

Your name is Mauricio Villatoro and you are a nineteen year old boy living in Lourdes, El Salvador. Currently, you wish your stomach would just be quiet as you work; it has been bothering you all day. You only have a little bit of time left in your shift. Then you can go home. Hopefully your sister, Isabella, is able to come up with something for dinner. Money is tight but somehow she always manages to have a little bit of something ready once you get home. Your stomach grumbles at the thought. It is so hard to work on an empty stomach.

You lift up another box and move it onto the conveyor belt. Your back is aching. Still, you have to keep working at the factory. It is the only way to keep your home. You are provided with shelter as payment for your work which makes the procuring of food even more difficult. Since you do not actually earn money, you feel providing a home for you and Isabella is all you can do. She insists to you again and again that it is more than enough. It does not matter though, you still wish you could do more but conditions are rough. This is your only option. You either have to work for shelter or live on the streets. The streets of El Salvador are dangerous and full of criminals. Survival on the streets is minimal. Isabella encourages you to do something other than the crime that is all around you.

You sometimes feel that a life of crime would be easier. You do not hear stories of gang members going hungry. Your focus is completely lost in your stomach at this point. Watching the clock slowly click by does not help at all either. It is more than tempting to take a piece of fruit out of one of the boxes but that was a lesson you learned the first time. The beating you received had not been worth the meager amount of food it put in your belly. You lost a week of work and almost lost your house. Somehow Isabella had persuaded your bosses to let you keep your job. You never asked how she had managed to do so because you did not think the answer was something you wanted to know. With a sigh you heft another heavy box or two up and watch them roll away.

Fifteen minutes, that is all that is left in your shift. Ten hours seemed to last forever when it was the same, seemingly endless task all day. You outwardly groan with the next box, six o'clock cannot get here fast enough. Dinner last night had been so minimal that today was just awful. Usually fighting the hunger was not so bad. The few slices of molding bread that had been last night's dinner—being careful of course to eat around the mold—were not enough. It was better than a spoonful of sugar in some water; those points in time were always the worst. It had not been that bad in a while but somehow you and Isabella always ended up back in that situation. Isabella did not know how to hold onto money when she had it. She had a tendency to spend it on alcohol and drugs. The combination of the two at times made her forget about caring for you. It was times like that when you wish you had a job that actually paid you with money.

Six o'clock finally rolled around and other workers came pouring into the plant. It was finally time to go. Now you would have to endure the 30 minute walk home in the rain. Rainy season was always the worst but at least the water cooled you down in the heat. It did mean you

would be completely soaked when you returned home, which was not really pleasant. At this point, it did not matter, though. You just want something to eat.

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Isabella is not there when you first get home. You are alright to wait because the old lady next door gives you a tortilla from those she was selling. She hands you a second one for Isabella. She tries to take care of the two of you every now and again; she knows the two of you did not have much after you lost your mother. You debate saving the tortilla; there was a chance Isabella would have something that would go good with it. That idea was short lived. You quickly eat yours, setting Isabella's aside to resist eating hers.

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It was going on nine o'clock and still Isabella was not home. This was unlike her. Not to mention, that second tortilla was looking extra tasty. You would not eat it though. Isabella is your sister and all you have left of your family. You just recently lost your mother. She was raped, beaten, and left for dead by a man strung out on drugs. Before your mother, your cousin, Diego, was beaten and killed by a gang he refused to join. Your uncle and father had been involved with a drug deal that went wrong. Your grandparents were killed in their house during a robbery. Violence in El Salvador had claimed the lives of most of your family. Rape and murder were far too commonplace.

After waiting a few more hours, you pull a blanket up around you as you lie there on the hard floor. You go to bed that night praying nothing has happened to your sister. The thought of losing her too almost keeps you from sleeping. While the worry does its best to keep you awake, exhaustion wins and you manage to fall asleep before your next full day of work.

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Your sleep is restless and the morning comes too early. You keep waking up to check for Isabella. She still was not there when you wake. You feel guilty about doing it but you eat the second tortilla. Hopefully some food in your stomach will help you get through the day. It will be a long day, at that. You know you will be worrying about Isabella all day. You do what you have to. The walk to work feels like it goes on forever.

After you arrive at the plant you hear that Louisa, Isabella's best friend, is looking for you. You hurry over to packing, hoping she would have some news for you. She did have something to tell you but it was anything but good news. Apparently she and Isabella had been stealing money and food from wherever they could get it. This news really upsets you because she had promised to stop stealing. She told you that she had a job and you believed her. Yesterday, Isabella had gotten caught inside someone's house with a wallet, some jewelry, and a bushel of bananas. You know the bananas were for you. It would not have been a big deal if she

had not been caught stealing on multiple occasions in the past. As it was, most of what she stole went to pay her jail and court fees. There were also her relapses with drugs. Having worn out her warnings, the authorities wasted no time and she was quickly sent to Mariona Prison for Women in San Salvador. You find yourself having to make a difficult decision.

- You decide to stay in Lourdes. While Isabella had been providing you with food before, you figure you can handle it on your own. You do not think she will be in there too long. Besides, feeding one person is much easier than two. Turn to page 31.
  
- You choose to go to San Salvador. Isabella is the only family you have left and there is nothing left here for you. Besides, they say there is more money to make in the city. There you will have the chance to earn money and get Isabella out of jail. Turn to page 60.
  
- You know exactly what to do. You go talk to the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo, the Peoples' Revolutionary Army. The guerrilla group will help you. They are always willing to help the people of El Salvador to seek freedom. They will have to help since that was all you wanted for your sister. Turn to page 44.

It is hard not having somewhere to go. It is especially difficult knowing you have people waiting somewhere for you that would treat you right. You knew as soon as you became someone else's property that life would be difficult. It still baffles you that other people think they can treat their fellow human beings as items. You are not even comfortable in your own skin anymore. You cannot be yourself. The longer you stay here, the further your own identity slips away. The longer you stay, the further away Isabella and Lorena seem.

Sometimes you feel you never should have left home. However, you have finally been making a bit more money than when you first started out. At least, you are making enough money now to be able to send them a little bit without spending it all on the cost of sending the money. Conditions are still awful on the farm though. It is not that you thought they would improve since you are staying but you hope something will happen. Apparently you are not the only person who is looking for something more though. Leon is organizing a rebellion. You are not sure if that is something you care to take part in yet.

- You do not want to take part in the rebellion. You want wait a bit longer, this is currently your livelihood. You do not want to mess with the wrong people. Turn to page 23.
  
- You want to be right there with the rest of your mistreated coworkers. The farm owners need to know that people are not objects. You are going to take a stand. Turn to page 52.

You are making decent wages at *Desperados* restaurant. You work as a prep cook making sure that everything is in order behind the scenes. Sometimes it gets ridiculously hot. You are always working very hard hoping for a slight pay increase. You are staying in a house with six other immigrants. You all share a little two bedroom apartment. Three of you sleep in the living room and there are two to each bedroom. Sometimes it is a little cramped but this way you are only paying \$75 a month for rent and utilities.

It is a good long while before you can afford to send any money home to Lorena and Isabella. You send the money to Lorena's uncle's shop, it is the only address you remember in El Salvador, and still you wait to hear back from her. At this point you do not even know if you have a boy or girl waiting for you at home. You really hope to see them all soon.

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You finally receive a letter from Lorena. She shares with you the wonderful news that your sister Isabella has been released on good behavior. She also tells you all about your little boy Antonio. He and his Aunt Isabella are so very close. It warms your heart to know they are close to each other. It is also good to know they are doing well. Not only is the money you are sending helping but business has gotten better in the city and her uncle is doing well again. She is excited about you being able to see you soon. Many of your letters tell her your ideas for bringing the three of them to the United States. You tell her that you will send for her, Isabella and little Antonio once you have your own place. You end every letter the same way telling her that you will see her soon.

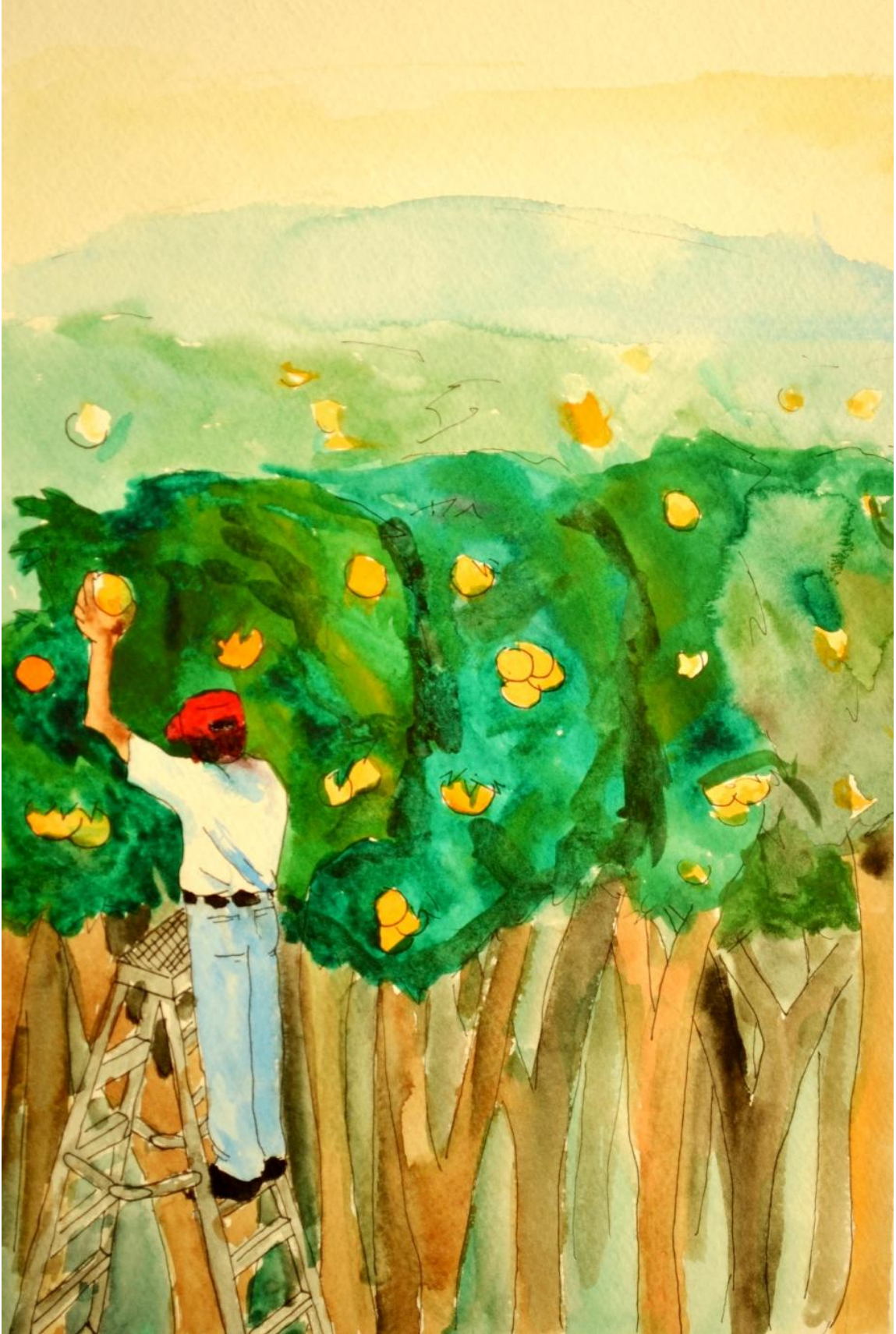
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Antonio is seven by the time you can afford for a smuggler to bring your family to you. You wait anxiously at a gas station for them to arrive. You cannot help but pace up and down. You were going to see your son for the first time and you still could not believe it was happening. A silver SUV pulls into the store and your heart skips a beat. They are here. You resist the urge to run up to the car. You do not want to scare them. You watch intently as the door opens. Isabella is just as you remember her; she looks so much like your mother. Lorena is even more beautiful than you remember; it brings tears to your eyes. You do not let them fall until your little boy climbs out behind her.

You cannot hold back any longer and run over to them scooping them all up into your arms. Lorena cries with you and clings tightly to you. Isabella wraps her arms around you both squeezing you so tight. Antonio does not know what to do but gets caught up in the moment as well. Once you have all calmed down, and you kiss them each numerous times, you help them move their bags to your car. A few more tears escape because it seems so unreal. Once everyone is in the car you head off towards home. Everyone is finally where they should be.

The End





You have no idea what you have gotten yourself into. You just want a good paying job. You are told not to worry, that all will be taken care of. It does not feel right. You try to ask more questions about what is going on but no one listens to you. The whole situation is suspicious. You feel like you have been in the back of this van for forever. It is never ending. You are so hungry and thirsty. You do not feel very well taken care of. What have you done?

There is no turning back. The man in the front says they own you now, shut up. He talks about how he got you to America and now owns you. You are confused. Since when are you someone's property? This is definitely not better than the struggles you had to leave behind. It is so much worse than that. You are a person but they are treating you like an object. You feel so offended. The man pulls over and tells you to get out.

You are greeted by some other shady looking person you do not know. He takes your arm and puts you into a car this time. He gives you some crackers and water but does not say a word to you. You eat and drink in silence. Lights flash past as he drives down the road. Where you are going is beyond your imagination, you wonder to yourself what will happen to you. The combination of silence, food in your belly, and motion of the car put you to sleep.

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You are shaken awake roughly. You blink the sleep out of your eyes looking around you. The sun is high and fields seem to run one forever. You hear someone talking to you but you are too disoriented to know what he is saying. He smacks you upside the head demanding you pay attention. He asks you for the money you owe him for the ride. You tell him you have none, you were told it would be taken care of. He takes this opportunity to threaten you. He says that you are here to work and it will be hard work. You have to work hard; you have to be motivated. You have to cut oranges and you have to harvest those oranges. He makes sure to state that if you try to leave without paying him for your ride that he will really fuck you up. You are guided back to a small shed-like building. You are tossed inside with all the other migrants to wait for your first day of work tomorrow.

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The weather in Florida is hot and muggy. It makes working all day horrible. You miss the hot days back at the taco stand with Lorena for company. It does not help matters that you are paid by the bucket and not by the hour. Filling three or four buckets maybe got you \$30. That is before your bosses take out money you owe them for your ride, for your food, and for housing. One day you are left with only \$10. You cannot even send that to Lorena because they also charge you to send money. The process is repetitive. You work all day to make measly wages. When someone makes a mistake or acts out they threaten to beat him and throw him in the pond with the alligators. It is enough you keep you in line. Still, you just want to get out of here. This is not what you had in mind when you set out for America. You feel the need to do something



but you do not know if you should.

- The first thing you think of is to just run away and get as far away from these people as you possibly can. You believe you can find someplace else to go and start to really experience what it means to be in America. Turn to page 66.
  
- The second thing you think of is to run to the police. This is risky considering you are in the states illegally but what these people are doing it not right. You feel they need to be punished because no person should be treated like an object. Turn to page 75.
  
- The last thing to cross your mind is to stay. These people are scary and they mean business. What is to say they will not come after you? In all honesty, you do not really have anywhere else to go. Turn to page 4.

You go scrounging around Nuevo Laredo gathering up whatever you could to sell. You barely manage to get \$23 worth in pesos. That meant you only have another \$177 to go. Selling discarded shirts, shoes, and items is not going to cut it. You decide to start doing odd jobs here or there. You wait outside the market to help people carry their bags. Very few of them actually pay you. You also wait to wash people's cars when they drive into the parking lot. It was another job where only some people were willing to pay. Between the three different jobs it might not take as long to save up.

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It still takes a little over a month to save up enough money. You even save up a little extra so you would have some money when you get to the United States. Food has not been so hard to come by any more but you are tired of always having to pick up an odd job for such short periods of time. You are tired of moving all over the place. You would like to stay in one place for longer than a few months. At this point you are so home sick for Lorena it is almost unbearable. You have to keep telling yourself that you are doing it all for her and your child. They are both counting on you and you simply cannot let them down.

Once you purchase your fake work visa from Amelia she has one of her coworkers drive you across this border. It is part of her service to help ease your nerves. Her partner that is fluent in English does all the talking so you do not have to worry so much. It astounds you how easy it is to get across the border. It has taken so long to get here and for you to earn money that to just be driven right through like this has you baffled. You cannot begin to fathom what life will be like now. You have actually made it.

Amelia's partner drops you off in an area where she says you should be able to find work. There are so many people wandering around. Most of them are trying to act leisurely, as if they are not there for any specific reason at all. You are not sure who you should talk to about work. Turns out you do not need to talk to anyone, they all know why you are here and they come to you.

- The first man offers to take you to Florida for work. He says that there are a lot of jobs available. He is also more than willing to take you at no charge. Turn to page 8.
- You are so ready to settle down that when someone offers you a job in Texas that you tell her yes before she even tells you what it is. Turn to page 21.
- A small group of migrants approaches you as well, they have relatives in North Carolina and are willing to take you along if you can help pay for gas. You are glad you saved

some extra money because North Carolina, based on what you have heard, is a great place for work for migrants. Turn to page 20.

The three years seemed to crawl by. You turn down the commander position because you want nothing to do with that kind of rank. You do not approve of many of the things you are ordered to do but you do them because you have to. The punishment is not worth it. Rarely is the punishment a beating, but they are so bad when they do occur that you never want to disobey again. The worst thing to happen is when you want to date Rosemary, one of the girls within in the camp, and the commander tells the two of you no. He has interest in her, wanting her as one of his girlfriends, so he does not want the two of you together. Yet you try to meet in secret. It is your last act of rebellion. Instead of hurting you, they make you watch as they hurt Rosemary. You swear to never see her again. You are still not sure what happened to Rosemary.

You shake away the thoughts. You are leaving today. They had not been able to get Isabella out within the three years. They say to you if you will stay longer that they will be able to work something out. You respectfully decline the offer. You have had enough fighting and just want to see Isabella. At this point you decide to travel to San Salvador to test your luck in the city. Hopefully there you will find a nice job where you can save money to help Isabella on your own. You wish you had tried that option sooner. Turn to page 60.

Once you have made it into the compartment you maneuver over to the only unoccupied corner. The air in the boxcar is tense; everyone is on edge, so no one says a word. You think it is safe to take a nap. You have a good long while before you reach your destination. A good night's sleep is exactly what you need right now. You lean against the wall and fall into sleep.

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You wake up to the sound of a gunshot. You jump to your feet but it is too late. A burley man grabs you by the arm yanking you off the train. You look around confused. The train was stopped and there were immigration agents surrounding it. However you did not see many migrants. You wonder why no one warned you about the check point. They just left you there sleeping. You hang your head as you are taken away by the immigration agents. They take you to the nearest bus depot making sure you get onto the bus back to Guatemala. Deportation was the last thing you want. Now you have to start all over again. Turn to page 15.

You are almost home now. Not only are Lorena and your boy waiting for you but Isabella has finally been released from prison and is waiting for you too. You miss her terribly. You fiddle with the ring in your pocket. You hope that Lorena will love it as much as you love her. The two of you have endured so much. You cannot wait to see her and your son. He is turning three soon. Lorena has told him all about you. Your mind is just racing. It took quite some time but finally you are heading back. You are even bringing enough money to help expand onto her uncle's mechanic shop so the two of you can work together. You find it laughable how easy it is to go back compared to the struggles you faced when heading to the United States. It is all too much. You are fighting back tears as you walk up to the door. You have made it. Your life and family are here and you will never leave them again. Uncle Carlos holds the door open for you and says welcome home.

The End

You sat at the edge of the Rio Suchiate reflecting on your journey through Guatemala. You crossed around a thousand miles to get to this point. The water in front of you looks brown and thick. It marks the Guatemalan border, once you crossed it you would be in Mexico, one step closer to the United States.

You find yourself facing the long road ahead. Considering your first few attempts had not worked out as planned, you start over knowing to make different decisions when you get to them. First you need to get across the Rio Suchiate to make it into Chiapas Mexico. That is where you would have the option to take the train. You have also heard of smugglers there willing to get people up to the border for a price. You do not have much money but were willing to work along the way to make even more. There are so many factors involved and you are only at the beginning of this journey. You brace yourself and head out.

You hope since you are on your own at this point you will not run into too many problems. You need to hurry across the river, into Mexico, away from dangerous border towns in Guatemala. Not that making it into Chiapas with its criminal activity will be any better but the sooner you pass through these towns the sooner violence and crime will be things of the past.

You head to the town called Tecun Uman, where the river is wider, slower, and easier to get across. It is important to be careful when in the city. The gang Mara Salvatrucha holds claim there. You do not want to cross their path. However, you ask around while you are there looking for a way across. There are a few other migrants willing to talk to you.

- An older gentleman tells you that he and a group of other men are getting ready to cross with a coyote. He tells you that if you can pay 8000 colons, or \$1000, that this coyote will take you all the way to the Rio Grande. He says that this coyote, Alvaro, knows how to get around all the immigration check points. You think this sounds like a good idea. Turn to page 34.
- There is a woman surrounded by a crowd of people shouting about getting you across the Rio Suchiate and to the Rio Grande as well. She only wants 2400 colons, or \$300, to take you that distance. She says she can charge such a low price since it is a group rate. The more people willing to go, the cheaper the trip would be. You decide you would rather go with Francesca. Turn to page 54.
- You are weary of the people around you. You do not really know them or trust their offers so you decide to cross the river on your own. From there you plan to risk traveling on the trains. Turn to page 29.







The last rung of the ladder is about waist high, higher than you thought but you are still intent on trying. You know have the strength to pull yourself up. You grab the bottom rung as the train continues on. You muster all of your strength and pull yourself up. Your first foot lands on the step quickly followed by the second which makes you sigh in relief. Getting onto the train was the hard part. You climb up to the top of the train and claim a seat in the middle of a car. You feel yourself start to doze. You need to try to keep yourself awake.

- At the front of the train compartment below you is a creepy old man, you consider sliding down to him, to talk for awhile. It seems like a good way to stay awake. You carefully move in his direction. Turn to page 80.
  
- At the back of the train is a small group of men talking to one another. You could talk to them instead. The old man only kind of creeps you out. While they are more your age and seem interesting to talk to you are weary that they are gang members. Still, you feel you need to do something to stay awake. Turn to page 50.
  
- You cannot fight how tired you are. You lock your feet between two ridges on the train top in order to keep yourself steady. You let sleep waft over you and you lay on the top of the train. Turn to page 63.

You should have listened to the old man. You let your guard down on the train. A group of young men come up to you, one asks for a light, a cigarette hanging from his mouth. You look up at him and tell him you do not have one. He smiles and shrugs saying that he will just take your money then. You laugh thinking he is joking. His buddy behind him hits you with a bat letting you know he was not. He hits you again completely disorienting you. Your shoes are ripped off your feet and someone takes all your belongings from your pocket. Another swing of the bat and you taste your own blood. You look up to see another swing headed right towards you unable to move out of the way. Battered and bruised you cannot move and one of the men hauls you to your feet. They have apparently grown tired of playing games with you and the man who originally asked for a smoke stabs you. You fall on top of the train as they walk away and you bleed to death.

The End

You get a job painting in North Carolina. It is great considering that you are paid \$13 dollars an hour. You are staying in a house with six other immigrants. You all share a little two bedroom apartment. Three of you sleep in the living room and there are two to each bedroom. Sometimes it is a little cramped but this way you are only paying \$75 a month for rent and utilities. You send \$150 to Lorena each month asking that she take at least \$25 of that to Isabella. You also tuck away \$100 because you are saving money in order to buy permanent residency papers. You are hoping that once you gain residency you can send for Lorena and your child. You send the money to her uncle's shop, it is the only address you remember in El Salvador, and still you wait to hear back from her. At this point you do not even know if you have a boy or girl. You really hope to see them all soon.

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You finally receive a letter from Lorena. She tells you all about your little boy Antonio. It warms your heart to know he is okay. It is also good to know they are doing well. Not only is the money you are sending helping but business has gotten better in the city and her uncle is doing well again. She shares with you the great news that Isabella has been released on good behavior and anxiously waits to see you again. She is excited about you being able to get residency in the United States but she thought you were coming home soon. She even tells you to just come home now that things are better. She says to bring with you all the money you have been saving instead of spending it on your papers. Isabella agrees with her just wanting you to come home already. Lorena is sure it would be enough money to get you home and you could work there again. She writes again and again how much she misses you. You are not sure what you want to do anymore.

- You take a moment to breathe and collect yourself. You have worked too long and hard to turn back now. If you cannot bring your family here what have you been fighting for? You are going to go see the lady at the immigration agency as soon as possible. Turn to page 53.
  
- Lorena is right. Why should you apply for residency? The plan has always been to save enough money to return home. You still want to marry Lorena as well. Once you buy a ring and save a little more you would head home to her. Turn to page 14.

Staying in Texas and settling in to work is not as easy as you thought it would be. People are constantly on alert for illegal immigrants. You have been squatting in a different building each night. You cannot even go apply for jobs. Someone has to go looking for your particular services. Today you are approached by two different people needing workers.

- The first job option you have is working as a roofer. The days are hot and long but the pay is \$16 an hour. A man sits in his truck waiting for it to fill up with migrants willing to work. You climb in. Turn to page 42.
  
- The other job is working in back at a Mexican restaurant. This job only pays minimum wage. It is further north which means it may be safer to work there and you would not have to be on edge all the time. There is one seat left in the car and it is yours if you want it. Turn to page 5.

You like the results of pick-pocketing. You are eating daily. It is great. Sometimes one pocket is all you need for a couple of weeks. However, there are a few times you get too comfortable and neglect working at the taco stand. Javier is getting fed up with your behavior. When your attempts to steal money come up empty you quickly return to help Javier and tell him you will never leave him stranded again. He needs the help so begrudgingly he accepts your apology.

One day at the taco stand you catch sight of a promising opportunity. The man was wearing a very fancy watch and nice clothing. You figure if you can get both the watch and his wallet, you will be set for the next month at least. You excuse yourself from the taco stand telling Javier something about a break. You follow closely behind the man, hanging back just far enough to not look suspicious. You follow him around a corner, just waiting for the right opportunity to take action.

You walked right into the sight of the man's gun. Your eyes widen as it points directly between them. He smirks and pulls the trigger.

The End

You find out later that it was good you decided to stay out of the rebellion. It is all a fabrication. It turns out Leon's main job on the farm is to test the loyalty of its workers. You have proved yourself loyal and therefore get to live a while longer. There were a few migrants that were beaten to death when they tried to strike out against the guards. It is no surprise for you to see new workers on the farm. They begin asking questions about how life here is treating you. You think it is another trap so you do not say anything. Besides, they are working here now, they will find out the conditions sooner than they will like.

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It is the middle of the night when light explodes across the fields. Everyone in the bunk shed wakes up and heads toward the door ready to run. Shielding your eyes from the bright light you try to look around. There is a helicopter in the air and cop cars are surrounding the place. A voice yells down from the helicopter telling you all not to move, they are not here to hurt you. You are too stunned to move anyway. However, some other migrants run off. You see them get tackled in the distance. A few policemen slowly approach those of you standing there in awe. They guide you to their cars by the arm and take you in.

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You have been sitting in the interrogation room for who knows how long and still do not know what is going on. You have told your story to two different police and one lawyer. You bite your fingernails nervously. Surely they are going to deport you. This has got to be your worst idea ever. Way to go. You sink into your chair waiting for the worst.

Finally a woman enters the room. She walks right up to you and shakes your hand. She tells you her name is Sandra and she works for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). She continues to explain to you that her organization has over two thousand members in Immokalee, Florida and that they all worked to end modern slavery. She tells you they have just extracted you from the Cortez family, a family they have been watching for a while now without significant evidence to put them away. Recently they have had a few undercover agents reporting from the inside. This is how they were able to make the bust that resulted in your rescue. She asks you to testify against the Cortez family in exchange for amnesty.

- You quickly tell her no. You already fear for your life, the Cortez's have no problem killing immigrants that interfere with their business plans. To testify against them seems like suicide to you. Turn to page 67.
- You jump at the offer. You have come this far, amnesty is a shining prize at this point. You knew that staying and waiting out the suffering would eventually pay off but you had no idea it would end this way. Turn to page 58.







You enter the water slowly and cautiously. You dunk your head under the surface each time the border patrol lights sweep by. You move slow and steady working hard to keep solid footing. Halfway across a whirlpool sucks you under. You are unprepared and swallow lots of water. You try to stand back up but now that you have fallen the current sweeps you away. You cannot stay upright and each time you fall more and more water flows into your mouth. Each gasp for air is futile as your lungs fill up with water. You are dragged below the surface. Your arm reaches out but there is nothing for you to grab onto. Once more you are plunged under the water and you drown never to resurface again.

The End

It is hard to believe but your destination is fast approaching. The old man had told you true. You manage to avoid being caught at the check points. His advice of listening to the train really pays off. Once the train starts to slow, even by the tiniest fraction, it is time to get off. Surprise checkpoints have been cropping up everywhere. You manage not to get snagged at any of them. You even begin to share the man's advice with younger migrants that come and go on top of the train cars.

The most important advice he gave you, even if it sounded off, was to take your time with the train, do not be impatient. It was how he lost his arm. Once in Tierra Blanco you do not get back before the train speeds ahead. You debate jumping on anyway more than anxious to get to the end of this perilous journey. You hesitate a moment longer, hearing the words of the old man, and decide to wait for the next train. Shortly after you see another man fall short of his leap and get swept away with the train.

You shake the memory away. Following the old man's advice has gotten you the farthest you had ever gone yet. You are so close to the border. The train you are on slows as it approaches the station in Guaymas. You are sure to get off before it stops and you are quick to get back on once it starts going again. Only two more stops to get to Heroica Nogales and your chance to cross into America.

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The work is just as hard as you remember it. You are not sure how long it is you need to work before you can head out. You have a few options open to you that would change how long you need to stay.

- You can cross on your own; it would not cost you much, just a bit of money to get some food and water for your trek through the desert. A long walk is not anything new and you feel you are prepared to head towards your future. Turn to page 43.
- You hear rumors of a coyote named Miguel willing to take immigrants across the border into Arizona for \$900. Having come this far, you think no cost is too steep. You will work hard to make the money and then go in search of Miguel. Turn to page 30.

- There is another coyote named Emilliano offering to take immigrants over to Nuevo Laredo. He says it is hopeless to cross in through Arizona and that it would be easier to cross into Texas. He asks for \$1,200 in order to cover extra expenses of transporting immigrants. The extra cost seems worth a better chance at America. Turn to page 62.

You are unsure of who to trust so you venture to cross the river yourself. You almost slip and fall a few times but your determination keeps you pushing forward. You are completely exhausted by the time you reach the other side. After you rest for a minute you wander through the outskirts navigating towards the Train Station. It takes a long time to get there because you are very jumpy. You have made it this far and are in no hurry to get caught. When you reach the station in Tapachula you hide in the graveyard nearby. Once you are inside you hide amongst a clustering of gravestones and wait for a train to roll in.

It is not an easy task to wait for the train. You continually have to hide somewhere else from a different danger. First there are gang members patrolling the graveyard trying to catch the immigrants off guard. If they find you, they will take all your money and beat you to within inches of your life. You do not know how much longer you can avoid them. It does not help that you also have to watch for immigration agents. You barely escape with the help of another immigrant. You wait with him until you hear the whistle blow. He takes off at a run and it is time for you to get up and move too. You run towards the train unsure of what to do once you reach it.

- You see a number of immigrants jumping right onto the train and hold on. It seems simple enough. You just need to time it right and hold on tight. You charge at the nearest ladder. Turn to page 69.
  
- Some other people have been jumping into compartments. It looks like a nice place to rest. It is enticing and safe looking. You try to pull yourself up into the next boxcar. Turn to page 13.
  
- The others are climbing right on top of the train. It takes a little more effort but it provides some more options for escape if you need it. You want the extra safety measure any head toward the top of train. Turn to page 18.

It takes you a little over two months to save up the money to get to Miguel. He takes you and five other immigrants to an opening in the border fence. He watches as you each climb across. You all wait on the other side for Miguel to come through and lead you to town. Five minutes go by and still Miguel has not come through the opening. You go to see what is taking so long.

Miguel has gone. Apparently he thinks showing you the opening in the fence is worth the \$900 dollars you paid him. You head back to the group and tell them you are all on your own now. A man volunteers to try to lead you all to safety. Since no one has any idea where to begin you all accept his offer. He starts following what appears to be a frequently traveled path assuming it is the direction most immigrants from this area follow. You have only been walking for about 30 minutes when you hear a helicopter above you. You all freeze.

Soon the border patrol shows up to take you all to the holding facility. You are all going to be deported. They send you back to Mexico not caring that you are from El Salvador. You are not in Mexico long before they put you back onto the Bus of Tears and ship you back to Guatemala. You find yourself back where your journey began. Turn to page 15.

Staying was a difficult decision to make but you feel it is the best option. You will visit Isabella as soon as you are able. She will have to understand that you cannot just go chasing after her. Besides, you told her again and again to stop stealing, there was already enough crime. However, you are struggling with the decision. Without money you are unsure of how you will get by.

When you make it home you talk to the woman next door. She does not have any spare tortillas this time; food is hard to come by everywhere. You sigh outwardly. This means you need to scrounge in the garbage for tonight. You just hope what you might find will not be too moldy. While it is something to eat, it always tastes funny. You hate moldy food.

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It had been a little over a month. You look for other jobs, jobs that will pay you with money, unlike your current work. However, you are not having any luck finding a job that is willing to pay you. Most nights you do not eat at all because it is easier just to go home and sleep. The pain in the pit of your stomach does not seem to bother you as much while you are sleeping. Sometimes it makes you wish you could just sleep all day. That sounds especially wonderful tonight. You are extra sore from work. All that heavy lifting on a forever empty stomach is wreaking havoc on your body. It takes every effort just to move. No food also means you have no energy so you are constantly tired. Tonight your head is aching as well. You just need to sleep. Things always feel just a little better when you woke up in the morning. You crawl up under the blankets wishing that things were not so bad. You quickly fall asleep. However, you do not wake up again. You starve to death in your sleep.

The End







You make time to talk to Alvaro, you only have 3000 colons, not even half of what he is asking for. You explain that you are willing to work for it. He tells you that you better get to it then, he is not going to wait on you. Maybe you can catch him the next time if you make the money. You walk away disheartened, how can you make another 5000 colons? You ponder the thought as you continue to walk.

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You must have talked to about seven different farm owners looking for work. You are ready to give up at number seven but you know you cannot. No matter what happens here you would have to give up for the night. Lots of time has gone by with your walking around. It is dark now. You knock earnestly on the door. You jump back when you are greeted by a man with a gun. He glares at you asking what you want. You tell him that you just want to work. He asks you what kind of work. Shifting nervously in front of the gun you tell him whatever work he has. He motions with the gun for you to go around back. Slowly you do as he says knowing he is following right behind you with his gun.

Once behind the house he lowers the gun to his side. He tells you that you can stay in the barn back there and you should go sleep now because you have to be up early to help him with the animals. You thank him profusely until he shrugs you off and heads inside. You do not know why he has decided to let you stay but you are more than happy he did. Inside the barn you curl up onto a bed of hay not taking long to drift to sleep.

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The barn door crashes open in the morning waking you from a sound sleep. The man shouts at you to get moving and you quickly get up heading to his side. You find out his name is Delgado. He spends the day showing you the ropes of tending to his farm. He shows you what food to feed certain animals. He shows you what to do with all the animal manure. He also shows you how to milk a cow. The last thing he shows you is how to pull up weeds out of the garden. He leaves you pulling weeds late into the evening. It is good busy work but you are unsure of how much he is will to pay you which is worrisome considering how much you need. You just try your best.

He comes out later that evening with some chicken and rice for you. You eat it quickly having forgotten all about eating consumed with worry about your money problems. You look at the man and ask him why he is being so kind to you when everyone else turned you away. He does not look happy that you asked the question but answers it anyway. About a month ago his son, the person who usually helped on the farm, was brutally murdered by the Zetas gang from Mexico. He has done nothing wrong; he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. You are about his age and he believed he needed the extra help.

You feel compelled to share with him how you lost most of your family. You tell him how you are currently fighting towards protecting what family you have. He sighs and asks how much you need to head north. You tell him you need \$625 in order to afford the help of a good coyote. You make sure to explain you are willing to work for every penny. He nods and disappears into the house. You remain sitting outside unsure of what to do now.

Delgado returns shortly with a bunch of money in hand. He puts it into your hands and tells you to get out of here as quickly as you can. You can only say one word and this point: why? He starts shoving you towards the front of the house serious about making you leave. He tells you he does not want to see another young man die and he is afraid that would happen if you stay. He wants you to have the life his son cannot. You start to cry at the kindness the man has showed you. You leave his place reluctantly wishing you could stay with him. You watch as he goes back into his house. You swear you see tears in his eyes as he closes the door behind him. You hurry back to the river to find Alvaro.

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Alvaro grins at you toothlessly as he counts your money. He takes your 3000 colons plus \$625 as payment and shares his astonishment at the fact you are back already. He did not even have time to miss your money. You think about Delgado and what he has given you. You still have another \$75 extra he gave you in your pocket. You tell Alvaro you ran into your guardian angel. He laughs and makes a joke about maybe asking for more money since you have an angel looking out for you. You do not think he is funny.

Once he gets you across the river on a raft he loads you and two other migrants into the back of his pickup truck. He has you all lay between two layers of blankets. He pours bags of corn kernels over the blanket except for where your heads are trying to make it look as though he is hauling a truck full of corn. He may not be funny but he is smart in your opinion. You already feel the cost is worth it.

After what seems like hours the truck comes to a stop. Alvaro guides the three of you out and into a nearby house. Inside an old woman feeds you all and shows you to a room you can share for the night. Now you understand exactly why Alvaro charges so much. He is a full service coyote. He not only will get you from point A to point B but he will be sure to get you food and safety along the way.

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Alvaro's network of smugglers runs all across Mexico. They work like a well oiled machine. He would drive for about 3-5 hours before stopping at the next safe house on his route. You are no longer traveling with the other two immigrants because they were headed to Nuevo Laredo instead of Heroica Nogales. Alvaro has you sit up front with him now confident the rest

of the trip will go smooth enough that he does not need to hide you. It makes you nervous but Alvaro has not done you wrong up to this point. You trust him to get you to the border.

In a few days you arrive in Heroica Nogales. He drops you off with a smirk wishes you luck before driving off. You feel funny without him now considering you have come all this way with him. You thank god for Delgado and Alvaro.

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They start training you for the position of commander immediately. The commander is in charge of everything including the relationships of his followers. If he does not want two people to date, he says no, and they have to listen or be punished. Since you are going to be a commander, you will be able to have as many girlfriends within the camp as you want. You will be the one who will tell people what to do and when to do it. You like the idea of being the one in charge.

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The three years you were expected to stay came and went. The Peoples' Revolutionary Army held up their end of the bargain. Isabella came to the camp to join you once she was released. You convince her to stay with you, explaining the situation. It is the best job you have ever had. The work is rough and not always something you want to do. As commander you just had to tell someone else to do the tasks you did not care for; that is the best perk to being a commander. It is good to be in charge. You never want it to end. You decide to stay in El Salvador and fight for the cause of the Peoples' Revolutionary Army.

The End

Lorena's Uncle Carlos, works you hard. You even stay late at the shop trying to impress him thinking if he really likes you, Lorena will like you even more. It is funny logic but you believe it nonetheless. You are really excited about how much money you are saving. Javier still lets you stay with him for dirt cheap at this point but you have your sights set on something better. You hope soon you will be able to have your own place. Well, you also like the idea you may not have it all to yourself for too long. When the time is right, you are going to ask Lorena to move in with you. You will have money to support the two of you. It will not be much but you will have each other.

You are putting all you have into your work and visiting Isabella as often as you can. She is looking much better at this point with the money you were able to put into her account. The conditions in the prison are still terrible but amenities make it easier. She is resigned to the fact she will be here for a while longer and is made stronger by knowing that you are trying to support her. She begins telling you the stories other inmates shared with her. She talks of jobs where people are paid close to \$7 an hour, about 60 colons. It makes you think of the offer you turned down. The money is still tempting. The thought retreats to the back of your mind when you leave the prison and Lorena is waiting for you.

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It has been a few months since you and Lorena moved in together and already things are becoming more and more difficult. She does not work, you tell her you do not want her to, and you feel it is your job to provide for her. Carlos cannot afford to give you a raise because things at the shop are going slow. It seems like things are crashing down around you just as you thought you were happy. To make matters worse, or maybe better? You are not sure but Lorena thinks she might be pregnant. You have no idea how you are going to support her and a baby.

You make up your mind. All of Isabella's talk has convinced you America is the place to be. There are a number of jobs that pay from 7\$ to \$15 an hour. She tells you again and again that your life would be better, easier, in America. You fight with this decision for a long time. You talk to Carlos before Lorena. You ask him to please take her back into his house and care for her while you are away. He protests at first but then you explain your long term plans. It is all for the sake of Lorena and the baby. Carlos, with a heavy heart, tells you he will do what he can. He does not approve, but he tells you things were so difficult at the shop; he cannot afford to keep all his employees. He says he was going to have to let you go soon anyway. It is better that you go looking for more work.

You explain everything to Lorena later that evening. She is furious at first, a little at you, a lot at her uncle, then at you all over again. You hold her close and explain again that it is what you need to do. She sighs; she knows there was not much she could do for work while pregnant. She asks if there was any way she could convince you to stay. You kiss her forehead, a silent answer to her question. She asks you one more question: Do you plan to migrate legally or

illegally?

- You tell her that you are going to apply to migrate legally. Hopefully you will get processed quickly. You may not have very many skills but you are a hard worker. Besides, if you apply legally, you might be able to bring her and the baby. Turn to page 77.
- You have heard about how hard it was to get to the U.S legally and have no intension of waiting years to get to your destination. The baby will not wait that long. You cannot afford to waste time. Turn to page 15.







The man in the truck is always the one to drop you off at jobs. He leaves you with ladders and tools. You are there for heavy lifting. You do what you can to help the other immigrants. You are not necessarily skilled in roofing but everyone helps one another. If you are needed for something they call you over and tell you what to do. You learn a new piece of the process every day. They advise you to be careful when laying down the pitch because it burns your skin. You all look out for each other's safety on the job. You become quite adept at carrying stacks of shingles up and down a ladder. Some of the other men start calling you Spiderman, because of how well you hold onto the ladder and rooftops, you do not really know why but enjoy the nickname.

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You all have been working together for about a month when the INS raids one of your jobs. It turns out they have been keeping tabs on your boss and waiting for the opportune moment to catch his illegal workers. They came when you are all inside on your lunch break. There is nowhere for you to run. They cuff your hands behind your back and haul you away. Words like scab and wetback are thrown around as you are taken through crowds of people. You look at your feet not wanting to meet anyone's eyes. You feel defeated.

After they hold you in a detention center for a few days they deport you. They send you back to Mexico not carrying that you are from El Salvador. You are not in Mexico long before they put you back onto the Bus of Tears and ship you back to Guatemala. You find yourself back where your journey began. You almost want to give up. Turn to page 15.

You carry a big bag filled with water and rolls. It should be more than enough to get you from Heroica Nogales to a town in Arizona. You sneak behind a group of people that have paid for a coyote to get across the border. Once you have made it across the border you hang back. You are not afraid of the desert and feel you can navigate it on your own. You have come this far, you feel luck is now on your side. You do not want to get caught following a coyote when you have not paid. Odds are he would kill you.

You carefully budget how much you eat and drink on your journey. However, something does not seem right. Two nights have come and gone and you do not see any sign of civilization. The journey is only supposed to take about three days. You should have run into the mountains by now. You fear you are lost. This is bad news since you packed just enough to reach the comfortable mountain region. You have enough food for one more day.

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It has been three days since you have run out of water. The desert is hot and dry. It has not rained since you began your travels. You cannot help but sweat profusely in the heat. Your eyes and mouth are so dry. A few times you have fallen because of dizzy spells. It is hard to get back up and continue on. It is even more difficult when whirlwinds of sand rush by, the mini-tornadoes tear at your skin with the hot sand. You are severely dehydrated and do not know you will ever get out of the desert. You fall again, only this time it is a seizure, your body is shutting down. It is with one more convulsion that your heart stops and you die lost in the desert.

The End

The Peoples' Revolutionary Army is more than willing to accept your help. You quickly accept before they mention they have one condition. If you want them to get your sister out of prison, you need to serve with them for three years. They have connections within the prison but they say they will not be able to get her out until after you serve your three years. They want to be sure you will not take advantage of their generosity. It was unexpected but you think it will be beneficial. Not only will they get your sister out of prison but you will have somewhere to sleep and you will be fed regularly. You are prepared to do what you need to do to help Isabella.

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They do not train you. They just give you a new name and a pistol. You have to be watchful of your comrades and the camp. If anything happens while you are guarding the place, no matter the circumstance, it is your fault and you will be punished for it. It was also important that you do everything the commander says or you will be punished. Mistakes are unacceptable. It was either pay for mistakes with your life or punishment. You receive your fair share of punishments. One of your least favorites is doing thirty trips to get fire wood.

Every moment you are on pins and needles because you can be blamed for anything. There is always a chance you would be attacked by rival armies vying for the same territory. In the midst of battles, you feel nervous, and you think that you will get killed and never see Isabella again. You miss her even more as you travel around with the Peoples' Revolutionary Army. Your worst fear is you will die and she would never know. The policy is if someone falls during a battle, they are to be left behind. Those remaining cannot handle the added burden. It is unnerving to leave behind people you once depended on. Still, you do what you have to do.

They allow you to write Isabella in prison. You often write about your time with the army and how it is to help her get out sooner. You hope they will make her smile. The letters are sent out after the commander reviews them crossing out the things he does not want you writing. You are concerned that the letters are not actually reaching her though because you have yet to receive one back from Isabella. You learn to walk quickly and to share the load. Each person is treated equally, no matter the condition you are in. If you are sick you are still expected to carry your heavy pack and to keep up with the rest of your comrades. You try your best not to step on toes. You have been with them for three months now. You do not know how much more of this you want to deal with.

- You decide that you cannot put up with this lifestyle anymore. You have seen too many people hurt. You just want to get out of there. You and a few comrades devise a plan to run away. Turn to page 74.
- While it is a rough place to be in, you have not gone hungry and you have become stronger. You may not agree with everything they do but you follow orders as best you

can. They offer you a chance to be commander based on your good behavior. The promotion comes with some rewards and you decide to take it. Turn to page 37.

- They offer you a chance to be commander based on your good behavior. You turn it down not wanting that much responsibly. You do not like it here but you will stay the three years as you agreed. Three years will go by quickly enough and you will get to see Isabella again. It will be more than worth it. Turn to page 12.

Your job with the gang was easy. You work in groups of two, one carries the drugs and the other offers up the sales pitch. In your team you carry the product. It is Guerrero who does all the talking. The work makes the journey speed by. There is also the added protection of working with the gang. No one else dares to mess with you. Not even local police dare to cross these guys.

You are careful when you work with them though. Their tempers are short and if someone makes them mad, there is a chance you might pay for it. Once when another migrant refused to buy from you and ran away Guerrero punches you in the face. He apologizes later saying that he got carried away with his anger. You tell him that you understand. You do not really but the last thing you want it to be punched again.

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The gang leaves the train at Hermosillo, the stop right before yours, and asks if you want to stay with them. You shake your head telling them that you need to get to Heroica Nogales to get into America. They wish you luck as the train gets going again. You are about the reach Heroica Nogales with hardly any money to your name. You wish you had more to show for your work but they only paid you with protection. You think at least you have made it this far.

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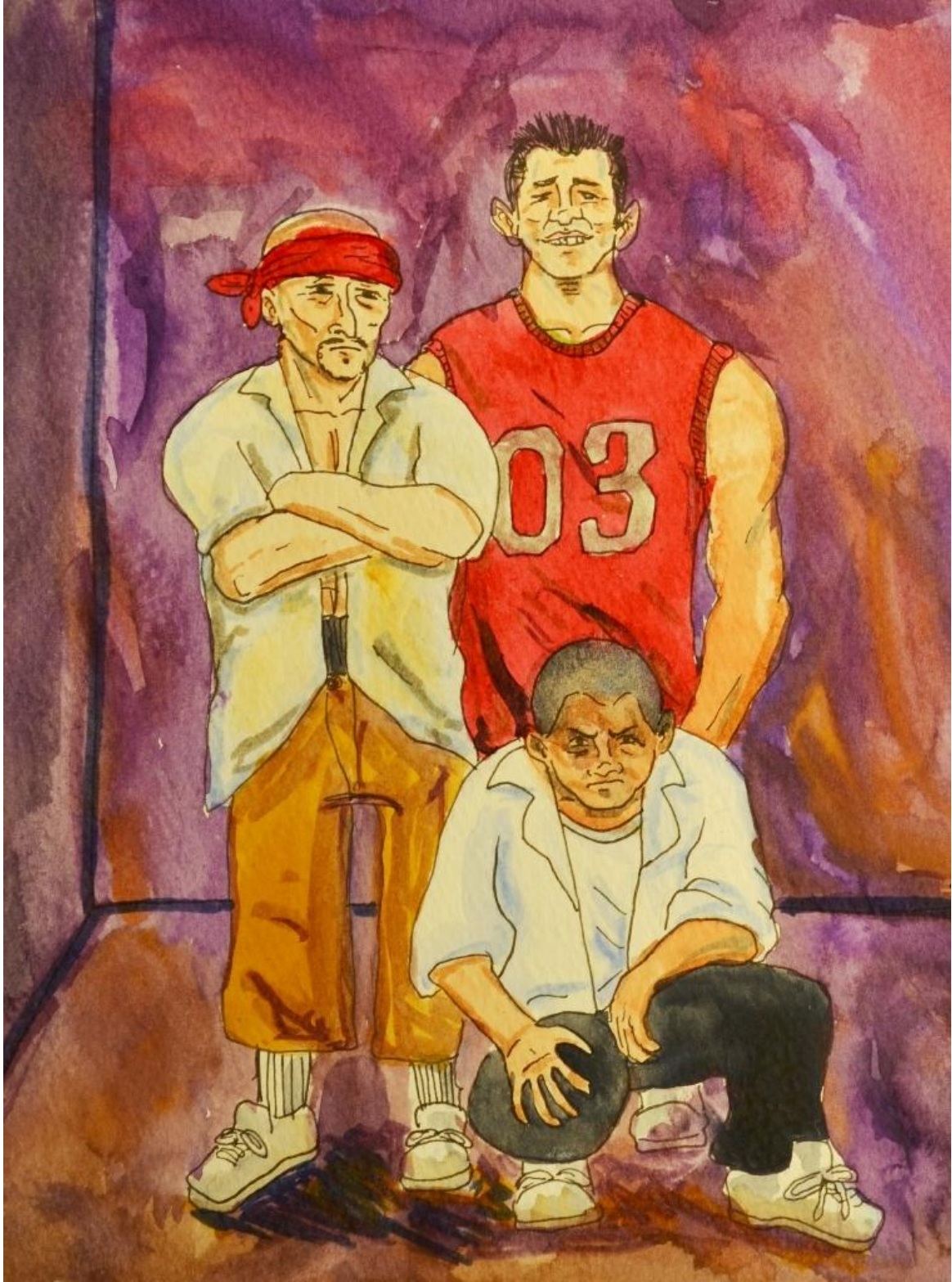
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You use precaution when approaching the young men at the back end of the train car. You do not want them to misunderstand your intentions. One flicks his knife open when he sees you coming. You stop dead in you tracks only wobbling a little trying to remain balanced on the train. You ask if you can join them. They whisper for a bit amongst themselves then the man with the knife motions you over. He offers you a joint once you sit down with them and you take it not looking to upset them. After you take a hit he asks for it back, he did not know you enough to share the whole thing.

Conversation with the group jumps around. For a long while they were discussing their sexual conquests and to your embarrassment they include you. You embellish a bit about Lorena trying to impress the guys. The conversation is definitely keeping you awake. Later the focus of conversation shifts from favorite foods to drugs of choice. They brag to you about their ever expanding drug trade and how much money it makes them. They ask if you would be willing to help them along the way to sell some to the immigrants on the trains.

- Afraid of what might happen if you say no, you say yes to their offer. Turn to page 46.
  
- Not wanting to get involved you turn down their offer. Turn to page 68.

It does not take long for the decision to stay at the taco stand to pay off. Her name is Lorena. She has the prettiest smile. At first she flirts with you a bit coming to the stand and buying a taco once a week. She hang around and talk to you, slowly eating the taco, making her excuse to talk to you last as long as possible. You go out of your way to give her the best slices of tomato and the freshest tortillas. After a few weeks, she buys you a taco so you could join her for lunch. That makes you happy for a few reasons. First off, you are getting food. Second, it is with the prettiest girl you have ever seen. Lastly, this means you have more money to take to Isabella.

Things do not seem so bad when Lorena is around. As great as she makes you feel she also makes you feel inferior. You can barely support yourself and she seems to have money to spare. She wants you to move in with her, she knows about your cramped living conditions, but you cannot accept the offer. You want to get your life in order first. You want to make something of yourself. Lorena is also insistent that you take a job at her uncle's mechanic shop. It sounds like a good step up. He is willing to pay you 130 colons a week. You have been considering it. Things are not so bad working at the taco stand. You like the old man you work with. Then there is the other offer.

A man has been recruiting people in the square on a daily basis. He promises jobs in America for \$70 U.S a day, that is about 600 colons. It is way more than tempting. You have always wondered about life in America. The opportunity had come to you. Can you really turn it down?

- Yes, while the opportunity is good, you have to turn it down because you want to stay with Lorena. Working with her uncle sounds like the best choice for you. It will be more money than you are used to making, maybe you can eventually move out on your own. Turn to page 38.
- Yes, you can turn it down; you do not like the idea of messing with a good thing. You enjoy sharing tacos with Lorena. There is also a sort of freedom for you at the taco stand. Some days Javier leaves you to run the place and you get to keep all the tips. You are comfortable here. Turn to page 70.
- No, you have to accept the offer. It is a great opportunity and you just have to take it. You can go work for a little while and then come back to San Salvador with money to provide for both Lorena and your sister when she is released and more. Turn to page 8.

Plans are set in motion and the rebellion is to take place when it is time for lunch break. You are more than nervous. The air is thick with tension, as well as humidity, as you work in the field today. No one does anything to draw unwanted attention. Continually you look to one another for reassurance. The idea is, once everyone goes to eat something, you are going to surprise the men in charge while they are eating. You all have weapons stashed just waiting to be taken from hiding. Many of them were rocks or big sticks but they would get the job done. The morning takes forever to end and when that whistle blows you practically jump out of your skin. It is time.

You take your weapon with you and slowly creep up on the dining hall. Other migrants should be closing in on the other doors at the same moment. You take a deep breath summoning your courage; you were going to get out of here now. You never should have stayed. You run into the room and are greeted by the zap of a tazer. You convulse and drop to the floor. A guard looks down at you and shakes his head.

Stupid immigrant he says kicking you hard in the side. Others join him and rain blow after blow onto your body. Apparently Leon's job is to test the loyalty of migrant workers. You have failed that test. They continue to beat you. It does not stop anytime soon as you slip in and out of consciousness. It smells like pee because someone decides that spitting on you is not enough. One final kick to the head and you stop moving at all. Damn it Ernesto, one man says, you were not supposed to kill him. The boss will not be happy.

The End

It is almost two years before you have enough money to pay for your residency papers. You step into a small office space and sit down with a woman named Cassandra. You hand her the \$3,500 she says it will take to get everything in order. She fills out a receipt and hands it to you. She also has you fill out a small stack of paperwork. You need to put information such as your name, address, and birthday, all the little details that will grant you your goal. You give the paperwork back once you have filled everything in. She takes it all and shakes your hand. She says she will call once the paperwork comes in. You leave with a big smile on your face ready to be a U.S. citizen.

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You have not heard from Cassandra and it has been two months. You go back to her office to ask her what is taking so long. The only problem is that she is not there. No one is there. You see that all the paperwork you painstakingly filled out is just sitting in the empty room. You hurry home unsure of what to do. Two full years of your savings are gone. You have nothing to take home now. You have nothing left to show for everything you have been through. You do not want to deal with this anymore. You head out the garage of the apartment building. You are resolved. You cannot do this anymore. You have already let Lorena down so many times. You do not deserve her. You could not even help your big sister Isabella. You have failed at everything. You drag a chair to the middle of the floor and grab some rope. You make a noose tying the other end up around the rafters. You climb up onto the chair and slip that rope around your neck. You are too ashamed to go home. You have lost everything. Kicking the chair away you say goodbye forever.

The End

You and the other migrants gather and give what little money you can to Francesca. You are able to afford the 2400 colons, that leaves you with 600 to get across the Rio Grande. You hope it will be enough, Isabella had sold the last of her Mother's jewelry to send you off with so much money. First thing the coyote does is send you all across the river on rafts, her partner takes you across six at a time. The raft barely floats and you make it across almost as wet as you would have been had you tried to swim.

Francesca ushers you all into the back a of huge semi truck. It is too hot and too crowded but she makes sure everyone who has paid her money gets crammed inside. Each bump the truck hits one migrant or more flies into another. You try to look at it this way; at least soon you can make a better living for yourself. A few bumps and bruises at this point are not going to discourage you. Lorena is waiting on you. Suddenly the truck stops moving, the trucker must be getting gas you think. You sink down trying to get comfortable amongst other people. While the truck was stopped is the perfect time to nap.

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It has been three days and still no movement. The back of the truck stinks of feces and people are severely dehydrated. The sun is baking you all alive. One of the men convinces everyone to try to maneuver the doors open. You push and you kick and nothing seems to be working. At one point everyone even charges at the door. It is a bad idea though because a lot of people get hurt. Someone's head smacked into yours giving you a bloody nose. You use your shirt to keep from bleeding all over the place. Finally the door opens from the outside, it seems someone had heard all the commotion and came to investigate. You are wrong. Outside the truck are a bunch of immigration agents pointing their guns at you all. The smuggler took almost all your money and only driven you across town to leave you stranded. The agents take you all to the nearest bus station putting you what is called the Bus of Tears. The bus travels back to Guatemala leaving you practically right where you started. You are back to square one. Turn to page 15.

Pancho sneaks you into America in the back of cargo van. He has you hiding in a box amongst many others that are just filled with little stuff animals. Even the one you are in is filled to the brim with the little toys. The hope is, if they check enough of the first boxes and see that there is nothing suspicious below the surface they will not dig through the ones at the back. It actually worked!

It was a long while before the van stopped again. Pancho opens the lid and lets you out of the box. He guides you by the arm to another man. He hands Pancho a great deal of money and says thanks for doing business with you. Pancho replies that it is his pleasure and hands you over. You look at him confused. The man shoves you in the direction of his car. He says come on, you are mine now and it is a long way to Florida. Turn to page 8.







It is nerve wrecking waiting outside those courtroom doors for them to call you inside. Your nerves are completely on edge. The slightest noise makes you jump. It does not matter that they have an officer waiting with you, you are still afraid someone will kill you, you have seen so much death in your lifetime is has effectively been a constant fear. They call you in as the next witness and you enter slowly. You really only have two very important things to do. Once you swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth you sit down.

The prosecutor walks up to the stand asking you to point to your captors and for you to recount your story for the jury. You point over at the defendants, aiming specifically at Rodrigo Cortez, and then tell the jury how you came to America and were sold to that man. You explain the harshness of your work environment with its constant death threats and barely any pay. Your story unfolds and the jury seems to be very involved.

When your story is finished the defense attorney accuses you of deserving your treatment for trying to enter the U.S. illegally. He claims your fate may not have been so bad if you had just stayed in your own country. He claims his client was providing a service. He gave you somewhere to eat, sleep, and make money. You cannot get better treatment than that; maybe if you had obeyed the law your boss would have been nicer. The prosecutor objects as the defense attorney badgers you with his words. When the defense rests you are allowed to leave.

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You are held in protective custody until the trial was over. It takes almost three full years for the case to be decided. The three members of the Cortez family are convicted of conspiracy to hold 500 workers in involuntary servitude. They are sentenced to thirty-one years and nine months in federal prison. You feel amazing knowing this was only possible because of you. There is also the fact that now you are a permanent resident of the U.S.A with a good job that pays you well. This experience may be the worst in your life but is definitely on the fast track leading to the best.

Soon you will be able to send for your family in El Salvador. You have only been able to write a few letters to Lorena's uncle's shop, the one address in El Salvador that you remember. You receive a few letters from Lorena. She shares with you the wonderful news that your sister Isabella has been released on good behavior. She also tells you all about your little boy Antonio. It is also good hear from them. At the end of each letter Lorena tells you she loves you and she is excited about you being able to see you soon.

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Antonio is seven by the time your family is able to come join you. You wait anxiously outside your house. You cannot help but pace up and down. You were going to see your son for the first time and you still could not believe it was happening. A silver SUV pulls up to your drive and your heart skips a beat. They are here. You resist the urge to run up to the car. You do

not want to scare them. You watch intently as the door opens. Isabella is just as you remember her; she looks so much like your mother. Lorena is even more beautiful than you remember; it brings tears to your eyes. You do not let them fall until your little boy climbs out behind her.

You cannot hold back any longer and run over to them scooping them all up into your arms. Lorena cries with you and clings tightly to you. Isabella wraps her arms around you both squeezing you so tight. Antonio does not know what to do but gets caught up in the moment as well. Once you have all calmed down, and you kiss them each numerous times, you help them move their bags into the house. A few more tears escape because it seems so unreal. Once everyone is in inside you lead them to the dining room where you have made an elaborate dinner. You all sit down and pray before your meal thanking God that he has brought you all back together.

The End

You think life in San Salvador will be easier than life in Lourdes. However, when you arrive it is nothing like you imagined. You manage to find work helping out an old man named Javier with his taco stand. He teaches you how to cut around the rotten parts of tomatoes, onions, peppers, even how to disguise an old tortilla. If you set it out in the sun for long enough it will soften back up and no one is the wiser. He has a lot of tricks up his sleeve. The food is not bad, you eat it yourself even. Sometimes your stomach is really upset for a few days but it is better than being hungry. You feel you have had more than enough of that sensation.

Javier even lets you stay with him and his nephews. The hut is essentially aluminum, plastic, and cardboard. You give him eight colons (approximately one dollar) a week to stay with him. It does not seem like much but, considering you really only ever make about 24 colons in one week working at the taco stand, it does not leave you with much money. You try to save four colons each week for helping Isabella. You think it is a good idea to set money aside to possibly help her get out of prison. You are really not sure what good it will do but it seems to be the responsible thing. You cannot complain too much about your situation, you are making money which is new. You wish Javier did not charge you to eat at the taco stand. Food is where most of your money went. The remaining 12 colons you have barely gets you through the week. You are used to the hunger though. Somehow preparing food daily is worse than just lugging around boxes of food. You are not only handling all the food but the smells surround you every second you are at work. You also have to watch people devour their tacos right in front of you. It is like they are mocking you and the fact that you are out of money.

Sometimes you dip into the Isabella fund. You only feel a little guilty. It is not like she knew you were putting money aside for her. You decide not to tell her about it when you visit her. You almost cry when you see her. It feels like forever since you saw her last. Yet, there she is. She smiles as best she can as she looks at you. At this point she has apologized over and over about getting caught for stealing again. You shush her and tell her how you are holding up without her; you told her she does not need to worry about you.

She tells you about the terrible conditions she is living in. She does not have a bed to sleep on. There is no running water so the bathrooms do not work. She tells you how she can only get toothpaste, shampoo, and other personal hygiene items through the prison store at one to two colons an item. That even includes the water to bathe. She has not washed in months because she has no money. Sometimes she could trade for shampoo or water but that would mean she had to have something else someone wanted which was rare considering she did not have much. Sometimes she would exchange lunch rations. More often than not she exchanges her beans or powdered eggs for drinking water, which also had to be purchased. You do not let her tell you anymore until you tell her you have set some money aside for her. You do not say how much feeling guilty that you have spent most of it. She openly weeps and clings to your hand. You leave sadly giving the two colons you had left in your pocket to the guard for Isabella's use. You swear you will save more money next time.

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Weeks go by and things are not getting any better. You have even started to eat less in order to hold onto more money for Isabella. It seems like every day you are barely getting by. In all honesty, you are sick of it. The humidity makes working outside awful. Not to mention the food goes bad much faster. You are continually sent to buy small amounts of vegetables from the market. Trips back and forth are unpleasant to say the least but by buying less it means that hopefully you do not lose too much to the weather. Even though Javier is a tricky man, he did not serve the food once it is too far gone. Still, you are not sure if you really want to keep working here. You think you want something more.

- You decide that you want to add something on the side. Just a little pick-pocketing. No one will get hurt and you will be sure not to get caught. Turn to page 22.
  
- With a sigh, you start whipping up another taco. Working here you have a place to stay, money for food every once in awhile and funds to help Isabella. While you want more, why mess with a good thing? Turn to page 51.

You have not talked to Lorena since you left. You wonder how she and the baby are doing. You are tempted to use some of the money you have saved to buy a phone card but then you realize you do not even have a number to reach her at. For a moment, you think this has all been a big mistake. Then you recall your childhood. You want better for your kid and Lorena. If all goes well, you hope to marry her when you come back.

It takes three long months to save up the money you need to travel with Emilliano to Nuevo Laredo. He is taking you and another young lady this trip. He has modified the seats in his jeep so that you fit inside them. You only have to hide when he reaches check points. Otherwise you actually sit in the seats. He regales the two of you with stories of close calls he has had. He says his jeep was not always a great hiding spot. Laughing at his own stories and jokes he assures you that you are in good hands, he always gets to his destination. He shares bread and cheese with you both when he stops for the night. He tells you this time tomorrow you will be in Nuevo Laredo. Then he leans his chair back and goes to sleep.

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Sure enough you reach Nuevo Laredo right around the time Emilliano said. He drops you off near the Rio Grande and says thanks for your business. He drives away to do it all over again. You are astonished at the quick turnaround of some coyotes. It really is just business to them. It seems each new location you find yourself in there are even more options. Now that you have made it to Nuevo Laredo you need to get across the intimidating Rio Grande. Everyone hears stories of the lives it takes when people are not careful. You need to decide what to do.

- You are confident in your swimming and if you cross on your own, it does not cost you a penny. Your adrenaline is pumping as you see America so close. You are going to brave the river. Turn to page 26.
- A man named Pancho approaches you offering to get you into America for free granted that you pay him back as soon as you get situated. It is a good deal, that way you do not have to try to find a job here for a short amount of time. Turn to page 55.
- An older lady named Amelia offers to make you a fake work visa so you can slip through the border with no difficulties. It would only cost \$300. She guarantees you will be able to walk right into the United States. You go looking for a small job in order to pay her. Turn to page 10.

You are sleeping soundly as the train picks up even more speed. The train rounds a corner and your idea for holding onto the train fails. You are sent flying. You hit the ground with a sickening crack. You gasp for air unable to move. It feels as if every bone in your body is broken; you lose consciousness from the pain. You do not open your eyes again and drown in your own blood.

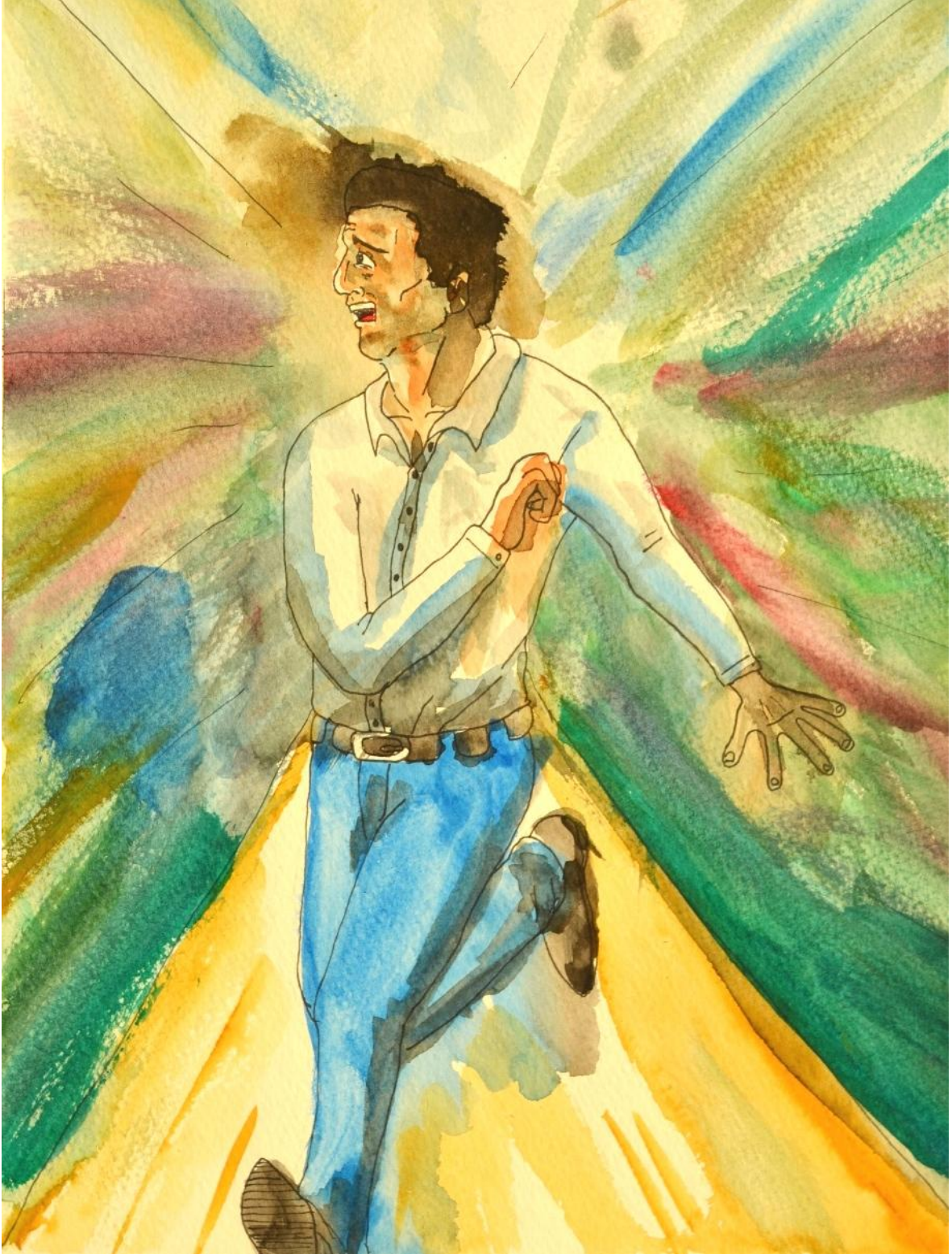
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Days later your body is discovered. The man who finds your body takes it into the town where it is placed in a mass grave. It is all they could do for you.

The End







Running away is not going to be easy. You know that but you feel like you have been back into a corner. You have to get out of here that much is for sure. You decide that the best plan for escape is to go alone. This way you are only looking after yourself and it is easier to sneak around. You try to work up your courage by pacing around a bit going over your plan in your head. It is sound. You are going to escape this hell tonight if it is the last thing you do.

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You walk out of the bunk shed with a few buckets in hand. You head toward the spigot carrying out all the motions as if you are going to wash the buckets. There are not many men out watching the orchard; they do not worry too much, threats work best to keep people from escaping. You hope that their confidence in that fact will work to your advantage. You put a kink in the beginning of the hose when no one is looking making sure to put enough coils on top of it that it is not seen. You call one of the men over to you. You tell him that the water is not working and you think that it is shut off. He tells you to stay put while he goes to check it.

Obviously you do just the opposite of what he says. It is funny how the 'guards' here use every opportunity they can to smoke. The man that headed to turn on the water was joined by his buddies and they all lingered in the watershed to smoke. It is exactly what you want to happen. You take off down the road at a full run not looking back. You only slow down when you can no longer see orange trees behind you. You feel exhausted after you have travel a few miles down the road. You thank god that they did not come after you. You decide to spend the night in a drainage ditch needing some rest before you continue on foot.

You are kicked in the side as a wakeup call. You recognize the rude awakening, they had come after you. You are stupid for thinking they would not. You are kicked a few more times and then spat on. Once they are done roughing you up they toss you into a truck. One man tells you that he is sending you right back. Now you owe money for their efforts to catch you and yet another ride. They send you back to the orchard considering you a good investment since you will continue to owe them money for a long time. You feel you never should have stopped running. Now you have to experience that brand of hell all over again. Turn to page 8.

Sandra tries to persuade you but you are determined that your life is still worth living. She sighs and tells you they have no choice but to deport you now. You curse your fortune as you are taken back to a jail cell. They hold you there for a good month periodically checking with you to see if you are willing to testify yet. You are set in your decision. You will just have to try to come back again. Starting over will be worth it considering you have just been rescued from slavery. All that matters now is you are free and since you are not going to testify, you are alive.

They finally give up on you and send you back to Mexico not carrying that you are from El Salvador. You are not in Mexico long before they put you back onto the Bus of Tears and ship you back to Guatemala. You find yourself back where your journey began. You gather your courage ready to try again and this time you will not be someone's property. Turn to page 15.

It is a big mistake to tell them no. It is made worse since they are all high. They jump to their feet all around you and take turns kicking you. One of them produces a bat and hits you with it. He hits you again completely disorienting you. Your shoes are ripped off your feet and someone takes all your belongings from your pocket. Another swing of the bat and you taste your own blood. You look up to see another swing headed right towards you unable to move out of the way. Batter and bruised you cannot move and one of the men hauls you to your feet. You feel the train start to slow down. You should be getting off right now, it is about to come to a station, but you cannot move. Next thing you know the gang is heaving you into the air. They are going to throw you off the train. They send you flying right onto the train platform.

Immigration agents waste no time in carrying you away. They hold you in jail long enough for your major wounds to be tended to and for them to heal up a bit. Within a week they take you to the bus station and send you back to Guatemala. You have to start all over again. Turn to page 15.

You consider your choice for too long. The train gathers speed as you run at it, too much speed. You do not realize in time that you need to wait for the next train. The last rung of the ladder is about waist high, higher than you thought but you are still intent on trying. You know have the strength to pull yourself up. You grab the bottom rung as the train moves on trying to pull yourself up. As you reach for the second one the wheels kick up hot white sparks. You scream as the sparks burn your legs. You hold tight on that last rung struggle to pull yourself up.

People on top of the train cheer you on trying to lend you strength. The air rushing beneath the train is sucking you legs towards the wheels. People are coming toward you hoping to catch you before it is too late. Your arms are just too tired at this point and the air is tugging harder at you. People call to you to fight the beast, the immigrant's nickname for the train, they say do not let it take you. You feel your hold slipping. You fall and the train cuts you in half killing you instantly.

The End

You may not have wanted to mess with a good thing but other factors are more than willing to do so. Work at the taco stand is not going as you had anticipated. Javier has to cut your wages because business is so slow. You are still able to pay rent at the time being but food is a scarce thing to come by once again. You try to be extra friendly at work to get more tips and work as often as possible in order to make a little more money. It seems there is never enough to go around.

You are putting as much time as you could into work and visiting Isabella. She is not doing too well. The conditions in the prison are still terrible and you are not able to give her as much money as you used to. You tell her situations are rough and you cannot even afford rent anymore. She begins telling you the stories other inmates share with her. She talks of jobs where people are paid close to \$7 an hour, about 60 colons. It makes you think of the offer you turned down. The money is still tempting. The thought retreats to the back of your mind when you leave the prison and Lorena is waiting for you.

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It has been a few months since you reluctantly moved into Lorena's uncle's house and already things are becoming more difficult. Her uncle does what he can for the two of you. You really appreciate that he took you in when Javier could not afford to keep you on at the taco stand. To make matters worse, or maybe better? You are not sure but Lorena thinks she might be pregnant. You have no idea how you are going to support her and a baby.

It is time you made up your mind. All of Isabella's talk has convinced you America is the place to be. There are a number of jobs that pay from 7\$ to \$15 an hour. She tells you again and again that your life will be better, easier, in America. You fight with this decision for a long time. You talk to Lorena's Uncle Carlos before you speak to Lorena. You ask him to please look after her and care for her while you are away. He protests at first but then you explain your long term plans. It is all for the sake of Lorena and the baby. Carlos, with a heavy heart, tells you he will do what he can. He does not approve, but he tells you he would do the same if the same pressures were pushing him. You both know it is a difficult decision to make but it is necessary.

You explain everything to Lorena later that evening. She is furious at first, a little at you, a lot at her uncle, then at you all over again. You hold her close and explain again that it is what you need to do. She sighs; she knows there is not much she can do for work while pregnant. She asks if there is any way she can convince you to stay. You kiss her forehead, a silent answer to her question. She asks you one more question: Do you plan to migrate legally or illegally?

- You tell her that you are going to apply to migrate legally. Hopefully you will get processed quickly. You may not have many skills but you are a hard worker. Besides, if you apply legally, you might be able to bring her and the baby. Turn to page 77.

- You have heard about how hard it was to get to the U.S legally and have no intension of waiting years to get to your destination. The baby will not wait that long. You cannot afford to waste time. Turn to page 15.







You and your comrades wait until it is night to leave. You hope that the dark will make escape easier. You slowly creep across camp more than terrified you will be caught. Hugo and Rolando follow closely behind. Everyone has served as guard at one point in time so you know the drill. Right now Omar will be walking around the East gate; you all are free to break away at the West gate. You get beyond the tents and make a dash for the exit. A loud bang sounds followed by a sudden pain in your chest. You crumple down to your knees grasping at your shirt. Things are getting blurry. You see Rolando fall down next to you his eyes wide in terror. A million thoughts run through your head. What happened? How had you been spotted? Are they just going to leave your body here? What about Isabella? Will you survive this? You are losing lots of blood, far too much blood; you can see it all over your hands. This should not be happening but it is. Your eyes close and the world slips away.

The End

Running away is not going to be easy but you need to get to the police. You know that but you feel like you have been back into a corner. You are terrified they will not listen to you and deport you. You have to get out of here that much is for sure. You decide that the best plan is to seek help on your own. This way you are only looking after yourself and it is easier to sneak around. You try to work up your courage by pacing around a bit going over your plan in your head. It is sound. You are going to escape this hell tonight if it is the last thing you do. The police will come back to help the others. At least, that is what you hope for.

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You walk out of the bunk shed with a few buckets in hand. You head toward the spigot carrying out all the motions as if you are going to wash the buckets. There are not many men out watching the orchard; they do not worry too much, threats work best to keep people from escaping. You hope that their confidence in that fact will work to your advantage. You put a kink in the beginning of the hose when no one is looking making sure to put enough coils on top of it that it is not seen. You call one of the men over to you. You tell him that the water is not working and you think that it is shut off. He tells you to stay put while he goes to check it.

Obviously you do just the opposite of what he says. It is funny how the ‘guards’ here use every opportunity they can to smoke. The man that headed to turn on the water was joined by his buddies and they all lingered in the watershed to smoke. It is exactly what you want to happen. Now you are the last thing on their minds. You take off down the road at a full run not looking back. You only slow down when you can no longer see orange trees behind you. When you think the coast is clear you go knock on the door of the nearest house. An older woman is hesitant but she opens the door asking you what you want. You ask her to please let you in to call the police. She opens the door and lets you inside. She tells you to stay put, she would call them herself.

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You have been sitting in the interrogation room for who knows how long and still do not know what is going on. You have told your story to two different police and one lawyer. You bite your fingernails nervously. Surely they are going to deport you. This has got to be your worst idea ever. Way to go. You sink into your chair waiting for the worst.

Finally a woman enters the room. She walks right up to you and shakes your hand. She tells you her name is Sandra and she works for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). She continues to explain to you that her organization has over two thousand members in Immokalee, Florida, and that they all worked to end modern slavery. She tells you that you have escaped the Cortez family, a family they have been watching for a while now without significant evidence to put them away. She asks you to testify against the Cortez family in exchange for amnesty.

- You quickly tell her no. You already fear for your life for just running away. To testify against them seems like suicide to you. Turn to page 67.
  
- You jump at the offer. You have come this far, amnesty is a shining prize at this point. Turns out this is far from your worst idea, it could even be the best. Turn to page 58.

There are so many things involved with applying legally to the U.S. There are a number of agencies you have to speak with like the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Labor, and Department of State. You have to fill out so many forms from them as well. Most of the forms you are expected to get off a website so you take the little money you and Lorena have to get them printed for you. Lorena tries to help you through all the questions. She is better at reading than you are. Her Uncle Carlos talks to a lawyer friend of his to look things over since you cannot afford one. He also made sure that your papers made it to the correct people afterwards. Then you wait.

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It has been two years since you applied for your visa. Still there seems to be no progress. According to the Visa Bulletin, the current priority date is 2007, that is about four years of backlog. A man named Miguel checks the bulletin every day around the same time as you. He is amongst the 2007 priority group and has been waiting for his name to come up for three years now. You do not have another seven years to wait!

Times are still difficult. You and Lorena have an adorable little boy named Antonio. The two of you do what you can to be sure he never goes hungry. You tell Lorena that is most important. You never want him to experience the pangs of hunger you had to endure. You have not been able to get another job so when you can you beg. Sometimes you pick items from the dump to sell them. You cannot do this any longer. After you and Lorena put Antonio to sleep you ask her to talk to you for a little bit. You sit with her and brush a hair away from her face as you tell her that you can wait no longer. You tell her that you have to go to the U.S. illegally. Turn to page 15.





The old man is not a creepy as he seems. He shares some bread with you and starts gabbing about his life. He has made the journey from Guatemala five times already. He shares with you the story of how he lost his arm. He tells you it was his last attempt at catching the train, his most recent journey. This is the first time he has tried the journey again in about two years. He says that part of why it took so long was his arm healing and the rest needing to regain his courage. You nod your head understanding what he means having seen some people miss the train gruesomely with your own eyes.

He smiles and keeps talking to you. He holds your attention with details of his earlier journeys. He tells you where all the check points are. According to him it is a constant game of on and off the train if you want to make it to the end of the line. You think it sounds like an awful game. He also tells you to be weary of groups of young men like those behind you on the train. A majority of them are in gangs only looking to take your money and sometimes even your life.

He continues to give you a list of does and do not does. You feel like he is growing preachy and he is getting on your nerves a bit. The train begins to slow and he says goodbye before hopping off the train. You follow recalling this is one in a series of check points. Somehow you lose him in the rush of trying to get back on the train before it speeds up again. You continue to think on his advice unsure of how much you should take to heart.

- You will heed his advice; he has made the journey more times than you and knows the ins and outs. He may have had a few rough calls but you think he was genuine. Turn to page 27.
  
- You decide to ignore the advice of the old coot. He lost an arm following his own advice, you feel you have a better chance on your own. Turn to page 19.



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