

## LARA CASTEL AT GYA CONSULTORES<sup>1</sup>

Lara could not take anymore. It was early March and for several weeks she had been feeling a deep sense of distress. Although only two months had passed since she joined her new company, a Human Resources consultancy firm in Badajoz<sup>2</sup>, she had a strong feeling it was not the job she wanted to do. However, she was unsure what to do. Would it be too rash to inform her superiors how she felt? Should she wait a little longer and make sure she really did not like the job? What would she do if she became jobless? Lara had just turned 26 and had graduated a few months earlier with a degree in Economics. She had also shown immense fortitude and had fought hard for her future. But now she was not sure how to best approach her recently-begun professional career.

It had been a tough day. She had got up very early to accompany her boss to a meeting in Cáceres<sup>3</sup>. There, things had not gone as they had planned. When she returned to the office in the afternoon, she had to deal with many problems. Although she knew she had to resolve them immediately, all she wanted was to get home as soon as possible and switch off. But when she eventually thought she was going to be able to go home, she was summoned to a last-minute meeting that would change her professional future.

### FIGHTING FOR A DREAM

Since she was a child, Lara had imagined what her professional life would be like. She had always dreamt of being successful in her job. She saw herself working for a large company that would allow her to travel abroad. She also wanted a job of recognized prestige, holding a post of great responsibility.

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<sup>2</sup> Badajoz is a city located in Extremadura, an Autonomous Community of Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Cáceres is a city located in Extremadura, an Autonomous Community of Spain

Although she was born in Santander<sup>4</sup>, since the age of four Lara had lived in a small town in the province of Jaén<sup>5</sup>. Her father worked as a town council secretary-auditor and had been transferred there.

Lara had a happy childhood, but there were certain aspects of her life that she would have changed. She had always felt out of place in the town, with her friends, in her environment, but she did not really know why. Sometimes she thought it could have been due to her parents' character, since they were from northern Spain where people are different to in Andalusia.

But she soon realized this was not the case. She really liked that character. She was a cheerful, funny and optimistic child who liked to get out and spend time with her friends. But there was something that distanced her from them. She longed to learn new things, travel to different countries and meet people from other cultures. In contrast, all her friends were interested in was finishing their studies as soon as possible and finding a job to earn a good salary without having to work too hard.

Lara had always been a good student and had obtained excellent marks. This, coupled with her strong sense of responsibility, showed that her aspirations were quite different to those of children around her.

During her last year at high school, she started thinking about what she wanted to do after she left school. She knew she wanted to study at university but had to decide which one. To study at university, she would have to leave her town and her parents would be unable to afford that expense.

Lara was passionate about journalism. She could spend hours in front of the TV watching different programs. She was also very attentive to what she saw and always liked to be very critical. But her parents were not sure whether journalism would be the right degree for her. They had also dreamed about their daughter going far and knew that to be a good journalist she would need to speak many languages and travel a lot, and they were unsure whether they would be able to finance all these things.

Lara understood this perfectly and continued to think about other fields that also interested her. At high school she liked Economics a lot and thought that would be a good degree to study.

With her parents, she decided to go to Granada<sup>6</sup> to read Economics. But she knew she would have to help her family financially. So, as soon as she arrived in the city she signed up with a hostess agency and worked regularly at different types of events.

She remembered her time at university as the best time of her life. It was hard for her because having to work at the same time meant she had less time to keep up with her

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<sup>4</sup> Santander is a city located in Cantabria, an Autonomous Community of Spain

<sup>5</sup> Jaén is a city located in Andalusia, an Autonomous Community of Spain

<sup>6</sup> Granada is a city located in Andalusia, an Autonomous Community of Spain

academic studies or to rest, but she enjoyed herself a lot. She had the chance to do many of the things she had loved since she was young girl in one of the quintessential university cities: meet lots of people, make good friends and have fun.

During her time at university she became aware of the importance of having good language skills and planned two long stays abroad.

With this in mind, she worked for a company that organized student stays abroad, for both Spanish students who came to study in Granada and students from Granada who went abroad to study English. For several years, Lara worked as a cultural guide in Granada for these groups and it was her good performance on the job that gave her the chance to opt for a scholarship to work at a theme park in Orlando for three months. At 22 she had gone with many of her friends to work at an amusement park, which helped her not only improve her English but also mature as a person. That experience confirmed her desire to work abroad or at least work in something that would give her the chance to travel.

Lara was an ambitious person with a strong desire to continually progress. She knew that applying for an ERASMUS grant could be expensive but she did not hesitate to complete all the formalities at university in order to qualify for the scholarship. If she were awarded a grant, then she would think about how to deal with the situation.

She received a grant to go to Brno in the Czech Republic, where she had the opportunity to leave behind a little the rigour of college life. For once, she did not have to work and she only had to pass a few subjects to obtain her degree, so she lived everything there very intensely. She made great friends to whom she felt strongly attached and enjoyed the experience enormously. She was also able to travel all around Europe, which she loved.

Something else also had a profound impact on her during her time at university: her father's serious illness. It was a severe blow for her and her family. At the same time, so many days of suffering, supporting her mother and spending sleepless nights at the hospital had made her stronger.

## **A CHANGE OF PACE**

When she finished her degree, Lara once again thought about what she wanted to do with her future. Although she had learned a lot while she was doing her degree, she felt she needed to acquire more knowledge about the world of business in which she longed to work. She wanted to pursue some type of postgraduate training and started looking at what was on offer in the market.

GYA Consultores, a small but prestigious local human resources management firm, had organized a "roadshow" to promote a new project, and Lara did not hesitate to accept the invitation to go to the hotel where it was being presented.