

our own skills to pick more. In a week and a half I demonstrated that I could harvest more with time. If he had given us the time stipulated in the contract for training, we would have picked the quota and then some. But I also think that it affects a person when you are being pressured, when you are told you are bad, lazy, and useless, or “we’re going to send you back to Mexico if you don’t try hard.” This affects you psychologically when they keep bothering you, repeating the same thing.

Someone from the State Institute for Labour in Coahuila called us and wanted to know how everything had started. They wanted us to stop making noise. I told him, as we say in Mexico, that I had to get rid of this thorn. You know how it hurts more to leave a thorn in than remove it? I had to get this thorn out instead of going back to Mexico with it still embedded. The only fear we had was that there would be reprisals against our families, because the Institute had a lot of information on our families: where they live, addresses, telephone numbers. So there was some fear. I am afraid mainly for my children; they are very young. I live with some fear, some anxiety, wondering if my children are okay. But you have to be strong, because if it wasn’t us women going through this, it would be other women, or other men. So if we can contribute something, then that’s good.

It is very difficult to be in another country where no one knows you, but here, far from your country, you begin to value your family, especially your children. A day does not go by in which I think about my children. In a week my oldest son will be nine years old, and I don’t have any money to send. But I keep thinking that there will be a reward to all of this; that we will be able to say we did something. You have to hold your head up high and say you did something. You can’t go bent over, like many of my *compañeros*, or like I imagine our leader—the one that started this uproar, that designated

us both as leaders—arrived home with his head bowed. No, I want to arrive in my country, in Mexico, and look people in the eyes. To hold my head up and say “I did something because I wanted to, and I achieved it. For me, for my people, for my children.” I think it is this that gives you strength to keep going.

Teresa lives with her three children and extended family in Northern Mexico. Upon return home, she could not find employment for eight months. She is currently working in a maquiladora that manufactures jeans for a U.S. company where she sews an average of 2,000 front pockets per day. She is paid

less than one Canadian cent per pair, earning approximately \$87 per week. Her New Year’s resolution is to have the opportunity to work in Canada as a seasonal agricultural worker in 2006 so she can better provide for her children.

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FLAVIA COSMA

Bullfight

“I will not kill this lunatic!” –
We were both thinking in wonder.
You, fidgety, like a lost kid,
I, drowsy from the eternal lurk,
From slippery hours of waiting.

Excited throngs roared in great delirium,
Scarlet kerchiefs unfurling in the windows;
Fires broke out in the withered dust,
And under the sun’s eyelashes, in dead trees,
Birds were budding on rusty branches.

Blindly I came to you, my hands outstretched,
And full of secret whispers, like weighted scales;
Fate seized us, noisily, in haste;
The rumbling arose from sleep into a wing;
With a clatter of hearts and with barbaric rhythms,
Rugged, the moon’s horn stabbed us wildly
And left us livid, lying in the sand,
Covered in blood and in slobber.

Translated from Romanian by Flavia Cosma and Charles Siedlecki.

Flavia Cosma is a Romanian-born Canadian poet. She has a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest. She is an award-winning independent television documentary producer, director, and writer, and has published seven books of poetry, a novel and a book of fairy tales. For information about Flavia Cosma: www.flaviacosma.com.