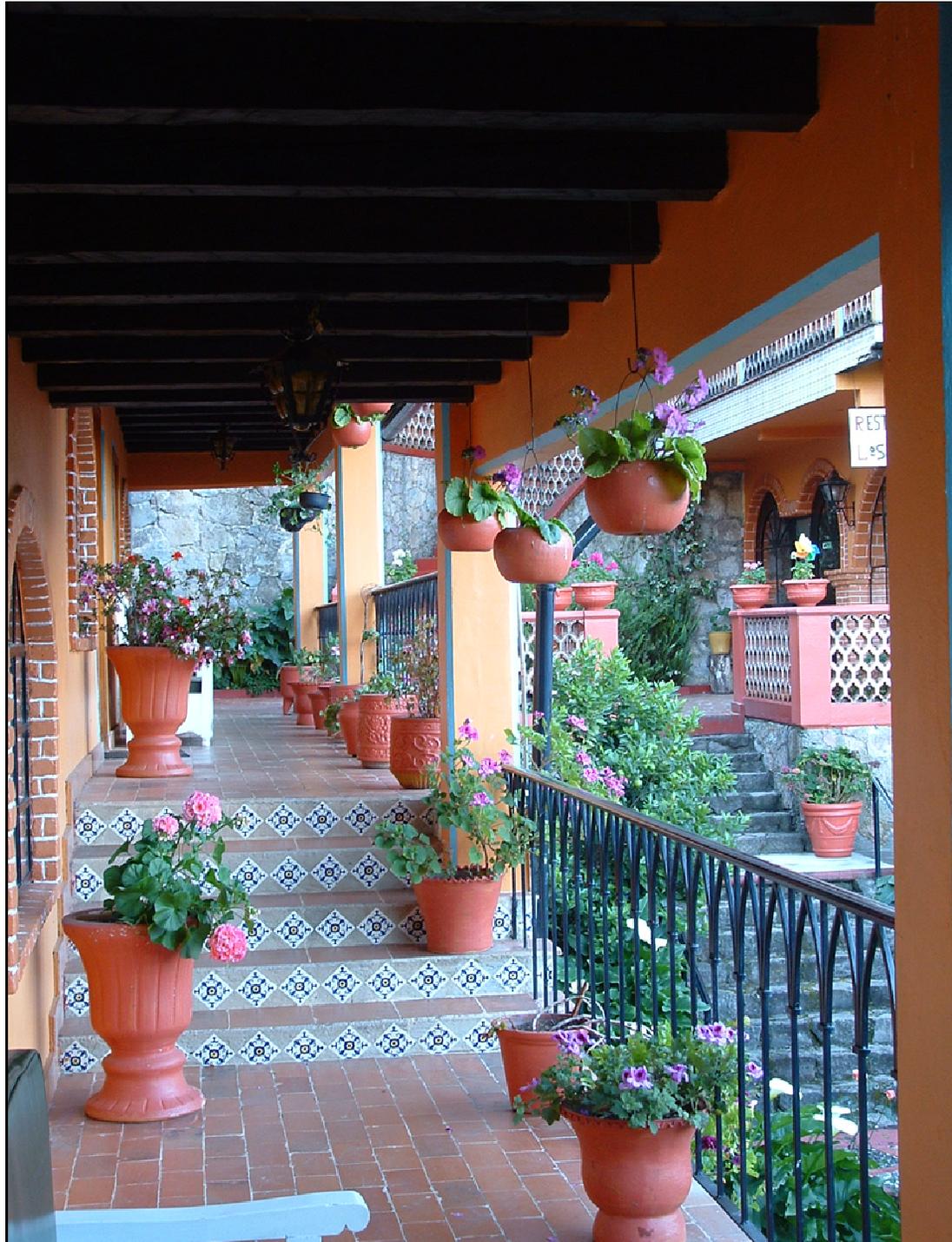


I could hear the rain...

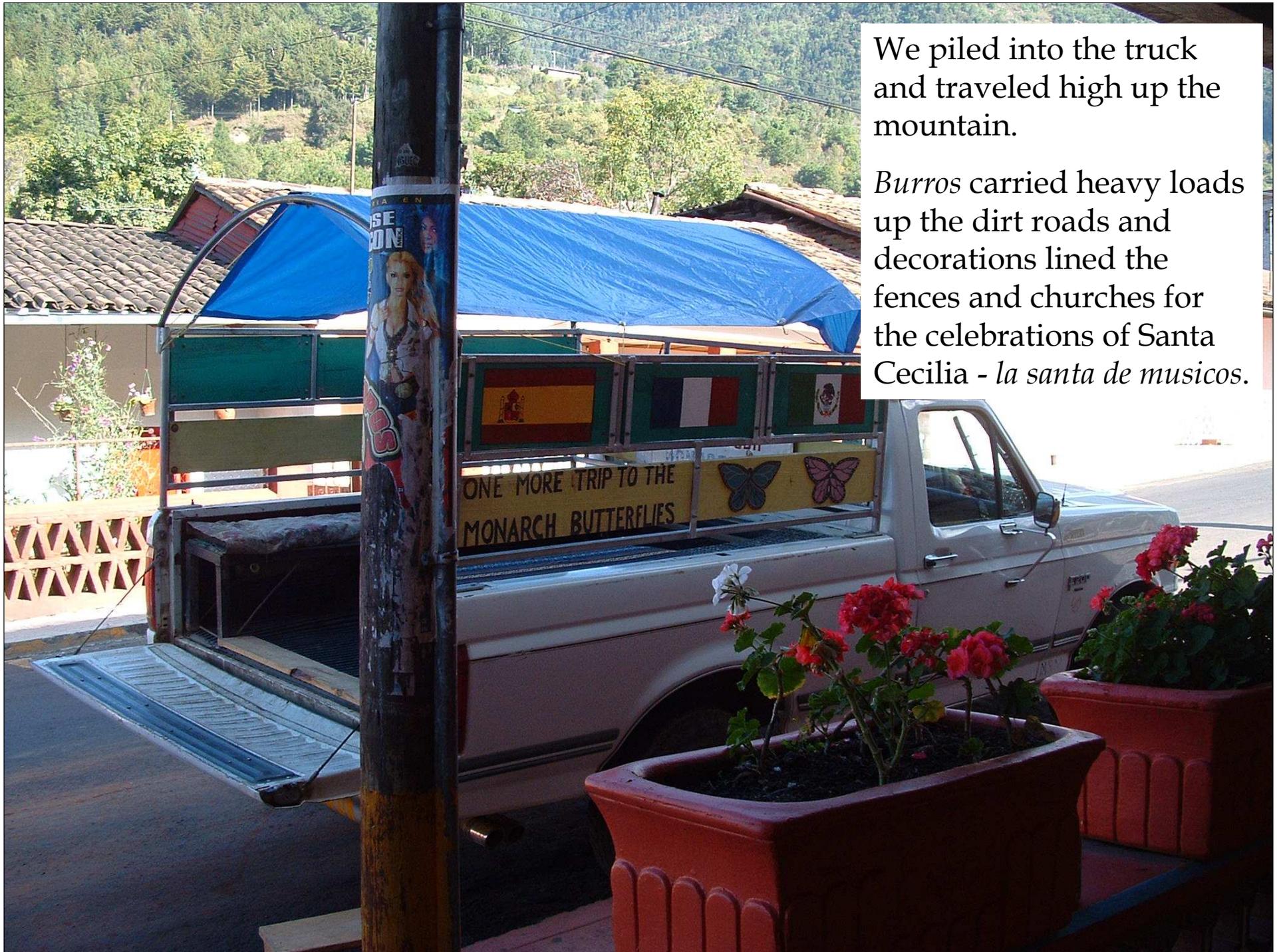
Graciela E. Lake Moore



I woke up early in the morning to the sound of a rooster crying for the sun to rise.

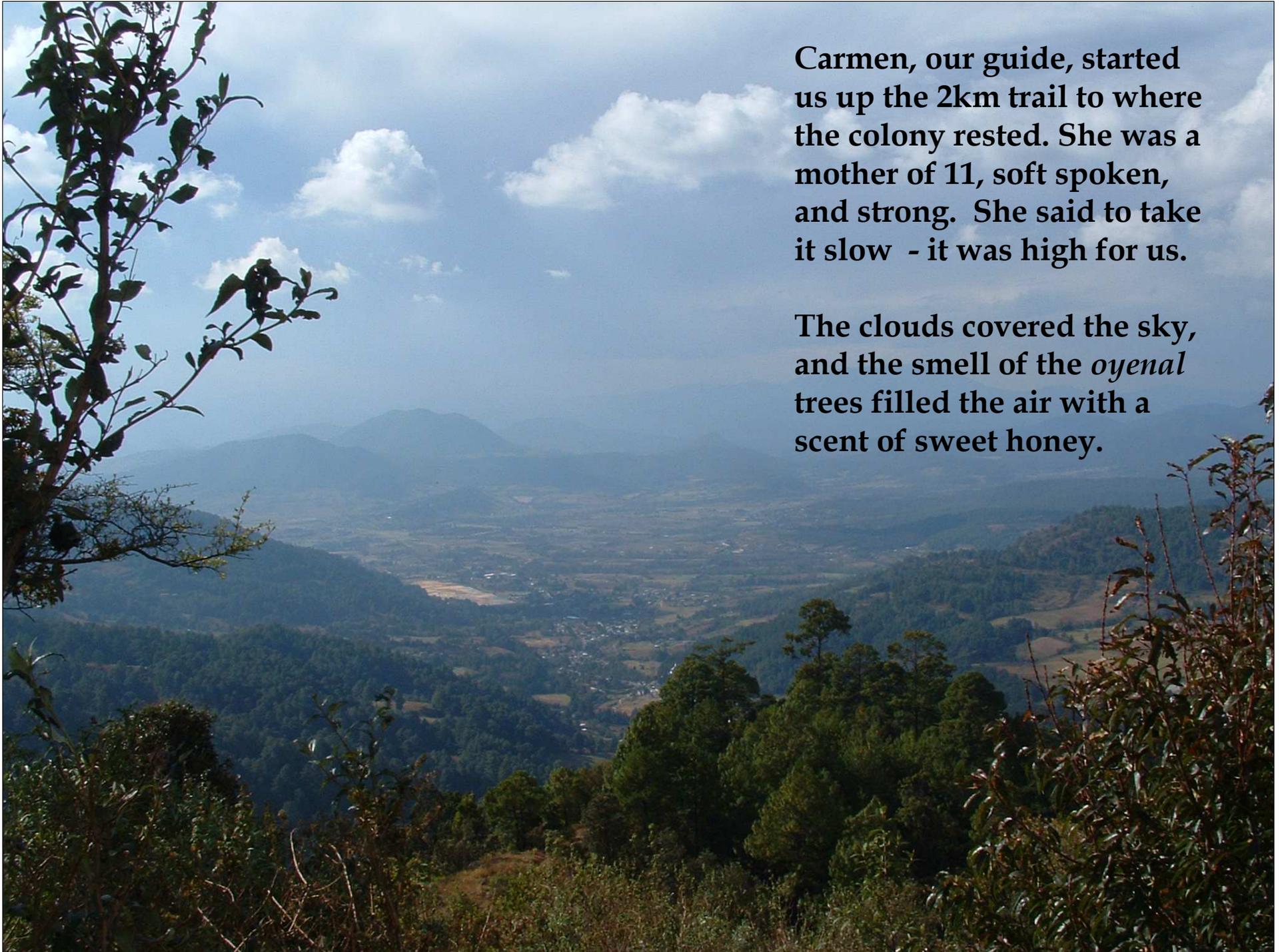
The bells of the church began playing a song my *mamá* sang. Her powerful voice echoed in my memories, singing about the country of her birth and the origin of my family.

Mi marido whispered "Happy Birthday" and the air around me didn't seem as cold as I listened to the music around me.



We piled into the truck and traveled high up the mountain.

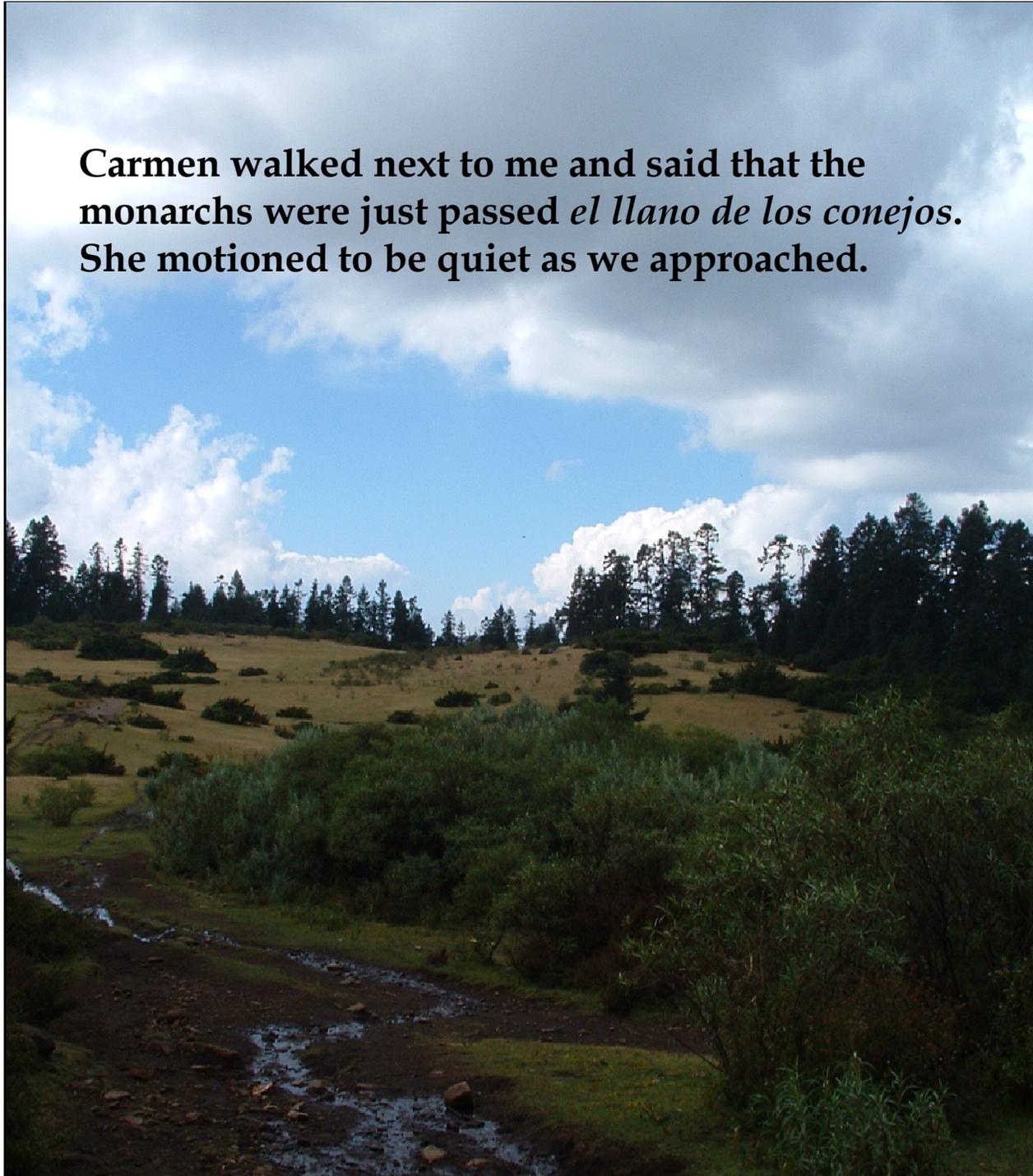
Burros carried heavy loads up the dirt roads and decorations lined the fences and churches for the celebrations of Santa Cecilia - *la santa de musicos*.



Carmen, our guide, started us up the 2km trail to where the colony rested. She was a mother of 11, soft spoken, and strong. She said to take it slow - it was high for us.

The clouds covered the sky, and the smell of the *oyenal* trees filled the air with a scent of sweet honey.

Carmen walked next to me and said that the monarchs were just passed *el llano de los conejos*. She motioned to be quiet as we approached.



The sky began to fill with black silhouettes against the bright white clouds.

Millions of little wings fluttered, and I could hear what sounded like rain.





Upon closer inspection, I saw the trees were covered with millions of brown figures! Flashes of orange caught my eye.

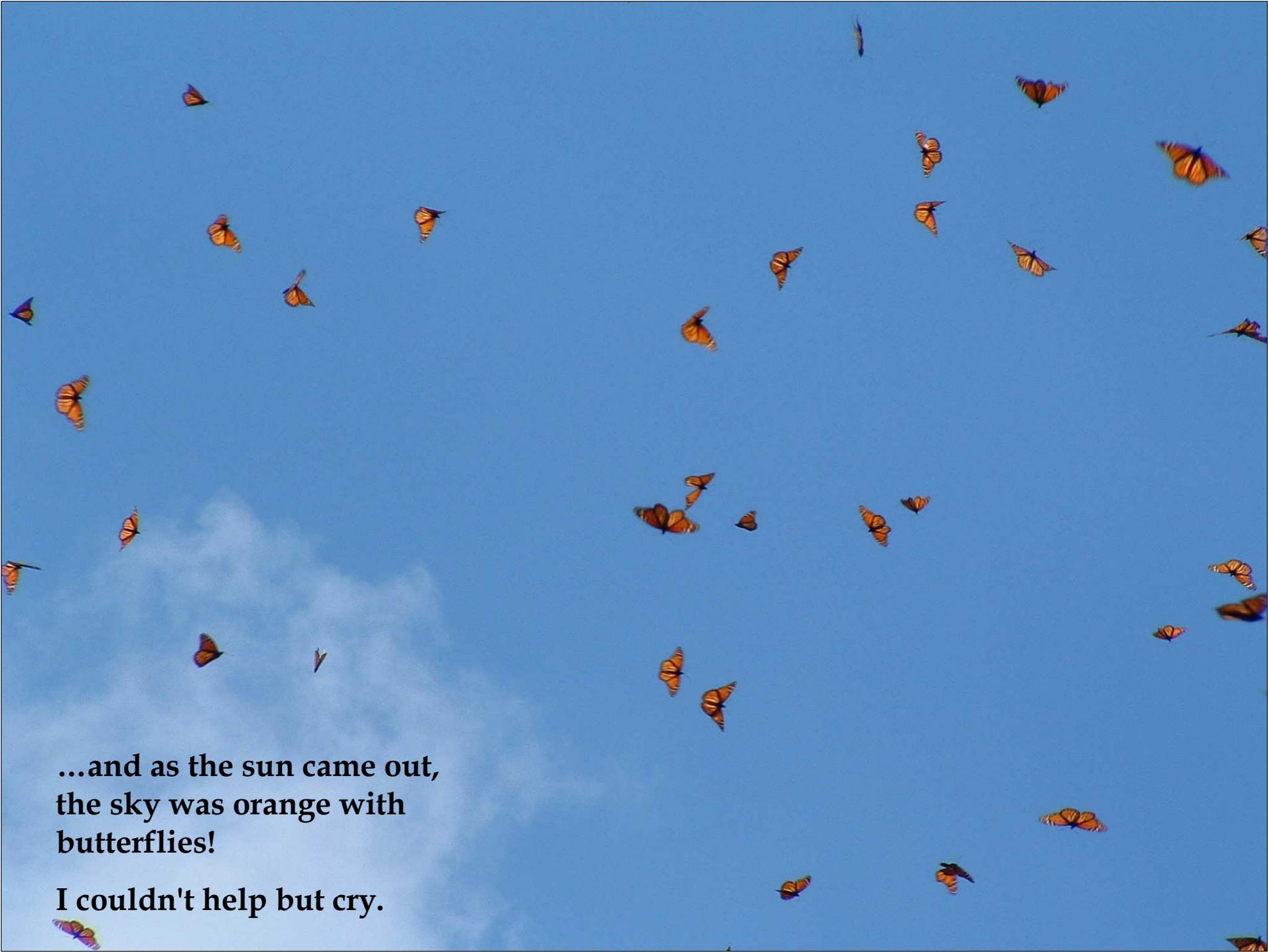
I stood in awe...these little spirits traveled so far to come back to the land of their grandparents.



As the clouds covered the sun, the butterflies fluttered to the trees. Some fluttered to the ground, too cold to make it back to the group.

Carmen lifted one of the little bodies from the ground and blew warm air on it. Rejuvenated, the *monarca* fluttered from her hands.





**...and as the sun came out,
the sky was orange with
butterflies!**

I couldn't help but cry.