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Los Hermanos: The Streets of Gold

New England Farm Workers' Council

Center for International Education

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LOS HERMANOS:

THE STREETS OF GOLD
Si usted vive en una casa de más de veinte años, sus niños están en peligro de haber comido pintura que contiene una substancia peligrosa que es el plomo. El plomo tiene un sabor dulce, que es atractivo a los niños. Un examen para detectar intoxicación por plomo toma sólo un minuto.

Si usted tiene niños llame al Consejo de Trabajadores de Fincas de Nueva Inglaterra:

Springfield: 736-4525
Holyoke: 533-8227
Northampton: 584-4059
o en Northampton al Centro Hispano.
THE STREETS OF GOLD

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT THE HERNANDEZ FAMILY. ROSA, THE OLDEST CHILD, LIVES IN NORTHAMPTON WITH HER HUSBAND, CARLOS. HER MOTHER, BROTHERS AND SISTERS LIVE IN PUERTO RICO.

TODAY, ROSA RECEIVED THIS LETTER FROM HER FAMILY......

Oh, Carlos! Jorge and Carmen aren't doing well in Puerto Rico.

Carlos, we can send money for the trip.

But where will they find work here?

Maybe they'll be hiring at Pro-Brush!

Good! I'll write to them this week!

Carmen - Margarita Gonzalez
Rosa - Aida Rodriguez
Carlos - Domingo Diaz
Jorge - Nestor Mendez
Patrón - Wally Velasquez
Jorge's friend - Juan Marrero
Marisol - Sonia Diaz
Marisol's friend - Madeline L. de Jesús
Dona Elena - Margarita de Jesús
American children - Maureen, Felix and Michael McGowan
Carmen's friend - Rosa Rivera
Policeman - Douglas Wilson
Doña Lolita - Nilsa Alicea
Doña María - Antonia Diaz
Carmen's baby - Lissette Alicea
Airport stranger - Ed Spillert
IN PUERTO RICO, ROSA'S MOTHER RECEIVES THE LETTER...

Oh, I know it's from Rosa. Please, read it for me, Doña Maria!

Look Doña Elena, you have a letter from the United States!

Oh, I don't know. My poor babies can't go! It's too far away. They are so young. And people are crazy there. They don't speak English. And Carmen can't take la nenita!

Look, she sent you a check! Rosa thinks that there is work over there for Jorge and Carmen. They can use this money for the trip.

Doña Maria, I need time to think about this. Please, don't say anything to Jorge and Carmen.
Jorge is looking for work everywhere...

I'm sorry. There's no work. We just laid-off two workers yesterday.

I don't know. I love this island. This is my home.

Listen, why don't you go to the United States? You can work on the tobacco farms.

Hey Jorge, did he hire you?

No, and I can't find work anywhere.

Since my Father died, Carmen and I have to work. We have to take care of our family.

...Maybe I can go to the United States and find work. I can make a lot of money and send it home. Maybe I can stay with Rosa and come home in a year.
Carmen is a maid for rich Americans who live five miles from her town in Rio Piedras.

It isn't fair! I have to take care of other people's children.

But we don't make enough money. We can't take care of our own children.

Carmen, how is your baby, Tanya?

She's fine. Mami takes good care of her. But I only see her on Sundays and Tuesdays.

Why don't you go to the United States? There are good jobs. You won't be a maid there.

But I can't take my baby. She's too young to go.

Leave her with your mother for now. She loves her very much.

Where can I get the money? Maybe I can stay with Rosa and Carlos. Oh, I don't know... I love this island! But I'm not making any money here.
Carmen's and Jorge's little sister, Marisol, is walking home from school with her friend.

Marisol, what are you doing next year? Are you going to high school in Rio Piedras?

I don't know. It's going to be difficult. I will need money for books and clothes.

My brother is sending money from New York. I'll have money to go to high school.

But Jorge doesn't have a job. I don't know where I'll get the money.

...Maybe Jorge can find work in the United States!

Marisol runs home because today is Tuesday and Carmen comes home.
Mami, I heard there are lots of jobs in the United States. I know I can make more money there. And I can take good care of Tanya.

Don't cry Tanya. Here comes your Mami now. Ola, Carmen!

Oh, my little Tanya! I miss you so much!

Ola Carmen! Mami, Mami I have to tell the teacher tomorrow if I'm going to high school.

How am I going to find the money? Oh, I wish Jorge had a job!
JORGE ARRIVES HOME AND TALKS ABOUT HIS BAD DAY...

Mami, the only place for work is the United States. Maybe Rosa and Carlos can send money for the trip...

Mami, you know that Jorge is right. We both can find work there.

What will you do with Tanya? And who will take care of the family here?

I can send money home for Marisol's education.

This week I received a letter from Rosa and Carlos...

They were happy for this chance. They decided to go to the United States and find those good jobs...

And you can take care of Tanya. I'll make money and come home soon.
THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY CAME TO SAY GOODBYE.

Oh, my Tanya! I'll come home soon. Then we'll be together always.

Oh, Carmen and Jorge! My babies! Don't forget us.

Marisol, you are the oldest now. Take care of Mami. I'll send the money for high school.

...SO THEY WENT TO FIND THE STREETS OF GOLD IN THE UNITED STATES.
JORGE AND CARMEN ARRIVE AT BRADLEY AIRPORT.

Con permiso. Donde recojemos las maletas?

What? I don't understand you.

...BUT THEY DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH.

Oh, I'm so happy to see you!

...FINALLY ROSA AND CARLOS ARRIVE.

Jorge, do you see Rosa or Carlos? What will we do?

BUT ROSA AND CARLOS AREN'T THERE.

First we'll try to find our suitcases.

...THEY WERE NERVOUS, BUT THEY FOLLOWED THE PEOPLE

Carmen! Jorge! Oh, we're sorry we're late! How are you?
For the first week, Rosa and Carlos show Carmen and Jorge around Northampton and Florence...

...the housing project of Florence Heights where they live...

...the stores where they buy things...

...the factory where Carlos works...

...and the downtown of Northampton...
AFTER A FEW DAYS...

Are you sure there are no jobs at Pro-Brush? Do you know of any other work? No? OK.

Sorry Jorge. There isn't any work in Northampton. The only job at Pro-Brush is for someone who can speak English.

But what am I going to do? I have to work. I can't learn English in one day!

I know what we can do. My brother Luis works in a factory in Springfield. Everybody speaks Spanish there.

Good! Can you call him?

Luis thinks they will be hiring people at the factory. You can live with his family.

Good!

You can go for an interview tomorrow. Everything is going to be OK.
Carlos takes Jorge around Springfield, and he brings him to meet Luis' Family...

Springfield is really modern and rich! I can make more money here.

...and look, this is the shopping center of Springfield.

This is the North End. This is where you'll find the ambiente. Everyone here is Puerto Rican and they'll help you.

...and this is where Luis' family lives.
Next morning, Jorge is happy to go to work...

...But one block away someone robbed a drugstore...

Hey you, where do you think you're going?

No entiendo!

Tengo que ir a mi trabajo!

Yea, yea, you Puerto Ricans are always making trouble!

I'm taking you in for questioning.

Pero tengo que ir a mi trabajo. Soy inocente!

...And although Jorge doesn't understand English, the policeman is supposed to tell him his rights...
At Florence Heights, Carmen and Rosa are talking...

Oh, Rosa and Carlos are so nice to me, but I miss Tanya and Mami.

Carmen, it's hard to find work when you can't speak English.

Some women here have jobs. We'll go outside and talk to Dona Lolita. Maybe she can help us.

Rosa, I need a job. I have to find work soon or go to Puerto Rico.

No, no. Things will be OK when you have a job.

What can I do? I need about $300 to pay you and Carlos, and I wanted to send money to Mami.

So they go outside to talk with the working women...
CARMEN AND ROSA TALK TO THE NEIGHBORS ABOUT WORK... AND CARMEN MEETS DONA LOLITA.

Look Carmen, Smith College is looking for maids. That is where I work, and you don't have to speak English.

But I left Puerto Rico as a maid. I thought there weren't any maid jobs in this country.

Carmen, you don't have a choice.

Tomorrow you can come with me to work. I'll help you.

Carmen! Telephone! It's for you!
IT WAS JORGE CALLING
FROM SPRINGFIELD...

Jorge, how is your new job?

Oh Jorge, that's horrible!
But maybe I have a job. I'm going for an interview tomorrow at Smith College.

Oh, but Jorge I will be a maid again.

Carmen, I have bad news. Yesterday morning, the police took me to jail. They thought I robbed a drugstore. It was horrible! It was 11:30 at night before they found someone who spoke Spanish. I'm afraid I lost my job.

Don't worry, Carmen. Everything will be OK.

Carmen, at least it is work. I'm angry that I lost my job!

...AND SO FAR FROM THEIR HOME, BORINGUEN, LOS HERMANOS HERNANDEZ CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE...
This fotonovella was conceived with and produced by the New England Farm Workers' Council. The following staff and clients of the Council helped in developing the plot, writing the dialogue and taking the pictures:

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Be Careful
Pesticides Can be
Dangerous

Check with the Boss
before You Work in Fields
Treated with Pesticides

Wear Proper Clothing
Wash after Work

Tenga Cuidado
Pesticidas Pueden
Ser Peligrosos

Informese Antes
de Entrar a Labores que Recientemente
Se Han Fumigado con Pesticidas

Use Ropa Apropriada
Lavese Bien Al Terminar Su Trabajo