



# This playlist is part of the journey

Listen as you read, or add your own tracks that capture the mood.



### ForeWord

Stories that Escape the Page is a collection born from the need to make visible what often goes unnoticed: the emotions, experiences, and human consequences behind contemporary migration. Through illustration, this book gives form to untold stories, to silences, to the ache of loss, and to the quiet resilience of those who carry on.

Migration is not merely a political issue or a passing headline, it is a deeply human reality that has long shaped our histories, cultures, and the ways we connect. It remains a powerful force for transformation, both personal and collective.

In this book, each page carries a different voice. Some speak of hope, others of uncertainty, but all are part of a shared experience. These are stories that don't stay still, they move, they change, they escape the page.

### Prefacio

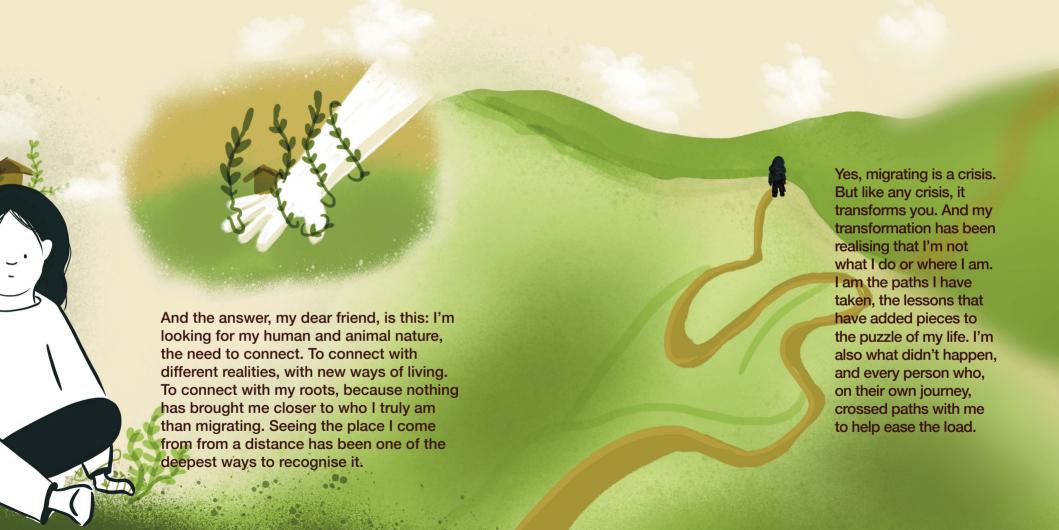
Historias que Escapan del Papel es una colección que nace de la necesidad de visibilizar lo que a menudo pasa desapercibido: las emociones, experiencias y consecuencias humanas de la migración contemporánea. A través de la ilustración, este libro da forma a historias aún no contadas, a silencios, al dolor de la pérdida y a la silenciosa resiliencia de quienes siguen adelante.

La migración no es solo un asunto político o un titular pasajero; es una realidad profundamente humana que ha moldeado nuestras historias, culturas y nuestras formas de conectar. Sigue siendo una poderosa fuerza de transformación, tanto personal como colectiva.

En este libro cada página transmite una voz diferente. Algunas hablan de esperanza, otras de incertidumbre, pero todas forman parte de una experiencia compartida. Son historias que no se detienen: se mueven, cambian, escapan del papel.

# Departure La partida







Migrating has shown me that no place is ever fixed or final. That, as the animal I am, the whole earth is my home. And that I'll probably always be on the move, because it's in my nature. Migrating isn't about leaving. It's about returning. Returning to connection.

It's through movement that we learn the most. And to strengthen your roots, you first need to grow outwards. That only happens by opening your mind to new possibilities, even if it means stepping away, for a while or for good, from the place where your roots are planted.

We migrate in search of better conditions for life. And like the animals, when the terrain changes, we return. Sometimes to where we started, sometimes to somewhere completely new. But always, deep down, we return to ourselves.



# Journey El camino



Three months later, on September 26, I arrived in Los Angeles, United States. We had thought the journey would last just three days, even knowing from the start that we'd be crossing through "El Hueco." We left Medellín, Colombia, on June 12, 1992, eight people from different regions of the country, each carrying personal hopes, but all of us united by a shared purpose: to give our

families a better future.

After calling my wife from Los
Angeles and then taking a
six-hour flight to New York, I
finally had a moment to reflect on
everything I had left behind, my
wife, my daughter, countless
relatives and friends, a city and a
country I carried deep within me,
always present in my thoughts.

The change was jarring at first. Even though I arrived in a community largely made up of fellow Latinos, speaking the same language, it was clear that many had already embraced the customs and routines of this new land.

Support for newly arrived migrants tends to be short-lived, often no more than a month. After that, you're expected to leave the home that first welcomed you, whether or not you've found work. In my case, I was fortunate. After that initial month, a group of friends living nearby in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, took me in. Still, the anxiety of not finding a job was overwhelming. It's the kind of fear that makes you question whether it's even worth staying.





# Shadows Translated from Spanish\*

In 1986, I travelled to the United States through "El Hueco", that's what people called it back then. I was very young, just 30 years old, and I wanted to see the country.

The odyssey began when I arrived in Mexico on 12th June. There, the coyote\* who was supposed to take me across the border was waiting. But when I went through immigration, a woman approached me and said, "Come with me, you look like a trafficker." I was absolutely terrified. She took me to a small room where she searched me all over, then demanded \$120 to let me go. I paid her, and went to meet the coyote.

\*A coyote is a person paid to illegally smuggle people across borders, especially from Latin America to the U.S.



We travelled to his house, and the first thing he did was take away my passport, my ID, and the clothes I was wearing. I was only allowed to keep a pair of black trousers and a black shirt to cross the border. The stay was dreadful, they didn't even offer water.

After six days, we travelled to Tijuana and stayed there for a day. He then took me to a deserted area where we met 14 other people.

We were all dressed in black. It was horrible, we had to spend the night under a tree. You could still feel the winter chill, and perhaps because I was young, I managed to endure it.



We arrived in San Diego and stayed for two days. Then, in a similar way, we crossed the border again with some Americans, but this time, seven of us were crammed into the boot. One elderly man nearly lost his life from suffocation, and we couldn't do anything to help.







# Border La frontera



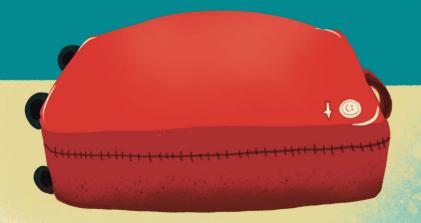
What to pack? I knew the initial trip would be two months, but there was a small chance it would extend for longer. For how long? How do you prepare and pack for the unforeseeable? Clothes for sure would be necessary, shoes too. Toiletries were essential, but maybe I could find those there. Would it work with my limited budget? How expensive would life be? I surely could not take Foot Powder, my country has a bad reputation with white powders and I didn't want to invite that kind of attention. Just the basics then, until I got settled and found my way around this new place.

30Kg, that is the maximum I could carry in my new adventure across the Atlantic. 30Kg was all that was included in my economic ticket on this journey, a chosen one, at the same time scary, exciting, and uncertain.





the countless objects I had collected over the years, and those given to me by family or friends. I couldn't pack them all. 30Kg wasn't enough to fit in those objects full of history and memories. Those had to stay behind, safeguarded in my parents house. It was only 30Kg to start in a new country, and that had to be enough, and it was.

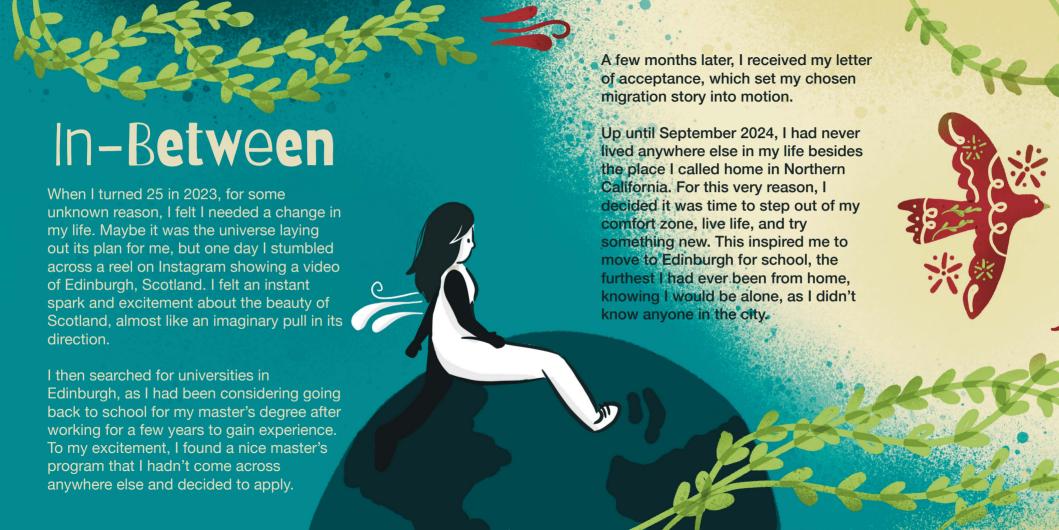




Fourteen years later I realised, those things I dreaded to leave behind also travelled with me in a different way, as memories of love and care, as parts of my personality, my family's legacy and my country's history and tradition. I carried them as parts of who I am and they are still with me. Although, I still pack coffee sweets and Bocadillo.

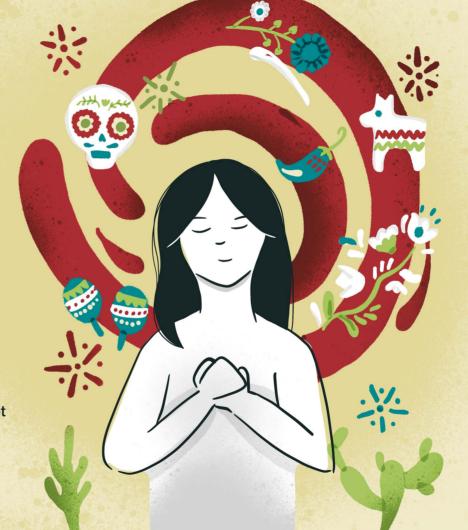


# Arrival La llegada



One big struggle since arriving has been my internal debate with cultural identity. While I am American and was born in California, my parents are Mexican, and I am therefore Mexican-American. Knowing that people in the UK don't always view Americans favorably has made me feel embarrassed to say that I'm American.

On the plus side, I'm very connected to my Mexican culture and have noticed that when I share this part of me, it's often received more positively. However, because my conversational Spanish isn't the strongest, I sometimes feel self-conscious when speaking with Spanish speakers, as if I'm not "Mexican enough" because of how I speak. The question I face is: am I more American or Mexican?



While I've struggled with this dilemma since moving, I've actually developed a greater appreciation for my Mexican heritage. So, even though the identity questions haven't disappeared, I've discovered a deep desire to proudly embrace my culture and share it with others.







# Migrante Translated from Spanish\*

Es curioso cuanto menos, cómo una decisión tomada hace 24 años, por alguien que ya no está, ha marcado mi vida de una manera tan profunda.

It is curious, to say the least, how a decision made 24 years ago by someone who is no longer here has shaped my life so deeply.

Muere a cada paso la orquídea que arrancada de su tierra no encuentra un nuevo sustrato donde crecer.

With every step, the orchid dies, uprooted from its soil, unable to find new ground to grow.

Incluso el colibrí con comederos de agua y miel aletea sin saber que el cuidado no siempre es el que debe ser.

Even the hummingbird, with feeders of water and honey, flutters unaware that care is not always the kind it needs.



¿Garantiza acaso el amor el bienestar de aquellos que pretendes impulsar?

Does love truly guarantee the well-being of those you wish to uplift?

Ruego a la vida desde los doce años no extrañar, encajar, alegrar en lugar de mutilar las esperanzas de mejorar.

Since I was twelve, I've begged life not to feel longing, to fit in, to bring joy instead of cutting short the hope of something better.



A veces lo he logrado, teniendo que renunciar a la música, a ser orquídea para pretender ser clavel, a reemplazar la salsa por el flamenco porque allá donde fueres haz lo que vieres.

Sometimes I've managed, giving up music, ceasing to be an orchid to pretend to be a carnation, replacing salsa with flamenco because wherever you go, do as the Romans do.

No me quejo, entiendo y agradezco la oportunidad de viajar, de salir, de vivir entre el privilegio de tener un DNI.

I do not complain; I understand and am grateful for the chance to travel, to leave, to live within the privilege of holding an ID card. Tal vez en otro universo crecí en Colombia, mi familia tiene más que una foto junta y mi corazón no está dividido entre dos tierras.

Perhaps in another universe, I grew up in Colombia, my family has more than just one photo together, and my heart is not torn between two lands.

Ese es el sueño, que la migración no hubiera atravesado, sin decidir, cada segundo de mi existir.

That is the dream, that migration had not, without my choosing, pierced every second of my existence.

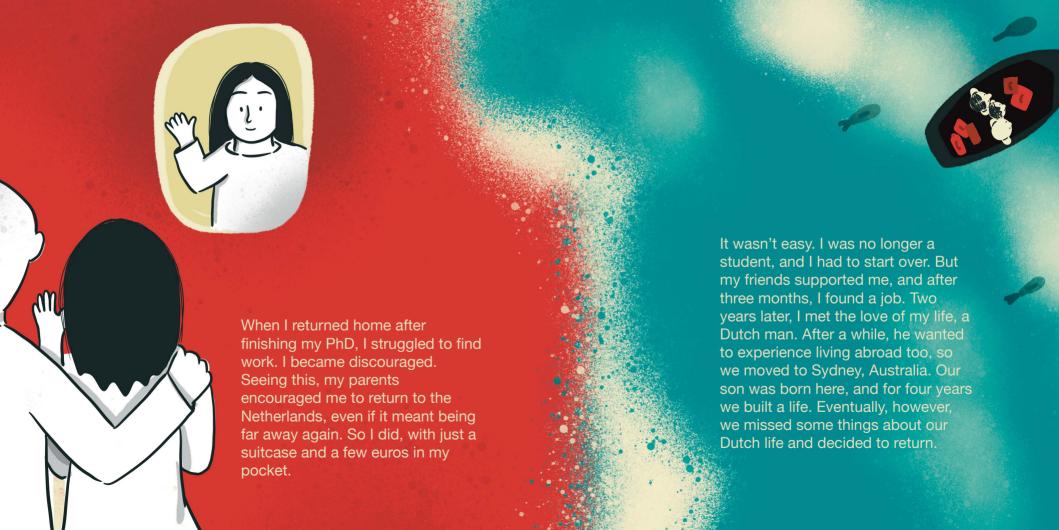


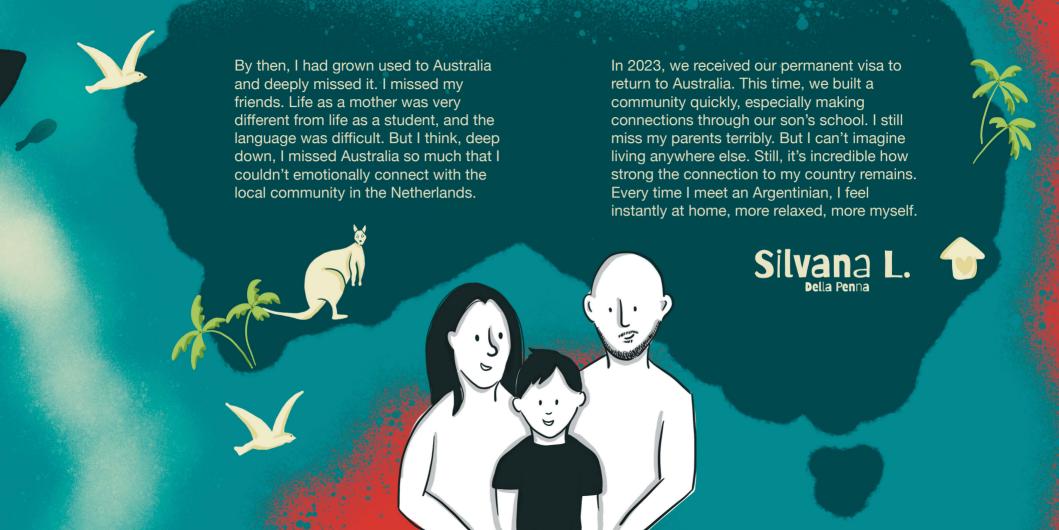


# Until | Felt at Home

In Argentina, things weren't going well, socially or economically. Ever since a trip to the U.S. when I was 15, I'd had the feeling that I wouldn't stay in Argentina forever.

In 2011, I found a scholarship to spend ten months in Europe during my PhD. I chose the Netherlands, where a friend lived, and ended up staying for three years, finishing and defending my thesis there. I was lucky, my university's international office connected me with an Argentine student in the city I was heading to. Through her, I met a wonderful Latin American community. Those were some of the best years of my life. I didn't miss Argentina, but I missed my parents terribly.





# Letter to the invisible cartas a lo invisible



I don't know if the pounding heart that hits me at night is just my body reacting to the knot of thoughts tangled in my mind, or if it's simply the universe's way of telling me that maybe, just maybe, I should be there.

I feel like I'm suffocating every time I think about it. Breathing gets harder. I'm in the place so many people wish they could be, in the place I once dreamed of being myself, and yet, sometimes it feels like the air I need stayed behind: with the warmth of the sun, the green of the trees, my mountains... and them.



Saying goodbye was never easy. The first time, my suitcase was filled with every dream I had, still have... or maybe feel I should have? But three winters have passed now, and I've learned that here, the cold doesn't only last five months.

It hasn't all been bad. I found myself. I found that version of me who can handle anything, the one others saw, but I didn't. But... the second time I said "see you soon" shattered me. It split me into two. I cried a lot before I left, because it's true, when we're far away, we forget that time also passes for those who stay behind.

I don't know if the air depends on the place itself, or on who you're with there. All I know is that saying goodbye was never easy... and maybe, it's not supposed to be.

Estefanía Gallego Uribe



## Letter to the invisible

Translated from Spanish\*

I was just twenty years old when I left Argentina in 1976. I left in haste, with little luggage and a wounded memory. I had no clear destination. Perhaps Sweden, cold, distant, unfamiliar, impossible.

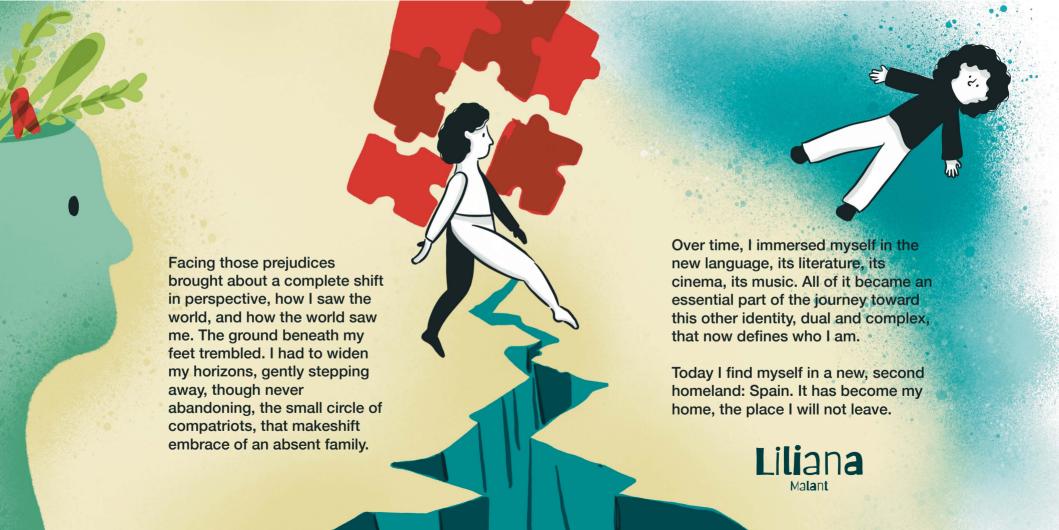
That first winter was a wall of white. I didn't understand the downcast eyes on the subway, or the silence that fell like snow on my shoulders. Crossing an ocean, I had stepped into a new world.

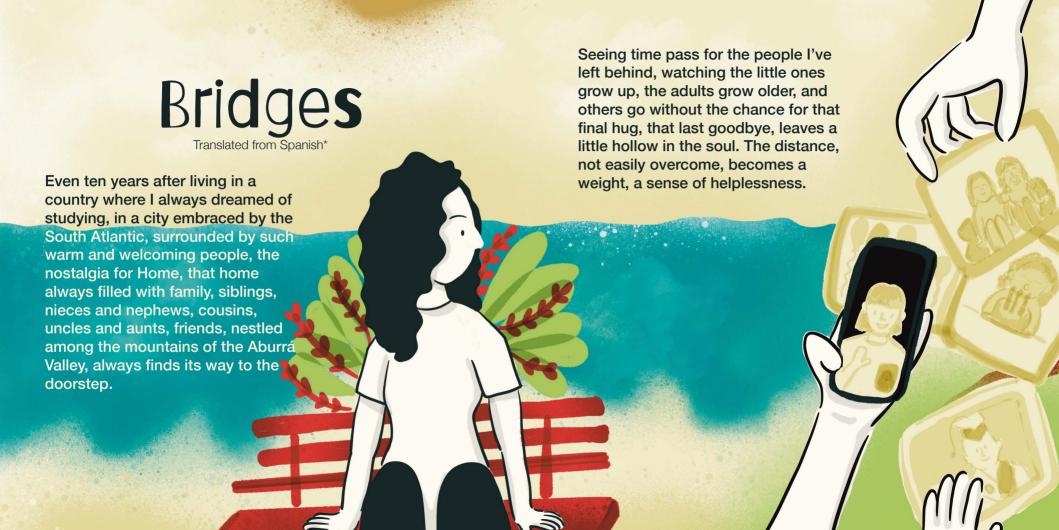
The first few years were shaded with distrust. It took time to realise that we were all afraid, they of the unknown, and I of losing myself. Slowly, they began to ask me questions, and I learned to listen.

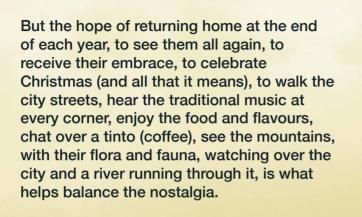


Migration is a long and complicated process. It transforms you. It forces you to rethink the values and beliefs that, until then, had shaped your understanding of the world. Along the way, I discovered that uprootedness doesn't just come from outside. Part of me had to let go of certain prejudices if I was ever going to grow roots in the new landscape of my life.









And so, it becomes essential to build and maintain strong bridges with my Home: colours, music, cumbias, porros, salsa, marimbas, food, a phone call, a message, a photo, a memory on the feed... little elements in my day-to-day life that remind me where I'm from, where my roots lie, my story, the result of so many converging people, places, and moments, and the proof that my foundation and my refuge are still there.



# I'm naturally curious

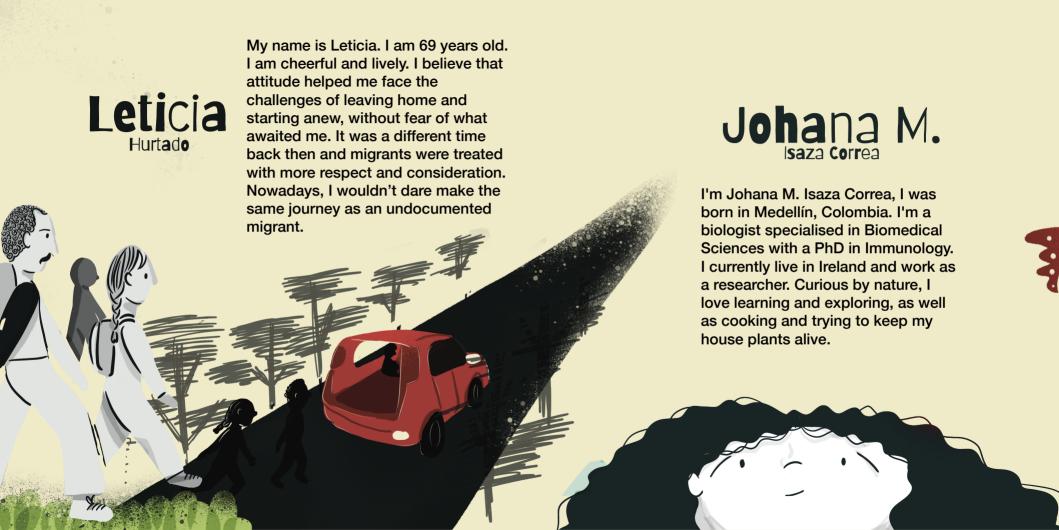
### Alejandra Pulgarin Laverde

I'm Alejandra, a human being learning how to live. I'm Colombian, living in Canada. I have a degree in audiovisual communication, but most of the time, my job is simply making things look nice. I love creating and bringing ideas to life, but I also find joy in recognising myself in what others, and life itself, create.

I'm naturally curious, both an adventurer and a homebody, constantly trying to let those two sides coexist within me.

I find beauty and meaning in the simple, everyday moments, the little things that make life worth living. I enjoy taking care of and loving my family and friends, often with a good ice cream or a great cup of coffee in hand, as we keep marvelling at and learning from whatever life brings our way.

### Leonel Isaza Gómez I'm Leonel Isaza Gómez, originally from Copacabana, Antioquia. I'm a Business Administrator, graduated from the University of Antioquia. Before retiring, I was a Spanish and Literature teacher for some time, and later worked as a site manager in companies dedicated to road expansion, maintenance, and paving.





### Analiz Ramírez

I'm originally from Northern California and I'm currently an MSc student at the University of Edinburgh studying Performance Psychology. In my free time, I enjoy reading, baking, playing music, and working at Islander UK.

#### Cristina Marín Marín

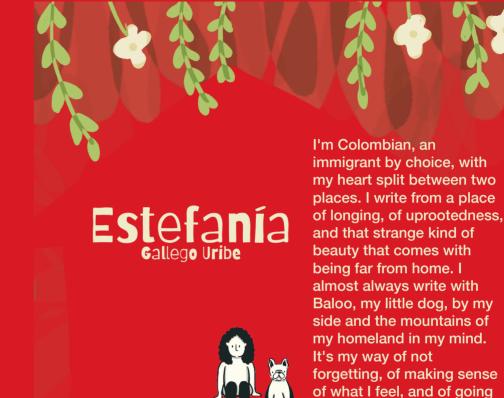
My name is Cristina, although everyone calls me Cris, or Sara, if they've known me for a long time. I write to understand myself and to make sense of the world. Crafting helps me slow down the pace of life. I've been torn between Colombia and Spain since I was five years old. I used to hate it, but now I accept it and see the richness in living between two lands.

I like cats, especially mine, colourful things, and pretty much every musical genre. I'm more of a mountain person than a beach one, and I prefer autumn over summer. I'm a professional restorer and a social educator in training.

# Silvana L.

I am Silvana L. Della Penna, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I am a pharmacist with a doctorate in Medical Sciences. I currently live in Sydney, Australia, and work in a research grants office. I love nature and hiking in the forest or mountains.

Helping and connecting people gives me a lot of energy, and I am fascinated by science. That's why, for the past 10 years, I have been a volunteer at the Ministry of Science and Technology of Argentina (working remotely), leading a group of Argentine professionals and scientists in Australia, and before that, Argentine scientists in the Netherlands. My greatest joy is being a proud mother of a 6-year-old boy who never ceases to amaze me.



back, if only a little, to

where I left a part of myself.

## Liliana

My childhood and adolescence were porteñas\*, in the always longed-for Buenos Aires. I came into adulthood in Stockholm, where the purpose was discovering my identity, without losing sight of that foreign and fascinating world. I turned 50 in Spain, and here, finally, came love, and even more love: grandchildren. And now (almost) free of phantasmagoria, I discovered inspiration and the pleasure of photography.

\*Porteñas refers to people or things from Buenos Aires, Argentina. The term comes from "Puerto" (port), as Buenos Aires is a major port city.

### Viviana Márquez Velásquez



I'm Viviana Márquez
Velásquez, a Colombian born
in Medellín. I hold a PhD in
Biological Sciences with a
focus on Zoology, and I've
dedicated my work to
studying fish and their
biodiversity. I'm a water polo
player and open water
swimmer, deeply passionate
about the sea, as well as
watercolour painting and
ceramics.

## Aknowledgements

My deepest thanks go first to all the writers who took the time and trust to share their stories, this book wouldn't exist without your voices.

To my parents, for their unwavering support from afar; to my mates, Nadia, Sarah, Inez and Sandra for their constant encouragement and belief in this project.

And to all the people from different parts of the world who have welcomed me throughout this migration process, learning from you and sharing life with you has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life.

## Agradecimientos

Mi más profundo agradecimiento va primero a todas las escritoras que se tomaron el tiempo y confiaron en compartir sus historias; este libro no existiría sin sus voces.

A mis padres, por su apoyo incondicional desde la distancia; a mis amigas, Nadia, Sarah, Inez y Sandra, por su constante apoyo y confianza en este proyecto.

Y a todas las personas de diferentes partes del mundo que me han acogido durante este proceso migratorio: aprender y compartir con ustedes ha sido una de las experiencias más gratificantes de mi vida.



### your story belongs here too.



Scan this code and share your story. It can be anonymous, short, personal, or just a memory.

Once a month, I'll send out a small selection of stories by email, to build a space for listening and connecting through migration. Some may be illustrated, others won't. All of them matter.

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