

Sold: family and uncle husband

Family



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In Patricia McCormick's non-fiction novel, *Sold*, thirteen year old Lakshmi is sold into sexual slavery by her stepfather. She believes she is going to work in the city, as the breadwinner, but her step-father is in it for the money and revenge of the eldest son he doesn't have. Lakshmi's biggest priorities are her mother and brother, and her stepfather could care less about her or the family, he has an addiction to gambling. Instead of working hard and paying for a tin roof, he gambles his money away, and sells his step daughter into slavery. If Lakshmi's stepfather had not met the city woman at the festival, Lakshmi wouldn't have been sold, she wouldn't have met "uncle husband or Auntie" and she wouldn't have left her mother, and baby brother behind. Lakshmi's friend Gita worked in the city and sent her family money, she was much respected. Lakshmi looked up to Gita and hoped to one day leave the hill side, and become the breadwinner of her family to replace the job of her stepfather. Lakshmi's stepfather's greed and gambling problem is what led to her being sold, even though she is only thirteen years old. Her step father is willing to negotiate and put a price on her, "one thousand rupees" he says, as the city woman says "she has no hips, and she's plain as porridge. I'll give you 500 rupees." Her stepfather settles at 800, half now and the rest after she "proves her worth". The young girl is very confused with her step father because she knows she is a hard worker when it comes to chores, she doesn't understand how her body affects the situation, while her step father knows exactly what he is doing. To him "a girl is only as good as a goat, good as long as she gives you milk and butter. But not worth crying over when it's time to make a stew." Lakshmi's step father is a horrid terrible person, but in their culture, a boy is "more valuable" than a girl. If Lakshmi's stepfather wouldn't have been such a lazy asset to the family they wouldn't

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have a financial problem and Lakshmi would be safe and pure at home. Lakshmi looked up to her mother in the most respected way; she wanted to provide a new roof for her beloved mother and food for her brother, which led to her being sold. She thought she was going to be like Gita and become important to her family as a provider. To Lakshmi, her mother is her idol, "and her slender back, which bears our troubles—and all our hopes—is more beautiful still." Lakshmi believes her mother, Ama, is beautiful for being strong and not just because of the way she looks. She wants to be strong for her mother; she wants to help her. Right before Lakshmi leaves she says, "Tell Ama I will make her proud, tell her I will be back for the next festival season." The innocent young girl doesn't understand that she won't be back. She may not ever return, that is because of auntie and uncle. After Lakshmi leaves the hill side with Auntie they travel very far and the young girl is dropped off with a man she calls "Uncle". He is smuggling her across the border into India. She is told to address him as "husband" and that he is going to protect her from the border men. He takes advantage of her innocence, "The border is a dangerous place, and there are bad men there, men with guns, men who might harm you or take you away from me and Auntie." Lakshmi believes she is being taken to her new house to become a servant and Uncle Husband's priority is taking her there safely. A boarder man asks Lakshmi, "is this your husband?" only knowing to address him as husband and not the formal meaning. After crossing the border safely, Lakshmi and Uncle Husband board a commuter train. After Lakshmi is forced to publicly use the privy she sees a girl being tormented by a cluster of men, they are yelling at her and throwing things at her. When Lakshmi asks Uncle why, he responds "That's what she gets... for trying to run away from her

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husband. " Lakshmi quickly learns what will happen if she tries to run, but she won't because she doesn't understand. Uncle Husband and Lakshmi soon arrive at a place called " The Happiness House", where Lakshmi is sold to a woman called " Mumtaz" for 10, 000 rupees. The next day Lakshmi is told to say she is 12 years old and has make up put on. Mumtaz pulls Lakshmi into a room with a strange man; she flings her on the bed as the man tries to rape her. Mumtaz says " I bought you for 10, 000 rupees; you are to pay me off. You will take men to your room and do whatever they as of you. " Lakshmi refuses and is whipped for several days, resulting in her strike Mumtaz takes away all food and water. The young girl is used to not eating, so she can fight the hunger for several days. She has the strength of her mother. Lakshmi is eventually drugged and is rapped by several men. As days past Lakshmi loses track of time, she forgets the smell of the hill side. Mumtaz ruined Lakshmi's purity and sense of being. She is beginning to forget where she came from because every day is a reminder of what her step father has done. Lakshmi gave up her kind life of love, for her mother and baby brother. She now has to sell her body to pay off double the debt of what she was bought. If Lakshmi's stepfather wouldn't have had such a gambling problem, or if Auntie wouldn't have been at the festival, Lakshmi would still be at home playing on the hillside with Gita and Tali.