

I arrived in the Netherlands in April 2014. The first time I couldn't pass the border, but the second time they let me through. Just after I passed the customs I felt a kind of loneliness, as if I became a garden without flowers. I was leaving for real.

I met her at the gym, I was her instructor. She was studying to become a physiotherapist. The roles inverted with time and she somehow also became my teacher. I felt attracted to her, in all possible ways. She was very bright and finished her study cum laude. We became friends, soulmates and finally we started a relationship. Soon we were living together in my mother's house. We are a good team, a perfect match. She became pregnant with our daughter and we started badly needing money. I took a job as an inspection officer in a water company, but I was earning too little. Even more so after our second child, a beautiful boy, was born. She was working very hard, day and night, as a medical transcriptionist. I suffered to see her always focusing on the computer, in a corner of the house. I remember that when I started to date with her, she had once told me that her dream was to become a full-time mother. I took it upon myself to make things change. It was a very difficult and heartbreaking decision.

Once in the Netherlands I was offered a job as a babysitter for one year. Later I became a supervisor in a hotel where I serve. I work in gardening as well and sometimes I am a security man in an art gallery. We were always together, helping each other and now we are both on our own, me here and her in the Philippines. But I want the best for her and for our children's future. She is always in my heart. She is even working harder than I do, I am so proud of her. Before I met her, I was just a guy without dreams. I was only working hard and partying at night. She made me a better person, I cannot be at my best without her.

I call them few times a day, as often as I can. They are my energy pill. I know all the free Wi-Fi spots in the city. Sometimes we leave the facetime video on for a long time and I hear the daily noises in the house, the children playing, her doing the laundry or my mother talking. I try to have a normal relationship with them even though we are not physically together. I play with my children and I ask my wife about her day once our children are in bed. The time difference doesn't help but I call every spare moment, even when I am so tired, sometimes at midnight.

I thought I would be in the Netherlands only for one year but we have been very unlucky. After one year my brother who lives in Oman got a kidney disease. He had to undergo a lot of operations that the insurance couldn't cover. He needs regular blood transfusions, about three times a week. As long as I stay in Holland his life can get a bit longer. Every passing year brought us more difficulties: my wife's father was diagnosed with cancer. They have a very close relationship, he is her hero. He first refused to get a chemotherapy treatment, because it was too expensive. The feeling of helplessness broke her strength. I begged him to let me help financially so that he could get a cure. Maybe that is the purpose of my life to help others, maybe it is my destiny.

A few months ago, my wife became impatient and asked me to come back. She suspected me to be happy without her here. My daughter also started to ask me to come back to them. It is really hard to make a decision as deep in my heart I want to be with them, to be a husband and father with a physical presence. But if I would go back, I could not help my brother and her father any longer. I haven't saved enough money for us to start a business of our own. I asked her to give me more time. I told her that the apple tree which we have planted already has a few apples but they are still green and we need to wait until they become ripe. Now isn't the right moment yet.

I don't dare to tell her the date of my return. Few times already my plans have been ruined. I don't want to make promises to my kids and disappoint them. I want to be honest. I don't count days, I don't count time, I don't look at the calendar. Sunday's particularly hurt me because they are family days. Our situation is heartbreaking. Even though I am surrounded by very kind people in Amsterdam I feel very lonely, I am sometimes in tears. I feel incomplete without my wife and my family, like a book without pages. God takes care of me. I go to church every Sunday. I cannot do this alone, He is my guide. In life you can't have everything, it is always a matter of sacrifice. In God's perfect time we will be reunited.