

BLESSED ARE THE REFUGEES

he sacrificed his youth and education to support others. He would never have thought himself a hero, but he was.

We first met over a pizza in a restaurant. I was to interpret for Scott, a coauthor of this book, who was preparing for a hearing for Adan's younger brother, Williams. Adan was magnetic and joyful, glad to be helping his high school-aged brother. Since arriving in the United States ten years before, Adan supported himself and siblings as a cook, saving precisely to bring his brother and sister to safety in the United States.

Adan fled El Salvador due to domestic violence and poverty when he was eighteen. His father had been forced to fight in a brutal war civil war when he was only a teenager. Plagued with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the father drank and took out his frustrations violently on his children. So Adan fled by making the arduous journey on foot and by bus to the United States and then on to Maryland where he created a new life to help the siblings he left behind join him.

His brother followed ten years later at age fourteen. Adan physically and emotionally supported his little brother in every way possible. When they first met with Scott, both of these strong boys broke down and cried as they shared their history. They grieved the challenges life brought them without complaint or blame of others. They both cried again at Williams's hearing. They held the courage and strength within to create their own fu-

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tures. Adan devoted all his time and youth to supporting the family.

His giving, brave attitude brought great comfort to those around him. Sadly, Adan's heavy work schedule kept him from learning English, attending college, and having a girlfriend. Yet Adan grieved even the loss of his young adulthood with acceptance. He rejoiced that his younger brother had a better life than he.

Williams became a star for Esperanza because of his willingness to share his tragic story publicly. That story exemplified the terrible circumstances that force children to flee from Central America, taking the dangerous trip alone to the United States. He was featured in television news stories and newspaper articles. Adan was proud of the attention and praise given to Williams. Behind the scenes, Adan quietly supported the cause of immigration reform in Maryland, driving Williams wherever he needed to go to help and encouraging Williams to continue the work.

The year passed. Adan continued to support his family, including the addition of his fifteen-year-old nephew who fled El Salvador. A sweetheart entered Adan's life and became his fiancée.

The last time I saw Adan he was twenty-eight years old. He leaned into my car's open window. With bright eyes and a warm smile, he thanked me in Spanish for taking Williams to a ceremony ordaining Scott as a