**“Volar” (1993)** （飞行）

**By Judith Ortiz Cofer**

At twelve I was an avid（贪婪的） consumer of comic（漫画） books—*Supergirl* being my favorite. I spent my allowance （零用钱） of a quarter a day on two twelve-cent comic books or a double issue for twenty-five. I had a stack of *Legion of Super Heroes* and *Supergirl* comic books in my bedroom closet that was as tall as I. I had a recurring（循环的） dream in those days: that I had long blonde hair and could fly. In my dream I climbed the stairs to the top of our apartment building as myself, but as I went up each flight, changes would be taking place. Step by step I would fill out: my legs would grow long, my arms harden into steel, and my hair would magically go straight and turn a golden color. Of course, I would add the bonus（福利，奖励） of breasts, but not too large; Supergirl had to be aerodynamic （空气动力学的）, and sleek （圆滑的，井然有序的） and hard as a supersonic missile （超音速导弹）. Once on the roof, my parents safely asleep in their beds, I would get on tip-toe, arms outstretched （展开的） in the position for flight, and jump out of my fifth-story-high window into the black lake of the sky. From up there, over the rooftops, I could see everything, even beyond the few blocks of our barrio （地方行政区域，a Spanish-speaking neighborhood

）; with my x-ray vision I could look inside the homes of people who interested me.

Once I saw our landlord, whom I knew my parents feared, sitting in a treasure-room dressed in an ermine （貂） coat and a large gold crown. He sat on the floor counting his dollar bills. I played a trick on him. Going up to his building's chimney （烟囱）, I blew a little puff [p. *4*] （粉灰）

of my super-breath into his fireplace, scattering （分散）his stacks of money so that he had to start counting all over again.

I could more or less program my Supergirl dreams in those days by focusing on the object of my current obsession （痴迷，困扰）. This way I saw into the private lives of my neighbors, my teachers, and in the last days of my childish fantasy and the beginning of adolescence, into the secret rooms of the boys I liked. In the mornings I'd wake up in my tiny bedroom with its incongruous （不协调，不相称的）—at least in our tiny apartment—white "princess" furniture my mother had chosen for me, and find myself back in my body; my tight curls （卷发）still clinging to （依附，紧抓不放）my head, my skinny arms and legs and flat chest unchanged.

In the kitchen my mother and father would be talking softly over a *café con leche*（coffee with milk） *.* She would come "wake me" exactly forty-five minutes after they had gotten up. It was their time together at the beginning of each day, and even at an early age I could feel their disappointment if I interrupted them by getting up too early. So I would stay in my bed recalling my dreams of flight, perhaps planning my next flight. In the kitchen they would be discussing events in the barrio. Actually, my father would be carrying that part of the conversation; when it was her turn to speak she would, more often than not, try shifting the topic toward her desire to see her *familia* on the Island: How about a vacation in Puerto Rico together this year, *querido?* We could rent a car, go to the beach. We could … And he would answer patiently, gently: *Mi amor,* do you know how much it would cost for all

of us to fly there? It is not possible for me to take the time off … *Mi vida* （我的生活）*,* please understand … And I knew that soon she would rise from the table. Not abruptly （不意外的）. She would light a cigarette and look out the kitchen window. The view was of a dismal （凄凉的） alley （小巷） that was littered with refuse thrown from windows. The space was too narrow for anyone larger than a skinny child to enter safely, so it was never cleaned. My mother would check the time on the clock over her sink （水槽）, the one with a prayer for patience and grace written in Spanish. A birthday gift. She would see that it was time to wake me. She'd sigh deeply and say the same thing the view from her kitchen window always inspired her to say: *"Ay, si yo pudiera volar."*（哦，如果我能飞）

She had body between a child and a teenager. Spanish