

THE FIRST DAY

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His mother's soothing words lingered in his mind: don't open the door, if you get sleepy there's a blanket and pillow on the sofa, if you get hungry there's a sandwich on the table, if you want something sweet there's a box of little yellow cream stuffed cakes next to the sandwich. He tried to remember, but he couldn't understand those words, *sandwich* and *sofa*. He tried to forget what his father admonished: if you open the door I'll hit you with my belt, if you break the TV I'll hit you harder, if you break anything I'll hit you.

He didn't like this place; locked inside a tiny house. He missed his home with the airy porches covered with ancient red roof tiles. He yearned for his uncles, cousins, friends, but most of all he missed his grandmother. She knew when he felt hunger,

when he felt thirst, when he wanted coffee, tepid and syrupy sweet, his tortillas steaming with a sprinkle of salt. He missed his home, he hated this house.

He sat on the linoleum floor and dreamed. How could he go home? Could he walk? Could he beg for money to pay for the giant flying bus that brought him to this strange place? If he screamed would his grandmother hear and come for him? He dreamed of home.

And so it's been, ever since that first day; he's never stopped dreaming of his home. Years have passed, the porches crumbled, his grandmother gone, his uncles too, his cousins immolated in endless wars, and his friends slain; he dreams that someday he'll return home.

