

EVEN. Do you hate my dad?

GRANDMA. This is not a bedtime story, E. This is another war story.

EVEN. But do you?

GRANDMA. I don't hate him.

EVEN. You're mean to him.

GRANDMA. I never understood why your mother married that man. His family—his people—they were the one's your grandpa Olive fought against. Maybe I took it personally. I didn't understand how she could betray her own father that way.

EVEN. But I thought the war was over when they met.

GRANDMA. You don't remember war at arm's length, E. No matter how time passes. It preys on your mind, gets in your skin and your bones. It's a pain in your chest every night. If that makes me mean, so help me. *(Pause.)* Remembering brings nothing but sorrow. I want to put all those things that happened over there behind me. Put them in that old wooden box downstairs and leave them in this house. It's time to move on.

EVEN. But what if—

GRANDMA. Give the war a rest, Even. Sleep.

*(She repeats the good-night gesture. He returns it.)*

## BLACKOUT

## BORDER

by Silvia Gonzalez S.

### CHARACTERS

NACHO: A used-car salesman-type.

ESTEFAN: A young man who normally goes about his own business. Not easily persuaded to do anything.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A barren landscape.

There is a high fence blocking the view beyond.

AT RISE: *NACHO* is digging under the fence. *ESTAFAN* enters and walks by, not noticing *NACHO*.

NACHO. One dollar.

ESTAFAN *(startled, then suspicious)*. For what?

NACHO. To get to the other side.

ESTAFAN *(not completely in the dark with what is on the other side)*. What's on the other side?

NACHO. Gold.

ESTAFAN. What's on this side?

NACHO. Silver.

ESTAFAN. I like silver.

NACHO. One dollar.

ESTAFAN *(losing patience, wanting to leave)*. For what?

NACHO. To get to the other side. Do you want money?

ESTAFAN. Everyone wants money.

NACHO. Give me a dollar, and you can go to the other side through here, and see what you'll get.

ESTAFAN. What will I get?

NACHO. Whatever you want. You want money, you can get that, too. See that hole?

ESTAFAN. Yes.

NACHO. I dug it so you can go to the other side.

ESTAFAN. What's on the other side?

NACHO. I told you! More money.

ESTAFAN. Then why don't you go there?

NACHO. I've been there.

ESTAFAN. Then?

NACHO. I'm here to help others like you.

ESTAFAN. To get to the other side?

NACHO. That's right. One dollar.

ESTAFAN. Why do I want to go to the other side?

NACHO. For the money.

ESTAFAN. I don't care about the money.

NACHO. Everyone cares about money. Are you crazy? Money is the first step to get what you want. You want love? Then you need money to dress yourself nicely to get the attention from that special person. You want to be entertained, you need money to pay for the movie. You need money to go to Disneyland! Everything is expensive. It's not free!

ESTAFAN. What if I want to walk in the forest? Just to see trees, and wildflowers.

NACHO. That costs money, too. You have to buy gas to get there. You have a car? *(Pause. Knows the answer.)*

ESTAFAN *(slightly curious)*. The money is on the other side?

NACHO. I told you that. Weren't you listening?

ESTAFAN. Where exactly?

NACHO. You have to work for it.

ESTAFAN. I thought so. I knew there was a catch.

NACHO. Well, how else will you get it? That's the only way.

ESTAFAN. I can work here and make money.

NACHO. And you can work there, but for more money.

You get much more for the work over there. NOW, just go through this hole and to the other side AND—

ESTAFAN *(interrupts)*. I already have a job. And I like it.

NACHO. How much does it pay?

ESTAFAN. Enough.

NACHO. On the other side, it pays even more than enough. And the extra, buy yourself a nice outfit, and see a funny movie with your date. Give me the dollar and I'll let you crawl through this hole. I made it with my bare hands. It's the perfect size for you.

ESTAFAN. I'll get dirty if I go through there.

NACHO. For another dollar, I'll put this plastic bag down so you won't get dirty.

ESTAFAN. No. *(He starts to walk away.)*

NACHO *(defeated)*. That's all right. I understand.

ESTAFAN *(stops to look back at NACHO)*. I'm sorry. I'm not interested.

NACHO. It doesn't matter to me. I'm just trying to help. That's all I try to do. So many like yourself hunger, and I try to assist. That's all. Make a little money, but mostly it is for people as unfortunate as you. You know yourself. It's all right. Go on your way.

ESTAFAN. You are making me feel bad. What did I do?

NACHO (*sincere*). *Nothing*. That's the problem.

ESTAFAN. What do you mean?

NACHO. I'm just an honest man trying to make a living.

Thank you very much for your time. (*Pause*.) Do you know anyone who would want to get to the other side?

If you do, let them know I'm here. God bless you.

ESTAFAN (*trying to act slightly interested*). What else is over there?

NACHO. Freedom.

ESTAFAN. Everyone has freedom.

NACHO. There's no freedom here.

ESTAFAN. I'm free to walk anywhere I like.

NACHO. There's no freedom if you can't make a lot of money.

ESTAFAN. You're making a dollar a person with that hole.

NACHO. As soon as *they* find out I'm doing it, I'll be kicked out. The horror is that someone else will take my place. And I've lost everything. That's the way it is here.

ESTAFAN. It is?

NACHO. Yes. Don't you know that already? Where have you been? Don't you see what is around you? Or are you content with what you have?

ESTAFAN. I don't know. I'm not sure now.

NACHO. The only way you'll know is by giving me a dollar, and going to the other side. You'll see what is waiting for you. You'll see wonderful things. Things you will want. Things that you'll get with extra hard work.

ESTAFAN. All you get is a dollar?

NACHO. Well, I get more. I get the satisfaction of helping someone into the world of fortune.

ESTAFAN (*suspicious*). That's all?

NACHO. Well, I do get a bonus for directing you to certain places for jobs. And I'm glad you asked. In my pocket I have places to find work. It's guaranteed. All you have to do is take it to them—they'll know it came from me—and you get the job. Otherwise, you find your own.

ESTAFAN. How much?

NACHO. You've become smart already. Just by standing here with me. One dollar each. Three for three dollars.

ESTAFAN. I'll take three.

NACHO. Then you'll use the hole?

ESTAFAN. You have leads on jobs?

NACHO. Exactly. I thought I told you that before.

ESTAFAN. You didn't.

NACHO. My mistake. No wonder.

ESTAFAN. No wonder what?

NACHO. No wonder you weren't eager at the beginning about going to the other side.

ESTAFAN. I *wasn't* eager.

NACHO. What changed your mind?

ESTAFAN. I don't know exactly.

NACHO. You won't regret it. That'll be five dollars.

ESTAFAN. Five dollars!? Four!

NACHO. It's five!

ESTAFAN. For what?

NACHO. For the plastic.

ESTAFAN. I don't want the plastic.

NACHO. All right. Give me the money.

ESTAFAN. Here's a ten