She chose México, she said, because she didn’t feel ugly here, not like in the United States, she, a Persian girl fleeing the Iran-Iraq War with her family. We met in college in California, and after she graduated she flew south, perfecting her Spanish, teaching belly dancing to natives and tourists alike. Whenever I visited the homeland I stayed with her and we explored the sites—Cuernavaca, Distrito Federal, Texcoco. And that day, on a whim, we climbed on a bus simply because we liked the name of its destination: Papalote.

The town named Kite was an empty town, with a town square with bored street vendors, but the buildings looked modern and new as if the cement of their walls had just hardened. In the town of Kite there stood a beautiful church with a colorful display explaining the history of the piñata—the Italian seven-pointed star that symbolized the shattering of the seven deadly sins.

We sat on a bench, waiting for the next bus back to the city. We gave the peanut vendor our business and chatted beneath a festive string of papel picado over our heads. “How I miss my country,” my friend declared. “How I miss mine,” I replied.

Suddenly a small parade came through: six children dressed in costume, blaring trumpets as they danced around
the square. And so it was appropriate, our presence there in a town empty of most of its people, many of them working in the North and sending money back to beautify Papalote because they were all expecting to return from exile. The trail of music guiding the way disappeared like smoke.