



Melanie's Story

I thought I was safe because he had clean shoes.

I thought I was safe because when we met, he smiled and he seemed so genuine.

I thought I was safe because he did not just want to use me; he wanted to marry me.

I thought I was safe because my mother liked him and trusted him.

I thought I was safe because he never beat me at home.

I thought I was safe because one day he came home with a roasted chicken from the shop.

I thought I was safe because we were married a whole year before we got on that bus.

But I wasn't safe.

His manner changed when we crossed the border. He was like a different person. He told me just to trust and that if I trusted, I would be ok. I didn't know what he meant. I had always trusted him! Imagine that! I trusted the man who sold me; who viewed me as nothing more than a valuable piece of property. I had fooled myself into thinking that I had control over my life; that I would be different from other women in my family. That I would be a somebody. But I'm a nobody. Did you know that I actually escaped once? I got to a police station and started telling my story. As soon as the officer left the room to call in another person, I ran. I ran back to the very people who hold me captive. Because at least with them I know what will happen next. I know where my next meal will come from. I know who I am. How could I ever return home – a disgraced daughter; an unmarried mother of a mixed race child? No, this is my life now. I just need to imagine that I am safe. Then I can get through each day.