuts with a bang. Still carried away by the nightmare, Mélida hears a sharp noise. *Was that a gunshot?* Her friend Dulce falls in slow motion, nothing can stop her crash against a pool of blood that grows larger by the second. The steady rhythm of gravity pulls her friend, but then *she* is falling, Mélida is facing that deep, red lagoon... she is her friend and herself, her sight, her pain, and she's passing out.

Between the noise and the need to escape that sight, it feels like minutes have gone by. *Stand up!* At last, she does. No wounds on her chest. Her hands are fine, but she feels the intense pounding of her heart. *Where am I?* Her eyes sweep the room. It was a dream, *but Oscar? Did he slam the door?* She snaps her fingers, and puffs. She wants to sleep, lie back down. No. Something tells her to stay awake and think.

*About what? No, I don't want to, it's not good.*

She cringes. *Did Oscar actually leave?* Seems odd. She needs to pee and to sleep, no time for other bullshit. She stumbles toward the bathroom. There's no relief for her. She hears the trickle, and a chill drains her body. She has to sleep or she won't have energy to service customers until 5 a.m., closing hours. One time she passed out, and a customer took advantage of it. Of course, she got the blame. Even after being used like a rag doll, her captors reprimanded her for giving a freebie. They pulled her by the hair as usual; curls are good for grabbing. Yeah, she better rest. It's either that or going back to cocaine, but there's no coming out of that hole.

No thoughts. What she can do is forget everything, even who she is. Her command over a body that isn't her own, as if it were a programmed machine, never ceases to amaze her.

She goes back to bed, eyes barely open, and scans her surroundings. It does look like they're alone. *Where's Dahlia?* There's no sign of him, but Mélida pricks up her ears and recognizes the other girls. *That's Silvia, she's a heavy breather. There's Yesenia, she snores a lot. Perhaps Dahlia was the one who shut the door. Maybe he went to get food or drugs... or a man. Did something come up?*

Memories suddenly invade her thoughts. This much is true: They arrived from Cuautla early in the morning. They were taken upstairs to sleep. Oscar came in later, with a bottle of liquor in his hand, eager to keep the party going despite the quarrel, the threats, the journey, and the road. She had a headache, and more than enough alcohol in her blood, but she joined them for a while. They drank. She saw them get high to keep on drinking. This was her world now. They were even joking. It was odd to see Oscar and Dahlia being so friendly to them. Everyone was in a good mood.

Her pain increased, she really needed to sleep. They let her be, but later she felt Oscar behind her, his hands on her breasts, his warm tongue on her neck, his growing erection pressing against her ass. Girls were laughing. Dahlia recited made up, dirty, and funny verses until Mélida stopped hearing to give in to the burning desires of the blood; the business of opening up her legs made her think that she wouldn't be able to enjoy the act ever again.

He filled up her body smoothly. For a brief moment, she thought, he was holding her with something more than lust, almost like love, she felt. She turned around to caress every muscle in his back, his skin, the humidity in his pores. It had been so long since she had embraced someone. Right after the orgasm, they stayed still and tight against each other. Then she fell asleep. That's all she can remember.

Once again, she fights to stay awake. Something's amiss: There's no caretaker, and the door. *is it open?* She could escape, but can she? The possibility frightens her. They kill you if you try, but so what? Her desire has always been the same, ever since day one, sometimes greater, a desperate longing; it's like an itch she can't scratch, and sometimes she can pretend it's not there. Specially, at the very last minute, she forces herself to believe it doesn't matter, that she's not thinking, that everything's fine, but no, the same goal burns inside her: Run away, keep trying, even after failing the first time, the second time, the third... try again. Run. Away.

This is the moment. No one's watching. Escape, yes? *I have no clothes.* Her eyes survey the mess. Dahlia didn't take out the bag with rags from the previous night, nor the platforms. He always does it, every night. It's to keep the women naked, but now the pile of clothes is still in the corner where all three of them got undressed. *He must be insanely drunk if he forgot, or is it a trap? It's not like I could ask him.*

She's on edge, and that makes her react. Mélida gets it together. *That top? Damn, it reeks of sweat, and who knows what else.* She opts for wrapping herself with a towel. *No. Everyone would notice a person with a white towel... well, gray, actually.* The other top and the miniskirt will make do, even if colors don't match. *God, I hope it's not freezing out there!* As she puts her feet inside the platforms, she thinks of straightening her hair, or at least wearing a headband. She gives up, it's pointless to fight her unruly curls. *Why do I even care? No time to waste.*

She stops right before the door, and tries to listen, to get the lay of the land. Slowly, very slowly, she opens the door, and her heart sinks, *what if this flowery-named fucker is playing with me? He is a vengeful faggot.* She breathes in, and tenses her muscles. *Move!*

She pulls the door, and exposes herself, but no one's in sight. Her heart might just come out of her body. She is alone. Fear takes hold of her feet, and the hall seems longer than usual. How many hours have passed since they arrived? How long did she sleep? *Four hours at the most.* Adrenaline pumps her body, it hurts. She feels dizzy. *Put up with it, I'd rather have that bastard kill me than lose my chance,* she thinks, but she doesn't want that, she doesn't actually want to die, even if she says it, or thinks it, she needs to stay alive. Her only hope is that she is lucky, invisible, able to escape this time around. She shakes her head, and starts walking; every step is dangerous, someone could notice her. "Walk normally, like a guest. Without a bag? Shit."

She has no bag, where could she have left the one that... she really needs a bag for support as she walks toward the stairs.

Two steps, a series of long, winding stairs, and her heart is still racing, it doesn't let her breathe. She's terrified because any minute now... "Mother of God, please pray for me that I make it to the street. Just get me there."

Somehow, she musters strength and is able to stand up straight and go down without much concern, even if every step feels like an eternity. Just a bit more.

Shadows, voices, someone is climbing up, and she is still halfway through. Terror crawls inside her through her navel, and grabs onto reason, like a freezing claw ripping her apart.

She murmurs prayers again. All she wants is to cry, kneel down, run back upstairs. No. She faces the wall to act as if she just dropped an earring. *I'm not even wearing one. Who the fuck cares?* She stays down, scratching the dirty rug despite her head is spinning. Her ears can't decipher the conversation of the people coming upstairs, but one thing is for sure: that's not Dahlia.



The couple finds odd the sight at their feet: a woman crouching on the floor, messy hair all over her face, her fingers stretching over the worn carpet, but they're only distracted for a second before resuming their hurried—and horny—steps toward the first floor.

Mélida is able to reach the lobby. She walks toward the midday sunlight. Doors are open. She hears someone mutter “Hey, wait,” but the voice is drowned out by the revving sound of a motorcycle.

She doesn't care where she is walking, as long as she keeps doing it. If she's lucky, today she'll hold her baby boy once again. If she's lucky, the nightmare will be over.

“Where the fuck you think you're going?”

That's definitely aimed at her.

She tries to hurry, but the platforms are heavy. It's impossible to walk. She quickly takes them off and runs barefoot with all her might. The noisy street prevents her from hearing the insults aimed at her. She can't feel the pavement as she runs against the wind. A quick turn to the left and then through the street. The voice behind her. A car honks. Insults. The voice. Her pulse. Nausea. She wails.

She looks back to find her chaser, and suddenly she clashes against a taco stand. She almost trips, but she's able to stop in time before falling over the boxes. Her hands are in the air, and everyone's watching.

“Is something wrong, miss?” Someone asks.

She looks up. It's a cop. A good cop? She turns around to escape, to go back, but the fat man chasing her is six feet away from her. The rage in his eyes, the threat in his face. What can she do? *Protect me, dear God.*

“Please help me. I've been kidnapped.”

## 2

Mélida is nervous. Fear can't stop coursing her body while she waits in the parking lot next to the taco stand in the alley. Every customer stares at her while they order their tacos. *I'll have one with longaniza. For me, three al pastor.* She can hear them chew. Eyes are fixed upon her, wondering why she is barefoot and almost naked. Shame and fear mix inside her. *I'm not an animal! This isn't a show!* A voice inside her shouts, but she is powerless to actually say the words. *What the fuck are you looking at?* Even a small dog that eats leftovers from the floor sniffs around her.

But the possibility of Darío finding her worries her more. He could arrive at any moment in his truck and shoot everyone, including cops. Yes, despite her efforts, she is afraid. If they suddenly blew her brains out, it would be fine, but it sucks waiting to be killed. Maybe she shouldn't have escaped. It feels like an eternity has passed, and she is getting cold.

Not to mention that the officers aren't moving. *What are they waiting for?* Darío's face haunts her, always looking from the passenger's seat, as if claws could come out from his eyes and grab her. The cops won't let her move, but her entire body aches to run away. They called for backup, or they're waiting for instructions, something like that. They always have their freaking codes, and there isn't a patrol car on sight.

Some memories make her smile, though, like when the fat man stopped dead at the sight of one of the cops. The other cop, his *buddy*, stepped toward him, ready to pull out his

gun. "Is that the man who kidnapped you?" he had asked. "No, he's in charge of the hotel. A group of pimps had me." After that, the fat man's face was filled with terror, his eyes grew larger, and he fled from the scene. She wanted to laugh, call him a sorry-ass motherfucker, and shout any and all curses until she ran out of breath, or until she cried, but her eyes had gone dry for a long time now. She didn't know what to do. She had no plan, nothing to say.

*What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh*, she told herself: If anyone could lend her some money to get to the bus station and ride to Zacatelco, she'd be fine. "Don't be foolish," the cops had told her. "The first thing the pimps will do is look for you in your house, your town. You'll risk your entire family." That triggered an image of his baby boy covered in blood, and that was enough to change her mind. Then what?

Another cop, the commander, as he calls himself, arrives. He wants to know everything: Who? What? Where? He looks at Mélida up and down, and then he scolds the other cops. "Why on earth did you keep her here? Can't you see it's dangerous? Get her in the fucking patrol right now!" He takes one of the cops with them for the report.

First they go to the police station. And so it begins...

#### **POLICE FACTS SHEET**

**Subject: On October 24, 2012**, the acting staff states that they called the Assistance Center for Victims of Sexual Abuse, where they spoke with María Silvia Páez Jiménez and asked her to send a social worker, clothes, and food for the informant.

Paper after paper. The sound of a computer keyboard.

**With acknowledgement of receipt of the official request issued to María Luisa Flores Castillo** on October 24, 2012 from the police station in the District of Tlalpan, Department of Legal Affairs, for the purposes of taking the informant's statement.

Another patrol car, more cops, and the growing concern in Mérida's face.

**With the statement of police officer Tadeo Carrasco Pérez, who brought the informant** on October 24, 2012, who states the following: 'On...

At last, one kind face explains they are taking her to the Human Trafficking Unit to help and protect her.

*Is this for real?*

**With the attorney's attestation** of the medical report of the informant, on October 24, 2012, hereby signed and issued by Gregorio Escudero Rivas, appointed medical expert witness, which includes two sheets describing the results of a psychophysical examination: The informant was conscious, she was able to speak fluently, and coherently; there are no signs of dehydration, she was able to walk in a straight line, her pupils are equal and reactive to light; her coordination results [...] She is sexually active since the age of 17; she is 20 years old and has had multiple sexual partners; she was a sex worker with use of preservatives (condom) as protection method; no clinical data of infection, STDs or pregnancy; four samples were obtained from vaginal swab, and the samples were placed in glass test tubes with cotton plugs for forensic tests of semen; blood samples were obtained for elisa assay. They were given properly to the officer in charge of the investigation to take the samples to the laboratory.

It all feels like a dream. Everyone's been respectful: the doctor, the social worker, the attorneys. They treat her well, care about her. She was hungry, so they gave her some meat, stew and potatoes. It tasted like heaven. She was sick of eating greasy junk food. Her cheeks hurt just from the savory taste of the stew and warm tortillas.

She felt grateful for the clothes they gave her, even the worn sneakers, which were perfectly fine. She was able to brush her teeth, and tie her curly hair into a bun. Everything has worked out so far. Anxiety and fear diminish. She no longer feels flustered, as she faces another lady, the prosecutor, who smiles while she types something in her computer.

“All right, Mélida, let me explain some things. My name is Rosa Martha Quiroz, I’m a prosecutor. Here we assist victims like you, and I’ll take care of your case. We just need to wait for your assigned attorney.” Mélida doesn’t like the sound of that, but Rosa reassures her: “It’s the law, and it’s meant to protect you because we are going to start with legal proceedings. Are you following me?”

Mélida nods, though she doesn’t quite see the point of these “legal proceedings,” but she remains silent while looking at her surroundings, the furniture, the area, the faces, and the actions of those who work there. In the cubicle next to hers, a woman complains about her husband who sells her, and has her sons kidnapped to keep her quiet; a woman with a weird voice behind her reports a man who hits her. *It’s probably her pimp.*

A woman arrives and sits next to her, she smiles and greets everyone. She and Quiroz exchange some words that sound like a secret code. The prosecutor writes more things that the woman tells her. Her fingers are fast, while her eyes keep track of everything around her. She is alert, calculating. Then she smiles at Mélida. “We’re ready for your statement.” “Statement? I don’t wanna do that. You said you’d help me, but not like this. What will I say? I don’t want no trouble. Just hide me or something, the cops were right, if I go home right now, they could attack my family. No, I don’t want to say anything, ma’am.”

“Relax, don’t be scared. You have to tell us who sold you.”

Nothing. Not a word.

“Did they kidnap you?”

She nods.

“Did they force you into sex slavery?”

She nods again.

“Well, that’s all you have to say.”

A wave of possibilities invades her thoughts. She could get revenge, but that could mean more trouble. Darío and his pimps are powerful, they have ears everywhere. She