

The bus rumbled on the tilted streets, screeched hard on the downhills, and moaned on the ups. In front of them a woman sat with a chicken in her lap. When the bus hit a pothole, Mamá's strong arm barred Ignacio's chest and kept him from falling, but the chicken escaped under the seat. Ignacio bent his head to look at her. She returned his gaze, frantically clucking, *where is that woman taking me? I am a broody hen! My eggs need me to sit on them!*

Ignacio wanted to tell her not to worry. Except, what did he know of her fate? He did not even know his own.

He reached out to pet her ruffled feathers, but she squawked, *baaaaaack!* Hearing the chicken's distress, the overgrown tree branches from the ravine scraped against the faded blue sides of the bus, saying, *Stop! Stop! Let the chicken off. She does not wish to go!*

Where were they going? Mamá just stared ahead; her hands folded in her lap. He gripped the seat's edge, knowing that if Abuela were here, she would squeeze his hand tight as she always did on the bus when they reached the dangerous bend in the road. He wished she were with them, not fading away in the distance like the mountains on a foggy day.

His eyes traveled over Our Lady of Guadalupe on a postcard pinned to the driver's dashboard. The border of roses around her reminded him of Abuela's proverb: *No hay rosa sin espinas.*

Soon the bus turned onto the main stretch of the highway, passing a village of low thatched roofs and pumpkin patches. With the windows cracked open, Ignacio smelled exhaust and felt the constant wind whipping through his hair and fluttering the bus driver's postcard so that the roses seemed in danger of falling off the paper. Down the muddy road, they passed stocky corn fields and verdant jungle. His heart pounded so hard he feared it was trying to escape from his chest. He pressed his hand over it and whispered, "Stay."

When he glanced at Our Lady again, her postcard lips moved. "Yes, stay," she mouthed.