

Division III      2<sup>nd</sup> Place

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**Each story in this poem is based on one of my relative's reasons for coming across the border. Thankfully, they did not have the negative outcome in this tale.**

**IMMIGRANT PRAYER by Melissa Castillo - 16**

Her face is illuminated by the moon and her soft lips mutter, "Padre nuestro que estas en el cielo" as he runs down-hill hidden in the darkness. Afraid that if he looks back tears will roll down his face, in silence he repeats, "Santificado sea tu nombre venga nosotros tu reino." Tears spill down her cheek as she can no longer hear his steps. Not being able to stand not seeing him, she turns away from the door and whispers, "Hagase voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo." She watches as Mauricio Jr. walks towards her, his shirt dirty with holes and his old beat up shoes. He complains about how his feet hurt and turned a tomato tint. His little eyes gaze at hers and exclaim, "Why are you crying mama and where is papa?" She exhales and wipes her tears into a smile. "He went far away to bring back money for shoes just your size, brand new so your feet won't turn tomato red." He asks, "How does he know where to go?" "He is guided by a coyote that runs through the desert," she responds. He ponders. "Will he be safe?" Silence thickens and she says, "Pray and he will." He whispers trying to remember, "danos hoy nuestro pan de cada dia." And the coyote howls towards the north.

"Mama," she whispers in fear, I must." "Why now? You can't just leave him, he is your husband. You can't just go. You don't know how it is over there. And you're expecting. They'll call you a sinner, a slut who just abandons her husband for stories of fame and fortune in the land of the free." She cries, "Mama listen," and takes off her coat and scarf and walks into the light. The light reflects into her punched swollen eyes as she cries, "He hit me again (blood stained body that told the tale of her life) when I was lying on the floor in a pool of my own blood and tears like I had seen you do a thousand times when papa was alive. I will not let my child see me that way. That's why I must leave...Mama, say something." "Run, before he wakes and finds that you are gone." Mama exhales, "Perdona nuestras ofensas," as her daughter slips out into the night. "You'll call us as soon as you can right?" She whimpered with tears in her eyes, "Yes, as soon as I can." And the coyote howls toward the north.

"Pancho, I know I can't stop you but won't you miss us, your family?" "Yes mama, I will, but there is no future for me here. I want to be a doctor not a soldier. I don't have a choice here. If I don't fight with them, then I aim against them and I will be killed. And there is no work here, no opportunity here for me but this will always be my home. I have to go but you'll see that it's best when I send you letters of all that I have earned." "I still don't know," she repeats. "Mama, what do you always say about me? 'That you've always been blessed and meant for big things.' Those things cannot be found here and you know it." As he disappears into the distance she waves and prays "Santificado sea tu nombre venga tu reino." And the coyote howls towards the north.

"Be careful," she whispered with sadness in her sister's ear, then embraced her niece. "Lola, you guys will be so happy," she cried. "You will be with your daddy again and your mama with her husband. You guys will send me pictures of your house and all the pretty things. You'll also meet Mickey and Minnie." The little girl mentioned with joy to her aunt, "Papa says I'll learn English I'll be whatever I want." "Oh," said her teary-eyed aunt, "and what do you want to be?" "Ummm- the president." "Come on mama, I want to see papa, already by sister," she cried. As she sees her walk away with Lola in her arms she pleads, "y libranos de todo peligro mala." And the coyote howls toward the north.

Five dreamers run through a lonely fearful desert in the night, following a coyote howling towards the

north. Four dreamers run through a hot burning desert in the day, following a coyote howling towards the north. Two dreamers run through a cold windy desert in the night, following a coyote howling towards the north. One dreamer runs through a violent desert in the day, following a coyote howling towards the north. One coyote runs through the desert howling towards the north. As Mauricio and Mama, Sister and Daddy, Mama and Family cry, "Amen."