Miguel Garduno

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Class period 1/2

Where’d You Go?

 Finally, after 19 long years my mom wants to meet me! We never knew each other~~,~~ because my mother gave me to my grandma when I was only five months old. I haven’t been told much why I haven’t seen my mother since, but I’ve considered my grandparents as my parents. Even after my grandpa died~~,~~ when I was 11 years old, my grandma still took care of me. I was born in Mexico but raised in San Diego in a community called Linda Vista, on Kelly Street. At the time we were living in a lower income community, but the people were so close. Maybe it's because I was so little at the time, ~~yet~~ I ~~long for~~enjoyed the days I was able to run outside and play.

That’s all in the past; right now my mother is about to walk in my grandma’s house and I already feel the anticipation I ~~have felt~~’ve had for 19 years. The sudden cool wind filled the room as the front door gently opened and I was blinded ~~the by~~by the sun’s glare. My mother walked in with her beautiful black hair, brown eyes, and a big smile on her face. I bit my lip feeling a metallic taste of blood, and tapping my fingers hoping to calm down my anxiety.

“Mom!” I said out loud filling the entire living room. I~~’ve~~ had seen pictures of her when she was younger, some in black and white, others in bad quality, but I never imagined my mother being so beautiful.

“Mijo is that you?” She looked twice to try and recognize me, and held a picture of me when I was 9 years old. “Antonio you’re so big!”

I thought about that when I was little it kind of reminds me of my tio’s when they were smaller. When I visited my tio’s in Mexico, we would ride their mini motorcycle around their ranch; and eating home cook food. My tio Santiago would tell me I looked like him when he was a kid; I never believed him because the pictures didn’t match.

“I didn’t recognize you mijo, because you are a man now.” she said warmly.

“Mom it’s so good to see you, I never forgot about you once and here you are now.” I said excitedly.

“Mom, I want to ask you so many things. Tell me about ~~d~~Denise, I remember my grandma speaking about her. All I know is that she was handicapped, and that you took care of her.” I ~~said inquiry.~~asked directly.

“I looked after Denise for 12 years and she died at age 29 by choking on a piece of food. A drunk man crashed into her car when she was 18 and left her handicapped. Denise couldn’t walk by herself even with her walker.” she looked gloomy

“It’s a shame she was such a bright person, but she wasn’t able to talk since the incident, we could only speak when Denise pointed at alphabetical letters.” I couldn’t imagine the loneliness of being in that situation.

“Mom can you tell me about how you met my dad? I would really love to hear it from you.” I recalled contently.

“Okay Antonio if that is what you want.” expressing a big smile. I wanted to know how my parents met for such a long time; what did they see in each other to fall in love?

“21 years ago, we met in Chula Vista. I was driving a close friend, and your dad brought another friend, so we went to a restaurant, ate, *and* laughed. We kept meeting afterwards by going to the park, meeting his parents and meeting your sister.” She looked so bubbly.

“After 2 months your father asked me to go out with him because before he met me your father was alone.” She paused, and lifted a recently taken photo with me and my grandma taken by a friend of mine. I stood there feeling compassionate for her.

“The memory is fuzzy, but I hope my answer is enough Antonio. Sorry...I talked too long, anything else you want to know?” she said, with a relief. I pondered the question for a moment, and understood the story how these two strangers eventually became man and wife.

“Well, mom, there’s a story I’ve been meaning a to tell you, because me and my sister haven’t told anyone, not even abuelo. Mom when I was 8 years old my sister and I had two birds. I had a Zebra Finch, and sister had a Canary.”

“Mine was a boy, with stunning grey~~/~~ and black feathers, orange cheeks, ~~and~~ a bright red beak. ~~and~~My sister’s bird was a bright beautiful yellow Canary, with a snow white beak.” I recalled with enthusiasm. *As* I’m telling her about the birds, I wonder why this story has priority over any other event that’s happened to me~~?~~. Like that bike accident I had when I was 16 or when I was sick with the flu all week?

I continued: “Grandpa bought those two birds when grandma couldn’t walk because the arthritis in her knee kept bugging her, so the birds helped the three of us to not worry about her while she was in the hospital for 3 months.” The arthritis happened so suddenly, abuel was worried for her health, she was in so much pain, and ended up going to the hospital not wanting to leave her grand kids.

 “My sister and I saw this movie umm.. What’s it called again?” I squinted at the thought. Well there's this part, where the main character releases their pet birds into the wild, with his friend or sister something like that. So, like the knuckle heads we were, we went outside and held our pet birds in the palm of our hands~~, I pause~~.” I paused. It took some time to catch my breathe from the long story. My mother awaiting the end of the story.

“Immediately after I let go of my bird I regretted it, so I tried to catch it but the damn bird ~~but it~~ was too fast!” We both laughed, I don’t know why either, we just stood there giggling.

 “The only thing I was worried about, was where the damn bird was going to get it’s food.” I shuffled my feet realizing I~~’ve~~ had been standing too long.

 “That’s a funny story Mijo” she continued to giggle, brushing the few tears from her face.

 “Antonio, tell me about your faith because your grandma mentioned it to me earlier because she said it’s been a big part of your life, and it’s changed you a lot.” my mother wiped her tears again. The cold draft of air fills the room again, I take off the jean jacket I’m wearing, and hold it in one hand to give it to my mom. She wrapped herself with it, holding onto the worn out jacket as if it were a blanket.

I took a breath allowing the memories to flood back: “When I was 5 years old I started to go to first communion, and after that I helped the priest in mass. If I recall... at age 8 I stopped going for 7 or more years. I felt like I didn’t need to go anymore.” I walk to the door and close it prevent the freezing draft from interrupting us.

“However when high school started my Grandma put me in youth group. It was fun, I had many memories there I won’t forget.” The memories long forgotten began to flow into me again.

“I’m still in it now because of the people, and there's always someone to talk to.” I looked downward to the solid oak flooring, I’m reminded of the emotional talks given by our youth leaders, there was a moment many of them showed brokenness and sadness. I knew a lot of students who didn’t care, *the* only things that mattered to them was social media, football, and their looks. When I looked at myself, my long hair, untrimmed black eyebrows, worn out converse shoes, I *realized I* never really cared for looks, only the need for clothes to cover my body.

“I go every Sunday, mom to preach about Jesus, his teachings, and how it relates to us.” Several tears rush down my face. Surprised by the sudden emotion I quickly brush them off, seeing my mother’s empathetic face. “Mijo it’s okay.” she tells me, “I haven’t seen you this way, but I feel I should have been there for you. Want me to tell you why I haven’t visited earlier?” I have to know, why wasn’t she here? Why couldn’t she hold me like this? ~~a~~All the other times I’ve broken down and cried?

 “I.. well mijo I-I-I wanted to come earlier, but I couldn’t face the guilt of leaving you…” I realizing I haven’t been the only one suffering, so why is my heart aching, the pain constricting like a boa.

“I’ve been waiting mom, 19 years I’ve waited to meet you. Here you are, so tell me *now*-about why you’ve been away for so long.”

“Well mijo, it’s not that I couldn’t visit you sooner, but the blame kills me as well as the guilt. If only I’ve been a better mother~~, If I realized someone took my credit card,~~  you could have been with me.” she said dejectedly.

 “Someone broke into our old home and took the 2,000 dollars I was saving and I couldn’t afford to keep you, so I left you with your grandparents.”

“Why do I feel like I lost something I never had.” bursts of sobbing came abruptly, In a low voice she spoke over and over again.

 “I wish I was there\* I should have been there for you. I wish I was there\* I *should* have been there for you.” I held her for as long as she needed, knowing I had some place to go. I remember all the anger in my heart screaming in my head, *mom didn’t you want to see your babies grow?* But by meeting my mom again, it has all been washed away by her gentle love.

I realize now that I haven’t thought how important it is to say my feelings to someone I care about. I wrap my two arms across my mother, the one who hasn’t been with me in the longest time, because of that I feel as if she’s everything I’ve longed for. I sob for a moment, remembering all the lonely nights I’ve spent praying wondering if I am loved. I pull away from my mother seeing the anguish in her face.