

# three girls never learnt the way home

by matthew paul olmos

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**characters**

Pacifica - female, early high school, minority

Edith – female, early high school, minority

Ivory – female, early high school, minority

A Mother – female, old enough to have a son in high school, any ethnicity

**time**

now

**place**

both the dry and green sides of the mountain

**the long bus goodbye**

Darkness on an early morning bus. We hear the hushed chatter of twenty early high-schoolers.

The bus moans and pulls along just as tired as they.

Appears the headlights from several cars driving alongside. Several honks from the cars send the children's chatter into elation.

The bus mechanicals, the chatter, and the occasional honk from outside cars find a rhythm, which turns melodic; we hear what a peaceful caravan must sound like. Finally, the single voice of PACIFICA.

PACIFICA

I swear my eyes ain't even seein'this, they ain't even seein'this. *How* is our parents drivin' alongside this bus like from outta nowhere? We been ridin'since dark.

(The lights of the cars illuminate PACIFICA, IVORY, and EDITH looking out the window; we see other students in the background also looking out)

EDITH

Lookit'em racin'right beside, cheerin'us on.

IVORY

Race or no race, my daddy would *walk* his ass here before he let a stranger in his ride.

PACIFICA

Ivory right. Since when our parents the sharin'cars type; this ain't one uh them pools or whatever.

EDITH

Pacifica, look out there, tha's only like eight or nine cars; they had to've shared.

PACIFICA

Maybe es not all our parents tho', Edith. Maybe only eight or nine could be bothered.

EDITH

I'unno, them cars, they look full.

PACIFICA

Yea, but how come they didn't tell us they was comin'then?

IVORY

Maybe they didn't want us to know. Maybe it strategic.

EDITH

Maybe after we left bus-drop, it was so sad they couldn't take it no more. So they start talkin'what if they go with, pool the cars, save on gas—

PACIFICA

I'unno. My Pops barely made it to bus-drop, can't imagine he'd have hisself driving way the hell out here.

EDITH

Imagine wanting to drive all this way with us.

PACIFICA

I'unno what's the point. They goin'watch us step off the bus, walk into the classrooms and then jus'drive all the way back???

IVORY

They must wanna be there just in case.

EDITH

In case of what?

PACIFICA

Tha's a long'ass way just in case.

IVORY

It's called mobil'i'zation.

PACIFICA

Mobil'what?

IVORY

Do you see how they're driving like that? So tight, so all-together. Their headlights guiding our way through the darkness; we like an army of outsiders pushin' into the enemy territory.

EDITH

Inte-Centro High School is *not* the enemy territory.

PACIFICA

What kinda name is that anyways.

IVORY

That's what they're forcing'em to call it now.

PACIFICA

The hell was it before?

EDITH

Central High School.

PACIFICA

Well, that ain't like a real beautiful improvement then.

IVORY

The name was imposed on them, just like we being imposed on them.

EDITH

I'm excited for the classes an all that, but me I'm so curious what they eat over on this side.

PACIFICA

Hey, do not be talkin' about food. I'm motherfucking starving. Pops said he's goin' get his ass up early'n make me some kinda special first-day-breakfast, but d'you know what that sonofbitch made me? Made me tell him when I was all-the-way ready to walk out the door so he could get an few extra sleeps in.

IVORY

I had eggs.

EDITH

Yea, me too.

IVORY

What'd you have on yers, Edie?

EDITH

She likes to cut up weenies-

PACIFICA

Yo, that bitch likes to cut up weenies, tha's like convictable in the court uh law an shit.

IVORY

Do not listen to her. Fried weenies taste like home.

PACIFICA

Yo, I can't even. You two talkin' about weenies.

EDITH

So what'd you have on yers, Ivy?

IVORY

Well, I almost don't wanna say, with Pacifica all starving, but this morning my momma reached into our fridge all quiet an she pulled out from last night the leftover steak. She knifed some uh that into strips an tossed it on the pan with the oil, so it was crackling an gettin'all smokey, then she poured the eggs all beat on top. I ain't never smelled nothin' like it before in my life. She sayed it was real common or whatever, that adults eat it, never really kids, but...if that's what bein' adult is, I can't even wait.

EDITH

Why tho', why is it what adults eat, never really kids?

IVORY

Steak expensive. Fact, I dunno how my daddy goin' react when he sees half a steak missing. I just hope she tells him what she told me. That I needed the proteins cuz goin' to school is like working a muscle; that me I'm in training.

(Beat)

PACIFICA

So what *do you* think we goin' be eating at Inte-Centro?

EDITH

Oh, I'm curious an all, but my mama packed my lunch. She said we weren't takin' no chances.

IVORY

Yea, my daddy packed mine too. Just in case.

PACIFICA

I ain't asked if yer parents packed you or not, I'm asking what do you think they eat.

EDITH

I been imagining it to be well-balanced servings of each food group.

IVORY

And them cloth napkins each at the tables already laid out.

PACIFICA

Fuckin'salt an pepper shakers, nah, nah, not shakers but them ones you gotta twist. Fuckin'freshly crunched or whatever.

EDITH

Pacifica.

PACIFICA

Uh, Edith.

EDITH

Do you think maybe, not on the bus, but once we arrive, that you should not talk like that?

PACIFICA

Talk like what?

IVORY

Your tongue.

PACIFICA

My wha?

EDITH

Just—

IVORY

Es dangerous.

PACIFICA

You know how come this tongue bother you two so much?

EDITH

...

PACIFICA

Because unlike your tongues, my tongue has *been places*. You talkin' all the time what your *mother or father* makes you when you get home, sheeit, by time I get home, es dark out. An me an *my tongue* have been out experiencing the world. And I don't care what your dinners smell like, it ain't nothin'to when a boy is his temperature all raised'up for you. The inside of his mouth so just warm. Oh, I dunno what I'd rather be tastin'than when me, my mouth, an his. An there ain't no place he'd rather be than me.

EDITH

(*whispering*) Pacifica, I think some of the boys could hear you.

IVORY

They got all quieted, 'specially when you were talking about the inside of the mouth.

(PACIFICA embarrasses, then fronts)

PACIFICA

They all wish.

(*to the boys in the bus*) You all wish!

(We hear some hoots and hollering from boys)

(*to IVORY and EDITH*) You two watch, I'm fin to be the motherfucking queen of this bus by time semester ends. Each of my rides back goin'be spent in the back seats.

(Beat)

IVORY

Yea, but what you goin'eat, did your dad give you money?

(PACIFICA nods)

Well, if their food is all unedible, or even just weird, you can have some of mine.

EDITH

Everybody eat, you know. Everybody chew. Food don't change that much.

(They both look at her)

But yea, you can have some of mine too, Iffy.

(IVORY and EDITH both reach into their bags; hand food to PACIFICA)

PACIFICA

Nah, I'm straight.

(They insist; she finally takes; eats)

How much longer we got anyways?

(They all look around; the car headlights now faded in the early morning sun)

IVORY

It's almost light out; it must be close to time. Everybody be arrivin'soon.

EDITH

Everybody?

IVORY

I don't think our parents will be the only ones at the frontlines today.

EDITH

Ain't frontlines, quit it with that.

PACIFICA

What you mean, Ivy?

IVORY

Just like our parents are following us along, theirs will too.

EDITH

You think there'll be parents from *both* sides?

IVORY

The school will have some sort of ceremonial something, the school 'll wanna make the peace.

PACIFICA

What peace?

IVORY

My daddy says the police will be there, for when our bus pulls up, until we safely inside the classrooms. And the police'll be there again when we re'board.

EDITH

Police for who tho'? Us or them?

IVORY

My daddy says it could be anybody, even the most unexpected kinda person. He says anybody is capable of anything when it comes to they children.

(Beat. All look out the window)

PACIFICA

Es getting greener.

EDITH

I like it; the trees, all the grass like that. It's pretty.

IVORY

Yea.

PACIFICA

...they must be not give a shit about water supply. Can you imagine how much it musta took to water all that?

IVORY

Water's not something they concern over on this side of the mountain.

PACIFICA

Tha's something I never understood, how the fuck the rain know to rain more where es rich?

IVORY

It's on account of the clouds, the way they move from where we live to here. First they're low, then when they hit the mountains, out drops the drops; watering just all over this place.

PACIFICA

An what, clouds don't ever go the other way?

IVORY

Not so much.

EDITH

I like where we live. Es warm. An comfortable. I like it.

IVORY

Tha's good, Edie. We supposed to like where we come from.

PACIFICA

Edie, if yer family weren't there, if everyone you ever know didn't live there, I doubt very you'd like it as much as you think you do.

EDITH

What is wrong with liking where yer family is at?

IVORY

Nothing. But the reason we're on this bus, the reason this whole everything is happening is cuz where we live, Edie, it isn't good enough. It doesn't have what they have. An that ain't equal.

PACIFICA

Anyways, somebody should invent some wind-machine that'll blow clouds towards our direction for a change. An we could get watered. I love me my hair when it's wet an all darker. If my hair was like that all the time, that boy at the mechanic shop—

IVORY

That ain't no boy at the mechanic shop, that a man.

PACIFICA

With them dirty'ass hands, all blackened all the time from whatever under the cars.

EDITH

Sometimes, when I'm walking by him, I imagine he touches my shoulder first, then other places, and by the time he's done with me, I have his touch just all over. An I know I won't be able to hide it; even if I ran home an scrubbed my clothes.

An pretty soon everyone in my entire family knows where his hands have been. An they curse him, an they form a posse to hunt him down. Then just when the entire town is ready to burn him to a cross, I scream out that I let him. That I wanted it.

An they all stare at me. But instead of apologizing, I demand him to be let go. They ask me how could I want some man who would do that loose on the streets? An I smile. I smile as I say right to my whole entire family an town that that I want his hands again. That I wasn't done. That I want some more.

(IVORY and PACIFICA stare at EDITH)

What?

IVORY

You think he over eighteen?

PACIFICA

You the one said he a man.

IVORY

I ain't mean numerically.

EDITH

I never think about his age. Just hands.

PACIFICA

Anyway, Ivy, dayum, why you gotta ruin what keeps me going all day?

IVORY

*All day???*

PACIFICA

Yea, that's what girls our age are supposed to be thinkin'all day. Even Edie, apparently.

EDITH

I enjoy him for a couple blocks, then I move on.

IVORY

Well, I hope that's not how you spend all day at Inte-Centro, Iffy. How you think them parents gonna react if one of *ours* starts anything with one of *theirs*.

EDITH

You don't think the students care so much, do you? It's the parents mostly. The adults.

IVORY

How would we feel if there was a busload of kids like them being injected into our everyday?

EDITH

I would be curious. But not against them.

IVORY

You see people, an tha's good, Edie. But this is us, an that's them. Ain't no other way to see it.

PACIFICA

Don't worry, Edie see people being burned at the stake an shit.

EDITH

I see both.

PACIFICA

Anyways, them Inte-Centro boys—

IVORY

Boys are *not* why we're being sent.

EDITH

Why *are* we being sent?

PACIFICA

We being sent cuz our school ain't a school no more.

EDITH

Is so a school.

IVORY

Edie, our cert-if-ication was taken away. We're being dispersed.

EDITH

Not everyone.

IVORY

No, just us with the grades. An the temperament. Can you even imagine *certain* people from our class bein'in this bus?

PACIFICA

This wouldn't be no bus, it'd like zoological an shit.

(All three laugh)

IVORY

An don't none of you even worry if we can't keep up. Our minds an they minds don't even work the same, an they best be knowin'that from day one.

PACIFICA

Shit, anyone can do anything out here. Lookit this place, es like a vacation or some shit. How hard is it to be on vacation?

EDITH

I dunno, I ain't ever been on one.

IVORY

Me either.

PACIFICA

Well, I have, an the shit easy.

EDITH

Where you been???

IVORY

You been about as many places as you can see from yer front porch, Pacifica.

PACIFICA

My Pops took me once. To the coast. We drove for hours an hours. An I kept saying what he didn't know the way. But he's like, "How hard could it be? You just keep goin' an goin' till you splash water."

Drove so long I couldn't help ta sleep.

But when I opened my eyes, there was all this blue; took up the entire shield what we call window.

So we sat in our car an just stared.

Later, Pops drove us down to this little town area, where there were little restaurants with food from the sea. An this special kinda hotel what we could drive right up to the room; almost to the door.

Two nights we stayed. Daytime goin'to the sea, an nighttime eating food from there.

I loved wakin'up like that. You could smell the ocean in the air. Could hear the waves when you went to sleep. Best couple days I ever had I think.

IVORY

What about yer mom, ain't she go too?

PACIFICA

Nah. Said it was a me an him trip. No mothers allowed.

EDITH

I don't think going to school at Inte-Centro will be like that tho'. I mean, I think I know what you mean, but I don't think it will be like that.

PACIFICA

What'll it be like then?

IVORY

I think they're going to look at us just like we goin' look at them?

EDITH

How's that?

PACIFICA

'Cept boys. Boys same wherever.

EDITH

You don't know that, I know you don't know that.

PACIFICA

Ain't they tho'? Always kinda the same. No matter what kinda boy. They'll look at me. Whisper about me. Pretty soon one of the brave ones will talk to me. But I know what they all be thinking. I know what they all want.

IVORY

I'm tellin' you, do not be starting nothing with—

PACIFICA

If anybody start anything, it'll be *them* with *me*.

EDITH

Hey, hey, think we're.... (pause) Look, look I think this it. Think we're here.

(The song of a peaceful caravan entering an unfamiliar town.

All stare out the window as the song reaches a beautiful surge, then quiets as the bus slows and we see the reds and blues of parked police vehicles and hear a crowd gathered.

EDITH loops IVORY and PACIFICA's arms in hers forming a chain; they face the front of the bus. The doors open and light shines in. White out)

## the landing of the children on the light side of the mountain

As bus doors open; we hear indistinguishable reaction from adults.

No sounds from children.

A few moments of tense silence followed by the shy countdown to a school cheer:

ALL

Open the doors, step outside  
The light side of the mountain  
is where we reside

Lower the steps and step on down  
Inte-Centro High and you're right on time

(The cheer finds its strength and turns momentous and full of progress)

Nevermind what you've heard  
Nevermind what you thought  
This new union is worth a shot

We open our doors,  
we lower our steps,  
Inte-Centro welcomes you to yours

Open our doors  
lower our steps  
Inte-Centro, get ready, set...

(On the word "GO," a cheer of children from both sides.  
Sound of a bell indicating 8 o'clock amidst the elation, however nobody can be bothered by it; the union of children endures.

As it quiets, we hear the measured and intelligent cadence of adults talking; from underneath it, a single, beautiful note of music can be heard; it elevates and finds its voice; it twirls and finds harmony with the adults talking.

Music of progress takes us to the sounds of children gossiping and the bright of an afternoon sun.

Stands PACIFICA, she tosses her hair and juts her chest out. Up comes EDITH)

EDITH

*What* are you doin', we been both looking all over this—

(PACIFICA positions EDITH)

PACIFICA

There, stand right there.

(EDITH looks where PACIFICA is looking)

Don't *look*.

EDITH

You said you were going to the bathroom.

PACIFICA

I was.

EDITH

There's a bathroom right by that statue thing—

PACIFICA

Which, there's like a thousand of statue things.

(Beat)

EDITH

Well, you can at least tell me which one yer gazing at—

PACIFICA

I ain't gazing anything, they the ones gazing me.

EDITH

Alright, well which one is gazing you?

PACIFICA

Look. They so stupid. They ain't got no idea what to make uh me.

EDITH

Thanks.

PACIFICA

Us, whatever.

EDITH

Well, we *are* new.

PACIFICA

Nah, I mean like, es like we're from another world or—

EDITH

Aren't we?

PACIFICA

Will you let a bitch talk.

EDITH

Fine, talk.

PACIFICA

Boys always look, like they can't help it, their eyes just find their way all up an down when a girl walk by or lean over or—

EDITH

Yea, I *am* a girl, you know.

PACIFICA

Lookit'these ones though. The look scared to even look.

(EDITH looks at the boys)

EDITH

I'unno, feel like maybe they're just nervous, excited; same like us.

PACIFICA

Excited, scared, same shit.

EDITH

No, it ain't. An what is it you imagine them to be scared of then? You?

PACIFICA

The one, with the striped shirt, hair all tossed to the side.

(EDITH casually looks)

EDITH

He cute.

PACIFICA

If I were from here, he'd have come over already.

EDITH

Oh, you don't know that, I know you don't know that.

PACIFICA

He woulda come over on a dare; or just to show off. But look, the other guys ain't even givin' him shit neither. I'm like fucking with their entire insides. All he wants is to come up an get close to see if my parts are just like other girls' parts, but what if they're not; what if he walk right up to me an I smell different, my skin feel different; what if the inside of my mouth don't taste like what he taste before.

EDITH

You getting all that from way over here??? (pause) What about if you went up to *him*, talked to *him*?

PACIFICA

No. I'm a girl. Plus, I wanna see what he do with it.

EDITH

Do with what?

PACIFICA

Me.

(Enter IVORY)

EDITH

(to IVORY) Alright, without looking, look at the one with the tossed—

IVORY

Yo, there is some straight up les'bians in this place.

(Both turn to IVORY)

PACIFICA

What???

IVORY

Aaight, so I's walkin' over there by all them trees all tall.

EDITH

This whole place is trees.

IVORY

You know, where they sit on the grass all laid out like they animals.

PACIFICA

Did one of these bitches—

EDITH

Will you let her talk, can't you see she upset.

IVORY

So I walk onto the grass cuz I thought maybe you went to see where the gate was, like how much acreage we got. And as I'm goin' past the special tall trees, I hear this, "Ivory?" And I turn, an this girl from my homeroom is sitting, staring directly at me, and like waving. Like with her hand. All like this.

(IVORY waves her hand side to side)

So I'm like, "Yea..?" And she *get up* from her friends and walk over, standing like right up to my face.

PACIFICA

An what'd she do???

IVORY

So I'm all thinking what this bitch up to. An *then* she reach her hand out and start touching my hair.

PACIFICA

The fuck???

IVORY

So I step back. And she's all "Oh, sorry, I just wanted to feel." And I don't say nothin'. Then she ask if I wanna come sit with her.

"Like on the Earth?" I say. And she laugh, like I'm the one sayin' weird shit.

So then she's all "On the grass. C'mon, my friends want to know you." So then I look over, an there's *two more* staring up at me. An then *they both wave*.

I swear es like some secret hand signal or something. So I don't wave back, I keep my shit to my sides.

But then the girl from my homeroom, I turn back and she's all her eyes right into mine. So I ask if she has a problem, and I swear to God, she says, "You are so pretty, I wish I had your *face*."

(IVORY composes herself)

EDITH

Um, is that it?

IVORY

Is what it?

EDITH

That's your whole story?

IVORY

Well then I took off, was lookin'all over, and finally here I saw you two standin'.

EDITH

Ivy, I don't think she was being a lesbian.

PACIFICA

Bitch was up to something.

EDITH

I think when she said she wanted you to come meet her friends—

IVORY

Yea.

EDITH

I think she wanted you to come meet her friends.

PACIFICA

She touched her motherfuckin' hair, I *hate* when motherfuckers think they can just do that.

EDITH

Well, don't you kinda wanna touch *theirs*?

PACIFICA

Yo, yo what the fuck'd you just say?

EDITH

Not like a boy does, but just to see. If it feel different. (pause) Well, don't you?

IVORY

Well, yea, kinda, but that don't mean I would just reach out an—

EDITH

Pacifica, do you? Be honest.

PACIFICA

Fine. If somebody *offered* me what they hair feel like, maybe I wouldn't say no. But still, tha's what people do to animals. Those girls was lookin' at you, Ivory, like they the people and we the animals.

EDITH

I don't think so. And I think you two thinking all these things about them is like exactly what you're accusing them of.

PACIFICA

Whoa, was that...English?

EDITH

Yes. It was.

IVORY

I'm goin' point her out, her an her friends, an you two better keep your eye cuz in case they try anything.

EDITH

If anybody tries to pull anything like be nice to you, I'll be sure to have my eye.

IVORY

Eddie, you don't know, you weren't even there.

EDITH

Iffy, you comin' or you still on display?

(EDITH tries to form their chain with their arms, however PACIFICA shakes it off, and IVORY is too distracted; they walk off into the school grounds together, but separate.

Lights shift as sounds of recess swell. PACIFICA, IVORY, and EDITH stand on grass, pretending not to look)

IVORY

Alright, so right by that first fountain—

PACIFICA

Which one.

IVORY

Not the big one; the littler fountain, the first fountain to the right.

EDITH

Are they on the blanket or the straw thingy?

PACIFICA

Es called a mat, you use it on the coast. To lay out on.

EDITH

Whatever.

IVORY

See the three layin'directly on the grass?

EDITH

Oh, yea, I see'em. The one in the middle's got her hair all 'lookit me'?

IVORY

Yea, yea, that's the one.

PACIFICA

Which?

IVORY

She's wearing that green top all hanging off.

PACIFICA  
*That's her?*

IVORY  
Uh huh.

PACIFICA  
We could take that bitch.

EDITH  
Nobody's taking anybody.

IVORY  
Why she keep looking up for like that?

PACIFICA  
Maybe she a special.

EDITH  
She's not a special. They keep special in their own special place.

IVORY  
Well, something is wrong with her.

(EDITH notices something)

EDITH  
Hey. Up there. Lookit.

(IVORY and PACIFICA look up)

Lookit how the clouds are not so white no more?

PACIFICA  
Yea.

EDITH  
Think that means weather.

IVORY  
I do not think that's a thing.

PACIFICA

I been where weather happens an I do not think that is a thing—

IVORY

There she go bringin' up her coast again—

PACIFICA

I'm just saying, I was literally in the ocean, like up to my tits in it, an these drops started falling all around me from outta nowhere. I ain't know what it was at first, I thought something was like happening to the ocean, like it was boiling or some shit.

EDITH

With you in it?

PACIFICA

How the fuck should I know? Was just all these little jumps of blue happening all around, but then I look up an I could see the drops coming straight at me.

IVORY

I'm sure it wasn't the first time you saw drops of something coming straight at you.

PACIFICA

This when I was *little*.

IVORY

Why is it the first we're hearing of it then??? All these years you've had this magical'ass trip to the coast, *where it rained* apparently, but you never mentioned it???

EDITH

You tell us sometimes about your trips the bathroom.

PACIFICA

So you know, Sunday my Pops likes to relax after mass.

IVORY

He likes *to drink*.

PACIFICA

He's getting ready for his week!

Anyways, so yesterday he got real talky. An so he calls me over an asks if I remember the day when him an my mom first knew she was leaving. I said I didn't remember.