



Ocotillo Dreams

Melinda Palacio

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2012 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award

2012 ILBA Mariposa Award for Best First Book

Set in Chandler, Arizona, during the city's infamous 1997 migrant sweeps, this riveting tale brings to life the social issues that arise from border policy and economic inequity. Palacio skillfully weaves a story of politics, intrigue, love, and trust in a community that is suspicious of others, an attitude she experienced firsthand after moving to Chandler in the late 1990s. "The neighbors suspected that the house I bought was a way-station for undocumented immigrants," she recalls. Thus, the seeds for *Ocotillo Dreams* were sown. In it, we meet Isola, a young woman who inherits a Chandler home and relocates there temporarily. There she learns that her mother had lived a secret life of helping the undocumented workers. Isola must confront her own confusion and sense of loyalty in a strange and unwelcoming environment. As she gets to know her mother from clues left behind, she grapples with issues of identity and belonging that lead her on a journey toward purpose in life and reconnection with her roots.

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