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Carne Viva In Postville: Stories Of Madres And Monarchs

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***Carne viva* in Postville: Stories of *Madres* and Monarchs**
Jennifer Cooley
Karen Mitchell

Introduction
Carne viva: A Tapestry of Voices Emerges from Silence and Violence
Jennifer Cooley

Carne viva are two words in Spanish that together can be translated various ways. Taken literally, they refer to live flesh, like an open wound. In this way they can allude to the slow process of recovery after a traumatic event. The words draw up images of enduring pain. In addition, they can be read to refer to fresh meat and in the context of human relations, to the image of a new conquest. They can also draw our thoughts to the context of a slaughterhouse, where working conditions involve constant contact with carcasses and blood, and the value of human life is not superior to the lives of the animals processed on the line; both cattle and humans are vehicles for profit. Finally, the words refer to human beings with vibrant lives whose stories will be told as this performance unfolds.

On May 12, 2008, approximately 900 police agents (federal, state and local authorities, helicopter pilots, and others) were on the ground in Postville, Iowa to stage what was at the time the largest workplace immigration raid in U.S. history. Given that the total population of Postville was just over 2,000, there was nearly one agent for every two Postville residents. By the end of the day, 389 workers had been detained at the Agriprocessors kosher meatpacking plant. Most detainees were herded into buses and transported to the National Cattle Congress in Waterloo, where they were caged in the very stalls that were typically reserved for cattle and hogs, and then “fast-tracked” in legal proceedings that, like the raid itself, were unique to U.S. history. Such legal proceedings have since been declared unconstitutional. Some of the detained workers, primarily women, were released by the evening of May 12. They were tagged with GPS tracking devices, given a 5-mile radius as a limit to their mobility, and told that they could not work and could not leave the delimited area, but were “free” to care for their children.

The events represented in *Carne viva* occur over the course of 5 months, from May 12, 2008 to Oct. 12, 2008. These months correspond to the sentences laid out for the majority of detained workers at Agriprocessors. These were traumatic days both in Postville and in Guatemala, in villages dotted across the Western Highlands that sent workers to the plant. The detained spouses and significant others of many Guatemalan women in Postville were the process of being deported, but the women often had no idea in what jail or even in what state prisoners were housed. During those five months family members in Guatemala would have no source of income from remittances and little or no word about the status of their loved ones and their possible return.

The large number of Guatemalan workers as a subset of those detained at Agriprocessors (297 out of 389) must draw our focus to the specific context of Guatemala, a country inscribed in centuries of struggle and ethnic violence against indigenous people that ultimately play into contemporary issues related to immigration and the global labor market.

The most appropriate words to describe the troubled history of Guatemala, and in particular the 36 years of civil war that plagued the country from 1960 to 1996 are *violence* and *silence*. The Civil War is often referred to in Guatemala as *La Violencia*. More than 200,000 people perished in the war, the vast majority of whom were indigenous Maya. Conservative estimates suggest 83% of victims were indigenous, which establishes grounds to rank this among one of the most systematic examples of genocide in recent history. In addition to massacres of Mayans and targeted killings of intellectuals, priests, social workers, union organizers, etc., this war is especially infamous for its brutality. Military forces

descended upon indigenous villages with a slash and burn policy. Family members were tortured, mutilated, immolated, raped, dismembered, etc., all before the eyes of loved ones. However, the most common reaction to this brutality was silence. The recognition and punishment of war crimes has been slow to unfold. A general sense of impunity reigns and may in fact link widespread contemporary gang violence and organized crime to Guatemala's shadowy past.

This historical information from Guatemala's recent past helps to explain, in part, how a culture of fear and silence was so easy to breed in the context of an Iowan meatpacking plant and the community that harbored its secrets for so many years before the 2008 ICE raid.

As we turn to the events unveiled in the play, it is important to note the significant numbers of women employed at the plant. Although the first workers employed at Agriprocessors were primarily men, by the year 2008 when the ICE raid occurred, some areas of the plant were staffed almost exclusively by women, the majority of whom were from Guatemala. Most of the women were of indigenous descent or grew up in K'akchiquel Mayan towns near Antigua. Limited access to education and to the formal workforce are key factors that impact Guatemalan women's migration. The women's perception of life in Postville was certainly colored by their upbringing in a war-torn, poverty-stricken country with exceptionally high rates of infant mortality and malnourishment among children. These challenges, faced by many families every day in Guatemala, are coupled with shocking rates of violent crime against women, who suffer severely limited cultural and legal protections as victims.

The women whose stories led to the creation of this play actively sought to break the silence that has enveloped their suffering for so many generations, and to create new vehicles for their self-representation. Interestingly, one of their innovations, a strong vehicle for personal expression, was the creation of traditional indigenous items and in particular woven goods. *Carne viva* highlights scenes from the lives of a few women who, in the aftermath of the Postville raid, banded together to form a cooperative that produced a wide variety of typical Guatemalan products, such as woven items, dolls, magnets, caps, scarves, aprons, toys, bags, etc. Their collaboration offered emotional and economic support during the months following the raid. In addition to these visual means of expression, the play also includes excerpts from legal testimonies that recount workplace abuses.

The performances enacted here are the visual, physical and verbal embodiment of real-life stories collected by Jennifer Cooley during 3 years of ethnographic study with Guatemalan families in and around Postville and in communities in Guatemala, but they also float freely as the stories of a collective group of people whose lives are emblematic of the challenges many migrants face in the U.S. at the start of the 21st century.

This work is dedicated to all migrants who leave their home in search of a better life.

SCENE 1: May 12, 2008. Postville, Iowa.

(Sound of helicopters begins. Sirens are heard in the background. As they crescendo, we hear agents talking on walkie-talkies. Over-exposed images of the raid appear as the lights come up on people scurrying as they rush to hide from ICE agents. Lights begin to flash on and off across stage. Workers hide as agents invade the space. Momentarily, the space is empty as sounds of the raid continue among shouts of profanity in both English and Spanish. ICE agents enter with several people in shackles. They are forced to kneel on the floor and handcuffed. They are marched out of the space. A single worker reveals herself. She was hiding under the risers in the theatre. She looks around cautiously, and runs off stage. Blackout.)

SCENE 2: May 12, 2008. Cedar Falls, Iowa. Cristina's house.

(A phone is ringing as lights come up on CRISTINA who has been interrupted at her office computer. She answers the phone.)

CRISTINA: Hello?

ALE: CRISTINA! Thank God I found you at work.

CRISTINA: You sound upset. What's wrong?

ALE: There has been a raid at the plant.

CRISTINA: An immigration raid? In Postville?

ALE: Yes, I saw it all. Oh my God! It was terrible. I'm still shaking.

CRISTINA: Are you all right?

ALE: Yes. I was released, but so many... hundreds... were taken away.

CRISTINA: Oh Ale, did anyone suspect a raid?

ALE: No, not here. The rumor this morning was that it would be in Waterloo.

CRISTINA: I heard that, too.

ALE: All the workers were asking me if there was going to be a raid and if I would tell them if I knew, and I said, "Are you serious? Of course I would tell you!"

CRISTINA: Of course you would. They know that.

ALE: So I told them I would check the news at my 9:00 break. Okay, that's fine, they said. So, at 9:00, I went into the office and looked on the internet. A news article said Immigration and Customs agents had rented the Cattle Congress grounds in Waterloo, but it didn't say anything about a raid. So, I stayed on break until about 9:30, and I went back to the plant kitchen. Then, the lady who cooks livers asked me,

WOMAN 1: Ale, is it *migración*? Seriously, I think the *migra* is here!

ALE: No, there's no problem. I just checked the internet.

WOMAN 1: *No. ¡Yo sé!* There **is** something going on here, something bad...

ALE: Let me check in the packing room.

(Ale crosses stage as if to go to the packing room when she runs into Andrés who is coming from another direction.)

ALE: Andrés, look. We have always been friends. I have helped you a lot and you have helped me. Please, tell me what's going on.

ANDRÉS: *(whispering)* The *migra* is here. Run and tell everyone that they're here. Go to the packing room. Let them know so that everyone can escape.

ALE: *(to CRISTINA on phone)* So I went and looked, but I couldn't see anything going on.

CRISTINA: Everything seemed normal?

ALE: Yes. The only thing I saw was someone hanging up his white work coat and taking off his boots. I couldn't see anything else... but then I realized the workers were quietly trying to make their escape... So, I didn't say anything. I didn't speak a word because I wasn't going to slow them down if they were getting out. I just hoped they would escape in time.

CRISTINA: You must have been terrified.

ALE: Yes, but it gets worse. I went back to my area and told the woman who boils the livers, *(to woman in scene)* "Take off your robe. Get those boots off because you can't run in them." And the woman ran off. Then I called my sister and I told her, "The *migra* has come into the plant and I don't have any i.d. on me. I don't have my passport. I have my driver's license, but my license is not proof of citizenship. I have nothing. If they pick me up I'll have to go to wherever they take me."

CRISTINA: Did you try to run?

ALE: No. I... I went back to the office and grabbed my wallet where I had my driver's license, and then I went back downstairs. When I was returning to my area, a woman I worked with called to me. She begged me,

WOMAN 2: Ale, ¡Ayúdame, por favor! Please call my husband and tell him don't go out. Don't leave the house!

ALE: And then everyone started to ask me, please, call here, call there and everyone was giving me phone numbers.

CRISTINA: They must have been so scared...

ALE: We all were...so I was getting ready to leave when an ICE agent stopped me and said

ICE 1: Stop! You can't leave.

ALE: Why not?

ICE 1: The plant is under investigation and no one can leave the premises.

ALE: I was just going to make a phone call.

ICE 1: It doesn't matter now. You'll have plenty of time to make a phone call later, but right now you can't. You stay here with the rest of the wetbacks.

ALE: Please, let me call my husband and tell him to bring my passport. I'm here legally.

ICE 1: No! Just shut up, and stay here.

CRISTINA: So what did you do?

ALE: What could I do? I stayed. They sat us down in the cafeteria and they said

ICE 2: Legal residents to the right, citizens to the left. Those without proof of status stay seated.

ALE: So, I just sat, because I couldn't prove anything. I was with the women I work with. I told them, (*moves back into scene*)

ALE: I'm going to stay here with you until they separate us. Don't forget what I am about to tell you: Your children are all alone and they don't have anyone to care for them.

WOMAN 1: Yes, you're right. I'm going to stay right here and.. I'll tell the agents about my children, all alone....

WOMAN 2: Ale, ¡vete! Try to escape! Fight to get out of here!

ALE: No, I'm not going. I can't leave you all here alone!

WOMAN 1: No! Don't stay here for us. Do it. Just go!

ALE: No, I'm not going to leave you alone.

WOMAN 2: Please, try to get out! If you really want to help us, help us this way!
¡Vete, por favor!

WOMAN 1: Go, Ale, care for our children.

(Ale moves to the part of the room where the documented people are gathered. ICE agent #1 sees her move and smirks at her. He continues to watch her every move)

ALE *(to ICE agent #2)*: I'm a citizen. Here's my driver's license. I know this doesn't prove anything, but if you want to look at any documentation for me, you'll have to take this; it's all that I have.

ICE 2: When did you become a citizen? You don't become a citizen every day... What was the date?

ALE: October 12, 2000.

ICE 2: And your husband? He works here, doesn't he? *(obviously trying to win her confidence)* Tell me the truth, and I can start the legalization process for him right now. I can help you.

ALE: My husband isn't here. He doesn't work here.

ICE 2: Hmmm, yeah right!

ALE: No, no, my husband doesn't work here!

ICE 2: Let me see your id.

ALE: Here!

ICE 2: *(to ICE #1)* Maybe she's clean. Take her ass out of here. We'll question her separately. *(ICE agent #1 roughly grabs her arm and leads her out of the plant area)*

ALE: So, the agent took me to get my things and then he took me out of the plant. When I was walking out, I was crying and many of the women were trying to console me.

WOMAN 1: Ale, don't cry. *¡No llores por favor!*

WOMAN 2: Look for our children. *!Piensa en nuestros hijos!*

WOMAN 1: Go, you go and find help for us.

MAN 1: Think of yourself, Ale, think of your husband.

MAN 2: Ale, help me please!!!

ALE: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

MAN 1: Ale, this is where it all ends... Thank you for everything. You were really good to us, and although I will never see you again, I will always remember you.

ALE: I will look for you! I will look for you and find you wherever they take you.

ALE: Then they took me out to the car and searched the whole thing.

CRISTINA: That's an illegal search!

ALE: The agents said that since it was on plant property they could search it.

CRISTINA: Yeah. I guess there was nothing you could do. So where are you now?

ALE: ... In my car. I'm going to St. Bridget's church.

CRISTINA: Good. Just stay calm.

ALE: Stay calm? How the hell am I supposed to be calm? I'm so tired of everyone telling me there's nothing I can do while people's lives are being destroyed.

CRISTINA: Do you want me to come to Postville?

ALE: No. I have to go. I'll call you later.

CRISTINA: Okay. I'm going to pick up my kids at the babysitter's. I'll talk to you later.

SCENE 3: Early July, 2008. Cedar Falls, Iowa. Della's house.

(Lights cross fade as CRISTINA's arrives at her nanny, Della's, home. Della is at the door and comes out to her garden.)

CRISTINA: How are the kids?

DELLA: Good! We've been talking a lot about butterflies today.

CRISTINA: Butterflies?

DELLA: Yes! We found a tiny white speck on a milkweed plant in the garden. See? It's a monarch egg. We took lots of pictures. I told Natalie it would hatch by the end of the week.

CRISTINA: Was she excited?

DELLA: Oh, yes. Then, Dominick found a monarch caterpillar! He wanted to catch it and take it home, but I told him the caterpillar wouldn't become a butterfly if he did that.

CRISTINA: Did that satisfy him?

DELLA: Well, not until I explained that this butterfly had to become an adult because it was a 4th-generation butterfly, and that makes it special.

CRISTINA: A 4th-generation? What's that, Della?

DELLA: The fourth generation is born this time of year and is the one that migrates south. They return home to overwinter, to gain strength and to mate. They will return to Iowa next summer, to lay their eggs in the north, but they'll never see their offspring flourish. They just die, exhausted from the trip north.

CRISTINA: Oh Della, I think it's great that the kids are learning so much about butterflies. Be sure to send me the pictures you take. The garden is so beautiful!

DELLA: I want my garden to be a butterfly sanctuary...a safe space where monarchs can nurture their offspring.

CRISTINA: Well, if you are as good with butterflies as you are with my children, those butterflies will be fine. Where are the kids?

DELLA: Inside drawing butterfly pictures. Come see. *(They exit.)*

SCENE 4: July 27, 2008. On the street in Postville, Iowa.

CRISTINA: Hi! We made it! I had some trouble loading up the kids. Sorry we're late.

ALE: I'm glad you could come. Here! Take this sign.

CRISTINA: What? I'm just here to see what it's like. I don't think I'm ready for any marching or anything... But, there must be more than a thousand people here. What's this all about?

ALE: Read the signs, CRISTINA. There are people here from all over: Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa. There are even reporters from the *BBC* and the *New York Times*. This is about justice. It's about broken families and workers, some of them children, who suffered abuse at the plant. Look, that's Congressman Joe Baca.

CRISTINA: A congressman, here in Postville?

ALE: Yes. He said the way the detained workers were prosecuted at the Cattle Congress in Waterloo was a "kangaroo court!" There's Luis Gutierrez.

CRISTINA: Who is he?

ALE: He's a congressman from Illinois. He's proposing comprehensive immigration reform. There are priests, rabbis, pastors, farmers, school teachers, union organizers, children left without parents. Everyone has something to protest!

CRISTINA: This is a circus! There are so many signs. Why did they all come?

ALE: They're fed up! Families are torn apart. People are unemployed. Businesses are closed. This is like Postville's 9/11. There's a before and an after May 12th. Postville will never be the same. This rally is about comprehensive immigration reform... This is what democracy looks like!

CRISTINA: Are there any anti-immigrant protestors? You know, the media coverage tends to spotlight all the evils of immigration...

ALE: There are a few... maybe about a dozen. They're over on Main Street trying to catch the reporters' eyes. But today the numbers are on our side. More than 1000 supporters are here!

CRISTINA: Are the women you told me about here? The ones with the GPS ankle monitors they have to keep on all the time?

ALE: They're all here. They can't work, and they can't leave, but they can protest! Postville is right in their 5-mile radius. They just have to make sure they're charged up for the day.

CRISTINA: What do you mean?

ALE: They can't remove the anklets, but they have to charge them every day. They plug themselves into the wall.... while they're watching their children (*sarcastically to show how ridiculous this is*).

CRISTINA: How can they do it? How do they support themselves? Their families?

ALE: This is a remarkable community, CRISTINA. There is a very strong network of support between the churches and the residents and everyone else...but there is so much need...

CRISTINA: I see. Now I'm starting to understand why you're so busy. What can I do? I don't live here...

ALE: You speak Spanish, right? Why don't you come with me to meet some of the women? Come hear their stories. Then you'll know what to do. You'll see.

CRISTINA: Right now?

ALE: Sure!

(Ale approaches RAQUEL, Aurora and Esperanza.)

RAQUEL: Ale, *aquí estamos*. Do you like my sign?

ALE: I love it, Raquel! Hello, Esperanza, Aurora; *¿Qué tal todas?* I want you to meet a friend of mine. This is CRISTINA. She is a professor at the university.

CRISTINA: *Encantada*. Ale has been telling me about Postville... about all the difficulties here since the raid. How are you all doing?

RAQUEL: We're surviving. *Aquí estamos, aguantando*.

ESPERANZA: At least we have a roof over our heads, *gracias a Dios*.

AURORA: And all because of you, Esperanza.

CRISTINA: What do you mean, Aurora?

AURORA: After the raid I had no place to live. My husband was detained. I was pregnant, and alone and then, I was thrown out of my apartment.

CRISTINA: That's horrible!

AURORA: Esperanza and José, they invited me to move in with them....

CRISTINA: Esperanza, were you at the plant the day of the raid?

ESPERANZA: No. It was supposed to be my first day of work at a new job at the *huevera*, packaging eggs. I had been laid-off at Agriprocessors for just 2 weeks -- Something to do with my social security number not matching... Anyway, the day of the raid I heard a helicopter overhead, and then the owner of the apartment I rent called and told me not to go out because *la migración* had gone into the plant and rounded up a lot of people. They took my brother.

ALE: He was one of the first to be deported...

CRISTINA: I'm so sorry...

ESPERANZA: I cried a long time. I was so sad to see my niece and nephew without a father, and my sister-in-law (*indicating Raquel*) with an ankle bracelet.

CRISTINA: Raquel, were you at work that day?

RAQUEL: Yes. I was on the chicken line. When the ICE agents came into the area, we were all shocked. I was with my husband. (*She begins to re-enact the events.*) He told me,

ANGEL: *Yo te quiero. Pase lo que pase yo te quiero y siempre te voy a querer.*

RAQUEL: I didn't think of taking anything with me. (*doing action as she narrates*) I ripped my gloves off and threw my knife to the ground. (*Angel is miming taking air vent off.*) My husband tried to rip the filter off the front of an air duct to help me hide. Suddenly, a piece of metal hit him above the eye. (*Angel gasps as he is hit.*)

He was bleeding everywhere. He had a white bandana. *(miming action)* I used it to clean his wound. I went to hide in the air duct, and he went off to some other part of the plant. *(ICE agents enter and begin search.)*

ICE AGENT 3: Spread out. Keep your guns ready. They could be hiding anywhere and they may be dangerous! Any sign of them over there?

ICE AGENT 2: No, it's clear over here.

(At first they can't locate anyone, but then they notice the air duct).

ICE AGENT 3: Help me with this...

(Agents grab Raquel)

RAQUEL: Please, don't arrest me! My children!

ICE AGENT 2: You'll be sorry you tried to hide. Just wait...

(Hearing this threat, Ángel comes out from hiding to help her.)

ÁNGEL: ¡Raquel!

ICE AGENT 2: Grab him!!!! *(He surrenders with his head down.)*

RAQUEL: I remember looking at his face as they handcuffed us.

ÁNGEL: *No te preocupes. Yo te quiero, Raquel.*

RAQUEL: I tried to memorize his face. I didn't know when I would see it again. *(She watches as agents lead her husband from the space.)*

ÁNGEL: *Allí cuidás a nuestros hijos. Tenés que ser fuerte.*

RAQUEL: Now, all I have is a handkerchief with his blood on it. *(long pause. Esperanza is weeping. CRISTINA and Aurora are silent.)* After the raid I was released with an ankle bracelet so the government can track me.

CRISTINA: So, then what? Did ICE send you to jail that day? Or what?

RAQUEL: I was sent from one area of the plant to another. They wanted to question me and they kept moving me around. Then, finally, around 8:00 at night they sent me home. I walked in and I was all alone. I was sort of paralyzed, numb... My kids were gone. I didn't know where they were. My husband was gone... I didn't know

where he was. I had seen the buses at the plant, but I didn't know where they were taking him.

ALE: He was on his way to the Cattle Congress in Waterloo, but we didn't know that then.

RAQUEL: I didn't know what I would do without a job, and without Ángel. But then I realized I had to be with my children. I started calling around and discovered they were at the church. I went to pick them up at St. Bridget's.

CRISTINA: And when you finally got back home?

RAQUEL: I was so sad... I just kept crying. I couldn't get out of bed for days. I couldn't watch my kids or clean my house. The children were watching TV and saw images of their father in shackles and chains. My son asked, "What crimes has he committed? Is our dad a murderer or something?" My daughter was silent. She did not speak for 2 weeks. I tried to be the strong one but it was very hard. My son said he was going to be the man of the family and take care of us. He was 12.

CRISTINA: He was so young! But he is a good son.

RAQUEL: Sí. Es un buen muchacho.

CRISTINA: How did you deal with all this? Were you traumatized?

RAQUEL: I had no husband, no job, no money even to buy my children something to drink, or shoes for their feet. Finally, I lifted myself out of depression. I got out of the house. I went to work with my sister-in-law. And we started to weave.

ALE: They work at Esperanza's house. The women are organizing... They're making plans to create a weavers' cooperative.

ESPERANZA: Yes, we make *típicos*, traditional clothing, *tapetes*, dolls. We sell them at the Farmer's Market in Decorah.

CRISTINA: I would love to see all the things that you make.

ESPERANZA: You could come over and watch us weave if you like.

CRISTINA: Thank you! When do you meet?

RAQUEL: (*laughing*) All the time. What else can we do?

.....

ALE: You should go, CRISTINA; you will be amazed when you see their work.

CRISTINA: Well, if I wouldn't be any trouble, I'd really like to....

ESPERANZA: Come! You are welcome any day. Bring your kids!

ALE: Looks like the march is finally starting. Are you ready?

CRISTINA: I guess so!

On the street, from offstage a male activist begins the chant "¡Sí se puede! Yes we can!". The migrant women and CRISTINA join in.... Others start to appear and follow the chant and voices become stronger. Some chant, "No more raids! • Stop the raids!" Then, spotlight on reporter and chants continue softly as the next scene begins.)

SCENE 5: Rally, July 27, 2008, on the street in Postville, Iowa.

(Angry anti-immigration protesters are gathered behind a reporter.)

REPORTER: An immigration rally is being held today in Postville, Iowa, where over 1,000 people have gathered to protest on both sides of the controversial ICE raid that took place in this peaceful town on May 12, 2008. *(approaching a group of protesters)* Sir, can you tell me why you are protesting today?

VOICE 1: The government isn't doing its job to police immigration. There could be terrorists entering America while no one is looking!

VOICE 2: Yeah, just because Europeans came to America as immigrants 500 years ago, doesn't mean Americans gotta accept wetbacks today. This is a great nation, not a motel!

VOICE 3: You know what kind of Immigration reform I wanna see? The kind where these illegals pay their fines and get work permits like everyone who comes here legally does!

VOICE 4: The problem is these Mexicans have anchor babies and then stay here. They don't ever go home. It costs a lot of money to educate those kids. *(Reporter nervously moves away from this longwinded speaker... who continues off mic...)*

VOICE 2: *(Straight into camera, on mic)* Come here legally, or get out. Is that clear enough?

VOICE 3: We don't want 'em takin' our jobs!

VOICE 1: Illegals bring diseases!

VOICE 4: Do you see how many of these Mexican women are pregnant? Gee, there's a shocker!

VOICE 2: None of them speak English. Do I have to learn Spanish to make some spic feel at home?

VOICE 3: So if a robber sneaks into your house, do you ask him to stay?

VOICE 4: Can you say, "anchor baby?"

VOICE 1: They take our jobs! I'm unemployed. Why should they be able to work and not me?

VOICE 2: Go home, illegals!

VOICE 4: Deport 'em!

VOICE 3: Throw 'em out!

VOICE 1: Send them home!

VOICE 2: Yeah! Send them home!

ALL VOICES: Send them home!! Send them home!!

REPORTER: This is Jane Rawlings reporting live from Postville.

(Pro-migrant chants peak as reporter signs off.)

SCENE 6: Early August, 2008, in Esperanza's home. *Multiple woven goods are piled around the space. Esperanza is showing Cristina pieces one by one.*

ESPERANZA: Look. This is a *huipil*; a traditional Mayan blouse. See? This bird here is a *guacamayo*. It likes to eat the seeds of flowers and also summer fruits.

CRISTINA: I bet he wouldn't like Iowa.

ESPERANZA: No, he wouldn't, with all the snow! (*Laughing*) This weaving starts with a sort of thick thread so that you won't have to cut it. You start with this thread here and then you wrap it around the *palo*.

RAQUEL: Starting with this, these are called *cadena*s or chains, and these are called *pepitas*, like the seeds of the fruit. These are flags. These are *arcos*, like the arches in Antigua.

CRISTINA: I see!

ESPERANZA: Look. These are the leaves of the *jocote*; the plum tree. These are the little worms. And here is the bird again. Look at this bird! He loves to fly and travels long distances. Sometimes when the fruit runs out at one place, he just goes somewhere else.

CRISTINA: What is it called?

ESPERANZA: This is a *gorrión*. A sparrow. It has a beautiful song, as well.

CRISTINA: We have them in Iowa too! But, it is not as beautiful, or at least, it's not as colorful.

ESPERANZA: This bird likes to eat strawberries, apples and it loves to fly. Now, the rest of the weaving repeats the same pattern.

CRISTINA: So what is the next bird called?

RAQUEL: That's the *guacamayo* again.

CRISTINA: Is this *huipil* something a young woman would use at her wedding?

ESPERANZA: Yes! It has the flowers to represent her happy thoughts. But a *huipil* lasts a lifetime, so they're really for all occasions. I remember that back home all the women wore them.

CRISTINA: And here in Iowa too?

RAQUEL: [*Cracking up*] Yeah. We love to wear our traditional clothes when we're cutting up chickens!

ESPERANZA: No, no, no! (*Laughing*) Now we just use these clothes for special occasions.

RAQUEL: I think men like to see a woman's butt in a nice tight pair of jeans instead of a *corte*. (*Showing off her butt.*)

CRISTINA: (*Laughing*) Esperanza, what about your husband?

ESPERANZA: Well he says he likes he likes the *corte* skirt better, because it's easier access... (*lifting/opening pretend skirt to show her legs*)

(*All women laugh.*)

CRISTINA: So, do you have to be a certain age to start wearing a *huipil*?

ESPERANZA: Almost any age, if you have a lot of money to buy one, or if you know how to weave... For example, if I have a 3 or 4-year-old daughter I could make her a little *huipil*. Then, when she's 6 or 7, she can learn to weave her own.

CRISTINA: So little? Only 6 or 7 years old?

ESPERANZA: Sure! And when she learns to weave she can choose her own colors and make herself one, or make one to sell.

CRISTINA: And all of these objects (*indicating symbols in the weaving*), do they have a name in the K'aqchikel language?

ESPERANZA: *X'a anúm*... (*Shá/anúm*) The leaves I told you about are called *X'a anúm*: The leaves of the plum tree. And these are *arco*, *la bandera*, *las pepitas*. I guess they don't really have a name. I mean, I just can't remember their name in K'aqchikel.

CRISTINA: Oh. Okay...

ESPERANZA: (*Returning to huipil.*) These are the markers. These are the guards. The guards are only seen on the front side (*indicating weaving*) but the markers are seen on both sides.

RAQUEL: These are techniques and patterns you would only see in San Antonio, Aguascalientes. They're hard to perfect. I didn't learn until I was a teenager, when my mother-in-law taught me...

ESPERANZA: I remember when you moved in! My mother loved you so much and you learned to weave quickly. (*Returning to woven items.*) Look. This one is made of a special silk/wool thread. It is very difficult to weave because it's very fine. It needs to be boiled first so that it will become a little firmer. Then, it weaves through easily. This *huipil* (*signaling another*) is also handmade.

CRISTINA: What are the flowers called?

ESPERANZA: Carnations, pansies, mums, *campanula*. We have a lot of flowers in Guatemala. Have you seen the *huipil* we gave Alejandra? It's embroidered in the style of Patzún. It's kind of like this one. It uses very expensive thread and it shines in the sun.

CRISTINA: How beautiful! Let's see what else you have....

(Voices fade as conversation continues. Lights fade on interior of Esperanza's house. Spotlight on scene in coffee shop, downstage.)

SCENE 7: Early August, 2008. Interior of Postville Bakery.

JANET: Hi Ale, what are you having? The usual?

ALE: Hi Janet. Today I'll just have coffee... And do you have any Guatemalan bread?

EDGAR: *(Entering with apron on, wiping off hands, apparently dirty with flour.)* We had to let Manuel go. He's the only one who knew how to make our Guatemalan breads, but we have no customers. I couldn't pay his salary so I had to let him go.

ALE: It's not your fault, Edgar. We all know you've been trying to support the workers and keep your business afloat.

JANET: Postville has really changed since the raid, Ale. I've never seen it like this. The streets are empty.

ALE: The migrants want to keep a low profile. They stay indoors... in the shadows.

JANET: You know, my great-grandfather was one of the first to immigrate to Postville. He opened the Postville Bakery in 1870. We are one of the charter businesses here. But if things stay this bad, we'll have to close our doors.

ALE: I think we can make it. We just have to work together.

EDGAR: You know what they say, "*El pueblo unido...*"

JANET: We'll keep trying, Ale, but we can't keep this up forever.

(Edgar puts his arm around Janet as she wipes a tear from her cheek. Their faces reveal the stress of immanent financial collapse. Lights out on Bakery and refocusing on Esperanza's house.)

SCENE 8: Early August, 2008 in Esperanza's house. *Meeting with CRISTINA continues. CRISTINA and Esperanza are seated on the couch, surrounded by weavings.*

ESPERANZA: This weaving (*signaling green tapestry*) has a *campesino* on his way to the fields to work the land. See?

CRISTINA: It looks like he has everything he needs.

ESPERANZA: Yes. He's dressed to work in the fields. He has his hat on, to protect him from the sun and the rain. He has the bandana around his neck. That is very typical. He's carrying his machete.

CRISTINA: Do people really use them?

RAQUEL: Of course! A machete can help you so many ways. He uses it to cut any big weeds down, or even just to clear a path as he walks toward his plot of land. Also, it can protect you from snakes.

CRISTINA: Snakes??

RAQUEL: There are a lot of them in Guatemala.

AURORA: I remember when I would have to take my little brothers and sisters to the field. Many women take their children out to the field when they're working the land. They lay them down on a little blanket so they can rest or play while the adults work, but you never know when a snake may come along and eat your baby!

CRISTINA: What!??

RAQUEL: That's why people take a dog with them to the field sometimes too. A dog can also help scare the snakes away.

AURORA: I remember once we were walking back from the field and there was a huge green snake hanging from a tree.

RAQUEL: (*Laughing*) I remember those green snakes. They would hang from the branches waiting for their next victim... (*gesturing with hands*)

ESPERANZA: You have to have a machete to protect yourself when you go out to the *campo*. You never know what could happen.

CRISTINA: Okay. I'll remember that. (*Laughing a bit nervously*)

ESPERANZA: Look, he's got his water here, in the *tecomate*. He's got his tool to work the land, and his lunch bag. When a person goes out to work the land he leaves early in the morning, and he has to walk very far. He takes a lunch with him so he has something to eat during the day.

CRISTINA: What do you think he has in his lunch bag today?

ESPERANZA: Well, my father would usually take some *chuchitos*.

RAQUEL: Mmm chuchitos.

AURORA: Or maybe some tortillas *con frijoles*.

ESPERANZA: He would drink only coffee in the morning. My father sacrificed a lot for us. He would not eat so that his children could have food.

CRISTINA: What is he wearing on his feet?

ESPERANZA: Those are the sandals that all *campesinos* wear. But my father usually went without shoes. He wanted to provide for us. He had 6 children, and he worked so hard so that we could have a better life than he did. (*Quietly*) I think he won't live much longer. He gave everything he had so that each child could have a small plot of land of his own. Now he's worn out.

CRISTINA: Is he in bad health?

ESPERANZA: *Si*. He's losing his sight, his hearing. Just last week he fell and we will have to find him a wheel chair. My mom and my sisters are looking after him. They take my turn since I can't be there. I just keep weaving here in Iowa. I hope that if I can sell just a little I can send the money back home so they have the things they need to keep him comfortable.

CRISTINA: You are supporting him in your own way even though you can't be with him. What other weavings do you have here today?

ESPERANZA: Look, I was working on this one, and I just finished it. This (*showing navy blue tapestry*) represents *la cosecha*. We harvested so many different things in Guatemala: beans, carrots, radishes, squash...

RAQUEL: But this man is harvesting the corn in the field. The birds, in this pattern with the circle around them represent the happiness a good harvest brings.

CRISTINA: What do you do with the corn?

AURORA: There's a process. We harvest the corn, let it dry, remove it from the ears, save a few seeds to plant the next time, and take the rest to the miller. It costs a lot of money to have the corn milled, but we use our corn every day... *para tortiar*. We make tortillas on the *comal* every day.

CRISTINA: Do you know how to make *tortillas*? I have tried, but..

RAQUEL: Haa haa haa! These two have known how to make *tortillas* since they were six.

AURORA: My grandmother taught me.

ESPERANZA: My aunt taught me. I was always asking to spend time with my aunt because she could teach me so many things. She taught me how to weave and how to make *tortillas*.

CRISTINA: Do you think I could learn?

AURORA: Haaa haaa. Sure! First, the *masa* has to have the right texture. It can't have too much or too little water.

CRISTINA: What's in it?

ESPERANZA: It's just water and cornmeal. The amounts have to be just right, or the *tortillas* will fall apart.

CRISTINA: I think that's what happens to me.

AURORA: You have to work the *masa* to form a small ball of dough. Then you flatten it with your hands. (*Showing the movements.*) I learned all this when I was about 6! (*Smiling*) Then, you have to place it on the hot *comal* over an open flame. You work with your hands. You turn the *tortilla* when you see it starting to look dry on the top.

CRISTINA: You do everything with your bare hands? Don't you get burned?

ESPERANZA: (*Laughing.*) Of course you get burned! My aunt would put my fingers to the *comal* to burn me if I made the *tortilla* wrong. I learned quickly! And I made the *tortillas* for my aunt's family every day, and that's how I started to earn my living by

the time I was 7 or 8. I earned 25 *Quetzales* a month.... I guess that was about \$5.00 at that time.

AURORA: Here in Iowa we don't make the *tortillas* every day like I did back home. We can't buy the *masa*... We just eat whatever we can get at the food bank.

CRISTINA: Maybe I can bring some *masa*...

ESPERANZA: But sometimes my brother makes us *pulgas* if we can get some yeast, sugar and flour.

CRISTINA: ¿*Pulgas*? Aren't.. those... fleas?? (*All laugh at her comment.*)

RAQUEL: It's bread! Not fleas! That's what they call the small loaves of sweet bread we have in Guate.

ESPERANZA: We serve them with coffee, sometimes, for special occasions...

CRISTINA: Like what?

ESPERANZA: Well, like, when I was 15 and José asked for my hand in marriage...

CRISTINA: Oh! What was that like?

ESPERANZA: Here, try on this *huipil*. We'll show you. (*While Raquel and Aurora dress CRISTINA, Esperanza narrates.*) José and I met when I was 12 or 13. He saw me weaving at the museum in Antigua. [*¡Mas apretado!* (Signaling *faja* on *corte*.)] I think it was love at first sight, for him, but I was so scared! [*¡Súbelo!* Signaling *faja* on *corte*.)] Then, when I was 13 I left Guatemala. My schoolteacher found me work as a nanny for a wealthy family in Costa Rica.

CRISTINA: You were only 13 when you left home?

ESPERANZA: I wanted to help provide for my family, so I took the job. Anyway, when I finally returned to Guatemala, José was very anxious to marry me. [*¡Qué guapa!* (signaling CRISTINA, now dressed.)] He came to my house to talk to my parents, to ask their permission. My mother told him no three times!!! At last, she agreed. Our families all got together and we had the engagement party.

RAQUEL: We're going to have to tie the *faja* a little tighter or you'll lose the *corte*. You are so slim. Are you sure you've had children??

AURORA: You have to imagine... If you are putting on a *huipil* this beautiful, it must be a special occasion!

RAQUEL: I guess you are a little taller than a Guatemalan woman! (*Laughing and showing how short the skirt is on CRISTINA.*)

ESPERANZA: José's father was the mayor of San Antonio when we had the *pedida*. He had the special "vara," the scepter he used for the ceremony to show we were to be married. (*Raquel acts out role of mayor with his wand and Aurora takes CRISTINA on her arm, as if she were her José.*) Then, José's family had to bring the *cestos*, big baskets of gifts. They gave my family baskets of coffee, beans, corn, *pulgas* and *cardamomo*.

CRISTINA: Cardamom? Was that for the coffee?

ESPERANZA: No. It is used for the incense we burn on the day of the wedding, if that day ever comes. Some couples never have a wedding... to save money.

CRISTINA: Oh!

RAQUEL: Tell her about the "ransom money!"

CRISTINA: Were you kidnapped?

ESPERANZA: No! (*Giggling.*) It's true some women are kidnapped into marriage, but we were in love and our families agreed! What happens is that all the bride's uncles give money. Then, the mother of the bride counts it carefully. My 9 uncles were very generous with me and together gave about \$500.00. That's what the bride is worth! But if anyone sees her with another man, she has to give that amount to the groom's family.

(*As Esperanza narrates the customs surrounding engagement and marriage, people silently begin entering the stage with baskets laden with items. Some paper flowers spill out of the baskets onto the floor. Juice is gradually delivered to audience members. Some receive a paper flower instead.*)

RAQUEL: Good thing you were so in love... You kept every penny!

ESPERANZA: We wanted a marimba band, but we just played music from records and the radio instead. We all ate the food my mother had prepared for that day. And there were flowers everywhere. You can just imagine how happy I was. I was almost 15 and ready to be married!

AURORA: Here CRISTINA! Taste the juice we made here. It's *ponche*. Just like what Esperanza had at her *pedida*.

CRISTINA: Thank you. *(Now fully dressed in indigenous clothes, receiving juice from Aurora)* It's delicious!

ESPERANZA: I remember that all the men were drinking *cusha*, a homemade liquor, but that's too strong for me! Me and my girlfriends had juice.

RAQUEL: Would you like to dance, CRISTINA?

CRISTINA: Well I... *(Some women start dancing. CRISTINA observes and tries to follow moves. Many people mill around on the stage, some drinking, some dancing, some chatting. Aurora doesn't dance!)*

5 minute interlude

Juice is delivered to everyone. Large baskets lined with woven servilletas circulate through the theatre. There are paper flowers everywhere. Marimba music plays and songs change in an amateur manner. Some characters are dancing, others are chatting and drinking juice.

CRISTINA: Esperanza, is this one of the gifts from the baskets? *(Turning attention to light green servilleta.)*

ESPERANZA: Yes! The one with the butterflies looks just like what we used back home that day.

CRISTINA: Are butterflies common in Guatemala?

ESPERANZA: We see them all the time! And... you know all the different colors have different meanings.

CRISTINA: They're really beautiful. What meanings do they have?

ESPERANZA: There are so many! Let me try to remember. For example, white butterflies signal endings and new beginnings. If one enters your house, someone or something will die, but by sacrificing this life, another may be saved. Yellow butterflies announce the solution to a problem...

RAQUEL: We don't see too many of those here in Iowa. *(laughing)*

AURORA: There are some black butterflies as big as a sheet of paper. They announce death or a coming tragedy, but if butterflies with colors come into your house, they announce a visit.

CRISTINA: I see so many colors here. Are there that many different kinds of butterflies in Guatemala? Do they all have a meaning?

RAQUEL: *Sí pues*, there are hundreds of kinds of butterflies there! And, you know, people invent a meaning for everything in Guatemala... Like, once my friend was cleaning at a rich guy's house, and she saw a huge snake in the bed... and... she....

CRISTINA: Oh no! (*interrupting RAQUEL mid-sentence*) Not snakes again! What about the butterflies? What else do they mean?

ESPERANZA: Sometimes when I'm weaving (*slowly and quietly*) the butterflies start to move across the tapestry... To me, butterflies are, well, they're like *carne viva*,

CRISTINA: What do you mean by *carne viva*?

ESPERANZA:(*Starting slowly*)) I think they are the vivid embodiment of our greatest hopes and our deepest worries that sometimes flutter by... (*Gradually more sure of herself, voice raises and she stands up*) They fly freely! They cannot be detained. Butterflies move through the silent stories we hold inside, the hopes we have for our children and the dreams we inherit from our ancestors. They are part of the natural world, the *madre tierra*. We share their beauty and their mystery when they come out at the loom to grace the *tejido* or when they fly by.

AURORA: Maybe they come from the past, or the future (*touching stomach*).

RAQUEL: Maybe they are there to send us a message from someone or something far away...

CRISTINA: From Ángel, back in Guatemala...

ESPERANZA: Could be... You know, maybe the butterflies come to unite families who have been separated. Their flight links North and South. Now, when they appear in our weavings they connect our Guatemalan past with our lives here in Postville, and they share their message with the Iowans who display them in their homes.

CRISTINA: That's beautiful! Someday I hope I can have one of your weavings with butterflies for my house!

RAQUEL: (*Laughing.*) Esperanza may be right about butterflies being dreams on the wing, but I can tell you why they're really important to us: They sell like hotcakes at the farmer's market. The American ladies see the weavings with butterflies, and they all want one. They ask us "Can you make that in yellow?" "I would like orange for my house!" "How soon can you make me a blue one?" They're willing to pay a lot of money for the butterflies so I've memorized that pattern... In fact, (*Looking directly at CRISTINA*) maybe you'd like something?

CRISTINA: Oh... *(very disappointed)* well, yes the butterflies are beautiful, mysterious creatures. But, I, I think I have to get going *(taking off Guatemalan clothes)*. I have to go pick up my kids. Thanks, everyone. I'm learning a lot from you... Even... things about myself... See you later... I'll try to bring you some *masa*, or some, thread for your weaving if I can.

(CRISTINA quickly gathers her things and leaves, somewhat uncomfortably. After she exits, the women start to examine the bags of things she brought for them. There are children's clothing, paper towels, toilet paper, oranges, carrots, beans, rice, spinach and sugar and other items.)

ESPERANZA: This is all very useful. We can't get any of this at the food bank! *(Giggling happily)*

AURORA: *(Laughing)* Last time we went they would only give us 1 roll of toilet paper. I tried to get two. I told her there were 7 of us living here... but they said just one roll per family.

RAQUEL: Remember the time we got the free meat?

ESPERANZA: *(Giggling)* ¡Qué tremendo! We all got sick.

AURORA: Not me! I didn't eat it. I was nauseous that day *(showing pregnant stomach)* but not from the meat.

RAQUEL: I remember I was here weaving that day when someone came pounding on the door. I didn't know who it could be, but they were sure anxious for us to open the door. I figured if it was the *migra*, I've already been detained... I've got nothing to lose, so I opened the door. The minute I opened the door "Snap!" *(photos taken, intrusively)* Someone took a picture of me as the other one was handing me a bag full of meat. They said,

PLANT REPRESENTATIVE: "Here, Take this! We know you aren't working and you can't buy your own. Take this meat, courtesy of the plant!"

RAQUEL: And they kept snapping photos as they handed me the bag.

ESPERANZA: Oh yeah. I made stew that night.

RAQUEL: We all ate it, and we all got sick.

ESPERANZA: Maybe it was the meat, or maybe it is just our sadness.

(Women continue talking in Spanish about clothes for their children and foods and looking at things in the bags as lights go down.)

SCENE 9: Mid-August, 2008 on Della's patio in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

CRISTINA: Della, you told me a few weeks ago that Monarchs migrate south. Where to?

DELLA: Mexico. The monarchs that spend the summer east of the Rockies, like in Iowa, go to Mexico in the winter.

CRISTINA: So, your butterflies are on their way to... Cancún? Like the spring breakers?

DELLA: *(laughing)* Not exactly. Most of them are headed to central Mexico to a forest just two hours west of Mexico City. But, unfortunately, monarch habitats are threatened. There's a lot of deforestation...

CRISTINA: I guess I've read about that. So, where will they go?

DELLA: No one knows for sure, but it's clear that many travel to Guatemala.

CRISTINA: Guatemala? *(Excitedly)*

DELLA: Yes. They like to overwinter at high altitudes with temperate climates....

CRISTINA: Oh, like in Antigua?

DELLA: Yes. There is even a sanctuary for butterflies close to Antigua... In one of the small towns...

CRISTINA: Which town? Patzún? San Antonio?

DELLA: Something like that... Some small town in Guatemala.

CRISTINA: Oh... You know, Della, I've just met group of women from the Western Highlands of Guatemala. Their hometowns are near Antigua.

DELLA: Is this another one of your projects?

CRISTINA: Yes. That's why I've been going to Postville.

DELLA: Oh... the raid. Were they workers at Agriprocessors?

CRISTINA: Yes. They don't like to talk about it much, but they're trying so hard to survive here, and to look after their kids.

DELLA: Just like the butterflies I taught your children about.

CRISTINA: Well... yes! And actually, the butterflies are a symbol in Guatemalan culture. They sometimes appear on typical clothing and in the weavings.

DELLA: Really? Have you seen their weavings?

CRISTINA: Lots of them! They're beautiful.

DELLA: Are they expensive?

CRISTINA: No, not when you consider the work and skill that goes into making one.

DELLA: Do you think you could buy me one?

CRISTINA: Sure! I can buy one this week when I go to Postville. What color?

DELLA: I don't care about the color. I just want to support the women.

CRISTINA: Thanks Della. I feel so lucky to have met these women...

DELLA: It's more than luck. It's fate.

CRISTINA: You think so?

DELLA: I know so!

(Lights dim as Della and CRISTINA move into dark space (house) to pick up children. Conversation continues.)

SCENE 10: September, 2008 in Esperanza's home in Postville, Iowa.

(The scene opens with the women cooking together, chopping vegetables, and talking. Esperanza is rolling up a red skein of yarn.)

CRISTINA: What are you cooking?

AURORA: We're making a Guatemalan dish called *pepián*.

CRISTINA: Sounds good! What's in it?

ESPERANZA: Chicken and a special sauce with *chiles*. Raquel got a chicken with her voucher from St. Bridget's, and she decided to share it with us. It's the first time we've had chicken in months, so I guess that's a special occasion!

CRISTINA: Do you have it often in Guatemala?

ESPERANZA: Maybe once or twice a year.... When my parents decide they want to put their chicken in the pot, rather than keep her for the eggs. We eat it at Christmastime, or for a special occasion like a wedding or a first communion.

CRISTINA: Does everyone make it? All the families? Like, did you have it for your first communion, Aurora?

AURORA: No. I didn't have a first communion. (*Without emotion.*)

CRISTINA: Oh, ok...

ESPERANZA: (*giggling*) She's an *Aleluya*. (*i.e. Evangelical Christian*)

AURORA: I am not Catholic.

CRISTINA: Well, now you tell me! You know what? In my church they didn't do First Communion either. They did Confirmation.

AURORA: Oh, but, since my husband is Catholic...

CRISTINA: Ohh!! Interesting...

AURORA: I'm going to have to do it.

CRISTINA: I see...

RAQUEL: It's contagious. She says she was contaminated by a Catholic!!! (*Laughter.*)

AURORA: He says I have to study with him because he has not had his first communion either.

RAQUEL: Aurora says she wants to go back to Guatemala to "study" with her husband but we know that as soon as the little *americano* is born (*signaling Aurora's stomach*) she just wants to go, get pregnant again and turn around and come back. That's what she's been saying.

ESPERANZA: Poor Roberto. Aurora says she wants to go back to be with him for just one night. Ha ha ha ha.

RAQUEL: One night is enough!

AURORA: I was watching a show on TV about Costa Rica and Honduras and how families are split up, and so I was just thinking. There are so many people who can't be together. Not even for just one night, nothing more....

RAQUEL: You just go, get pregnant again in Guatemala and come back.

AURORA: It's not so easy. If I had some money maybe I could find away to return to Guatemala, but getting back into the U.S. is almost impossible now.

ESPERANZA: Right... The getting pregnant part is not so hard, but the trip back and forth....

RAQUEL: Tell him to send it to you in the mail!!

CRISTINA: Well, these types of things are not easy to arrange in the mail.

ESPERANZA: Have her tell you about her *quinceañera*!

CRISTINA: Okay! How was your 15th birthday party? Had you already met Roberto? Or not yet?

AURORA: No.

CRISTINA: Did you have a different boyfriend?

RAQUEL: *(Laughing)* Ooooo! *Había tantos...*

AURORA. No. No, I didn't have a boyfriend yet. I may have had a boyfriend when I turned 16.... *(smiling)*

CRISTINA: Oh really? And what was his name?

AURORA: No. No. Heee hee. Are you taping this? No, when I turned 15, I had only girlfriends. And I remember that my mother didn't sleep the night before the party because she was cooking all night and getting ready.

RAQUEL: And Aurora was dreaming all night of her many *novios*!

AURORA: Raquel!!!!

RAQUEL: When Aurora was getting to know her first boyfriend, she was actually falling in love with her cousin at the same time.

CRISTINA: Sounds a little complicated, but, okay.

AURORA: No. Those things that Raquel is telling you.... *!Mentiras!* No!!

CRISTINA: Well, the cousin makes the story a little more interesting.

RAQUEL: Aurora has a way of looking for trouble!!

CRISTINA: Where should we put the microphone so you can tell me more?

AURORA: No, CRISTINA. That thing about my cousin that Raquel is telling is pure lies that she has made up. Maybe she's the one who was in love with my cousin.

CRISTINA: Okay, so getting back to your 15th birthday... How did everything work out?

AURORA: No, it's just that what Raquel said, that I fell in love with my cousin... I didn't have the slightest interest in him. Ay, Raquel. He was already married.

CRISTINA: Well, maybe he was just so good looking...

RAQUEL: He is hot!

ESPERANZA: Maybe at that time he was...

AURORA: He was already married. Are you taping this, CRISTINA, or did you turn it off?

CRISTINA: I'm taping it all.

AURORA: Ah...

ESPERANZA: Ha ha ha! (*Giggling*)

AURORA: Just erase this part, CRISTINA. Erase it. My husband is going to get mad!!!

CRISTINA: Okay, so your *quinceañera* turned out well? Did you just make food or do people dance or what?

AURORA: No. There's no dancing. I am evangelical.

CRISTINA: And do people drink? Is there drinking?

AURORA: No, none of that either. We just have a church service and my mother, she, she made me a *huipil*.

CRISTINA: She did? What did it look like?

AURORA: It had the colors of summer. In fact, it looked a lot like that *huipil*. See? (*Raquel hands black huipil to CRISTINA.*) Look at the flowers, the birds, the *caracoles*...

CRISTINA: What does that mean?

AURORA: This pattern is the *caracol*: the snail. And there are the plums and look at all the different tones of green... I wore a *huipil* like this one at my party... (*Nostalgically.*)

CRISTINA: Did you leave it behind in Guatemala?

AURORA: Oh, yes! I left all that kind of stuff back in Guatemala. What good is it here?

CRISTINA: Right. (*Handing huipil back to Raquel.*)

AURORA: You know, the whole party, everything, my parents paid for everything!

CRISTINA: Was it at your house? Or where?

AURORA: At my Grandma's house. Uh huh. That's where we had the party.

ESPERANZA: I had only been back in Guatemala for 2 days.

AURORA: I never knew that Esperanza had been at the party.

CRISTINA: Oh!

AURORA: I never knew, until I saw those pictures. I actually have a photo of Esperanza at the party. She was there!! (*Looks admiringly at Esperanza, in whose house she now lives.*)

CRISTINA: So you (*Esperanza*) went to the States and returned to Guatemala?

ESPERANZA: Yes. I had returned just 2 days before the party for a visit and to make arrangements to bring my children to the United States.

AURORA: Esperanza returned to Guatemala by plane.

CRISTINA: Wow! Sounds luxurious.

ESPERANZA: When I went to the U.S. the first time, I also went by plane.

RAQUEL: She has flown back and forth so many times she's like a regular stewardess (*signaling with hands*).

ESPERANZA: I obtained a visa for legal entry to the U.S. as a weaver. I got to return to Guatemala twice.

RAQUEL: *¡Muy lista!* Esperanza got on the plane and in 2 hours she was in the U.S. It took me 2 months.

AURORA: You should have seen what was on "Laura" yesterday on TV. On this show they were in Tijuana with immigrants. *¡Pobrecitos!* It was horrible to watch.

CRISTINA: I bet it's worse to live it than to watch it on TV!

RAQUEL: The worst part for me was crossing the river. I am terrified of water. I asked, "I have to swim there? No way, I won't touch that water. There must be snakes in there."

CRISTINA: I would have turned back right then.

RAQUEL: But, I couldn't. I had to think of my children. We *had* to get to the U.S.! And, a guy with a bad leg carried my daughter across. She was crying, since the man was unsteady with his bad leg. He had my daughter above the water, and she was crying "yyhiii yhiii" while he limped.

(The other women laugh at her imitation of the lame man and her daughter.)

RAQUEL: Later we were detained, and we had to say that the *cojo* was my children's father and that's why we were traveling together. My daughter couldn't understand why we were saying that.

CRISTINA: What happened next?

RAQUEL: They put the man and me in separate rooms and started asking us personal questions.

BORDER PATROL AGENT: Does your husband snore? Which side of the bed do you sleep on? What does he wear to bed? What do you do when you're in bed together?

CRISTINA: That's terrible!

RAQUEL: Somehow, we gave the same answers.

CRISTINA: Wow!

RAQUEL: When we were detained there, in Texas, they sent us to a holding room. I kept calm and didn't cry until I saw where they wanted us to go to the bathroom. That was just too much.

CRISTINA: What was it like?

RAQUEL: It was just a hole in the ground... There was waste *¡po pó!* everywhere. I wanted to be strong for my children, but I just burst into tears. I didn't want them to have to live through that...

CRISTINA: But, you all made it?

RAQUEL: Yes. From Texas we traveled by car to Postville. My husband Ángel was here, waiting for us.

CRISTINA: And what about you, Aurora?

AURORA: My husband came to Postville just a few months after we got married. I missed him so much... I decided I would come to the U.S. too.

CRISTINA: All alone?

AURORA: Yes. I decided I needed to be with him, and I would do whatever it took to get to Postville.

CRISTINA: That must have been dangerous...

AURORA: I... just... I can't really tell you about any of this... I'm late...I have to go.

RAQUEL: (*explaining to CRISTINA*) She is helping to clean some houses.... to earn a little money. A lot of people moved out... Left Postville in a hurry. There are lots of abandoned houses.

AURORA: *Adios*, CRISTINA.

CRISTINA: *¡Adios!*

AURORA: *Cuidese mucho usted y sus hijos también, primero Dios.*
(*Aurora exits.*)

CRISTINA: (*Regretfully*) I guess I asked too many questions....

ESPERANZA: Oh, she is just very shy.

RAQUEL: She doesn't like to talk about crossing the border. Nobody does, but Aurora's trip was truly horrible.

CRISTINA: Why?

RAQUEL: She paid a coyote to bring her to the U.S. But, it took three tries before she made it.

CRISTINA: Three tries? What happened?

RAQUEL: (*Taking out map.*) The first time the *Migra mexicana* deported her back to Guatemala. They dropped her off in Tapachula, here! (*showing map*) and sent her across the bridge at the border of Guatemala and Mexico. She didn't have a dime. She had to beg local businesses for money for bus fare to get back home.

CRISTINA: What happened the second time?

ESPERANZA: She traveled by bus to the Guatemalan border and crossed the river to Mexico at night with a group of migrants.

RAQUEL: The coyote told them he had a great idea... a "good deal" that would save them time and trouble walking across Mexico. He loaded all 22 of them into a truck that was hauling chickens north toward the border town of Ciudad Juárez.

CRISTINA: How could they all fit?

ESPERANZA: There was a layer of chickens in their crates, then a layer of humans, then several layers of chickens on top of that.

CRISTINA: Oh my God!

RAQUEL: They spent 2 and 1/2 days in the truck with no food or water, sandwiched between the chickens.

ESPERANZA: The coyote told them they would be safe, but near the capital, the *migra* found them. They unloaded everyone and took the women....(long pause)....they took the women....aside.

RAQUEL: What she means is the border agents... *las violaron a todas...*

ESPERANZA: They raped all the women, except for Aurora.

CRISTINA: How did she avoid being... assaulted?

RAQUEL: She was starving and thirsty and couldn't even stand up. But also, she was stained when she got out of the truck.

CRISTINA: What do you mean?

RAQUEL: She was covered with blood. So, they didn't want her.

CRISTINA: From... the chickens?

RAQUEL: No.... She got her period while she was loaded on the truck...

CRISTINA: Oh... (*horrified*)

ESPERANZA: Then, after a few days in a Mexican jail, she was deported for the second time.

RAQUEL: But on the third try she did make it.

CRISTINA: How long did it take that time?

ESPERANZA: Three-and-a-half weeks. At one point they spent two days in the mountains and almost three days walking without food and drink.

RAQUEL: Just when they were about dead, somewhere in Texas, they found some water on a ranch. It was dirty, with dead animals floating in it, but they didn't have a choice, so they drank it.

CRISTINA: She must have been in terrible condition when she arrived here.

ESPERANZA: Yes. Her feet were bloody and covered with blisters; her toenails were purple. Four of the toenails fell off and have never grown back.

RAQUEL: The funny thing is she kept the shoes she walked in from Guatemala for years after she got here. I think she finally lost them when she was kicked out of her apartment after the raid.

CRISTINA: How could anyone risk so much to come here?

RAQUEL: She says she came here for the love of her husband, but I think she's here because she wants to help her parents put food on the table for her brothers and sisters.

ESPERANZA: Aurora is one of 11 children. The truth is, I think her parents are better off without her... She knows that.

CRISTINA: Oh. She's so young, and so brave...

ESPERANZA: It's the same for all of us. We're here for our families... We want to be able to feed our children, send them to school.

RAQUEL: It's the same for me. I just want my children to have a better life than I did. My mother left my sister and me when we were little so she could come to the States.

CRISTINA: She left you alone?

RAQUEL: No, she left us with our aunt, but our aunt had her own kids to worry about. So we were abandoned...

ESPERANZA: Well, until my brother fell in love with you. Thank God you could come live with us. You were about 14, right? That's when you started to learn how to weave.

RAQUEL: Yeah. But, weaving's not the only thing I learned about at your house... Her brother taught me a few things too...

(Laughter and lights out.)

SCENE 11: October 1, 2008 *Door of Della's house*

DELLA: CRISTINA, you've got to sign this petition

CRISTINA: About?

DELLA: This is a ban against genetically modified corn.

CRISTINA: Well, I know it's been banned in some places, but here in Iowa?

DELLA: The problem with genetically modified corn is that it destroys butterfly habitats.

CRISTINA: How so?

DELLA: Well, the seeds produce corn that insects can't attack, but the seeds can also resist herbicides and so the farmers spray more to kill the weeds, hoping to get a bigger harvest. When they spray, they kill the milkweed.

CRISTINA: Ahh, that's the plant you have in your garden, so the monarch butterflies can lay their eggs?

DELLA: Exactly. And, maybe it's not just the butterflies that suffer, I mean...

CRISTINA: Oh, I'm thinking about what my friends have told me about the importance of corn in Guatemalan culture...

DELLA: The genetically modified seeds change everything for farmers.

CRISTINA: The farmers in Guatemala celebrate the harvest and save a few seeds each fall to plant the following spring.

DELLA: Not any more. Genetically modified corn seeds can only be used once. You have to buy new seed each year.

CRISTINA: Nobody in Guatemala can afford that... and what about their traditions?

DELLA: It all comes down to greed...

CRISTINA: Yes. And the big corporations want their pound of flesh. *(Takes clipboard from Della)* Show me where to sign.

SCENE 12: October 12, 2008 in Esperanza's home in Postville, Iowa.

ALE: We are going to go over the testimonies again. You need to share as much detail as possible.

ESPERANZA: *Estoy un poquito nerviosa, Ale.* Is this risky? Giving out all this information? I never heard of anyone getting a visa because of telling stories about work.

ALE: A U-visa is a new type of visa that the U.S. Government has established for people who can prove that they were victims of abuse in the workplace and can

supply information about criminal activity under investigation. It is similar to the T-visa for victims of human trafficking, but I think your testimonies will fit better with the U-visa.

RAQUEL: I have nothing to lose, so I want to testify. St. Bridget's is paying my rent and helping me clothe and feed my children, but I don't want to be a charity case.

ALE: I know you don't. None of you do.

RAQUEL: I came to this country to work and to provide for my family with my earnings.

ALE: And the U-visa will allow you to be in the U.S. temporarily, to work legally, and to start proceedings to bring family members. Then, if you pay all the fees and have no legal record, you may ultimately be able to qualify for permanent resident status and maybe even U.S. citizenship.

ESPERANZA: That would be wonderful for us, and for our families. We haven't been able to send money to Guatemala since the raid. My parents depend on our help....

ALE: So, you need to tell CRISTINA and me, every occasion you can remember when there was verbal abuse, physical abuse, unwanted attention, pressure to do things at work that were not appropriate because they were dangerous or too personal... or even invitations to meet outside of the workplace... Think back and try to remember specific times when there was pressure to perform sexual favors if that's what you heard while you were on the job. You need to be as precise as possible with names, dates and events. Raquel, you want to start?

RAQUEL: Okay, *estoy lista*.... My name is Raquel....Am I supposed to tell you everything? *?Todo?*

CRISTINA: Just tell the truth.

ALE: And tell everything.

RAQUEL: In the plant I worked in cut-up. I was in area 29.

CRISTINA: Can you tell me how you were trained in your job?

RAQUEL: (*Matter-of-factly*) When I arrived at the plant I had to watch a video, and then I started to work. (*Several cast members enter stage and form an assembly line.*) They expected me to work really fast, and I had no idea how to do anything. They screamed at me, but I just said to myself, if this is what I have to do to be able to care for my children, I'll do it.

CRISTINA: Did the other workers help you... explain things to you?

RAQUEL: We couldn't talk at work. If the boss saw you talking,

PLANT MANAGER: Quiet!

RAQUEL: He would scream at you and call you names.

PLANT MANAGER: ¡*Silencio puta!*

RAQUEL: He would come in, and he would start saying,

PLANT MANAGER: ¡*Mas rápido! Huevonas. (He continues to curse under his breath)*

RAQUEL: And he would start to shake and turn red...

PLANT MANAGER: (*Huevonas. Hijas de puta. ¡Pendejas! and shaking as he flies into a tantrum.*)

RAQUEL: The longer he yelled, the more he would shake (*laughing as manager grumbles quietly to himself*) But I worked well. Still, every night was like a nightmare when I was working there. (*Manager begins to exit as floor boss enters. They exchange nonverbal greetings*)

CRISTINA: What in particular?

RAQUEL: Ummm... There was also a lot of uh... how do you say, grabbing and touching at the plant (*gesturing*), and invitations.

ALE: Sexual harassment?

RAQUEL: *Sí*. So if you were working on the line, you were just like a piece of meat. The men would get together and well, they would actually write things on the bathroom walls, and things like that.

CRISTINA: What exactly did they do?

RAQUEL: They would say how... well, they would talk about how women liked to have sex. You know, with their husbands or with other men just off the street. And lots of things were just pure lies, *mentiras!* Many, many of us heard the words *puta*, *prostituta*. Some women were silent, but I just laughed it off. So what if someone wants me? Want some *pechuga?* (*Pointing to breasts.*) I have 72 chickens per minute.

ALE: What would the men do?

(Floor boss enters the action.)

RAQUEL: There was one male supervisor, a man with a wife and kids, but he was always chasing after the young women. *(Floor boss suggestively leers at one of the female factory workers.)* He would threaten to take their jobs if they didn't do what he wanted. *(Factory line freezes.)*

CRISTINA: Did he ever approach you?

RAQUEL: Yes. He invited me to go out...

ALE: What do you mean?

RAQUEL: Well, at first he just told me he wanted to take me out to dinner, to spend some time alone with me.... And that if I said no, I would lose my job, and so would my husband.

CRISTINA: What did you do?

RAQUEL: I just laughed and told him no because here weren't any restaurants in Postville good enough for me! But then, one night, I got off the line earlier than Ángel, my husband. So, *el casco verde*, he followed me out to the parking lot. He came up behind me and grabbed me by the hips. He said into my ear,

FLOOR BOSS: *(Softly, with complete certainty)* You were just playing hard to get, but I know that you want me. You have always wanted me.

RAQUEL: He pulled me down to the ground. He...

ALE: Then what happened, Raquel?

RAQUEL: *(Silence.)*

CRISTINA: It's okay, if she doesn't want to...

RAQUEL: *Exactamente.* I told him I didn't want to. I tried to push him off me and reminded him that *(turning to floor boss, almost spitting the words at him)* I'm married. You can have me on the line but not after hours. *(Factory line workers unfreeze and look at Raquel and the floor boss)*

FLOOR BOSS: *(Angry)* Do you want to lose your job?

RAQUEL: Then some other workers came into the parking lot and saw what was happening. He just stood up, dusted himself off and walked away. (*Workers continue to work on line.*)

CRISTINA: Did you report the attack?

RAQUEL: Are you kidding? I wanted to keep my job.

ALE: So, was he the only one or were there others?

RAQUEL: Oh, there were lots of guys like him. It was like a regular meat market. There was even a female supervisor at the plant who was kind of *alegre*. (*Female Floor Boss comes out and stands suggestively close to one of the women workers.*)

CRISTINA: What do you mean?

RAQUEL: Oh, she would get really close to some of the women and say things to them and touch them inappropriately. (*Female Floor Boss whispers into the ear of the worker.*) But we're from such a different culture that we really didn't know what to make of this. It was just very different to us, to have to face that. (*Line workers continue action.*)

CRISTINA: I'm really sorry you had to deal with all that.

RAQUEL: You know, I didn't really realize how bad things were at the plant until I had to sit down and give my interview and started working with a counselor. Then, we women started to realize that many of us had suffered very similar kinds of mistreatment. They picked on us because we're from Guatemala *y somos chapines*.

CRISTINA: *Chapines?*

RAQUEL: First of all, we're smaller. Our size made us perfect for detail work so they usually put the women on the chicken line. Next, we're from farther away than the *mejicanos*. We would never just pack up and look for work somewhere else. We were not going to leave the plant or leave Postville, no matter what. We would do anything to keep our jobs and keep our family together. (*Manager and Male Floor Boss join Female Floor Boss on line.*)

ALE: Were you afraid?

RAQUEL: Well, I guess I could defend myself if I had to! I was always carrying a knife or scissors when I worked on the line! (*Laugh*) But it's true, they insulted us all the time: They called us wetbacks,

FEMALE FLOOR BOSS: *mojados*,

MALE FLOOR BOSS: *serotes*,

PLANT MANAGER: *indios*. (*Very deliberately.*)

RAQUEL: There were also a lot of people who didn't really know how to defend themselves because they spoke a lot of different languages. Not everybody spoke Spanish. They laughed at us for that reason too. But, that was just life at the plant. (*Male and Female Floor Managers exit. Line freezes.*)

ALE: Are you speaking for all the women or just yourself?

RAQUEL: For me, I can just laugh it off. What are those guys going to do to me? Other women just don't have a sense of humor... They've been doing a lot of crying. A lot of tears have been shed in Postville.

ALE: Raquel, workers have rights and women have rights. It doesn't matter if you are a citizen or not. Labor laws protect workers. Your story can help change conditions at the plant in Postville, and may even help workers in other states, Mississippi, North Carolina, Louisiana...

CRISTINA: Esperanza, what can you say about your work?

ESPERANZA: How do I start?

ALEJANDRA: Just start with your name and a little bit about yourself.

ESPERANZA: *Mi nombre es Esperanza*. I am 37 years old. I am indigenous. My grandparents and parents are my example in life. Like many other people in my family, I am a weaver. Weaving has been my work since I was 7 years old.

CRISTINA: Why did you come to this country?

ESPERANZA: I came to the U.S. hoping to change our destiny. We wanted to give our children a better future. We are here with our children, two sons and a daughter. I am also a grandmother! I have a granddaughter who is 1 year and 3 months old.

CRISTINA: How did you get started at the plant?

ESPERANZA: When I got to Postville I started looking for a job. My husband was working at the plant. I started to work there too on May 11, 2003. I was so happy!

They gave me a job at Agriprocessors! It was a new experience. I worked in Area 29, which was cut-up.

ALE: Describe a typical day.

(Factory line begins to move.)

ESPERANZA: We started work at 9:00 a.m. and until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. we worked without stopping. I remember when the *mayordomo* would tell me that he wanted everything done faster and that it had to be 12 trays a minute... He kept staring at me, and he would start to shake, he would shake his fists like a baby and tell me to go faster

PLANT MANAGER: *(in Spanish)* Mas rápido! Hija de puta. Rápido. Pendeja.

ESPERANZA: So I told him, "Why don't you show me how to do it faster?" *(Sweet and coquettish)*

ESPERANZA: *(narrating as she reenacts the scene)* He was just shocked that I had talked back to him. But, his eyes opened wide, he walked straight towards me, and then he dropped his clenched fists, came up next to me on the line and worked by my side. *(They work side by side for about 30 seconds. Line freezes as Esperanza moves back toward the women.)* I worked for 3 years in that area. During that time I saw how they treated all the workers at the plant. They screamed at everyone.

CRISTINA: That would be difficult to take. Did you stay in that part of the plant?

ESPERANZA: No, after three years there, in Area 29, my children arrived in Postville. I asked to be moved so that I could spend some time at home with them. I could see how they would go to school when I was going to work, and by the time I got home they were already asleep. But they didn't want to change my shift at work, until we bought a car from the manager.

CRISTINA: From the manager!

ESPERANZA: Yes. In fact, in the end we bought two cars from the manager. When I first got to Postville, they wouldn't hire me until I agreed to purchase a Chevy Blazer for \$5000.00.

CRISTINA: That's unbelievable!

ESPERANZA: But, when my husband went to pay for it, the manager said he had decided he wanted \$6000.00 or there would be no job for me. So, that was one of the cars we bought. The other was a green van...

ALE: How much did you pay for that?

ESPERANZA: Another \$5000.00, but I was willing to pay because I knew it meant I could spend more time with my children.

ALE: So what was your new job?

ESPERANZA: Area 14, Evisceration. *(Factory line begins to move)* One Tuesday night, the manager told me that I could go home at 7:00 and report back to work at 6:00 the next morning. I was happy because I could get my children ready for school in the morning, but working in area 14 changed my life. The manager put me to work on the line with all men. *(Women leave line.)*

ALE: So, was that really better?

ESPERANZA: Well, no, not exactly. *(She again begins to re-enact the factory scene as she narrates.)* They were running 70 to 80 chickens per minute, and my arms would get really tired. My hands would be numb. My eyes were always irritated and filled with tears from the chemicals that run with the blood along the floor. My nose was constantly running, and I could not clean myself because I was wearing gloves, and I couldn't stop working to take them off. One day I told the manager *(In scene to the manager)* I had to go to the bathroom.

PLANT MANAGER: No, keep working.

ESPERANZA: Please, I need to go now!

PLANT MANAGER: Just keep working. I'm not paying you to pee.

ESPERANZA: But, I need to...

PLANT MANAGER: It's 80 chickens a minute, *pendeja*. You don't want your job? If you can't do it, somebody else can. *(Men stop moving.)*

ESPERANZA: *(to CRISTINA)* He wouldn't let me go. I peed my pants. *(quietly, embarrassed)* The same thing happened to many other women. *(Men exit silently.)*

CRISTINA: Didn't they give you regular breaks? That's a law.

ESPERANZA: Yes, there was one 30-minute break for an 8-hour shift, but after you took off your boots and apron, there was no time. You had to choose between eating or going to the bathroom. Plus, there were just a few bathrooms that everyone shared, and one whole area went to break at the same time. Sometimes

the human waste would flow out of the toilets onto the cafeteria floor. (*Factory line workers exit in silence.*)

CRISTINA: How could you put up with it?

ESPERANZA: Those days were difficult, but we had enough money to eat and to go out on Saturday with our children and give them a hamburger. But, since the day of the raid, since the 12th of May everything has changed for the Hispanic families in Postville, and for my family.

ALE: What do you mean?

ESPERANZA: My sons told me that they didn't even want to study anymore because we are worthless in this country. It's been really hard for us to survive... I can't believe we've lived for 5 months here with no work... and... I just thank God that we're still alive.

CRISTINA: [*Silence, breathless.*]

ESPERANZA: We were just hoping for a better future. I pray to God for my sons, who are still in school, to keep it up, and to get ahead in life so that they don't have to repeat the same stories we've lived through.

ALEJANDRA: You are so brave for sharing what you have told us today. If enough people tell their stories, we can force things to change. We can break the cycle. Nothing changes unless your story is heard. So, Aurora, would you tell your story to CRISTINA?

AURORA: My story? There's really nothing special about it.

ALE: That's fine. We need to hear typical stories as well as unusual ones.

AURORA: [*Quietly. Embroidering.*] Pues, as soon as I got to Postville I applied for a job at the Agriprocessor. I got a job in the turkey slaughter area, and they put me on the line, and they said here you go, but they didn't really train me. It was cold and I only had one shirt. They said, you stand right here and then you do this. Use two fingers to grab the lungs and rip them out of the turkey. They wanted me to do it really fast. When I first started, the lungs would keep slipping away from me, and I couldn't work as fast as they wanted me to. I was so cold that first day I was numb. But little by little I learned the job. I found my way to get the lungs out of the turkeys fast, as they were coming by on the line. It was very difficult. There was always a lot of blood where I worked. They gave me a jacket to cover my clothes, but the blood seeped through. (*Pause*)

Pues, that's pretty much how it was. I don't have anything more to say. (She sets down embroidery and leaves the room.)

RAQUEL: *(Standing up, checking to see if Aurora will return.)* She isn't telling the whole story. Yes, there was a lot of blood on her, but it wasn't all animal blood.

ESPERANZA: Raquel, hush!

RAQUEL: I am just telling the truth!

ESPERANZA: What you know happened two years ago, and she told it to you as a sacred secret.

RAQUEL: It was sacred until they destroyed it. They have human blood on their hands now.

ALE: So, the rumors are true? *(Turning off recording device.)*

RAQUEL: *Sí.*

CRISTINA: What are you talking about? Whose blood?

RAQUEL: Two years ago, Aurora discovered she was pregnant, and people gossiped. They said the child was not her husband's... maybe the manager's.

ESPERANZA: Nasty rumors.

RAQUEL: She lost the child when she was seven months pregnant, while she was working on the line at the plant.

CRISTINA: Does that happen to many women?

RAQUEL: *(Fiddling with weaving or thread)* Who knows?

ESPERANZA: Aurora was not able to go to the bathroom often, she was not able to take breaks to eat, and so that was why, she...

ALE: She lost the baby.

ESPERANZA: She had a miscarriage. *Estaba tan triste.* Her spirit was broken, and then her body got sick.

CRISTINA: Did anyone try to help her?

RAQUEL: *Sí.* Ale took her to the free clinic in Decorah for medical care. (*Alejandra nods in agreement.*) And now, there are counselors who come to Postville, but she refuses to talk. This whole thing made her so much worse.

ALE: She suffered a lot of insults at work, because people said that since the child was not her husband's, she had an abortion, not a miscarriage.

RAQUEL: Her life was falling apart. Her husband was threatening to leave her.

ESPERANZA: She stayed by his side, no matter what he said.

CRISTINA: She's lived through a nightmare. And she's so young. What will the future hold for her? Will this baby bring her hope?

RAQUEL: What? With no job? No papers? No money? No husband? And stuck in Postville?

ESPERANZA: A baby is a blessing and a promise for the future.

RAQUEL: Hah! My promise for the future is, when they take this ankle bracelet off, I'm gone!

[Lights down.]

SCENE 13: Minutes later on a street outside the home of Esperanza in Postville, Iowa. (*Spotlight on CRISTINA and Ale*)

CRISTINA: Those stories aren't easy to hear. These women have suffered so much. Do they have a case for a U-Visa?

ALE: It's hard to say. Their cases are strong, and they have a very fine attorney who knows the law...

CRISTINA: Then they should get the Visas, right?

ALE: You know the climate surrounding immigration in our country. But, these women are willing to take the risk. The truth is, I really admire their courage. The only system of justice they know is what they grew up with in Guatemala, and they are skeptical.

CRISTINA: What do you mean?

ALE: Are you aware of the massacres? What happened in Guatemala was genocide.

CRISTINA: Genocide?

ALE: The civil war in Guatemala lasted more than 30 years. Men were tortured, dismembered and killed, women were raped, and children were disappeared... More than 200,000 dead. These attacks focused on indigenous villages across the country, and conservative reports say that at least 83% of the victims were Mayan people. Prosecutions for these crimes are almost non-existent. There was no justice for the loss of life that happened there.

CRISTINA: But this is the United States....

ALE: Yes, and now... the raid, the helicopters. I can't imagine the fear that the sound of helicopters triggered... That was the sound villagers associated with the military approaching to attack during the war in Guatemala.

CRISTINA: They must have been traumatized...

ALE: Yes. Now, this generation comes to the U.S. to seek a better way of life for their children and grandchildren, and they're rounded up like cattle and sent away. The ICE Agents were actually armed with guns and cattle prods!

CRISTINA: It's so terrible. What can I do?

ALE: I think you help tell the women's stories.

CRISTINA: But, I haven't lived this story. It's theirs to tell.

ALE: Haven't you written a book already? You know how to get people to listen. If you really want to help, make sure these stories are heard... Not just by us, but by people around the country, around the world! Make it bilingual. Spread the word in Iowa and in Guatemala. People argue over immigration all the time. There are 800 miles of wall trying to block entry from thugs and terrorists coming in from the south. They just come to take our jobs, right? Those are the myths, but you know the truth about why they come and what happens to them when they get here. The only thing that is going to change people's hearts and minds are the stories. Go! Tell them! Let them know how this affects families, women, and children. Let their stories speak the truth!

(She exits, leaving CRISTINA alone as lights dim.)

SCENE 14: October, 2011, Cedar Falls, Iowa. *Three years after the raid.*

CRISTINA: I wish I could tell you there was a happy ending... not just for the butterflies, but for all migrants. But the truth is that migration is just a vague promise for the future. It is triggered by the instinctual wish for a better life for our children, but it's uncertain. Just last month, on Labor Day weekend, I stayed late in my office to work. Finally, I decided it was time to head home. As I was walking through the grove of pine trees, here, just outside Lang Hall, I heard a strange sound, like a low humming. I stopped to listen, and as I looked up at the trees I saw thousands of monarch butterflies, hanging from the branches, resting in the warm September evening. I knew I was in the presence of something rare and fleeting. I sat and watched them, trying to imagine what drives them to travel so far to lay their eggs, when they will never see the fruits of their journey. I slipped away quietly as the sun began to set and called Della. She would want pictures of this! And, she needed to know that there were monarchs thriving right here, in Iowa, thanks to her, and others like her who take small steps to offer a safe haven.

The next day I returned with my family. I told everyone I had something very special to share. I held my breath as I approached the grove, hoping that the monarchs would still be clustered in the pines. I first heard the low hum, then, looking up at the thousands of monarchs, I whispered, "You see them? They're getting ready for a long trip... some 3000 miles."

"They're on their way South! To Guatemala!" Naty said. "Della told us!" said Dominick... And suddenly the monarchs began to rise, a spectacular cloud of orange and black against the blue Iowa sky, setting their course for home. Their fluttering wings made the journey look easy and their mysterious beauty was breath-taking.

As we watched the cluster disappear on the horizon, we slowly started heading for home with a mixture of feelings and a million questions in our heads. Would the monarchs reach their destination safely? Would there be shelter for them or would they return to destruction, devastation and hunger? Would the future generations be able to sustain themselves? What did this monarch cluster symbolize for me and for my family? Why did they choose to stop here to gain strength?

My thoughts quickly turned to the women of Postville. I tucked my children into bed, went to my desk and sat down to write.

(Lights out.)