FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Tree of Sighs
Lucrecia Guerrero
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Altagracia Villalobos spends her childhood, the years before she becomes American Grace Thornberry, in the Mexican border town of Mesquite. *Tree of Sighs* is the story of Grace's ever-changing identity and the journey that takes her from Mexico to Ohio to Indiana and, finally, back to Mexico.

Author Lucrecia Guerrero is at her strongest when she's writing about Mexico. "A cloud of small white butterflies fluttered about the pink flowers of the Rosa de Castilla that rambled up the outside wall near the front door (painted blue to keep out evil spirits, Chelo said). I imagined myself shrinking down to the size of my smallest fingernail, my stick-tiny legs striding the black body of one of the butterflies." Those are the words of thirteen-year-old Altagracia, before her parents die tragically in a car wreck, before her grandmother "gives her away" to a nicely dressed American woman who needs help caring for her two young children. The woman promises kindness and a college education, but it's soon obvious that it won't work out that way. "Mrs. Smith took hold of my wrist as if to leave. No matter how much I twisted my arm back and forth, I couldn't pull free…"

It's almost twenty years before Grace pulls free and makes her way south again, lured to the Borderlands Motel (on the American side of Mesquite) by mysterious sounds. "I call it my tree of sighs," explains Josie, the motel's owner, when Grace shows up at her door. "Just a little arroyo willow, but I got it all decorated real nice with all kinds of wind chimes."

The book's foreshadowing can be heavy-handed at times and some relationships change a bit too quickly, but always, eventually, there is Mexico, where Guerrero's writing is most alive. It is here that Grace discovers more of her family history and faces questions that lack easy answers—both in her own life and in the lives of those around her.

You can’t help but root for Altagracia—Grace—as she takes baby steps back home—to herself, her land, and who she’s become while living in between the two.

S. Hope Mills