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Perros en la Calle

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Perros en la Calle

Mark Crimmins¹

The two of you are sat on a curb just off the Avenida Cinco de Mayo in Mexico City, shoving your faces full of the roast chicken dinners you bought at Gili Pollos. When you sat on the curb and started unwrapping your meals, you both bobbed briefly from side to side, singing in unison the endless jingle that blares over the speakers of the cantina just down the street: *Pollito con papas! Pollito con papas!* Gili Pollos was closing so you were lucky to get your food, but it's getting close to midnight now and you have slipped into the nearest alleyway to slug back your chicken and spuds. It's dark in the alleyway and you eat most of your meal before you hear the voice. It rises in a shrill angry column and falls into a rhythmic accusation: *Como perros en la calle!* When you stop eating and look up, a well-dressed old man is glaring at you from the spot where he has stopped in front of you. His eyes are wide with astonished outrage. His face is twisted with anger. He curses you in Spanish too visceral to understand, but his gist is clear. Disastrously, though, the angry old man's meaning is not equally clear to both of you, and to your horror your corazon rises to her feet, smiles at him, and says, ever diplomatic: *No, Senor! No es perro! Es pollo! Es pollo delicioso!* This really lights a fire under the old guy. Now he explodes in anger. He waves his arms and solicits the sympathy of the gods. Then he gestures at the two of you, his hands shaking. Finally his anger becomes a lament. He never thought in all his life he would ever see such a thing in the great city of Mexico. The gods must really be angry with him. What had

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happened to civilization? What was his beloved city coming to now—when his eyes had to be offended by the sight of savages sitting on the curb and tearing at their food with their bare hands, with no shame, no culture, no dignity—just sitting there and eating like dogs in the street? *Como perros! Como perros en la calle!*