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## Bowls, Cups and Unidentifiable Objects

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THEY GRIPED  
ABOUT WANTING  
TO TALK, SING,  
AND SMOKE WHILE  
WORKING, AND  
OFTEN ASKED  
EACH OTHER FOR  
OLD REMEDIES TO  
HELP CURE THEIR  
SICK CHILDREN  
AND HUSBANDS,  
WHO ALWAYS  
SEEMED TO BE ILL  
FROM SOMETHING  
OR ANOTHER.

**F THE SEAMSTRESSES FELT** particularly close to the woman they were whispering to, they would secretly light a cigarette and exhale through their shirt to hide the smoke, stealing a short break from their employers. During these times, they quietly spoke of fear for the future of their families and children, and about their personal losses and regrets in life. Their eyes, dull while at their machines, would become glassy while color flushed their cheeks. Faces hardened and aged by factory life would crack into pained expressions, soft but tortured, as they ducked their heads to their work, hoping no one would see. Some had lost children in factory accidents when their little clothes had been caught in giant machines, others went home to husbands who had cheated death, but came back missing limbs and unable to work.

The same women who could look so unbearably hollow, however, could also appear to be barely containing their joy. Stories of new grandchildren sparked love in their hearts, and tears of happiness, quickly wiped away into their collars, spilled over their cheeks when they spoke of finally saving up enough to bring their families to America. Rich social lives centered in their churches and communities kept their spirits high, and struggling to preserve their various ways of life gave them purpose and meaning. Despite the differences in language or lifestyle, all these women were facing the same terrors and joys together, and simply being together made everything just a little better; made them realize they weren't as different or alone as they might have thought.

## BOWLS, CUPS AND UNIDENTIFIABLE OBJECTS

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