

Rosa Olguin

A warm feeling surrounds me, but it may just be the feeling of the tears streaming down my cheeks. The days are slowly becoming longer now. More time to reminisce about you.

Spring reminds me of you. My favorite memories with you were during the warmer months, like in middle school, when you would pick me up from school. We would visit my favorite *paletería* and I would pick the *aguacate* flavor, while you probably got the typical *nuez* flavor Mexican parents love. I can't believe how quick time flies. I can't believe they're just memories now.

Inside, a part of me is missing. I know for sure it is you.

What should I do when I think of you? When I see you, I see myself. I see the family I do not know. I see your smile. I hear your voice. I replay the times I sat in empty apartments, listening to classic rock playing from your phone in the background as you did the electrical work. As I stared out the window, my mind was always elsewhere. I wish I had another opportunity to squeeze your hand, not minding the rough, thickened skin across your fingertips from all the years of wiring you've done. So I carry you with me, always. You're not really gone. In turn, I'm left with moments I wish I could relive.

The summer before I started high school, we would head to a nearby town. Cheaper than child care, I would stick around you. I followed behind you, your footsteps always the same. Composed and secure in typical dad New Balance sneakers. Quite the opposite of me, a young girl terrified to start high school, my head dreading time apart from you as we spent nearly all summer afternoons together. Making runs to Home Depot, tightening the loose screws on light switch plates behind you, or reading a book as I sat near you as you did electrical work. On one of those days, we took a lunch break and walked to a nearby Chinese food restaurant. You would order your half fried chicken and my chicken with broccoli to go and walk back to the empty work site. You would form a makeshift table, probably from random plywood pieces and milk crate boxes. We'd sit on the plastic milk crate boxes and eat while listening to anything you played on Pandora with ads, because paying for streaming music at the time seemed like an absurd idea. Sometimes it'd be Creedence Clearwater Revival and The Beatles, while other times it was José José, Camilio

Sesto, or Manuel, and talk about the rest of the work you have to do for the day. I'd listen, nod my head every other pause, and continue the conversation with small utterances. Then, I'd ask the questions. I'd ask you about the opening date of this place, how you met the owner, and why we used *cable diez* instead of *doce*.

Somehow, that would lead to my family history. *Veracruz era una ciudad industrial, tu abuela tenía una tienda en el mercado, yo viví en la ciudad para estudiar* were snippets of tales you'd always retell. You immigrated here from México and met my mother in the 90s, but I never knew the exact reason why. I find myself wishing I had asked before. I wish I asked more about your brother you loved so much and your intelligent sister that was not given the same opportunity to study.

Since your obsession was The Beatles, it soon became mine. I would watch all the music videos, movies, and interviews on YouTube. We'd watch them together as soon as I came home from middle school. You'd tease me about today's music lacking everything the music you grew up with had. You'd show me how you danced back then, funny movements with your legs, seeing the bruised parts of your legs from years of hitting your shins on the most random things. Always painful and left a mark. Your arms swayed to a rhythm, one outside of the song's harmonica or drums, it was your own. Your confidence taught me to have my own. Thank you for a dance lesson I'll never forget.

Part of every weekend morning ritual was waking up to the Beatles 1 album playing from your gray CD stereo, which filled our apartment in 181st in the Bronx. In the basement of a six floor apartment building, the acoustics were great to vibrate each strikingly different tempo from the album. At six years old, I'd sing along loudly from start to finish, not knowing the meaning behind Day Tripper or Paperback Writer. Today, I wonder if you ever did.

I'd follow behind you, wondering what today would bring. Hands in my pockets, I remember looking down at the ground a lot. Looking at the intense patterns of the cracked concrete sidewalks, creating different shapes with their own stories in my head. Those years, I said more in my thoughts than using my words, but you always understood something was going on in my small head. *Vente mija*, you'd say, *nos vamos a trabajar con Omar*. Omar was a family friend, a Mexican entrepreneur with a small Mexican grocery store across the street from us. From adding light fixtures to the store or locating a short

circuit, I was your right hand person. Silently focusing on the *maizena* or *pan de dulce* in the *tienda*, my thoughts would be elsewhere.

When I close my eyes, I imagine you. I picture your back, facing the wire shelves in your tool room as you always did, getting ready for your day of work. In your out of trend bowl haircut pointing in 5 different directions, tan arms contrasting the white tank top you'd wake up in, and some long shorts that began to resemble capris more than shorts. I could list everything in that room, from your favorite red pliers to the electrical tester pen you'd always lose, you'd always place everything in *el bulto de herramienta*. Organized in your own special way, it looked clumsily thrown in, to me. I didn't understand your system, I never truly did.