

Las Sandalias, la Cuna y la Niña

By Hope Garza

Studies have proven that baby monkeys prefer their mother's affection in place of food. It's true. I know firsthand what it's like to yearn for a mother's affection and not get it. I was raised by my grandparents and although they showed me love and gave me lots of attention, I needed my mother's love. I was never convinced that my mother loved me because she never told me, never held me and she was never home. When she gave me to my grandmother and told her she did not want anything to do with me, she meant it. She lived with my grandmother so I would see

her once in a while when she would come in late at night from the bar. I decided to do my own experiment.

I had to prove to myself that she loved me, so I came up with a plan. My grandmother had told me that if I went to sleep with my shoes on, that my mother would die. So, I always took off my shoes before climbing into

my blue crib. I was too big for my crib, so I would sleep in a semicircle. My head would touch the head of the crib and my feet would touch the foot board. The side panel was always at its lowest because there was no fear of me falling out. I decided that my crib and my sandals would be the tools I would use to prove that my mother loved me. I decided that if I went to bed with my sandals on and the straps buckled, I could raise the rail on the side of the crib and hang my feet over it. My feet would be right in my mother's path on her way to her room. If she took my sandals off, it would mean she didn't want to die or that she loved me. Pues, mi abuela siempre me decía cosas así. I believed what my grandmother told me; that's why I never slept with my shoes on. ¿Qué abuela tan trucha, no?

Pues, se hizo tarde and I went and got a plum and got into my crib with my sandalias strapped on tightly. Esperé, munching and sucking the juice out of my plum. I waited and anticipated my mom coming home. I thought to my-

self, "If she takes my sandals off, that means she loves me."

It got real late and I waited. Then I heard a car drive up. I quickly swung both feet over the right rail of my crib. My heart was racing a thousand miles an hour. I was looking at my feet in the dim light that came from the kitchen and I had a look of excitement on my face and felt flushed. You know, like when you are a teenager and you are about to go on a hot date. I knew I would be heartbroken if she didn't take my sandals off. Then, I would have to wait for her to die.

She walked in the door past my crib. My mind began racing in all directions. My heart began its ascent up my skinny legs. Before it could get there, when she reached the head of the crib, she stood and contemplated for a few seconds. Then she started walking backwards and came back around to where my feet were hanging. Roughly, and in anger, she grabbed my feet and began undoing the leather straps of my sandals—*echando madres*. She threw the first sandal under the crib. Then she took off the second one and threw it under the crib as if it was a *chancla* throwing contest. Then she grabbed both my feet and forcefully threw them into the crib as she cursed at me.

I was rejoicing and trying to contain my laughter and happiness. I felt a sigh of relief. I had won! I had made her prove to me that she loved me. It never occurred to me that maybe my grandmother had told her the same story about going to bed with shoes on, and maybe—she just didn't want to die.



Esperanza Gallegos-Garza (Hope Garza)

Esperanza (Hope), born in Uvalde, Texas began writing poetry in middle school that evolved into writing music, short stories, and vignettes about her life as a child. Raised by loving grandparents, she learned to appreciate life and things around her. Her goal as a writer is to harness memories that readers can identify with in their own lives. She states, "If through my writing I can cause someone to reflect and relive a memory and love it or hate it, then I have done my job as a writer. If that reflection can bring change in a person for the better, then I have done mankind a service."