**20 minutes**

Author: Lucía Gallón Rueda (l.gallon461@uniandes.edu.co)

All it takes is twenty minutes from the nightclub to my house. Just twenty minutes by foot to get to my house, undress in my bedroom and get into my bed. Just twenty minutes and I can rest. My ears will no longer buzz from the sound of the music, my feet will get a rest from the heels I’m wearing and my legs will no longer have to bear the weight of my tired body. It only takes that, twenty minutes, from three in the morning to twenty past three, to get to my house.

But those twenty minutes turned into three hours. For me it was as short as a sigh, a matter of seconds, fractions of a second. I was halfway through my journey , halfway through the night, when a wet cloth covered my face and then everything turned dark. I blinked and found myself in another house that was not mine, nor anyone’s for that matter, looking for the traces of the pass of time in my body. My head ached, it pounded like a hammer, and it was hard for me to see clearly, but my agitated breathing reminded me that I was alive. Passing my hand over my arms to warm up I felt a sting; there was a mild cut in my arm, but not leas painful as if I had been stabbed. As much as I hugged myself and rubbed my arms, the cold did not leave my body. A gust of wind swept up the length of my skirt and the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Then I noticed I was not wearing my underwear. The cold made me turn my attention to the lower part of my body, checking my hips, my pelvis, my tailbone and then my legs. They were wet, like they were covered in a thick, sticky liquid.

Those were the only clues they gave me; the rest was left to my imagination. I wondered if it only takes twenty minutes to get home from the disco, what had they not done to me in all those different periods of twenty minutes between three and six in the morning? Was there more than one person? And if so, did each one take twenty minutes? Had they taken more? Could it be that someone repeated their turn? Would the others have been angry about this or would they have encouraged this person? And if it was just one, how long did he linger with me? Did he take some rest for his body (his, not mine) and then continue to enjoy me? Did he do it for pleasure or just because he could, or for both reasons? Had they done it only once, or various times? Did I know him or them?

There are an infinite number of questions for every set of twenty minutes between three and six in the morning. Infinite questions and just one brief answer: they raped me. How? How many? Where? I do not know. I only know that my watch stopped at ten past three that night. Such was the blow when I fell to the ground that the poor thing could not withstand the impact and the glass cracked. I fixed it, it works again, but I left the glass untouched. It still has that break, that cut, that fracture in its face, but that doesn’t seem to matter much to the minute hand who continues his march, always forward, never backward and indifferent to the fact that on that night, from ten past three in the morning, three hours were subtracted from its life. Three hours that will never come back. Three hours that leave a lot to be said. Three hours that only leave things to be imagined. Three hours that leave only blurry, confused and severe images. Three hours that should only have been twenty minutes, from the nightclub to my house.