

TWO SUMMERS

TEXT BY M. B. BROZON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIANA VILLANUEVA





M. B. BROZON was born in Mexico City in 1970. She studied for the diploma in Literary Creation at the Escuela de Escritores of SOGEM, and since 1996, she has been dedicated to writing mainly for children and young people.

Over almost 25 years, she has published more than 30 books and has received the most important awards given in the country: El Barco de Vapor of Ediciones SM in 1996 and 2001, A la Orilla del Viento of the Economic Culture Fund in 1997, Fine Arts Award for Children's Story Juan de la Cabada in 2007 and the Wide Angle of SM Editions in 2008. In 2010 she was a finalist for the award Norma Fundalectura. She is currently a member of the Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte. Her stories are characterized by an easy manner and humorous style with which it deals with the topics that most interest girls, children, and young people. Today she is one of the most representative authors of children's and young people's literature in Mexico.

TWO SUMMERS

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TWO SUMMERS

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Text: Monica Beltrán Brozon

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PRESENTATION

Two Summers is a literary proposal that is part of the **Árbol** collection, which the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE, National Electoral Institute) makes available to children and teenagers with the intention of promoting citizen formation, democratic values, and equality between men and women in a simple and entertaining manner.

The Unidad Técnica de Igualdad de Género y No Discriminación (Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination Technical Unit) of the Instituto Nacional Electoral has the purpose of making human rights a fundamental focus of all the Institute's areas, as well as applying the principles of equality, gender equality, and non-discrimination to all the services we provide for the citizens, in order to contribute to people's participation in elections, without distinction, and to their participation in the decision-making processes that involve them.

Through these pages, the reader will learn the story of Rosa, a teenager that decides to work during her summer vacation and faces labor discrimination, as she is offered a lower salary just for being a woman. This enthralling story addresses a situation that is all too common for women, in addition to underlining the need to value people beyond their gender and their physical characteristics, and the importance of defending the rights and equal opportunities of all the Mexican population.

This short story is an opportunity to enjoy a literary text of great quality and do so as a community.

The story is appealing to people of all ages; however, it is designed in particular for high school students. Readers will have the chance to reflect on the importance of dialogue and respect for the rights of others, in pursuit of the common good.

The final pages of this book include the section "To Reflect and Discuss", which has the purpose of inviting children and teenagers, by themselves or accompanied by an adult that is close to them, to reflect on the importance of analyzing the origin of our societal problems, proposing viable solutions to solve conflicts, and underlining that we all have the commitment as citizens to participate in solving such conflicts.



Two Summers

When I was born, according to the three photographs that document the event, the hospital room that was my first home in this world was decorated with a few ornaments, all of which were pink. Although it happened in Mexico, where a lot of people speak Spanish, there was a balloon, also pink, that read “It’s a girl!” in silver letters.

I was a girl indeed. In another picture you can see my mother’s face, who seemed to be at a funeral and not at the birth of her third child. Surely she was tired after giving birth to the other two, whose births deserved many more pictures than mine; they even had more decorations for them, blue in the case of Tomás, my older brother, and pink in the case of Liliana. Pink was present not just in that room’s decorations, and in my first onesies, but also in my birth certificate, because my parents decided to name me like that: “Rosa”, which means pink in Spanish.

Time went by and it was evident that I was no Rosa at all. My sister should have received that name. Liliana’s dresses were always pink and the more laces and bows they had, the happier she was. Her toy collection consisted of dolls, beauty products, and a toy kitchen; and she listened to a trio of girls who sang cheesy love songs exclusively. Me, on the other hand, wore long or short pants (depending on the weather), t-shirts, and baseball caps, and my most valued possession was a bottle cap launcher that I made myself, with the help of Jorgito, my neighbor of apartment 502. I liked short hair, I hated the girl band’s cheesy songs, and I loved the rock music that Tomás listened to.

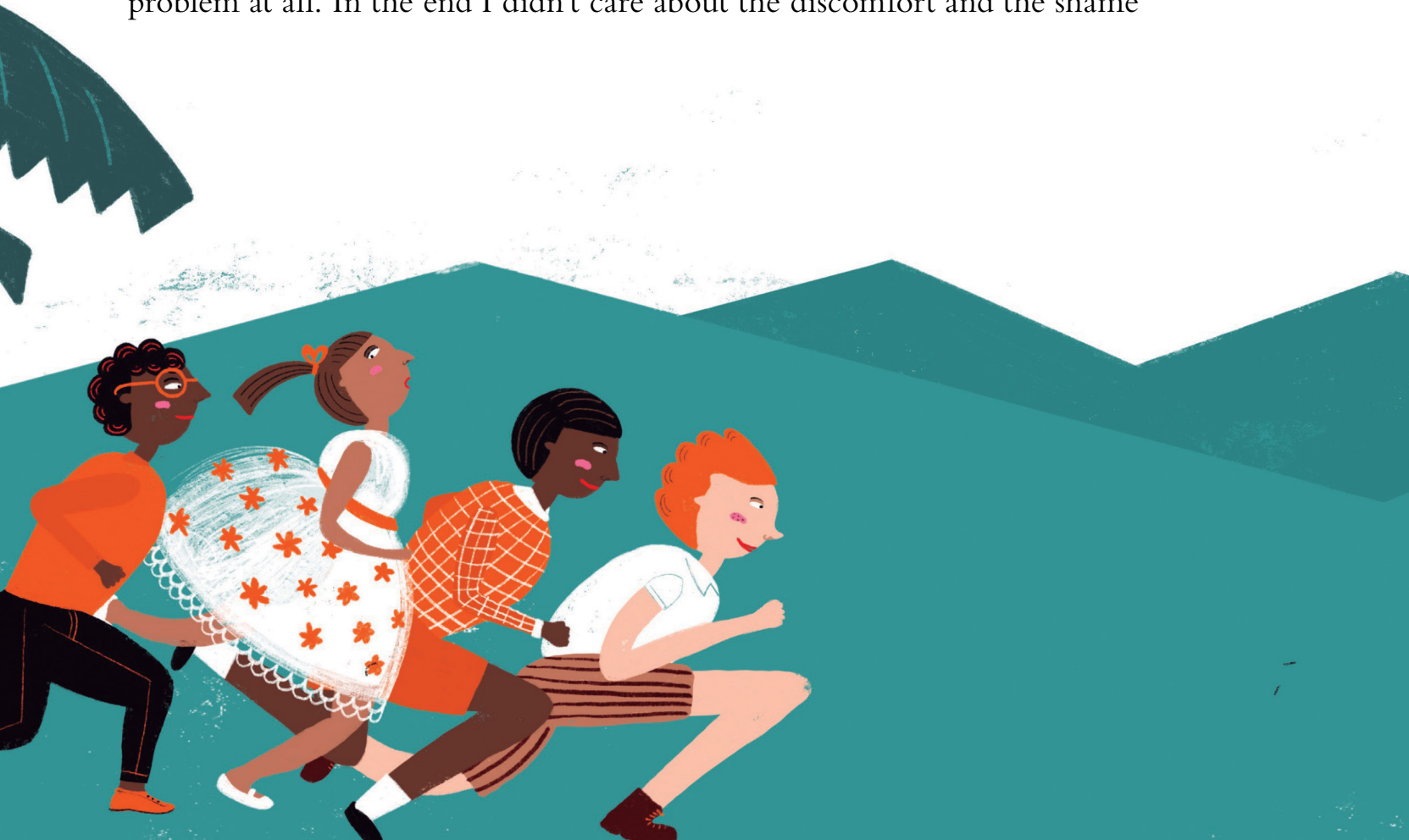
My parents found all of this very weird; one day I told them that I hated my name and I complained about such a cheesy name. Another day I asked them for a short-sleeved straitjacket as a birthday gift. They laughed a lot. I suppose I had heard that word in some conversation, and I thought it was a jacket that gave strength to whoever wore it. And



Nacimiento de Rosa 19...

I always found strength, speed, or bravery much more interesting than being vain and well-groomed.

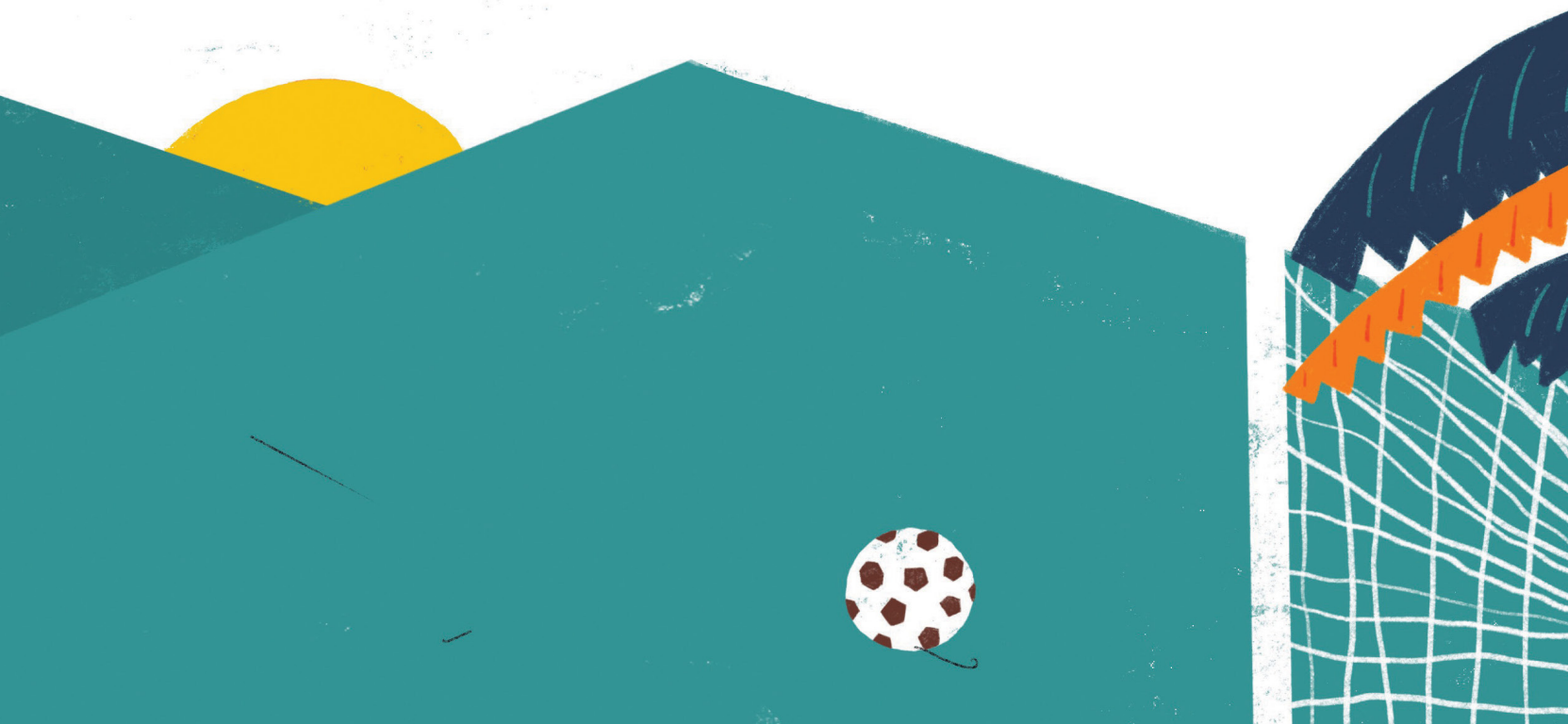
I remember the fights with my mom when we had to go to an event with a dress code. There is a picture that represents my feelings about that. It shows the whole family well-dressed and me, at five years old, wearing a fluffy white dress with small orange flowers, and a big bow at the waist, and a smaller one on my head, and my face showing the angriest expression, which contrasted with all the other faces in the picture. The truth is that in that kind of events, after all the formalities had concluded and I wanted to play, that dress was terribly uncomfortable to play in. It was uncomfortable to play the things that I liked, but for carrying a doll, it wasn't a problem at all. In the end I didn't care about the discomfort and the shame



of showing my underwear, so I would go for a ride on the slide, or I would chase a ball with the boys, while the girls — and my sister — remained seated talking or playing with Barbies, as my mom looked on in resignation.

Time did nothing to stop me from hating my name, and I promoted that, instead of Rosa, people should just call me Ro. I preferred being wild than flirtatious, and wear jeans instead of dresses, and listen to rock instead of romantic ballads.

However, like everyone else, I was hit hard by adolescence, and it came with some kind of magnet that made certain representatives of the male sex attractive, who up until then were just playmates. Because of this, even if I didn't let my hair grow, I did comb it more carefully. I still hated skirts, but I chose pants that better defined the shape of my legs. I wasn't addicted to make up, but I began to use blush and gloss on my lips.





I liked being a girl, although I still recognized that boys had more and more practical perks. In that moment I considered, for example, that it was easier for them to go to the bathroom in the countryside. Another perk was that, at home, they didn't have to wash dishes or clean the kitchen after eating.

I witnessed another one of these perks firsthand one summer, when I was too old for summer courses, but old enough to have some financial needs I had to cover. As many people of my age, I began to search for a summer job. My brother had worked in "La Jungla" several summers. It was the most famous amusement park in my city. He earned enough to pay for the movies and his girlfriend's popcorn (For me it was one of the perks of being a man: the possibility of paying for all my expenses). So, one morning, my friend Jorgito and I went to fill out and application. We had separate interviews with Mrs. Verástegui, from human resources, a sturdy woman with glasses that always made her seem in a bad mood, who told us about the job conditions. The workday ran from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, with one hour for lunch, and the salary was 175,000* Mexican pesos per week, which I thought was fantastic because I'd never had that kind of money in my pockets before, and, above all, I earned that with my own effort. I just needed to submit an authorization signed by my parents or guardians and I would be hired. Jorgito was also very enthusiastic when he came out of his interview.

"One hundred and ninety-five!" he suddenly said on our way home.

"One hundred and ninety-five what?"

"One hundred and ninety-five gummy bags, I can afford that with my first salary."

* You shouldn't think that La Jungla paid millionaire salaries, this story takes place in 1987, when Mexican pesos had three more zeros and 1,400 Mexican pesos equaled 1 dollar.

I laughed because Jorgito made such a silly math operation, but he was a big fan of gummies, and he always bought them when we went to stores; however, it seemed that he couldn't do math.

“No, you can buy one hundred and seventy-five.”

“No, they cost one thousand, for one hundred and ninety-five, it is one hundred and ninety-five thousand.”

“Are they paying you one hundred and ninety-five thousand?” Jorgito nodded, “Are you sure? They're paying me just one hundred and seventy-five.”

“No way.”

We made copies of our applications to verify that, indeed, we had different salaries. We speculated for a while about the reason for this difference. Jorgito didn't have more experience, nor did he speak an additional language, and he wasn't working more hours than me.

“It must be because you're a woman,” he concluded.

When I got home, I asked my brother if he knew anything about the issue, and he confirmed to me that women had a different salary.

“It's because girls are not supposed to do rough jobs, you know, like controlling rude people in the lines, cleaning up vomit, carrying fainting people, and stuff like that.”

From what my brother said it sounded like I had accepted a job in a war zone, but it seemed logic. And it wasn't that bad, it was just twenty gummy bags a week.

In all the summers I had lived through so far, even when I participated in several courses with a lot of activities, I had never been so tired or had had so much fun. A week before starting the park gave us, boys and girls, a course in which they taught us to set up and manage the mechanical rides. We would all rotate between the many activities that needed to be done. They would give us tickets for free meals at different restaurants. At the beginning I thought it was fantastic, but after weeks I was tired of fast food, and it was the only thing available there, so I started taking food from home.



As time went by, I found out that what my brother said about different salaries and different activities wasn't real. Gómez, the general manager, was in charge of task assignment and he changed them every day, so boys and girls had exactly the same tasks. From all the tasks that Tomás mentioned, the most frequent was cleaning vomit, and girls were less disgusted by it than boys. We were also better at handling little children, at calming them down after the ride. I had to take out the trash, control rude people in the line, clean up the rides, and much more. During those six weeks there was nothing that Jorgito did different from me, and what justified the twenty thousand extra pesos they paid him? Nothing.

There was no time to make close friendships, but near the end of the summer I was getting along with one of the girls, Diana, and I trusted her enough to tell her about the payment issue and see if we could organize some kind of protest as a group. She



seemed upset too, but told me that she worked in La Jungla just to kill time during summer, and payment was not that important to her, because her parents gave her a good allowance. That talk was the only thing that happened in my attempt at collective protest.

Anyway, at the end of the summer the balance was positive. Time passed by really fast, I got tanned — because we spent most of the time outdoors — and I spent almost nothing, because I did not have the time to do so. I ended up with lots of savings, but not enough to buy the game console I wanted. To avoid temptation, I asked my dad to hold my money. Next summer I would have enough money to buy the game console.

“Are you really not spending any money?”

“That’s right,” I responded with determination.



Nevertheless, I was still mad about the difference in salary (and my anger increased when I realized I would be far closer to buying the game console if I earned a boy's salary). It was kind of a pebble in my shoe, and the shoe was my intention to return next summer and work again in La Jungla.

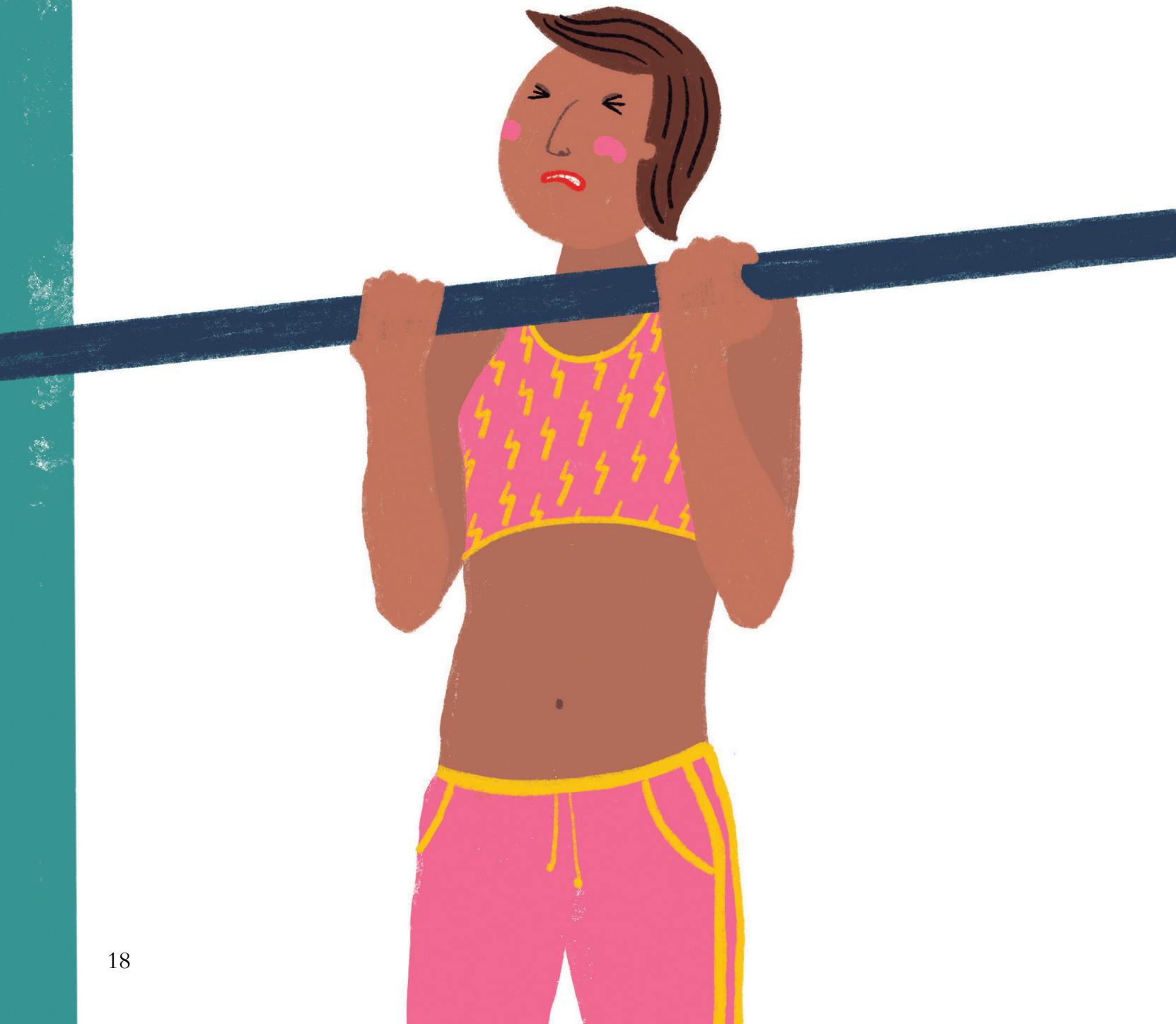
One night, with summer vacation just around the corner, during my sister's birthday party, my dad brought a projector and our childhood slides to watch and reminisce about old times while we ate cake. I confirmed that in many of the pictures that had been taken of me as a child, I could have perfectly passed as a boy. Short hair, usually messy, a t-shirt, pants, and scraped knees. Everything fit. That night I had an idea.

It wasn't very hard. Until that day I was a little upset my breasts had not grown enough, and they looked like little grapes, but in that moment I was thankful. First, I bought a couple of thick bandage rolls to hide them, and later I got a haircut, because I had let my hair grow, more out of laziness than anything else. All the other stuff I needed was already in my closet.

A few days before I went to my interview I practiced my deep voice, which was the most difficult thing, because it sounded fake. I also got, for strategic and entertainment purposes, a couple of movies in which the characters did what I was about to do: *Victor Victoria* and *Tootsie*. I watched some T.V shows with very masculine male characters, such as *Magnum* and *The Hulk* — who was very strong when he became green — and I tried to imitate their voice and gestures (although I was really imitating their dubbing actors, because at that time all the series were dubbed). I also bought a tube that I installed in my doorframe to do pull-ups.

I did not have to explain anything at home, because the outfit that I used to fill my application wasn't strange at all. I was in a hurry when I asked my parents to sign the permit, so they didn't have time to read the name on the permit, which was not their daughter Rosa, but an inexistent son named David Portilla Zepeda.





Jorgito wasn't surprised when he saw me either, he was also used to that kind of clothing, but he became surprised when I greeted him with my supe deep voice, and I started walking with Mr. Magnum's strut.

"What's going on with you, Rous?"

"No, no, n, no, from this moment forward, and until further notice, you must call me David or bro, as you wish."

"Wow!" He exclaimed in surprise and amusement, "You sound like a guy."

"Of course, and I'm earning your same salary. It's only fair."

"So, are you going to pretend you're a guy while you're in La Jungla? Six weeks?"

"As long as it takes," I said, and we both laughed.

When I delivered the application and my parents' permission, Mrs. Verástegui from Human Resources kept watching me, or so I thought, longer than was necessary.

"You seem very familiar, and also your name," she said, looking at my face and the papers. I got nervous, but I thought fast.

"Eeeeh, that's because my siblings have worked here for a few summers. My brother Tomás did it several times, and my twin sister Rosa came just last year, but now she's gone camping."

She seemed satisfied with my answer, and received my application, where she wrote the amount of 195,000 Mexican pesos; I had become my own twin brother.



Honestly, my acting was very good. Gómez was the only one who looked at me with suspicion, until I said my sister Rosa had sent her regards after she had worked there last summer.

Just as I thought, the quantity and variety of work that I did as David was practically the same as I did working as Rosa. I felt very comfortable with my costume, and everything was going well, until, as usual, that inconvenient and disrespectful little bug called Cupid appeared on scene to start causing trouble. The problem was Luis Alberto, a boy with a soap opera name who supervised the skill play area and who had the biggest, most expressive eyes and the most toned arms I had ever seen in my life. Of course, I always tried to keep a safe distance, but it was drastically and necessarily shortened the day that Gómez told me to pick up a marble sack that was going to be replaced with plastic balls, because it was too heavy. Well, even despite the pull-ups I did every morning, I didn't have the strength to lift the sack and put it in the wheelbarrow. I thought it was the first task I was unable to perform







BOLETOS RUEDA DE
LA FORTUNA

NIÑO 45,000
ADULTOS 7,000

because I was girl, but I also knew that Jorgito, for example, could not have done it either. Luis Alberto noticed I was having trouble with the task and came closer.

“Do you need any help?” he asked. I kept watching him with my mouth open, and I was so nervous I could not talk with my masculine voice, so I just nodded.

He bent over and his shirt stuck to his back muscles, his biceps contracted when he lifted the sack, and I was almost drooling. Luis Alberto left the sack in the wheelbarrow, and I was slow to stop staring at him as if he was candy.



“What?” he said.

“About what?” I said ‘about’ as Rosa, and ‘what’ as David.

“Can you?” he asked, talking about lifting the wheelbarrow. I approached and verified that I could. Although I wanted to fake it and say no, just because I wanted him to go with me so I could keep watching him while we walked together, sanity prevailed. But I couldn't help but turn around a couple of times and smile at him before I went. The second time I could notice an awkward look in his face.

★

The following days I found out that the saying “money moves the world” was not true in my case. I was so attracted to Luis Alberto that it was more important to me than the twenty thousand Mexican pesos a week; I didn't mind risking that extra salary just to see him. I used any pretext to be closer to the skill games and talk to him when I had the chance (there was also a perk: people didn't puke there). I asked Jorgito to observe some of our conversations to see if I was too obvious, and he, who was very honest, told me it was. So, I put more effort in my interpretation of



David, but I didn't try to keep distance between us. On the contrary, I insisted on strengthening our friendship and Luis Alberto seemed to give in. Until one day, when we were eating with other fellow workers, he asked me for water when I got up to get some. When I came back, I leaned to put his glass in front of him on the table, and for some reason, I put my hands on his shoulders as if I was about to give a short massage, but it didn't happen, because Luis Alberto got up violently and left the table, leaving his water and his burritos half eaten. There was an awkward silence, and everyone was looking at me like they were waiting for an explanation, minus Jorgito, who looked at me as if to say, "you messed up". I took my burritos and my water, and I went to a bench far away from the cafeteria.

That afternoon, before heading home, as I was going to the locker to pick up my things, I felt a presence behind me. My knees almost buckled when I saw Luis Alberto standing there, and my face automatically turned flirtatious.



“Can you let us talk alone for a minute?” he asked Jorgito, who looked frustrated for not being able to hear the potential bombshell. He gave me a weird look and went away.

I swallowed saliva. Luis Alberto took a few nervous steps around a chair.

“Look, I don’t know, truly,” he said, his voice also sounded nervous, “I don’t judge, and I like you, but to tell the truth, well... I don’t know, and I don’t judge,” he said again, “but it’s not my thing, ok? And I want it to be clear...”

“Do you like me?” I asked excitedly as Rosa, not David.

He opened his eyes in surprise.

“Well, yeah, but what I want to tell you is that I don’t... I really don’t...”

His explanation was interrupted by my happy dance. He just kept looking at me, confused.

So, I asked him to take a seat, and I told him the whole truth. Luis Alberto had his eyes wide open, and sprinkled in a laugh or two.

“Close call!” he said in relief after I finished my confession, and I was the one who saw him with questioning eyes. “The thing is, I also felt like... and well, I guess not, right?”





Even if he said nothing, I understood perfectly what he wanted to say, and that made me very happy. Luis Alberto promised to keep my secret and he invited me for dinner after work. That same night we became boyfriend and girlfriend.

But as another popular saying goes, “Wealth and love cannot be hidden,” and after just a couple of weeks Jorgito told me that the whole park had already heard the rumor about us.

“Does that mean that I’ve been discovered?” I asked alarmed.

“Ahmm... no.”

“But, if I haven’t been discovered...,” it didn’t take long for me to understand the scope of the rumor, “oh...”

That night, over pizza, I told Luis Alberto what Jorgito had told me. Of course, like me, as the rumor’s main character, he had no idea, although he had noticed some suspicious looks from staff members. His attitude went from surprise to blushing, but he didn’t go along with my giggles to play down the situation. He didn’t think it was funny at all.

“Don’t worry,” I said. “On Friday during our meeting, when everyone arrives, I’ll tell the truth.”

“Are you sure? What about your twenty thousand pesos? Your game console?”

“Well, it doesn’t matter,” I answered with sad resignation.

The next few days were awkward. During our workday in La Jungla we practically didn’t speak to each other, and outside of work there was an uncomfortable tension between us. On Friday, when I was going to the meeting room, determined to confess everything, Luis Alberto got a hold of me.

“You know what?” he said after sighing deeply. “Don’t do it. I don’t want you to say anything. You do a lot of work here, the same as me, and everyone who works here. It isn’t fair that you lose those twenty thousand pesos.”

Now it was my turn to ask:

“Are you sure?”

“Pretty sure,” he said, and then added, with some extra drama, “I don’t care what people think. I love you and I will always support you.”

I hugged him right there, in the middle of the park and one hundred meters away from the meeting room. After a second, we separated.

“Don’t think that’s just that, I also want to play with your game console.”

So, we talked about the usual stuff in the meeting, and that night I came home thinking that Luis Alberto was the best boyfriend I could have, and that I loved him so much. This thought didn’t change, but other, less optimistic thoughts, took its place after a while. He was willing to put up with the stigma of being gay (that still exists, but in the 80s it was far worse), just to protect me, and I had to pretend I was of the opposite sex to get a fair salary, one that was equivalent to the value of my work. Nothing made sense.

★

The following days, although Luis Alberto and I tried to be discreet, Jorgito told me that the rumor was still going around. While I did my job, I started to observe what my coworker did, men and women, and I wrote everything in a notebook.

Laura programmed the mechanical games. Horacio too.

Federico cleaned up vomit. Sara too.

Marcia handled the tickets. Ernesto too.

José emptied the garbage cans in the food court. So did Nayeli. Both cleaned the tables and swept.

So, I made a list of the different tasks we performed at the park. The only task that women didn’t do was security, but that was an external hire. I asked Jorgito to help me divide the tasks in a way that could be understood as boy’s tasks and girl’s tasks.



I also asked some girls. Some of them didn't even know they earned less than boys. Other did know, and they didn't like it, but they chalked it up as the way it was and that nothing could be done. All the girls seemed surprised that David and Jorgito were so worried about this difference, because they were men, and they earned more. In fact, my original plan was to reveal my identity to them, but both Jorgito and Luis Alberto thought that I could get into trouble, and it was better if I did it at the end of the summer, and just to our co-workers. So Jorgito and I told them it was just solidarity.

Unlike Diana, none of the girls had a father that gave them good allowances, and although all of them were working there because they thought it was fun, they could really use those twenty thousand pesos. Nayeli and Claudia, who until that day didn't know about the salary difference, went to talk with Mrs. Verástegui at Human Resources, and they called a meeting in the women's restrooms to tell them about the result.

I couldn't be there for obvious reasons, but they told me that Mrs. Verástegui's argument was the same that Tomás told me last year: because women couldn't do everything, and there was a lot of "heavy" work that only boys could do, and equal pay wasn't fair to boys. I gave them the list that Jorgito and I made, which evidenced that Mrs. Verástegui's statements were untrue. We promised we would think of something, and we agreed to meet on Monday, our day off. We met at noon in a mall near the park.

"My mom says that what people should do in these cases is a strike," Sara said.

"Yeah, a strike!" said several girls, supporting the proposal.

“But the idea would be to stop doing the tasks that, according to them, girls can’t do,” Nayeli said.

“The thing is that we can do everything!” said Claudia angrily.

And she was right. Claudia, for example, was stronger and bigger than Jorgito, while Luis Alberto was able to carry the sack of marbles that I was couldn’t carry.

“I mean,” I reflected, “it’s not about sex, but about what it means to be a woman, according to them.”

“Weak and easy to scare,” Sara said.

“Whiny and fickle,” Laura continued.

“Well, fickle...,” Jorgito looked at me, “we have to admit that you wouldn’t be able to do many of the tasks if, for example, you were dressed like your sister dresses when she goes out with her friends.”

This time it was Jorgito who hit the nail on the head.





The next day all the girls went to the park dressed differently, not exactly like my sister, but oozing femininity nonetheless. All of them wore skirts of different lengths, heeled shoes instead of sneakers, and Sara was wearing pantyhose. Gómez looked at them with a mix of discomfort and confusion.

“What’s wrong with you? Why are you dressed like that?”

“Because we are women,” Nayeli answered.

“Yeah, I know, but you can’t do your job dressed like that.”

“Exactly,” Sara said. “Today we’re only doing the tasks that these outfits allow us to do. It’s only fair.”

“How is it fair?” Gómez’s reddened face resembled a crock pot. “What are you talking about?”

“We earn less than boys, because, according to you, we can’t do the same tasks,” Claudia clarified. “Well, as of today we really can’t!”

Gómez had to distribute them at the ticket booth, the skill game area, and the food court, but then boys—me included—had to do everything else; we even had to manage tasks for which they had more experience, like unbolting the bars of the Canoe, which required a trick that only Claudia knew how to do. That morning, the whole park operation was complicated because we the boys, fake or not, weren’t enough to perform all the tasks.

In the middle of the workday, we heard Mrs. Verástegui from Human Resources voice over the loudspeakers asking the female collaborators to go to her office before they left.

Several of us went, and as usual, gossip beckons gossip, and nearly the entire staff witnessed the conflict outside Human Resources. We thought, of course, that they had considered their mistake and were about to announce its correction. We were wrong.

“Come tomorrow, if you are not dressed properly for your tasks you will be fired.” Verástegui threatened.

There was general and awkward whispering, and then we heard Sara’s voice.

“We have a contract,” she said. “Sara already had asked her uncle, who was a lawyer, and in the contract there’s no specification about the way we dress, it’s the same salary. The only thing that prevents us from doing the same tasks than boys do is an outfit like the one we brought today.”

“But the rest of the time we do the same tasks,” Nayeli shouted. “You have seen that, Gómez, tell her!”

Gómez didn’t nod, but he didn’t deny it either. He just seemed thoughtful.

“The contract also says...” Verástegui tried to reply, but I interrupted her shouting.

“If you fire my female coworkers, I will go too.”



“All right! Portilla, right?” she said, and she was about to write something in her notebook (I suppose it was my name).

“I’ll go too,” said Luis Alberto, who was raising his hand.

Then Federico, Juan and Horacio also said “me too”, until one by one, all boys raised their hands while girls shouted:

“We do the same work, pay us the same, jerk!”

The slogan was the work of Jorgito and myself, and we were not exactly poets and could not think of anything else that rhymed well and had the same strength.

Verástegui and Gómez exchanged a confused glance, exchanged a few phrases in their ears, and Gómez made gestures to diminish the scandal, which, after a few minutes, was over.





“We will address your petition with management,” Verástegui said in a calmer voice. “But, please, come tomorrow dressed properly.”

The next day all the girls, several boys, and me, came earlier and gathered outside the Human Resources office. All the girls were dressed the same way than the day before (but also brought handbags) and Gómez looked at them as he shook his head.

“Didn’t Mrs. Verástegui ask you very politely to dress properly?”

“Yeah, we also asked very politely for equal pay,” Sara said.

“Well, the jerk thing wasn’t very polite,” whispered Jorgito to me, “maybe we should have chosen another word.”

And he was thinking about that, while the girls started to shout the original slogan. Gómez came and went from the office, where we could see Verástegui talking on the phone and looking at her watch. The park was about to open.

RECURSOS HUMANOS





“Ok, gentlemen, please go to your posts,” she asked.

“Not until we have an answer,” Jorgito shouted.

People started gathering around the park’s entrance. Gómez was trying to get us to lower the volume of our slogan (of course I had already joined the choir). He nervously watched the office, the entrance—where people were starting to complain because they couldn’t enter—and us. Until, almost angry, he went to the office again. From outside we watched how Verástegui hung up the phone and got up determined to face us. We remained silent.

“I already talked to the authorities,” she said, in a very serious tone, “and I must tell you that...”

She paused for a moment. She looked at us and then at the people gathered in the entrance.

“They consider that your demands are valid!” she shouted. “Starting this week, girls will have the same salary than boys.”

We burst into cheers. The girls went to the bathroom to change their dresses for the clothes they had in their backpacks, and I ran to embrace Luis Alberto, who lifted me in his arms to celebrate our victory with a kiss.

I didn’t see it, of course, because I was busy kissing him. But they told me later. I know that if that kiss had occurred in the present, they would have recorded Mrs. Verástegui’s expression with their cellphones, and her facial collapse would have gone viral immediately.

Although, you never know. I’d like to think that nowadays no one would have reacted like that.

TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS



Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls, Adolescents, and Women

Two Summers allows readers to appreciate the importance of recognizing and protecting the rights of girls, teenagers, and women, to transform behavioral patterns and redefine gender relations. Supporting their empowerment is to strengthen our knowledge and capacity for more boys, girls, teenagers, and women to have freedom, information and support to make decisions about their own life, and acting accordingly to make them real.

Reflection and dialogue can become byproducts of reading this short and accessible story, and will allow readers to acquire knowledge, recognize skills, develop competences, innovate, and have the self-confidence to become agents of change in the context of progress toward gender equality.

These last pages outline the most important concepts of the story, so readers can identify them in different moments throughout the narration.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, and promoting it is essential for a healthier and more participatory society. Different kinds of discrimination that boys, girls, and teenagers experience change according to their place of residence, social rules, and economical condition.

Gender inequality is present at all levels: in personal, family, and social relationships, but also in



institutions and public policies, and it affects not just women and girls, but also men and boys.

In this story, when Rosa reaches adolescence, she decides to look for a job to satisfy some of her needs. Along with his neighbor Jorgito, and with the authorization from her parents, she applies to work at “La Jungla”, an amusement park, where they would have the same tasks. However, she is offered a lower salary, just because she is a woman. As the days go by Rosa proves that women have different but no lesser skills than boys, and, in spite of this, they are not valued as much as boys.

Based on Article 1 of the Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (Political Constitution of the United Mexican States), the Ley Federal para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación (Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination) sets forth the act of establishing differences in compensation, benefits, and working conditions for equal jobs as a form of discrimination.



A year later, Rosa decides to apply for a job at the same amusement park where she had worked the previous summer. However, convinced that she had been treated unfairly, she decides to take matters into her own hands and disguises herself as a boy in order to achieve equal pay.

National policy on gender equality defines the actions to be taken to achieve equality between women and men in all areas of life, and promotes the elimination of stereotypes based on sex.

Actually, Rosa didn't have to use that strategy, looking like a boy, to have a fair treatment, defend her dignity, and have her skills valued. If this story had happened in the present, and Rosa would have known the law, she could have defended herself differently.

Women, men, girls, and boys should enjoy the same equal rights, resources, opportunities, and protections. The historical inequalities that women have faced in this regard continue to have intergenerational impacts that affect current childhood. This complicates the progress made in achieving conditions of equality and in building new social relationships and healthy and just environments for children and adolescents.



This story becomes complicated when Rosa falls in love with Luis Alberto, a boy who works at the same place and whom she meets the second summer. After causing confusion with her disguise, he discovers her true identity, understands her reasons, and shows solidarity by supporting her in obtaining fair wages.

The empowerment of girls, teenagers, and women is fundamental to put an end to the cycle of discrimination and violence.

The events that unfold result not only in Rosa empowering herself and advocating for equal treatment, but also inspiring other girls like her to demand not to be seen as weak or inferior, and to claim the same rights as boys.

If you think that some of the terms in this book are used improperly, we encourage you to look up dictionaries and find different meanings, make a list, and find synonyms and antonyms for each one of them.

Something fundamental in this story is the support of boys: in any circumstance, we can only achieve gender equality together, men and women, with understanding, solidarity, and empathy, in pursuit of a more just society for all Mexicans, regardless of age or social status.





TWO SUMMERS

The Bembo Std font family was used.



MARIANA VILLANUEVA was born in Mexico City. She holds a bachelor's degree in Design from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, UNAM. She has a master's degree in Illustration from EINA in Barcelona, and one from ESAT in Valencia. Won second place in the Sharjah Exhibition for Children in the United Arab Emirates States, third place in the XXII Catalog of Illustrators (FILIJ), and mention in the Tercer Catálogo Iberoamericano de Ilustración. She has published various books in recent years.



Rosa is a teenager who decides to work on her vacation; however, she does not receive the same treatment or remuneration as men. In addition to finding love, she discovers the solidarity that young people can have in situations like the one she faces.

This volume is part of the **Árbol** collection, whose objective is to contribute to the civic culture of children and adolescents through attractive stories that motivate reflection and active participation in the society, particularly concerning gender equality and non-discrimination.