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.