

Scent of the hands

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My eyes stay focused on his plastic hero cape, and I hear raindrops beating down on his hat. His feet red with cold and his sandals squeezing his toes. Carrying bags of lemons and bunches of chamomile, he runs to the car windows with no fear. Many ignore him and hurriedly close the windows, and others go faster, splashing water on his already damp clothes.

I am sitting on a sidewalk, covered with aguayos (native cloth) and taking care of our assets, a small sack of lemons and a pile of chamomile. I see people go by, they look at me too, but not for long. I follow my father's movements with my gaze; I feel safe around him, I am afraid that he will disappear. The sound of the rain helps me to remember the words of encouragement and joy of the people in my community when we were leaving.

-Are you going to the city? You're so lucky!

Lucky? Perhaps at that time, the thrill of the adventure made me imagine better days.

From the makeshift seats on the loads of potatoes, my father and I envisioned a future that was a little less complicated. And with every sudden movement of the truck, we felt that we were getting closer, to the lights, money, opportunity and work. But now I only want to go back to my village, where people don't look at me with pity or throw coins at me so I wouldn't get close to them.

I see my father and other members of my community, running for their lives every time they cross a street. I see them wash their clothes on the squares, and sleep on benches or in makeshift houses made of cardboard and plastic.

As if it were a ritual in our makeshift camp, every morning we all buy lemons and chamomile from people in the city, who may not even know how to grow them.

My father has taught me to count while we fill the bags with lemons, and together we count the coins, and we imagine the day when we will be able to go back home. He looks me in the eyes and caresses my face, and I can feel his hands, they are not very soft, but they smell like lemon and chamomile perfume.

