

LA LECHUSA

It's a creature of night, la lechusa, with powerful wings and claws caked with blood. It soars silently over the treetops, but if you go outside, it will swoop down in front of you, laughing and cursing, and when you run, it will pursue you.

Marcella knew not to leave home that night, but her abuelita was ill, and she had to go to her cousin's to phone a doctor in Pleasanton. Walking quickly, she spied headlights up the road, weaving back and forth. With a squeal of brakes, they dipped and halted, the car doors opened, and two men emerged. In the headlights, Marcella saw the lechusa, its great wings, its hideous claws.

She turned and raced for home, but she could not outrun the terrified shrieks of first one man, then the other. She pushed through the door and ran to her abuelita. Outside, they could hear laughter and cursing, then, suddenly, a fierce scratching on the roof. Louder it grew, like great claws tearing into the shingles.

Then came the dawn and, just as suddenly, silence.

They say you can't tell that house from the others in Pleasanton now. The roof was repaired, good as new.

But the old story lives on.

Story told to teacher Sue Godsey by her Pleasanton student Christina Villareal. Taken from Storytell listserv.

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