

El Otro Lado Del Odio

BANG! BANG! “*¡Abre la puerta!*” Open the door! my drunken father exclaimed, as my mother, siblings and I held our door, secured only by a chain lock on the verge of snapping off. “*Vete Mauro*” Leave Mauro my mom implored. Once my mom assumed it was safe to open the door, my dad suddenly lunged at us. My older brother, in a swift rush of adrenaline, managed to restrain my father, as I maneuvered myself towards the house phone to call 911 for the third time.

I go back to this moment frequently. Why? Why did he let alcohol have him in a choke hold? Episodes such as these lead to a gradual increasing distaste for my father.

My dad is not the alcoholic he once was. He has since bought a business which has consumed him entirely. Since the age of 12, my days have mirrored each other on a repeated, never-ending cycle. I wake up, go to school, come home, head to work, repeat. My friends eventually stopped inviting me to sleepovers or special events because I was constantly busy. It's hard for me not to hold my father accountable for me not discovering my interests outside of school.

My father is not of an understanding nature.

“Pa, why do you want us working at the diner all the time? I can't even remember the last time we did something as a family.”

“Oh shut up. You kids don't understand. You've never had to struggle. If you don't want to work for me, find a job, and see how they treat you.” These words burned into me a strong feeling of resentment. Resentment for him not being a father who listens to me.

For not being a father who prioritizes spending time with his family. For not being more approachable. For not being what I envisioned a father should be.

Sometimes I felt as if our family was more of a business exchange. Instead of hanging with friends, I started doing mundane tasks around the diner up to six days a week. In spite of the hours worked, I was told to, "*Echarle ganas y apoyar la familia.*" Put in effort and help the family. There was nothing in return, not even my fathers approval.

I eagerly waited to board the plane bound for Mexico. We were going to celebrate my mom's birthday. But before we could board, we had to scan our thumbs for fingerprint documentation. When my father tried to scan his finger, it would not process. Out of annoyance, I grabbed my dad's arm to touch his hand. I felt an electric shock go through me at the realization that his hands were calloused and fingerprintless.

The many hours my dad had spent working as a brickmaker in scorching ovens led to his fingerprints eroding away. My father's calloused hands lead me to a profound realization of the reason he was so distant. My father is not the sullen estranged man I had believed him to be. His sore back is from carrying burdens he took upon himself for us. He works long hard hours for us. He saves money, so one day he can do what his father never could. Help his family build a better life. As his kids, he wants to give us all in life. We are his hope for a brighter tomorrow, the reason for all sacrifices.

I've forgiven someone who never asked for forgiveness.

Through my mother's words, I've tried to piece my father's mind. I see the young man who left home full of hope. Hope to provide for his aging mother as she once tried to do for him. Hope to live a fulfilling life with his companion, my mother. Hope to give his kids a better future. Although I do not see this man now, I hope that one day I will.