

The writing contest inspired by Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* generated many entries worthy of publication. The staff realized some were too good to ignore. Here are the vignettes they chose as their Staff Picks.

Rachas

My mother says to me, "We're going to visit Prima Lydia in 'Booklin.'"

While on the 'J' train, Mama whispers to me as only Puerto-Rican mothers can

"Pssst! Oyeme, in the house of Prima Lydia hay muchas cucarachas."

"Like the roaches we sometimes find in our house?" I ask.

"No, hijo, those we can kill; the ones at Lydia's are bold."

That night after eating cornflakes con leche, Prima Lydia says:

"If you have to pee, do it now, because once the lights are turned off, the dance will start."

By Fritz Mondé

"Mama, what dance?" I ask.

Mama rolls her eyes and says, "Shhh!"

Later that night, as we sleep together on a twin bed, hoisted high on twelve inch cinderblocks, I hear scritch-scratch sounds, flapping and scurrying. Mother's eyes are already open when I turn and whisper.

"Cucarachas."

Across the floor comes the brown army. Little ones, mother ones, generations of them. They shake and dance, mambo, cumbia, pachanga, and cha-cha-cha. Up and down the 'rachas' move looking for crumbs, foraging inside of shoes. Along the wall, brown antennas poke, switching back and forth. I'm afraid not even Raid can get rid of these roaches. The next day, on our way back home, I think about Prima Lydia.

"Why does Prima Lydia live like that?"

Mama's answer is simple but true.

"When you live in 'Booklin' Puerto-Rican-poor, cucarachas know this and multiply even more."

Kendall Campus