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## If You Want

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## If You Want

### Cover Page Footnote

Lucinda Lucero Sachs is the author of *Believe in the Wind* (2014) and *Clyde Tingley's New Deal for New Mexico: 1935–1938* (2013). As the first Literary Coordinator for the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Sachs developed and produced readings by national and regional authors. Here, she also created the first National Latino Writer's Conference and initiated the NHCC Literary Award presented to a US Latino author for an outstanding body of work. In 2006, the City of Albuquerque hired her to chair author month for the Albuquerque Tricentennial celebration. For this Albuquerque celebration, Sachs also collaborated with PBS and KNME to produce a documentary showcasing some of New Mexico's well-known authors in engaging conversations, "Platicas." Holt, Winston & Reinhart hired her as a Review Editor for the 2000 *The American Nation* and *The American Nation: Civil War to the Present*. Lucinda taught US History for Albuquerque Public Schools. Her mother's family dates back to the time of Oñate and de Vargas. On her father's side, Moses Sachs, her great grandfather, came from Germany [Bavaria] to New Mexico around 1847 and settled in Valencia County. Lucinda and her husband, Lewis Real, make their home in Alameda.

## If You Want

by Lucinda Lucero Sachs

It isn't just any day or time of year. It is the second anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

“If you want?” her husband asks. Not even the government trusts them. Marcos wants to be friends with them. Not her.

At the north end of Santa Fe, a Japanese internment camp sits atop a mesa. Not so far away, Ana chops wood in a crisp and polar air under a distant grey sky. She wears a blue-red wool sweater given to her by a woman in town. It pills at the elbows. She sets the ax down, sighs and closes her eyes. How can people be good if they have enemies?

The Selective Service declared Marcos, 4F. Ana thanks God and sleeps at night. Marcos works as a guard at the Japanese detention camp. She doesn't understand how Marcos can talk with the Japanese internees. *I cannot accept his notions of goodwill? Are they not the enemy??*

Japanese soldiers captured her brother, Encarnación, and 1,800 other New Mexican National Guardsmen on Bataan in the Philippines. The Japanese refused to let the Red Cross deliver medical supplies to the prisoners. She grieves with those who have lost husbands, sons, and brothers, like the Perea family, neighbors whose two sons were killed. She wants to believe with absolute certainty that President Roosevelt will stop Hitler and Hirohito and their evil. And unsaid, she asks God what he is doing for the just.

The *Agua Fria* neighborhood of Santa Fe gives Ana respect and affection. She attends Mass almost daily, works on voting day at the local precinct, and writes letters for neighbors who want to send news to loved ones in uniform, but do not know how to write.

During the Depression, Ana and Marcos' could not make a living on their *ranchito* in Peña Blanca. They moved to Santa Fe and lived for a while with Marcos' mother. Ana found it difficult to share the two children, her husband, and a kitchen. If it had been the other way around—if they had moved in with her mother—Ana knows Marcos would have been fine. Marcos possesses an undisturbed core that never seems to waver. But not her.

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Mr. Morimoto and Marcos talk farming and about his large farm of many acres and three tractors in California's Santa Clara Valley. From him, Marcos learns about the importance of fertilizer and contour planting. The Morimotos, born in the United States, speak with an accent. Marcos and Ana born in the United States, like their parents and their grandparents, speak Spanish as well as English. Marcos believe that they have much in common with the Morimotos, but she does not listen.

After the war, Mr. Morimoto plans to stay in New Mexico to buy farm land in Alameda, north of Albuquerque. Marcos encourages him and believes that he will find respect and acceptance among the Spanish-speaking *Nuevomexicanos*. The eldest Morimoto son, serving in the United States Army, studied to be a doctor at Berkeley. The two younger boys attend high school at the camp.

“I am sad. The Japanese have committed no crime,” Marcos says.

“You are wrong. They could be spies or at least been so before they were put in camps.”

Marcos slowly shakes his head. “No. He is a farmer like me.”

“The American government put them in camps. They keep the Japanese in separate fighting units. They will not send them to the Pacific. like they sent my brother.”

Marcos moves a stray hair of Ana’s away from her face and tucks it behind her ear.

She’s insistent. “Do the Morimotos know that my brother and the others eat nothing but rice balls in a Japanese prison?”

“Ana, they too are in a camp. And there is no justice to it.”

“They have enough food, and no one beats them.”

As they often do, Ana and Marcos sit at the kitchen table that faces the biggest window in the house. But it is late, and they cannot see the trees and the peaks of their beloved *Sangre de Cristo* Mountains.

“Ana, I’m grateful for my job. It pays well for Santa Fe.”

“But should you be friends with them? They could be the enemy.”

“They are the same as us. They believe in this country, as we do, as our parents do, as our grandparents, and great grandparents did. We love this country as they do.”

Ana tucks each hand into the opposite sleeve of her red sweater. Abruptly, she untangles them and points a finger at Marcos. “You want me to trust people who might be spies. I don’t care what you say. They’re not Americans.”

“They are as American as we are. If Mexico went to war with the United States, the government could put us in camps.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Mexico is not going to war against the United States.” She counters that they didn’t have family or friends in Mexico. “We have lived, our family, everyone we know, in New

Mexico, and only here, for three hundred and fifty years. This is our country, the only country we have ever known," Ana says.

But Marcos continues to make his case. The Japanese women have complained to the camp authorities that they want privacy. There are no individual shower stalls for them, and they must bathe in a group.

"You would not like this."

Involuntarily, Ana nods her head. She knows she would not like communal living, even with indoor running water and a gas stove. Her house is small, she must go outside to pump water and cook on a coal and wood stove, but it is her *casita*. Again, she reminds herself that there is a war and they could be spies. Marcos also speaks of Japanese formal manners and their respect for each other and their traditions.

"We are the same," Marcos says.

"I saw, we did, the news clips at the movies. Before the War, we read about what the Japanese did at Nanking. They want to kill my brother. Friendship with these people cannot be."

"You are wrong. They are American Japanese," Marcos says. "But I understand how you feel."

"You can't be right. Not about this."

"Marcos with the beautiful freckles," as Ana sometimes calls him, built their house. Because Ana wanted a pink adobe, he brought red dirt from *la Bajada* for the mud stuccoing. Women in the neighborhood, in the custom of northern New Mexico, helped Ana do the plastering.

"I envy and depend on his strength," Ana often says to herself.

She observes the dark smoothness of the back of Marcos' neck. The sight of this narrow space of flesh makes her feel very tender. To her it embodies the indefinable dignity of her husband. It is night and she wishes to be in bed next to her husband.

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Not often, but today is one of those days when Ana does not want to be a mother. But she knows her responsibility and kneads *masa* for tortillas and cooks a big meal of beans and fideos.

"Brighita, stop lying about. And stop winding your hair around your finger. There are other things to do besides reading a book."

"Mama, this is homework. You? You always say school comes first." Brighita wants to be a teacher like her aunt.

“Not one more word. You are ten. I need your help.”

Brighita’s lustrous hair bobs as she jumps up to help.

One-year-old David, a thick cowlick at the top of his head, moves his chubby hands from chair to chair. He finds a piece of a cookie on the floor and makes himself comfortable behind a chair, but Ana sees him.

“David, *mi hijito*, give Mama the cookie.”

David cries inconsolably as Ana takes away his treasure.

The door opens, and Manuel, the oldest, brings in a blast of winter air.

“You walk in with only a smile?” Ana asks.

Tall and self-possessed, Manuel shrugs his shoulders.

“Bringing in chopped wood is your job. Now, do it. *Flojo, hijo mio.*”

With the few words from his mother, Manuel metamorphoses from man to dutiful son.

Ana irons and washes uniforms for the guards at the camp and saves most of the money, but she sets aside a little for treats like a roast or chicken and ice cream from the store for Sunday dinners. But today is not a Sunday, and Ana binds the beans. The *roux* she creates leaves a delicious nutty aroma. They eat beans every day. Marcos and the children do not complain. Ana looks at them. This is her little family.

They pray before their meal. After, Ana reaches for Marcos' hand and says, “Our life is a good one.” They turn to their meal and to discuss their day. Marcos compliments Brighita on helping her mother with the Christmas baking.

Manuel looks out the window to the dark night as if something more worthwhile has caught his attention. He lifts his chin in the direction of his parents. “What I do is more important than what Brighita does,” With a somber self-importance, he explains that he helped the priest prepare *farolitos* by filling brown paper sacks a third full of sand and setting votive candles in the middle.

“I will go back the day before Christmas to line the path to the church and the edges of the roof with *farolitos*,” he says.

Brighita who never likes taking a step back says, “You're only twelve. The priest won't let you get on the roof.”

“The *farolitos* will light the way for the Christ Mass at midnight, ‘and they shall call him Emmanuel.’ So Brighita, I know about my name. Where did they find yours?”

Brighita takes in a deep breath and with that her nose narrows. She purses her lips in a precise manner, as only she can do. “Mrs. Pacheco, my teacher, says I am the smartest in her class. I think that she means the whole school. So, *flaco* church boy? You go to church to help the priest, blessing yourself, genuflecting, blessing yourself, genu...,”

“¡*Basta!*” Marcos ends their words, but not their war.

At the end of the meal, Brighita pulls back her chair from the table in time to miss Manuel's kick. She faces him with a smile, guileless as an angel, only the mischievous mockery in her eyes belies her malice. At meal's end, Marcos sees to it that Brighita and Manuel do the dishes. Ana takes David to put him to bed.

Having put David to bed, Ana returns to the kitchen wearing her robe. She announces that the priest came by that afternoon and asked her if they would agree to being in *Las Posadas*. They will play the parts of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter. The reenactment will be performed the nine consecutive nights before Christmas.

Symbolic of either the nine months of pregnancy or the nine days of a Catholic novena, the ninth home will be the inn that gives Mary and Joseph shelter. On Christmas Eve, the final night, Ana and Marcos with David, as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus will go to the Church to celebrate the birthday of Christ.

Ana sees the play as symbolic but also real, as she and everyone she knows seek sanctuary, an end to the war.

“The priest said that I didn't need to ask you. He believes that you are like Joseph and you will stand by whatever I want. Marcos, if you . . .”

“But, I do Ana. This is an honor. David will be Jesus, *que no?*”

Ana wants to say the rosary. “We must petition the Virgin Mary to ask God to guide and to properly represent the Holy Family.”

In Marcos and Ana's bedroom, they kneel on a rug by the side of the bed to meditate on the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, before they begin the rosary. But David is wailing from the next room. Ana brings him to the bedroom and sets him free. They recite the rosary, and David toddles about, tripping over their legs, asking them to hold him. Brighita happily quits her prayers, sits back, and cradles him in her arms. David tires of her and runs about, chirping in his own toddler language. Then he settles on Manuel, who picks him up, but he continues to kneel. Of late, Manuel talks about his call to the priesthood, but last year he wanted to be a pilot and the year before a manager at Woolworth's dime store. Concentrating on the spiritual mysteries of the rosary, Ana closes her eyes and feels at peace. Her family is safe.

After, the children are put to bed. She and Marcos return to the kitchen table, to talk intimately as husband and wife do. Her light blue chenille robe wrapped firmly around her waist delineates her trim form. Her dark hair and pinkish skin tones make her striking. And when Marcos tells her she is beautiful, she understands that he loves her. She stares at the brown hands firmly placed on the table and reaches for one to feel the quiet strength.

He smiles, and his freckles come to life. “You know the Morimotos like rice. Not me, I stick to *frijoles*, yours.”

Marcos always knows how to make Ana laugh. He moves to turn up the volume on the radio and returns to ease her out of her chair. They jitterbug to Artie Shaw's *Frenesí* and he twirls Ana around the room. They keep a quick step to the Latin jazz rhythm, a dance in perfect harmony.

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Christmas preparations will require more than usual from Ana and Marcos. Ana sees their role as Mary and Joseph as a great privilege. So many could have been asked, but the priest chose them. She will give baked goods for Advent, the sacrifice of extra work, to share and rejoice in anticipation.

Ana bakes Advent *biscochitos* and fruit and meat *empanadas*. The stirring, the rolling of dough, the baking demands her full attention. She instructs Brighita and Manuel to look out for David, but they complain they want to see friends on their Christmas vacation. By late afternoon Brighita and Manuel run from one end of the house to the other, sliding into their final destination, “home base.” Each time they reach the end, they call out, “Olly, Olly, oxen free.” David stumbles about, trying to keep up with them, shrieking in delight to have their company.

But like all things Brighita and Manuel end up in an argument. Ana shouts, “Brighita, stop throwing pieces of tortilla at Manuel.”

But the arguments did not end, until Ana gave them a severe scolding and told them to go to bed for the night. Manuel began to protest, “Not one word from you.”

But Brighita always wants the last word. “It’s too early, we haven’t eaten supper.”

“You threw pieces of tortilla at each other.” Ana lowers her voice to that of slightly over a whisper. “If you were a soldier in prison, like your Uncle Encarnación, you would be given only rice. Say your prayers. Tomorrow, I am certain that I will see the very best in you, my children.

David, without playmates, hangs onto Ana's leg. Ana sits down on the kitchen floor and stacks his alphabet blocks, so he can knock them down. They play, and Ana continues to put trays of cookies in the oven. Content and happy, David impresses Ana with his simple goodness. In the new peace, Ana forgets a tray of cookies. Swirls of smoke escape from the oven door. Ana jumps to her feet and pulls the cookies out of the oven. David cries and she picks him up and rushes from window to window to

open them and doors. When she stops, she looks at David's face, and he's happy, thinking that they are playing a game.

"I have been a bad mother," she says.

David gurgles and with fat dirty little hands, pats her face.

"What would Mary do? Certainly not yell, scold and threaten."

But now, she is Mary. She squeezes David. "Acting the part of Mary is announcing to everyone that I am holy or at least that I am spiritually wise."

Ana wants to have fine clothes, to own a big house, and to go places. Mary would feel compassion for the Japanese Internees. Mary would not yearn for material yearnings. Mary would have patience. Mary knows how to love. Is she no better than her children?

When they first moved from Peña Blanca to Santa Fe, Marcos took a job at La Fonda cleaning the lobby restrooms, mopping the lobby floors, and washing dishes at the hotel restaurant. Ana begged him to wait for another job.

Marcos said, "I feed my family. Do not worry about what people say."

Now they will lead in the Christmas play of searching for a room for Mary, so she can give birth to Jesus. But today, Ana no longer wanted the role of playing Mary, for she sees it as a burden, an obligation her conscience tells her she cannot fulfill. She knows that she's not worthy. The priest, nor the community really know her.

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Mrs. Rael, a woman in her fifties, comes to visit Ana. She is a widow with two married daughters and a son, who, with Ana's brother, Encarnación, was captured by the Japanese. Like most, she prays for the return of the soldiers and fervently asks for God's good graces to protect her son.

"Ana, you have much to do. I will watch David for you. I have brought musk oil. Dab some behind your ears. I mean nothing bad. I just want to show my respect."

Ana wants to plead, "*I'm Ana. I'm not the mother of God.*" But, she doesn't. She wants the spiritual blessings, but dreads the public role, and her own hypocrisy.

Jorge Silva brings them half a cord of *piñon* wood.

"I will pay you," Marcos says.

"You like this wood, *que no?* You and Ana will play the Holy Family; I must show my appreciation. Please, no money. This is my Advent offering."

People honor the young couple, as if Ana and Marcos were older and long-time residents of Santa Fe. In these good works, people prepare for Christmas and ask for God's blessings. Ana's parents plan to make a small donation in thanksgiving to the church when they come from the village of Peña Blanca.

And the Morimotos also feel blessed. They received two letters from their son who serves in the 442 Regimental Combat Team in Italy.

Marcos explains the honor they feel when they say that their son wears the American Army uniform. "It is the Christmas season, and we must give gifts to the Morimotos," Marcos says.

"I fear them." She cannot admit to Marcos or to herself that the Morimoto son is a loyal American.

"If you can? They want to share their joy with us. They will send us a gift."

Ana trembles and wraps her arms about herself. "When does this war end?"

"*Querida, linda*, it is what we should do," Marcos says.

She worries about her soul, about whether she has loved her husband and children enough, and about carrying out her love and regard for her country. Most of all, Ana wants to do what is right as an American. She knows that Marcos loves her, and she loves him, but unlike her, he makes peace instinctively.

Because Ana does not want to refuse love's request, the next morning she sends a box of *bizcochitos* and *empanadas*. She packs wooden statues of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, carved by Manuel. She knows they are not Catholic. She also is certain that no one gives cookies to her brother. Is she not being disloyal? The questions do not end, but the ever-present love for her husband remains steady and firm, like his hands.

"I try to do what Mary would do." She hands the gifts to Marcos"

"You are the heart of the family," Marcos says.

This makes her happy.

In the evening Marcos arrives with a bottle of Japanese wine and a large box. Ana churns, unable to settle her misgivings. She does not want the Morimoto gifts.

"Open the box. Open it," Brighita and Manuel beg.

Ana lifts the lid of the pearl grey box. Folded in delicate white tissue of embossed butterflies lies a light blue dress. A "kimono," Marcos calls it.

“Mama, it is beautiful,” says Brighita.

Ana changes in the bedroom and walks into the living room over to the chifforobe to see herself in the full-length mirror. The blue kimono fits perfectly and drapes against her skin like nothing she has ever worn.

“*Querida*, you look heavenly,” Marcos says.

“Mama, you look like a queen,” Brighita says.

Manuel bows. “We should drink tea.”

Ana smiles uneasily. She does not want Manuel asking for tea.

Ana moves back to the mirror and runs the tips of her fingers over the buttery smooth silk and fingers the delicate slender pleats of the royal blue sash. She can see that it fits her.

“Mrs. Morimoto thought you would want to wear it as Mary. She regrets that she did not have a headscarf for you, but I said that you have a while *mantilla*. Mrs. Morimoto said, 'I wish I could meet Ana. Thank her for the gifts.' ”

“With your long hair parted in the middle and the blue dress, you look like Mary. I will tell everyone,” Brighita says.

“It is beautiful and rich looking, so unlike anything that I've ever known.”

She turned to Marcos. Ana's voice dropped to a whisper, “Say that you understand. I cannot wear it.”

Marcos nods his head. Peace settles in her heart. He gets up and kisses her on the cheek.

Ana retrieves the butterfly tissue from David who is off in the corner happily playing with one of the tissue sheets, his idea of a gift. She pries open his little fists and takes the tissue from him. He screams, and Marcos picks him up. Marcos sits David around his neck and holds onto the tiny hands and gallops around the room. David's tears turn to laughter. In the bedroom, Ana, determined not to shed a tear, wraps the butterfly tissue around the kimono and places the sky-blue silk in a drawer.

“Impossible,” she says to no one, but maybe to God.

Neither her parents nor anyone else would accept the idea of her wearing a Japanese dress to play Mary on Christmas Eve. Sons, husbands, and boyfriends fight in the War. Only one letter from her brother! With eyes closed and a slow shake of her head, almost inaudibly she says, “generous and noble, a gift of peace. But I cannot wear it.”

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“You are not from here. You look different from us. We have no room for you,” says the innkeeper of the first house.

On a clear, cold night, the first night of the *Posadas*, Ana and Marcos as Mary and Joseph make their request. "Please, my wife is with child and we need a place to stay."

The procession sings religious songs of the season and carries candles to light the way. On the second, third, fourth, and fifth night, the innkeepers give the same responses. At each home, Joseph says, "We are travelers. We need hospitality, a place to stay and your understanding." Without a word, the door is slammed shut. Although this is a play, the swift reaction, seemingly without thought or consideration, startles Ana. The reenactment scenes and the inevitable rebuff of each night, nevertheless stun Ana. The slammed door makes her pull back and her stomach tighten.

After the approach at each home, the hosts invite Ana and Marcos and the church members who have come with them into their home for hot chocolate, *posole*, and *bizcochitos*. Marcos talks with everyone, but still Ana cannot share his ease, his joy. Anna thinks about Christmas Eve, the ninth night at church. The priest will say, "I have only humble accommodations for you, but there is room. I welcome you."

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The day before Christmas Eve, Ana starts early to clean her house. Brighita watches David. Manuel helps the priest to set up the farolitos, the Christmas lights in paper bags. Ana cleans, because she likes a neat house, but her heart is not at ease. She worries, some would say not her concern, but she's unsettled. The Morimotos have received a formal notification from the government. Their son is "missing in action" in Italy. She moves rapidly around the house dusting and washing floors, as if she could leave the news behind her. She does not want the Morimoto son to matter. She has a brother to worry about.

Ana hears a sharp knock at the front door. She pulls the door open and there stands *Padre Jaramillo*, his face red, his breathing rapid.

"*Buenos días le de Dios,*" Ana says.

In New Mexico it is customary to use this very formal sixteenth century phrasing of "God's good day to you." Indeed, this is the greeting that Marcos gives Ana, first thing, every morning, as their parents and their parents before have done.

In his deep Spanish accent, *Padre Jaramillo* says, "No, no. Manuel fell from the roof of the church."

Ana does not wait to ask questions but throws on her coat and calls on Brighita to take care of David. Father Jaramillo, a fat bald headed man, always so calm, even staid, trails Ana, the unbuttoned bottom half of his soutane, catching the wind. He periodically shouts, "The doctor is on his way."

Out of breath, she rushes to Manuel, who lies on the ground covered with blankets. A few parishioners surround him. Ana touches his pallid face. To her, it has been a long time since Manuel has looked so young and helpless.

The doctor kneels in front of Manuel. Dr. Rice, a wiry and imperious man in his sixties, delivered David and all of Ana's children at home. It is said that he has delivered most of the babies in Santa Fe.

He shouts at Ana that Manuel's two arms are broken. To Ana, it seems that he blames her. She holds back her anger, because he is the doctor, and Manuel needs him. "What about his legs, his head, and insides?" Ana asks.

"Ana, his legs are fine." He will X-ray at his office to be sure and doubts if there is any internal bleeding or a concussion. "This is serious, very. We cannot ignore the possibility of hidden injuries."

Marcos arrives, and *Padre* Jaramillo helps him place Manuel on the flatbed of his truck to transport him to Dr. Rice's office, a small adobe with thick walls. Rice, a very capable doctor, puts casts on Manuel and fits him with a splint on his two middle right fingers. As always, Dr. Rice dictates orders. Because everyone knows his concern for the patient is paramount, no one argues.

"For the next three to five days, I will come to the house. You will have to watch him closely." He wants Ana to observe Manuel for headaches, nausea, dizziness. "Ana, I'm depending on you. Day or night—send Marcos for me."

Manuel appears to have a hairline fracture over his right hip and must be kept flat on the bed. Rice warns her that it may take several weeks before Manuel can walk around. "You, Ana, are in charge."

Ana spends the rest of the day hovering over Manuel. She can only imagine the suffering that Mrs. Morimoto endures. Ana asked aloud. "Would Mary have ever agreed to the angel, if she had known that her son would be crucified and suffer death? No mother could look to the future, knowing the fate, the death of a child."

She accepts that she does not want Mary's perfection, but she thinks that she can learn to be kind. And like Mary, like all mothers, Ana shares the love for a child, the bond of sadness for a sick child, and fear to lose one at any age.

In the evening, Marcos' mother comes to help Ana. They gather to say a rosary at Manuel's bed. Ana is scared that Manuel may not recover but thankful that he is not dead.

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On Christmas Eve, Ana awakens early. She cannot breathe because of a weight like bricks upon her chest. With effort, she rises.

She fears for Mrs. Moritomo, a generous and kind woman. "I know my sin, what threatens my soul," Ana confesses aloud. There should be a room at the "Inn" for the Morimotos.

She makes a fire in the stove and adds cinnamon to the coffee she makes. She sits at the kitchen table to drink a cup. She savors its taste and heat. She looks out her big window. Just to the side, a cottonwood tree stands large and sheltering, and on the other end, a *piñon* tree with hundreds of pine needles remains green. Marcos buys *piñon*, more expensive than other woods. For Ana the burning wood, a redolent aroma of fresh mountain air, is so much a part of her northern New Mexico life. If she must eat beans daily, she makes the sacrifice readily to have the scent of her beloved land. She closes her eyes, grateful for her life of choices, her freedom to move about, her innocence presumed and accepted by others.

The Morimotos, what reminders do they have of mild temperatures, the fog, and the California ocean? Ana looks to the morning sky, a low hanging gray, a possibility of snow. She knows that the Morimotos did not need winter coats in California.

In the bedroom, she takes the box out of the drawer and dresses. Marcos is not yet awake. She powders her face, applies lipstick, and pulls her hair into a chignon. At the chifferobe, she checks her appearance. She looks well, but somber. Back at the kitchen window, Ana squints to see beyond her little forest.

Around seven, Marcos comes into the kitchen, ready for work.

"I thought you would not wear the kimono.

"I am going with you," Ana says.

"It's not allowed."

"You will take me. There are ironed uniforms to deliver."

"I cannot leave my post. You will have to walk home, maybe in the snow."

They drive north about a mile and a half in their black 1938 Ford-60. On top of a hill, sits the camp, the area enclosed by barbed wire, sharp metal points to wound and limit movement. Sentries look down on the internees. To the guards at the gate, Marcos has to do a lot of explaining, but they let Ana in.

About a hundred and fifty yards in, dozens of wooden barracks neatly align. They emerge as old and ugly, no doubt carryovers from World War I. In comparison to Ana's solid pink adobe, they look rickety and drafty.

Beyond the wood buildings, there is not one tree, not one cottonwood to offer a gentle protection from an unforgiving summer sun. The government cleared the land to make room for the structures and to give guards a better view of the internees.

Ana wants to escape. Never has she felt so enclosed. Is this like her brother's prison? Is the Morimoto son alive? Both boys fight for their country, the Morimoto America, the country that Ana so loves, the one she would never give up.

In the center of the grounds, on a pole about thirty feet tall, the American flag flies. While some of the boys in scout uniforms raise the flag, many in the camp in clear voices pledge allegiance or stand with their right hands over their hearts. Ana did not expect this overt loyalty, but Marcos assures her that the Japanese internees present do so voluntarily. How can a people be so good, she asks herself? She and Marcos wait for the end of this daily observance.

"I have come to thank you for the dress, the kimono."

Mrs. Morimoto bows in a very dignified manner. Ana lowers her head, but she is clumsy. Mrs. Morimoto does not seem to notice. They go into one of the barracks where she serves tea in small flowered porcelain cups without handles.

Large pearl earrings call attention to Mrs. Morimoto's dark hair and finely chiseled features. She wears the latest style of dress, a surplice cut navy gabardine. Thin and lustrous shell buttons on the front and at the elbow sleeves give the dress a delicate appearance. Ana did not expect her to be so beautiful nor to look so prosperous and refined. None of Ana's friends or neighbors' own pearls or such fine clothing, Ana feels very young and unworldly. They sit on a floor mat at a very low polished wood table. Ana does not like the taste of the tea but says that it is good.

Mrs. Morimoto offers Ana one of the *bizcochitos* that she sent. Ana looks at Marcos, and he nods his head. She takes one, and the tea tastes better. On a waist-high mahogany table, two rich looking wood boxes rest, the larger one supporting the other. To Ana it looks like an altar. Mrs. Morimoto points to the table. "We are Buddhists." Mrs. Morimoto seems to understand that Ana knows little about them.

"You are Catholic."

Ana nods. "I want to pray for your missing son."

Mrs. Morimoto places her hand over her heart. She nods yes after a long moment. Ana pulls out her rosary and kneels in front of the altar. She guesses it is okay with God. Marcos has gone outside to his post. Ana asks Mrs. Morimoto if she would like to kneel. She doesn't know her first name, and somehow thinks that today it would be wrong to ask. Mrs. Morimoto kneels, and then sits back on her heels. Ana prays aloud the five sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

When Ana is done, she stands. "I should not have sent the statues of Mary and Joseph."

“You have faith and believe.”

Ana bows deeply, and this time it feels true.

On her way home, Ana lifts her face to the sky to taste the cool snowflakes. Gently, the snow removes her makeup. It is the Advent season of peace and contrition. It is a time of war. Ana wants to make sense of the contradictions and mysteries.

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After Ana gets home from the detention camp, she prepares for Midnight Mass. Marcos, Ana, and David will be on the altar with the priest for the finish of *Las Posadas*. She wonders if she should wear the blue kimono.

It is not certain if Manuel has sustained any further damage. Manuel should have been more careful. She should not have let him go. Father Jaramillo comes by to see Manuel and brings candy for the children and a bottle of wine for Ana and Marcos. She asks the priest to stay for lunch and gives him beans and hot red chile, which he likes. She knows that the priest worries, but he leaves in a better humor.

Marcos' mother stays with Manuel while they go to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Brighita feels very grown up because she will sit with friends. Ana dresses in the kimono. Marcos holds her hand and smiles. His mother's eyes open wide, and she begins to shake her head.

“They are American. The Morimotos gave this to Ana. Their son is missing in action,” Marcos says to his mother.

“Oh!” she says, but Ana and Marcos know that she doesn't believe.

Ana changes out of the kimono, an extraordinary gift of beauty and spiritual meaning. But Friends and neighbors will only understand that their husbands and sons fight the Japanese. She does not want to disturb their need for peace on this night.

Wrapped in their warmest clothes, they walk to church with neighbors. They sing Christmas songs, “*Vamonos todos a Belen*,” “Silent Night,” “Come All Ye Faithful.” Ana, whose voice is very poor, never sings, but tonight she does and cares not what others may say. A light snow, a white lace on trees and beneath, stands out against the night. Marcos carries David, and Ana holds Brighita's hand.

Ana, David, and Marcos take their places in a crèche made especially for this event. In the Mass, Father Jaramillo honors this season of peace and follows with a prayer for the protection of those in uniform and victory in this time of war. There is no ambivalence toward the enemy.

“Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” they joyfully intone at the end of mass. They have prayed for peace and goodwill toward men.

Outside a neighbor says, “Ana, you have done well in playing Mary.”

“I wanted to please her.”

Ana wants to believe that Mary is not just for Catholics, but for all who seek goodwill, a kindness of spirit.

Ana does not betray her brother and his suffering, but she can choose to find room in her soul to give shelter for those in need. In the still dark, myriads of stars give light for those who want to follow.

*\*I need shelter  
[in]  
the sacred womb of your soul*

*“If you Want”*  
by  
Juan Yepes y Álvarez  
(St. John of the Cross)

**Lucinda Lucero Sachs** is currently working on a history of *Nuevomexicanos* from 1935 to 1950. She has published a political biography, a novel, several short stories, and served as the review editor of Boyer’s *The American Nation*. She coordinated the first Literary Arts Program at the National Hispanic Cultural Center and chaired author month for the Albuquerque Tricentennial. Lucinda is a seventeenth generation New Mexico Lucero and the great granddaughter of Moses Sachs, who came to New Mexico and assimilated into *Nuevomexicano* culture. Lucinda and Lewis Real, her husband, live in Alameda. The *Chamisa* themes of identity and culture are of great importance since they give proof of where we are and from where we came. The *cuento*, *If You Want*, allows the reader to see *Nuevomexicano* grit, courage, intelligence, and goodness. But the story also conveys the profound mistakes of an individual and how very difficult, but necessary, it is to overcome the mood and actions of prejudice. Lucinda does not write sentimental stories, for *Nuevomexicanos* are anything but that. *If You Want* focuses on a culture and a people worth respecting and emulating.