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FACING THE BEAST

Enrique wades chest-deep across the Río Suchiate. The river forms a border. Behind him is Guatemala. Before him is Mexico's southernmost state, Chiapas. "*Ahora nos enfrentamos a la bestia.* Now we face the beast," migrants say when they enter Chiapas. Enrique will risk "the beast" again because he needs to find his mother.

This is his eighth attempt to reach *el Norte*.

The water is the color of coffee with too much cream. Each time he crosses, as the rainy season approaches, the river is higher and higher. He is stoop-shouldered and cannot swim. The logo on his cap boasts hollowly, NO FEAR. He always crosses with one or two other migrants, in case he slips and starts to drown. Chin high, he staggers across, stumbling on the uneven riverbed, straining against the current. Exhausted, he reaches the far bank.