

## **If They Take Her**

My mom does not drive me to school  
anymore.

Instead, she lingers behind curtains,  
watching the world move  
without her.

Her feet, once steady on grocery store tiles,  
now refuse to step past the front door.  
She hands me the list—  
milk, tortillas, diapers—  
and I go in her place.

My grandma's hands  
should smell of masa,  
her voice should yell out,  
“Tamales! Champurrado!”

But her corner by the grocery store—  
where hands once reached for warm plates,  
is empty.

Her stove, cold.

The streets are too dangerous for a woman with no papers,  
only recipes.

Inside, I move through the aisles,  
list in hand  
Milk, tortillas, diapers.  
I go in her place.

At night, my mom whispers  
of a paper she must sign.  
Papers that would name me guardian,  
words that prepare for a future  
where she is missing.

My sister is eight. My mom wonders  
if her legs are strong enough to walk alone.  
If I am strong enough  
to become her mother.

I wonder how a country can call her a  
criminal  
when she has built so much of it with  
her hands.

I wonder,  
*if they take her*, who will I become?