



NATALIA O. TREVIÑO

THE NATURALIZATION

It is November, and I have been Mexican all my life. My cousins say we are all *norte americanos* because we are all born on the same continent. I imagine saying this to Rosy and Greta down the street. They will roll their eyes.

It is cold in the house this morning. Dad likes to keep the temperature as close to nature as possible, so my skin is unable to imagine crawling out from the covers. I dress like it's winter, but by the afternoon bus ride, we are sweating. I never get the clothes right in this kind of weather.

Mom has a strange look on her face when I get home, her eyebrows raised and looking down at her skillet, like a glass elevator is taking her way up. The cooking smells pour out from her narrow kitchen. Salted meat sizzling with onions. Small cubes of fried potatoes set aside, their grease sinking into the white paper towel below them. I give my mom an absent kiss on the cheek, put my books on the table instead of going straight to my room. I want to know what scared her.

She adds the tomato sauce to her already sizzling skillet, and there is the sudden cymbal sound of frying liquid. The aroma of *picadillo* lifts from the pan.

"*Ay mi'jita*." Her cigarette is resting on her old brass ashtray, growing a long, gray speckled tube that is about to crumble. She is stirring the tomato sauce while it bubbles. She lets out a long breath that hisses in unison with the sauce. "I hefto take a test."

"What? Why?" My mom does not take tests. Except I remember her getting ready for her driving test when I was in third grade. My stomach curls a little.

"I have to become a seetizen."

"What? You've never wanted to become a citizen." We've asked her about this. Lots of times.