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Alien

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Alien

When I heard this word first thrown around
 in conversation, my family's Spanish
 cracked to let in this strange stretch
 of cautious whisper, the weather changed
 in my mind. I'd read of spaceships,
 of planets so advanced you could
 travel freely, no stopping to be
 asked about citizenship, no stone
 face behind a badge peering
 to where I sat in the backseat.
 The world became another place.
 The word *wetback* began to bring
 to mind the scene where the dark creature
 burst from a woman's stomach
 in a movie. The sky grew overcast
 in my mother's eyes, kept her inside,
 when someone talked of borders.
 Rosaries turned secret communicators.
 Prayers: reports of worry and want.
 Each crucifix, a satellite.
 Before, I would stand outside and look
 at what I felt to be not empty space
 but an open window to another life.
 Now, another life invaded.
 There were people with papers,
 and there were people without.
 There were questions I was told
 the answers to should they come up.
 There were stories I was asked
 to forget. When my mother pressed
 the silver face of St. Jude
 into my palm, I felt the weight
 of it, the cold and unfamiliar
 feel of what I didn't know.