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Disconnected

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Disconnected

Lorna Van Gilst

Call me, she says—my young Venezuelan friend—
Call me. I want that we talk English.
Why don't you call me?

And I do call. But the line is forever *ocupada*.

At mid-morning, when I can get through,
Carmencita is still in bed,
but she says *Buenos dias* in a croaky voice
that really wishes it were still asleep.

Carmencita, who is only 18 and
fatherless since age 10—

Why? she asks.

Where is God?

I need my *papá*.

Carmencita, with the slender arms
and creamy skin,
eyes like black onyx in pools of milk—
eyes that search for God.

I want to go to the church with you, she says.
Will you take me?

But when I go to pick her up,
she is sleeping.

At last she drapes her drowsy head
over the window sill
three floors above.

Oh, mi amor, she says.

My mother is *enferma*, ill—

But I know her mother is far away in Maracaibo.

I leave on holiday.

Oh, mi amor, she says before I go.

Call me when you come back.

When is your birthday?

I give you a wonderful present.

I come back. I wait a week.

Then I call.

But the phone rings and rings.

And another week.

But the phone rings and rings and rings.

And the croaky voice
never answers the call.