

MANUELITO

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

WRITTEN BY ELISA AMADO

ILLUSTRATED BY ABRAHAM URIAS



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© 2019 Abraham Urias (illustrations)
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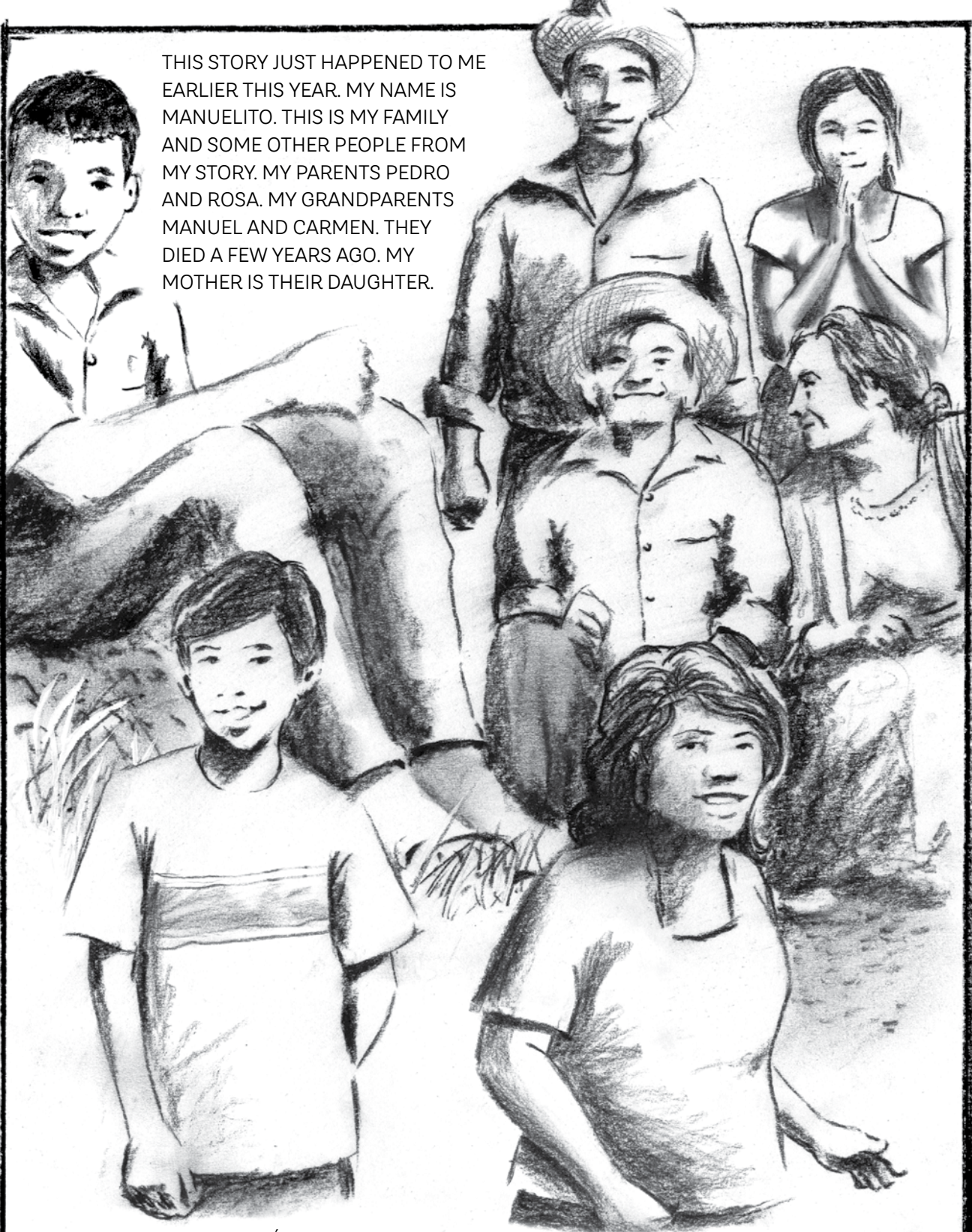
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*This book is dedicated to the real Domingo,
who was disappeared by the Guatemalan army,
and to his family and all the other Maya who have
experienced—and who continue to experience—
so much social injustice and violence.*



Sixty million people around the world become refugees every year. Half of them are under 18 years of age. They are fleeing their homelands because they fear that if they stay they will be killed. But this doesn't happen only in faraway places. It is happening in North America. Over 100,000 unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle of Central America—Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—have made the very dangerous trip across Mexico, alone or with a coyote (a human trafficker hired by parents to take their children on this journey), in the hope of finding safety and refuge in the United States. Almost as many have been detained in Mexico at the request of the United States. Very few of these young people have access to outside lawyers or people who can help them. And many of them are now being hunted down by ICE—the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency—and returned to the countries from which they fled, where their lives are in danger. Manuelito, a young Guatemalan boy and the hero of this story, is one of these people.





THIS STORY JUST HAPPENED TO ME
EARLIER THIS YEAR. MY NAME IS
MANUELITO. THIS IS MY FAMILY
AND SOME OTHER PEOPLE FROM
MY STORY. MY PARENTS PEDRO
AND ROSA. MY GRANDPARENTS
MANUEL AND CARMEN. THEY
DIED A FEW YEARS AGO. MY
MOTHER IS THEIR DAUGHTER.

MY MOTHER'S BROTHER TÍO DOMINGO.
HE WAS DISAPPEARED WHEN HE WAS 12,
ALMOST 35 YEARS AGO.

MY TÍA ADELA. SHE'S MY AUNT AND
LIVED ON LONG ISLAND, USA.

ME, MANUELITO.
I'M 13.

MY SISTER ROSITA.
SHE IS 10.

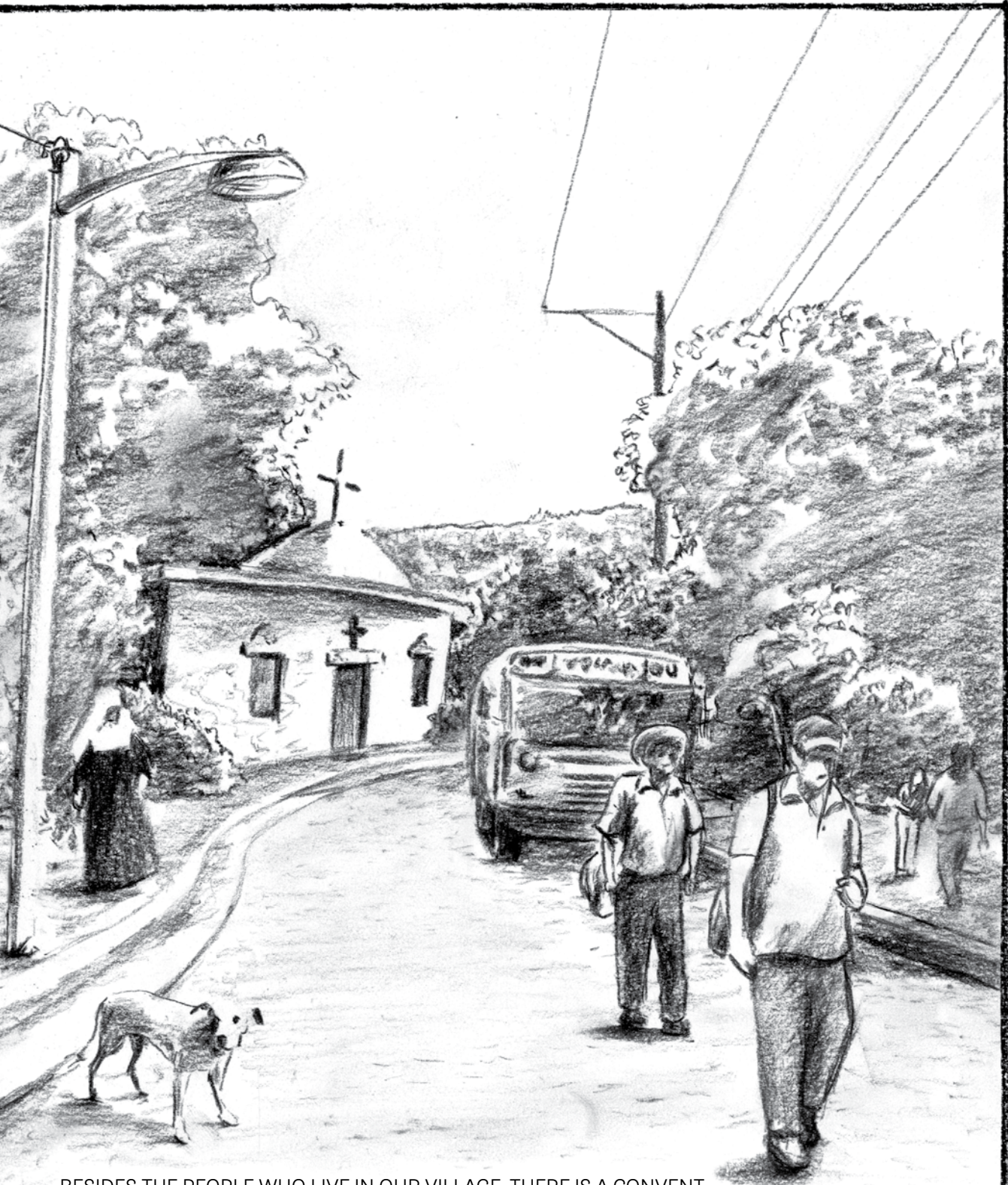
JENNY, A VERY NICE GIRL
WHO IS 14.

MY FRIEND COCO LOCO. HE WAS OLDER THAN
ME. HIS FATHER OWNED THE VILLAGE STORE.

SOME SEÑORAS
WHO HELPED ME.

THE COYOTE, A VERY BAD
MAN WHO GETS PAID TO TAKE
PEOPLE LIKE ME TO THE USA.

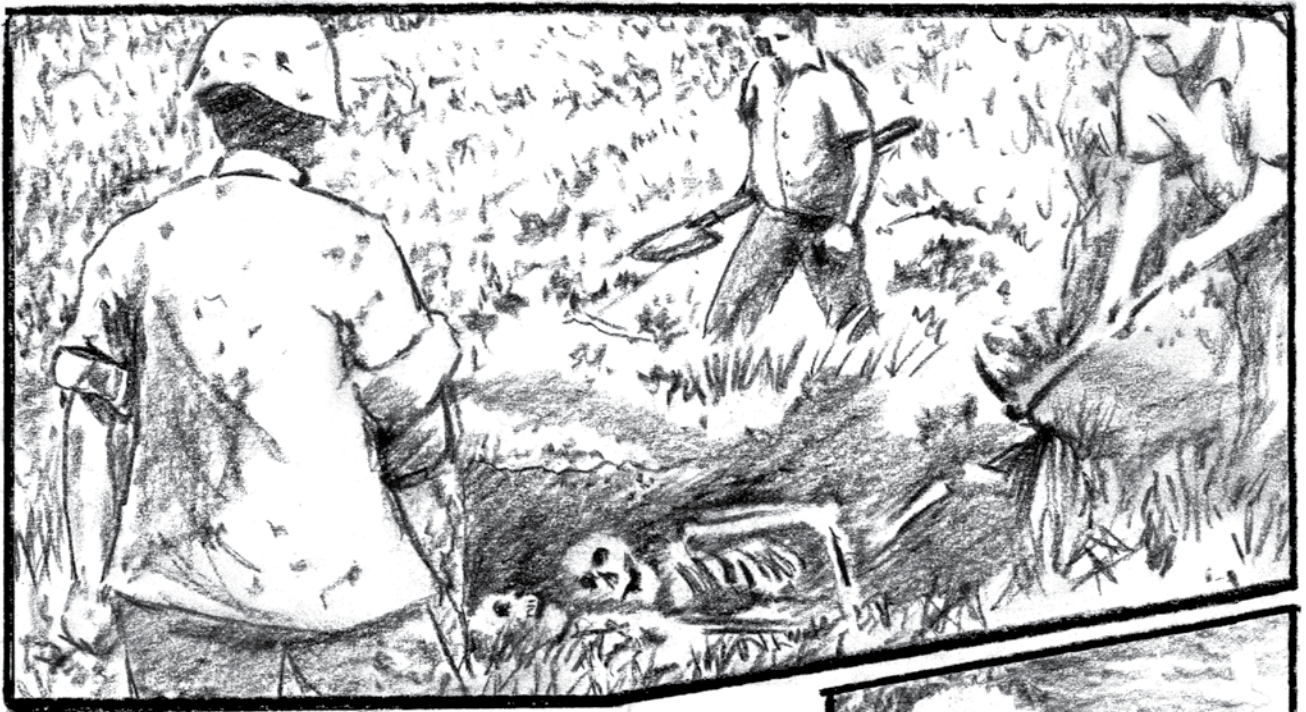




BESIDES THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN OUR VILLAGE, THERE IS A CONVENT, A SCHOOL, AND THE PACS—ARMED CIVIL PATROL. THEY ARE MEN FROM THE VILLAGE. THE ARMY GAVE THEM WEAPONS. THEY ARE VERY DANGEROUS BECAUSE THEY DON'T MIND KILLING PEOPLE THEY DON'T AGREE WITH.



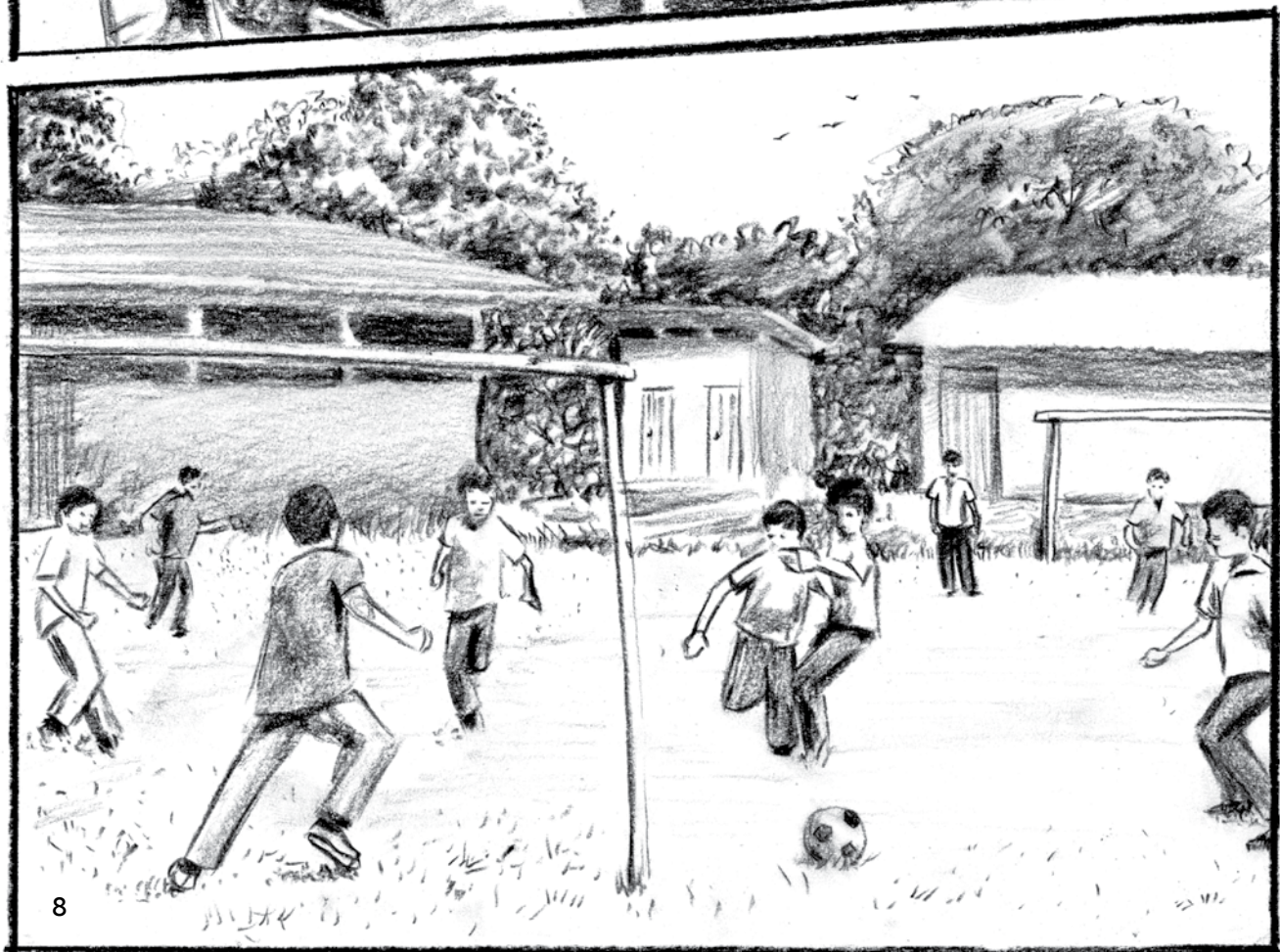
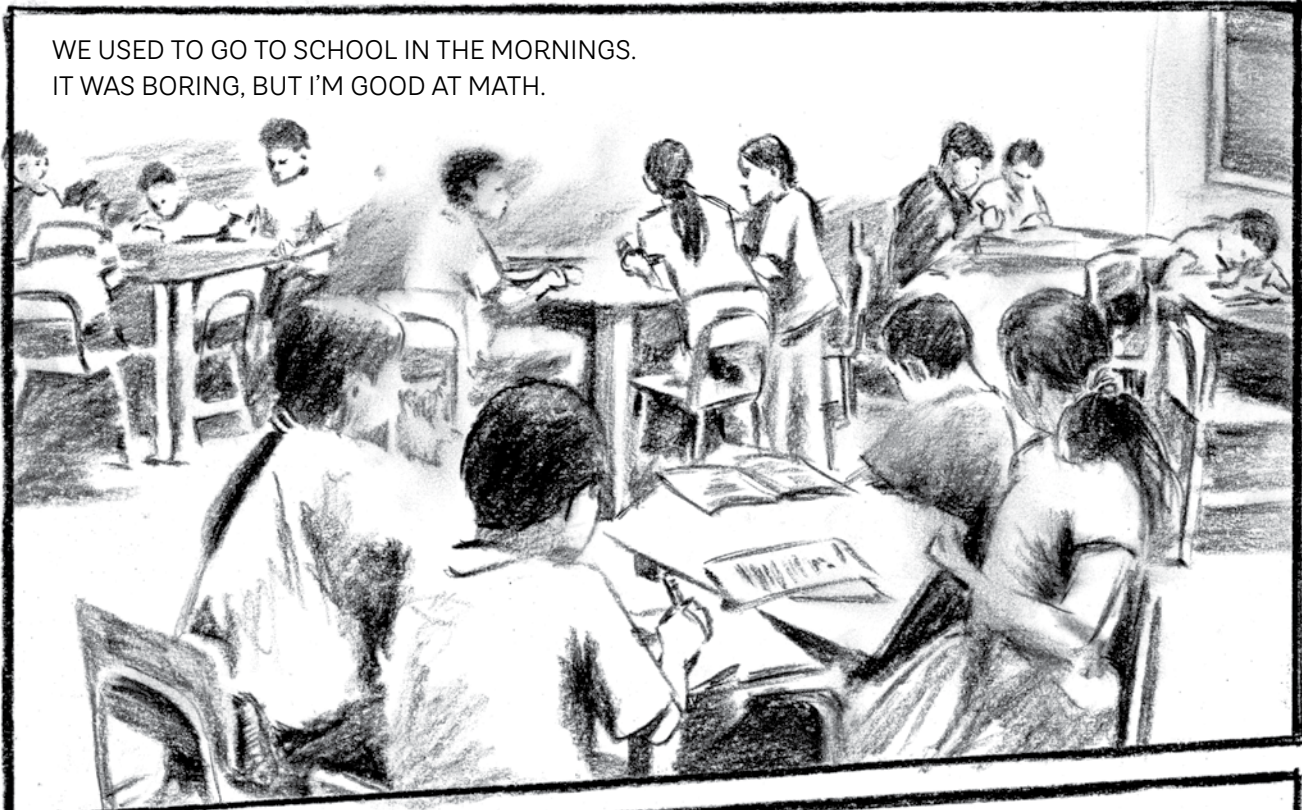
A LONG TIME AGO, DURING THE WAR, THE ARMY GRABBED MY TÍO DOMINGO WHEN HE WAS PLAYING IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE. HE WAS ONLY 12. AFTERWARD, MY GRANDPARENTS AND ALL MY FAMILY, AND LOTS OF OTHER VILLAGERS, WENT AND HID IN THE MOUNTAINS FOR TWO YEARS. THEY ALMOST DIED OF HUNGER. DOMINGO NEVER CAME BACK. AFTER THE WAR, THEY DUG UP A HUGE GRAVE IN THE CONVENT'S GARDEN WHERE PEOPLE KILLED BY THE ARMY AND THE PACS HAD BEEN BURIED. BUT THEY DIDN'T FIND DOMINGO. HE HAD JUST DISAPPEARED.

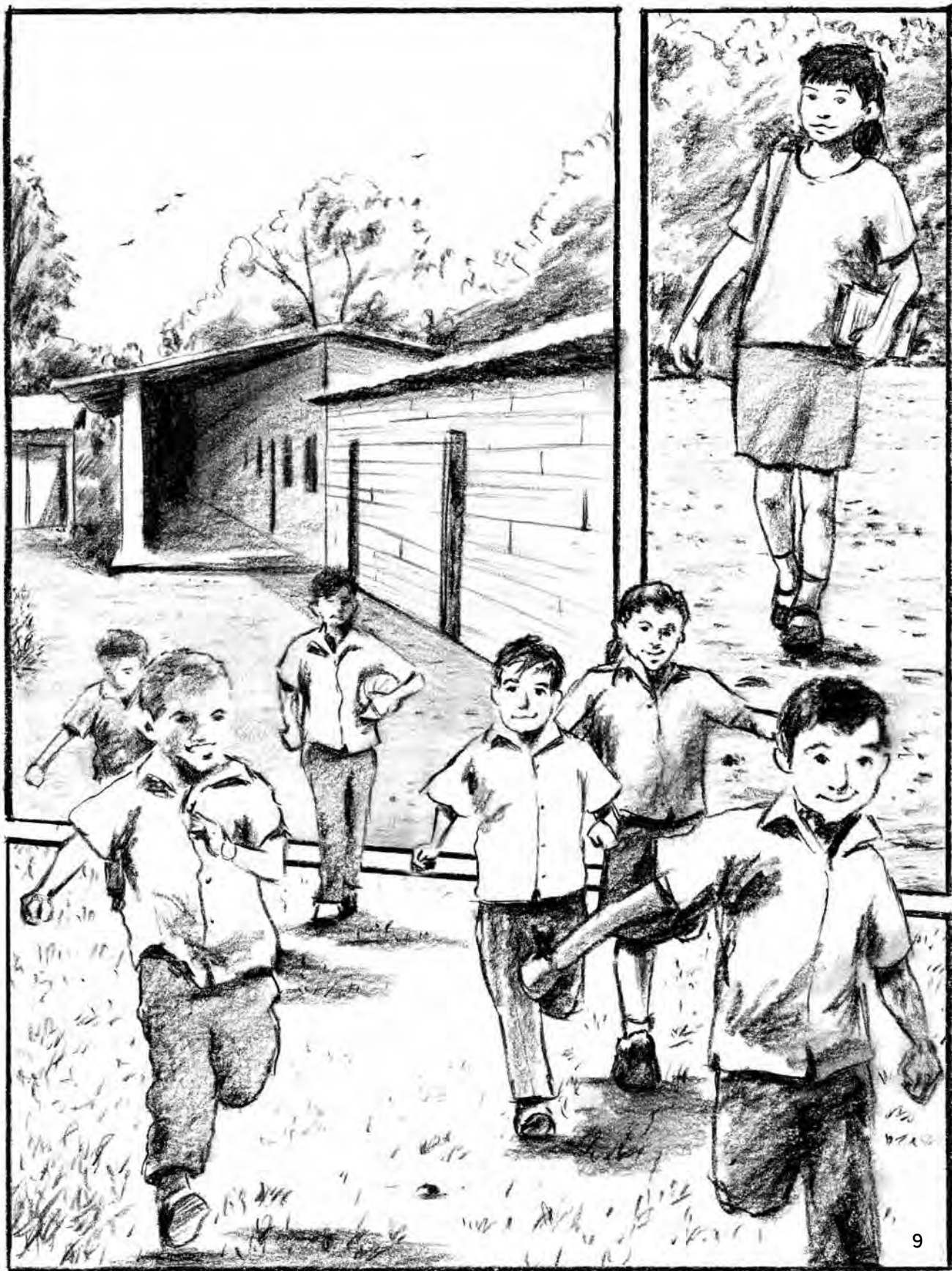


MY GRANDFATHER MANUEL USED TO TALK ABOUT DOMINGO ALL THE TIME. THAT MADE MY GRANDMOTHER CRY. I DIDN'T LIKE ALWAYS HEARING ABOUT DOMINGO. BUT I WAS VERY SAD WHEN MY GRANDPARENTS DIED.

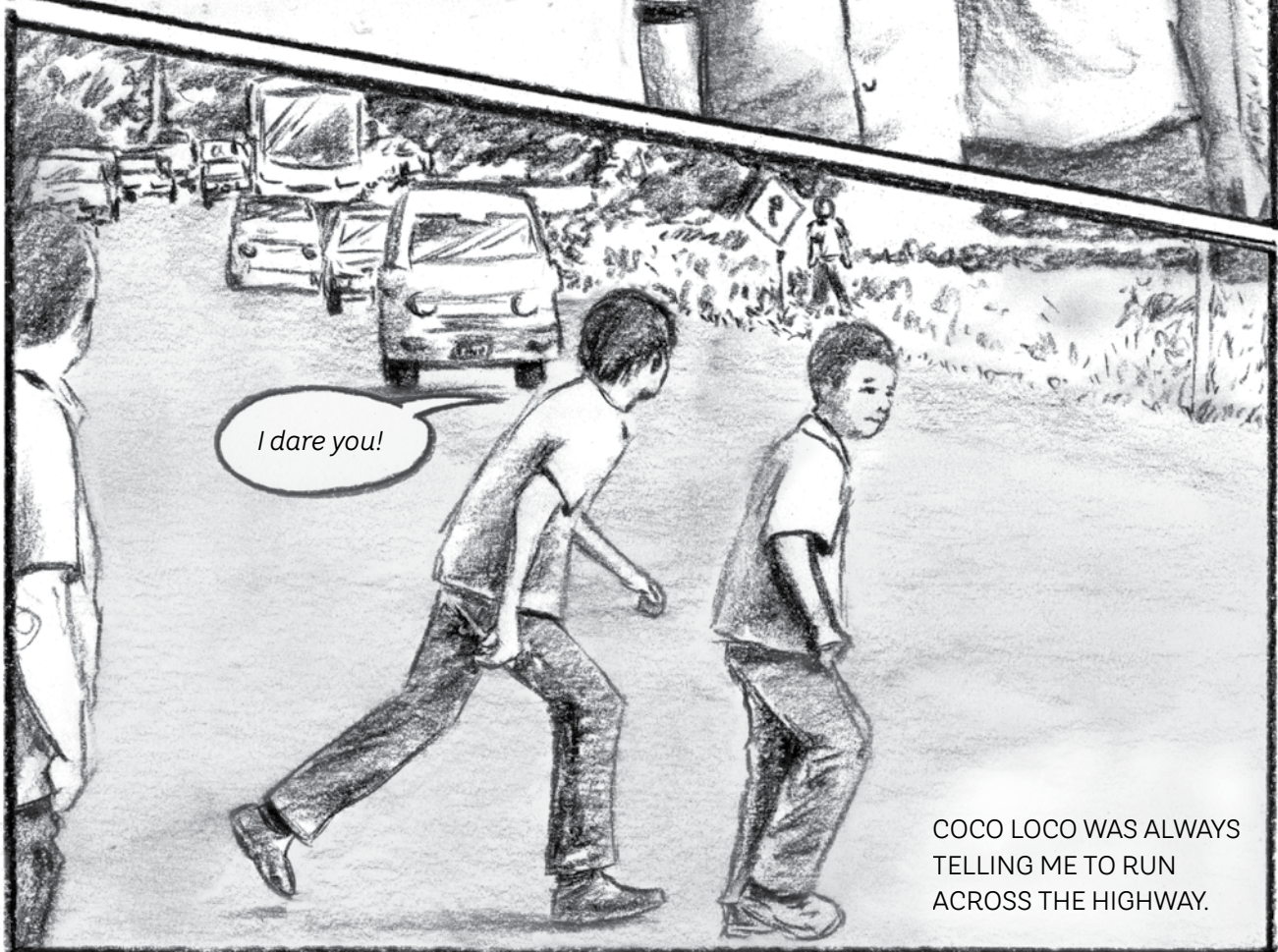


WE USED TO GO TO SCHOOL IN THE MORNINGS.
IT WAS BORING, BUT I'M GOOD AT MATH.



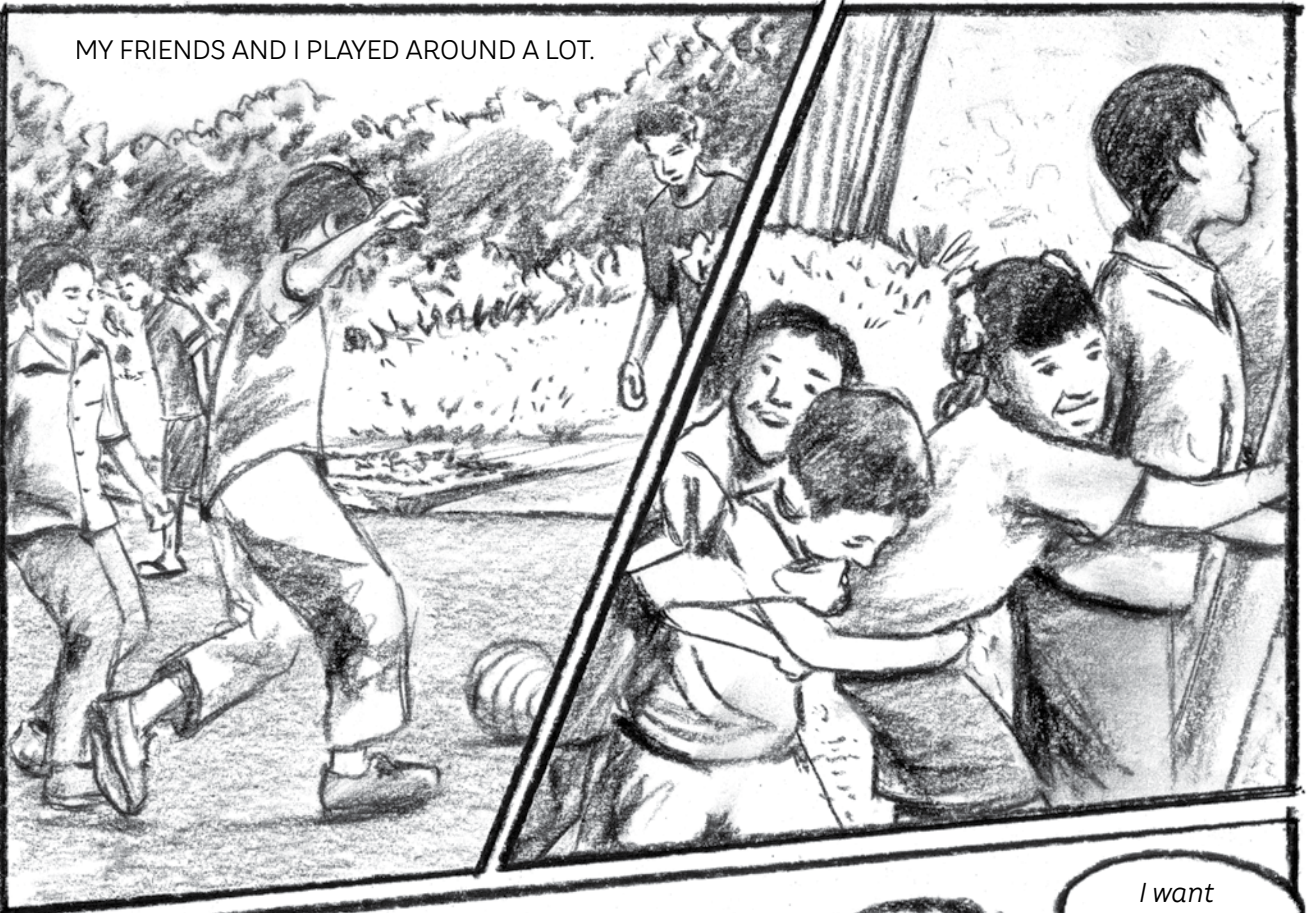


MY BEST FRIEND WAS COCO LOCO,
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS BIGGER
THAN ME. HE WAS RICH BECAUSE
HIS FATHER HAD A STORE.



COCO LOCO WAS ALWAYS
TELLING ME TO RUN
ACROSS THE HIGHWAY.

MY FRIENDS AND I PLAYED AROUND A LOT.



ROSITA LOVED HANGING AROUND WITH US.
SHE HATED TO BE LEFT BEHIND.

*I want
to go, too!*





BUT SUDDENLY EVERYTHING BEGAN
TO CHANGE. THE PACS WERE
WALKING AROUND THE VILLAGE
MORE AND MORE WITH THEIR
GUNS. WE TRIED TO PRETEND
THAT EVERYTHING WAS OKAY.

