

A Promise to My Grandpa

Xhuljana Met Hoxha

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read the title and the headings in the article. What do you think this story will be about?
2. As a pre-reading strategy, turn each heading into a question. Then see if you find the answer to the questions as you read.

Pursuing My Ambition

All my life I dreamed of being a judge. When I was a little girl, I promised my grandpa that one day I would be a judge. I worked hard every day to keep my promise. In 2017, I got my master's degree in criminal law. I wanted to stay in Albania and help women there. I love Albania, but life for women is not easy. Society revolves around men, so women don't have the same opportunities.

I worked in a legal office. I worked for many hours, and I would not feel tired. When I met with clients and they shared their hopes with me, I felt motivated to keep pushing. I wanted to be an example of what a woman can do. A woman lawyer can be as effective as a man, and more productive. I was so focused on my clients that even at night I still thought about possible solutions for their cases.

Meeting My Own "Prince Ariel"

People always asked me if I had a special someone in my life. But the fact is, I don't trust men. I was very focused on my career, and I didn't have time to go out on dates. One day, during our lunch break my colleague asked me for a silly story from my childhood. So, I told her this story:

When I was six years old, I told my father, "When I grow up, I will marry you." He was happy when he heard this. He thought he was my hero. But later I changed my mind. I told him, "Daddy, forget what I said. I don't want to marry you. I want to marry Prince Ariel. He has



This image is from a new feminist magazine in Albania called, Shota. It started in 2021, and its goal is to support women to organize and fight for their rights. <https://shota.al/>

a beautiful smile, and he is a good swimmer." (In "The Little Mermaid," the Prince's name is actually Eric, but I confused it with Ariel because Ariel is a common male name in Albania.)

My colleague said, "Oh, I have a cousin named Ariel, and he has a beautiful smile." We laughed at this funny coincidence. She said, "Imagine if you two got married. It would be like a story in the movies." My colleague showed me his profile on Instagram, and I thought, "He does have a brilliant smile." And so it all began.

A Hard Choice

Ariel and I got to know each other by phone and email. He was in the U.S., making his life there. We finally met on December 20, 2020, when he flew to Albania. On our first date, he said he wanted to marry me, but of course, we waited a few months. During those months, I didn't know what to do. If I married him, I would have to leave everything.

Right up until the day of our wedding, I felt indecisive. I felt like running away. I felt a pain in my stomach. But what could I do? I couldn't let him go, but I didn't want to leave my life in Albania.

New Dreams

Now I am here – in the land of dreams that I had never dreamed of. Here, I feel like I am nobody. Maybe I will start to work at a grocery store or maybe I will be a housewife all my life. Those thoughts were on my mind during my first week here. But my husband strongly supports me every day. He keeps me from giving up. He wants to help me have a career. He asks people in similar situations what they did. How did they get their credentials and education evaluated here? Let's hope we figure something out soon. I would like to start my master's degree here or take an exam so I can practice law in the U.S.

Maybe I will never be a judge, as I promised my grandpa, but I think he would be pleased that I am finding peace and security with my husband in the U.S. And our little miracle in my belly gives me strength to continue my dreams. Why not become even better here?

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Re-tell Xhuljana's story in your own words.
2. Do women have the same opportunities as men in your country of origin? You can use anecdotal evidence to back up your claim and/or research the topic and find data to help answer the question.



Xhuljana Met Hoxha is an ESL student at Plainville Adult and Continuing Education in Plainville, CT. She arrived in the U.S. early in 2023. She is a passionate advocate for justice and human rights. With her unwavering commitment to promoting equality and defending the rights of all individuals, she is embarking on a new chapter in her life. She is in the process of having her law degree evaluated for American accreditation. Her dream is to create a world where all people are treated with dignity and enjoy the fundamental freedoms they deserve.

Evaluating Credentials

The first step is to meet with an advisor at your local adult education program or community college. They will help you navigate the process. You can also check out these sources of information:

- [World Education Services](#)
- [Educational Credential Evaluators](#)
- [U.S. International Affairs Office](#)