

They Came

By Caroline Hagemann

They came,
South of the border, a whisper soft wind,
Carried them in the night, untouched by corruption,
Pushed out of their golden home,
She told them to go, and so they went,
Leaving prairies of promises never carried out,
An ache in their people felt for generations,
Which they hoped would cease once there.

There,
Where fields of *oro* grew, golden by the sun,
The corn yielded *plata*, real *plata* too,
It was all real there,
Except for hunger and poverty, that wasn't real,
From murmurs back home they knew this was true,
Lies couldn't cross the border,
Like *sus sueños* could.

Could,
The word that pushed them forward,
The rolling English crashed down like waves around them,
Not like the steady rocking of Spanish,
Cradled on their tongue, a reminder where they came from,
Because it felt so warm,
Compared to the white walls around them,
But a comfort in the dark.

Dark,
The color that filled their world,
Because they hid in the shadows,
Afraid of discovery in their tan skin costume,
Disappointed by the darkness that held them prisoner,
In the land they wanted to call home,
Paciencia, they were told over and over,
Until their ears became numb to the waiting.

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Waiting,
For the day when they didn't need to hide,
Building lives on a limb,
Tipping precariously over the edge,
It was all beyond their reach, if only they had known,
Known about the sweltering summers, and cold winters,
And the sweat on their father's back,
As he told them, "*para tu, todo.*"

Todo,
Everything had changed since they left the warm,
Where they could live, and not in fear,
Where they could fill their children's brains with truth,
And not place a finger over their lips,
When they spoke about home,
Fondly remembering a time,
When they weren't ashamed.

Ashamed,
Of the shunning they felt from those with enough,
And the people who fought to keep them away,
But they kept *los jefes* in their prayers,
Calling back home to remind themselves,
Of laughter and naïve dreams they once had,
But for now, clothes on their back and hot food was enough,
Until the meek could inherit the earth.