

20 to 30 percent of migrants who board here are fifteen or younger. Enrique has encountered kids as young as nine. Some speak only with big brown eyes or a shy smile. Others talk openly about their mothers: "I felt alone. I only talked to her on the phone. I didn't like that. I want to see her. When I see her, I'm going to hug her a lot, with everything I have."

Enrique nods understandingly as they speak. He confides in them, too. They share the burden of their loneliness. Although Enrique's efforts to survive often force thoughts of his mother out of his mind, at times he thinks of her with a longing that is overwhelming. He remembers when she would call Honduras from the United States, the concern in her voice, how she would not hang up before saying, "I love you. I miss you."

Wheels rumble, screech, and clang. The train speeds up and slows down unpredictably, tossing the travelers backward and forward. Sometimes each car rocks the other way from the ones ahead and behind. Migrants call the train *El Gusano de Hierro*, The Iron Worm, for how it squirms up the tracks. In Chiapas, the tracks are twenty years old. Some of the ties sink, especially during the rainy season, when the roadbed turns soggy and soft. Grass grows on the rails, making them slippery. When the cars round a bend, they feel as if they might overturn. Derailments are common. The train Enrique is on runs only a few times a week, but it derails three times a month, on average—with seventeen accidents in a particularly bad month—by the count of Jorge Reinoso, the railroad's chief of operations in Chiapas. One year before, a hopper car