



# **EL MUNDO DE JOSÉ MANUEL Y SU FAMILIA**

**Autoría:**

**MIRELLA - SILENIA - ISABEL QUINTERO**



*In the depths of a Pacific municipality, on the seashore, were José Manuel and Lucía, a humble family who for 20 years have been living with their children in a house built on a stilt house in the San José neighbourhood of Buenaventura. This couple, lived happily in this place, because it reminded them of the area in which they grew up, But there was a moment when everything changed and with a strong spirit spirit and united by love, the Valencia Valencia family had to face different challenges, to which they were not used to.*

*they were not used to. I invite you to get to know the world of José Manuel and his*

*FAMILY.*

My name is José Manuel Valencia, I am 53 years old and I live in Buenaventura. From a very young age, my family always lived by the sea, and I wanted to continue that tradition with my wife. When we arrived in Buenaventura, San José was a beautiful neighbourhood on the Pacific. Its diversity of colours and smells made it a perfect place to live. I built my house right at the end of the bridge at the end of the bridge that connected the neighbours who were already there. Every day, I thanked the ancestors for living in such a picturesque and contrasting place and full of contrasts that made it easy to raise my children.



As time went by, my family grew. I had three children, each one with a special personality. Camila, 6 years old, is cheerful like her mother, she loves to dance and sing and when she grows up she tells me she wants to be the best doctor in the world. Her brother Toño, on the other hand, has dreamed of being a footballer, which has allowed him to be in good physical shape and participate in different tournaments, even though he is only 5 years old. My last daughter, Lina, is two years old and although she is grumpy and cries for everything, she is curious about her surroundings.





My children are the spitting image of their mother, that beautiful woman who is my inspiration in life. Lucia is her name, a dazzling woman. Every time the sun goes down, her chocolate skin turns golden and her body becomes a guitar that I want to play. I don't know how I did to deserve her, and if at some point she leaves me, I'd die.

This is our little home, a cheerful little house by the sea, where the sound of the waves crashing on the piles, the singing of the seagulls accompanied by the voices of the people, becomes an orchestra that generates happiness for me. Everything was in perfect harmony.





One day, on a dark and cold night, due to the torrential rain, I was in the kitchen preparing dinner. My wife was with the children in the living room watching an animated film, but as expected the children fell asleep, even though Lucia had told them not to. Suddenly the whistle of the rice cooker blew, bringing me out of my thoughts and letting me know that the rice was finally ready. Everything was ready, the fish was well fried and the rice was delicious. Just as I take out the plates, I hear a sound in the distance that catches my attention. I look at the time and it is 9:30 at night, the sound becomes harder and more present, as if they were burning gunpowder and gourds.

This is weird, I thought. I rushed outside to see what was going on, but I couldn't see anything. Suddenly, I heard desperate screams and many cries for help. I panicked, but I kept my composure. I decided to go inside to tell Lucía. At that moment, my next-door neighbour shouted to me, 'José Manuel, José Manuel! take your things out and throw them into the sea, because the Escuranos are here and they want to kill us. I was bewildered, who are the Escuranos and why should I throw myself into the sea? The compadre told me again that I should get out. I reacted that my family's life is in danger and ran into the house to tell Lucía to wake up the children and to pack the most important things in suitcases.





Lucia, looking at me strangely, but just when she wants to ask something, loud detonations sound very close to our house that stun our thoughts. She understands what I want to tell her, and with one jerk she gets up and shakes the children so that they help to take out the most important things. We left the house, with briefcases on our backs, dazed and panicking to see what was going on.





The screams and sobs fragmented a quiet, rainy night. As we crossed the neighbourhood, which had given us joy, we observed bodies on the ground, bloodied, children crying for peace. I looked at my family and horror reigned on their faces, trying to understand what had happened in that place that opened its doors to us. doors. I was trying to think where to go and keep my composure so that my family wouldn't fall apart. Live crossed my mind, but I didn't tell my but I didn't tell my wife, even though she tried to know how I felt.

We walked all night, heading towards commune 12 in Buenaventura. We will be safe there, the further the better, I thought. When we arrived in the Triunfo neighbourhood, we found a large, beautiful house with a giant sign that read: 'Casa de Oportunidades, los sueños los construimos juntos' (House of Opportunities, we build our dreams together). This is our opportunity, I tell my family. They, with uncertainty, unload what they are carrying and lie down on the platform to wait for the sunrise.





I stayed awake, taking care of my own, until the dawn at last dawn broke. While the Casa de Oportunidades opened, we went from door to door to see who could give us some water to wash ourselves. A tired-looking man allowed us to enter his house and wash ourselves. The good thing about this town is that its people are friendly and helpful. It was already 9 o'clock in the morning, and the house opened its doors. Immediately, we went to ask what we could do to receive help from this place. As we entered the premises, we were greeted by a lady of about 43 years of age, with a formidable and friendly face. She looks at each of us expectantly but stops at Lucia. She widens her smile, saying; Good morning, family! It is a pleasure to welcome you. What can we do for you?

My wife, trembling, told her about the horror we had lived through the night before, saying at the end, "Please help us, we have nowhere to go! Mrs. Flores, with a sad but at the same time smiling look on her face, said:

"Oh, Valencia family, I am sorry for all the ordeal and horror you had to go through. Here at the Casa de Oportunidades, we can house them, they will have all the necessary comforts. They will be cared for and we will support them in what they need most. Housing, study and work will be guaranteed.

I look at my family and see that they are calm and expectant about the proposal. My wife, with a smile on her face, tells me; there are always kind-hearted people willing to help. We made the decision to stay in that place and accept the proposal that Mrs. Flórez had told us about. And so, we took our suitcases and headed for the rooms we had been assigned to stay in.



*Everything was wonderful. Months went by and the Valencia family were happy to have found an organisation that made their lives easier. But after a year, the deal changed and circumstances turned grey for the couple and their three children.*





One morning, we were having breakfast in the dining room of the Casa de Oportunidades, when suddenly, we heard the sound of metal shutters and chains dragging on the floor. I looked at my family, bewildered by what we had just heard. Lucia, running to hide our children in her lap, while I  
I look out the window to see what's going on.

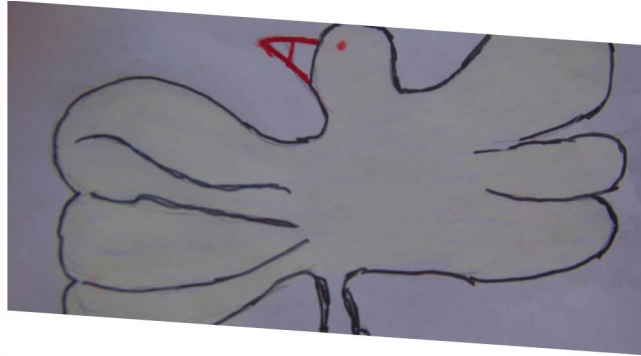
I can't see anything,' I tell my wife. Lucia looks at me with horrified eyes, fearing the worst. When Mrs Flórez appears, with a stinging face, but without her characteristic kindness, she says to us: 'Your grace period is over, what did you think, that this was free? Well, no. Now each one of you will have to pay for it. Hearing those words, my body trembled with terror, How could I not have seen this coming before, I thought and like a machine on automatic, I run to protect my family.

Mrs Flórez laughs loudly and calls two men, who are carrying thick chains, and orders them: "Take them, take Manuel in chains and take him to the bush, take his wife to the kitchen and dress her provocatively. They take his wife to the kitchen and dress her provocatively, and her children are put with handles on their feet and sent to work at the traffic lights. But madam, the children are too young to be put on the street, her companions reply: "What do I care if they are not grown up, they will not study any more, now they are going to pay me to sell sweets!"



That day I cried as I had never cried in my life, I was separated from my most precious treasures, my wife and my three children. What are my beautiful loves going through? I am here crying, feeling guilty for not having protected them as I should have. That's how I spent 10 days, crying and chained without food, turning over night and day, thinking about how to get out to meet my family. One night, I stayed awake, thinking about how to escape and devise a plan to get my wife and children back from that place. I searched for what I could and found a stone that with my love would remove my chains. I managed to free myself from them, I started to walk with nothing on my feet, so as not to make any noise and so I could run. Good thing I had found a suitcase, where I was able to pack water and some fruits I could get.

When I had everything ready, I set off on my journey to the triumph, where a cockerel began to whisper; compadre, compadre. When I heard that, I was startled, thinking that they had found me. When, I come back and hear, Compadre, compadre. I looked around, but found no one, only a chicken with a withering look. I don't think the chicken is talking to me, a month in that space and I've already been there.



I kept walking, not paying attention, when I felt the chicken perch on my shoulder and say, "compadre, compadre. I got really scared. How is it that a hen can talk, that must be the work of satan. The bird pecked at me, bringing me out of my thoughts and I paid attention to him: "Compadre, compadre, I know where your children and your wife are – how is it possible for you to know, if you are only an animal.

The bird tells me, he is my protector. I stay

I was astonished, because I remembered that my parents once told me the story of a spirit that lived in the chicken coops. I believed, and I started to talk to him. I

realised that the information he gave me was very valuable to me, although it is better that you do not know everything my family had to suffer.







I asked the chicken to help me reunite my family, so that we could make our escape to our forever home. We have already spent a long time away from home and that is evident. Arriving at the corner where the intersections of the township connect, I found my wife and three children. Sobbing, I approached them. I had missed their smell and their hugs. I told them about my plan, and they were very happy to say that they wanted to return to the place where they had seen us grow up. We walked all day, with the sun on our backs, and when we arrived at the lookout point, we could see that our house was still standing and intact. We happily ran back to our home, which we had to leave with tears and sadness, but which now with laughter and and its life and harmony were restored.

This is my territory and I will stay here, because even if bad things happen, it is the place that gives us peace and tranquillity, as well as providing everything we need. And looking back, I ask myself; what would have happened if we had stayed here? Today, I am proud to say that I live in San José with my wife and three children, and that despite everything we have lived through, we have been able to face adversity. I thank our ancestors for taking care of our home, because I believe that, if it weren't for them, we wouldn't have been able to get here. Our house remained intact and with courage, as well as our union and our gigantic love.



*Like this story, there are many others. The San José neighbourhood, known by the people as the San Yú neighbourhood, is home to different experiences and feelings among those who make up this beautiful place. Some families, like José Manuel's, return to their homes in spite of everything they have lived through, because in spite of everything, people know them and allow them to better themselves every day. But there are others whose stories are buried and silenced by the monsters that haunt the city.*

