

Tell Me What Happens to the Child Who Crosses the Border

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Look...

There are a few things *you* should know.

First, there are about four houses, three families, five cars from which you will be transitioning. There will be twenty *mojados*, five *coyotes*, many *cucarachas* in the elaborate chain of human smuggling.

Second, there are no rules. You are safe (at times). You are not (most of the time)...
allow me to emphasize my previous statement...

There are no rules.

You will demonstrate in the border some Olympic-winning-skills at track and field: *a la mojada*: magnificent execution at the long jump, extraordinary timing at the 100, 200, and 400-meter sprint event.

Jump, run, jump, run (oops, a slight tripping over that rock, get up), jump, run.

You will be an awarded first-class champion. With chameleon skills-blending with the scene—*first you see me, now you don't*. Blending among the piles of trash, the debris of an open wound between the land of the Disney Castle and the home of “our” athletic role model, Speedy Gonzales.

You will forget about hunger. The fact that you have not had food for about two days will not get in the way of performing your athletic skills. You will feed and drink out of fright; the adrenaline pumping through your veins will keep your body in perfect balance with the 80-degree Fahrenheit night.

You will suddenly have the ability to be almost non-existent: fifty pounds lighter. That skill will be quite useful for when you try to fit twelve more bodies in the American CR-V, the black one blasting *Chalino* corridos from Mexicali to the Wall.

Your eyes will gain super powers. Vitamin A will kick in, and in the darkest night from the back of your head, two little holes will develop retinas. All four eyes will have the ability to see and prevent you from stepping on the fastest-moving rats and from being run over by the fastest-moving cars.

But if *you* could just slow down a second
you would be able to see
how *you* move with grace and fuse through the shadows.
 how your body is overwhelmed with sweat
 and with the smell of the dry Calexico desert
 dancing with darkness
 kissing the devil,
 tempting the danger...

[And by now you must be thinking: “Wow, wow, wow! Too much for a ten-year-old girl! Slow down, cabrona! This girl is quite young. Don’t be telling her about ‘tempting the danger!’”]

I apologize for being too graphic. For telling the truth—that there are no rules.

But *you* have to know.

That in the process of migration, *you* will become a woman.

That your passage to adulthood will not be at your *quince*, nor with that first person who consents sex with you...

But it will be with—a wall, bricks, concrete.

That in the process *you* will scrape your knees, sweat out the fear, run like a cockroach, and maybe even bleed.

You will gain this so-called “womanhood” before you see little dots of blood in your underwear.

That never again *you* will play with dolls, that your mind will open. It will be angry, it will want

To Question.

“Why the fuck do things have to be this way?”

And when you get older
And when you can't sleep at night
this will be *the question* that will haunt you
it won't leave you alone
it will give you the reason
to keep jumping
Wall after Wall.
Obstacle after obstacle:
Jump, run, jump, run, jump...