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La Hermana Mayor in a Pandemic - A Collection of Poems based on Identity: Told From the Perspective of an Older Sister In a Latino Household During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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In Depth Piece

La Hermana Mayor in a Pandemic

A Collection of Poems based on Identity:
Told From the Perspective of an Older Sister
In a Latino Household During the Covid-19 Pandemic

How Old?

How old were you when
you picked up your sibling
when they fell?

How old were you when
you had to take over
your own doctor's appointments?

How old were you when
you had to translate
what the teacher said to your parent
what your parent said to the teacher
at the parent teacher conferences?

How old were you when
you realized being the big sister
wasn't only about watching your siblings
but it also was about
raising them?

How old were you when
you were counting down the
years, months, days,
to be old enough to work?

How old were you when
you took over the first bill?
Then the second?
How 'bout the third?

How old were you when
you felt guilty living your
own life?

How old were you when
your life had to stop
because the world
stopped spinning?

Life had us more enclosed than ever.

How old were you when
you realized that big sisters
have to keep moving forward
even when the world stops spinning
to keep the parents from going
down under?

We do it
when we're old enough
to understand
what is expected
from us

To get where
my parents have
gotten is the
bare minimum

The only goal
is similar to theirs;
to do all things
to support
La Familia

Feeling as though
there is nothing
compared to
crossing while
6 months pregnant
with me

To pay back
that kind of favor?
For giving me
the ultimate best
opportunity
that life could bring me?

There is only one
choice to
match even
with the angels
from above

There is only one
choice to
match even
with the angels
from above

And for that reason
That's why
I've been working
since I was 7
since I was 16 (legally)
and full time

since I was 18

First gen guilt
slapping me
in the face
since then

To help
in all ways
possible

My journey may be
filled with successes
and some failures

There is no way
of looking back
just like Mami y Pa
Siempre
Echandole paso por paso

And with that alone
I have to be the one
to hold them up
para siempre

Essential

And there was the moment
when the days were no longer
shining for only just me

The life that I had planned for
myself and the goals that
I had written on the wall
seemed as though they were
vanishing

The uncertainty didn't last
too long
Reality hit faster
Responsibility hit harder
Restlessness hit
around the clock
becoming
my life

Essential became a coined
catchphrase
Overtime was its middle name
and my employee number
is forever ingrained in my head

That was a different pressure
serving the public was something
I was used to
But serving desperation
was different

It was different going from
serving people who basically
had it all
to serving people who were
used to carrying their lives on
their back

Someone crying about wearing
a mask in a store
to someone crying about
how this was the first time
they've been in a shelter

That was the moment
where I realized
that these people
my community members
my family
needed me
more than I needed myself

As long as I knew
that dinner was prepped
the dog was walked
my brother was passing his classes
mi abuela took all her AM medications
all bills and payments were sent in
and my mami came home to a clean
home
then I could go to work guilt free

Because I couldn't stand
the thought of letting anyone down
except for myself
for I laid my head down at night
knowing I neglected the writing
that was on my wall

Finding Me, Myself, & I

To completely forget
about myself
became my new
art form
that I somehow
mastered

Downtown store windows blasted
NOW OPEN
Restaurants hung up banners
DINE-IN OR TAKEOUT
Movie theaters advertised
SOCIALLY DISTANCED SHOWINGS

The world was moving forward
and I wanted to catch on

How could I moved past
the consistent weeks being
burnt out
the days where I worked more
than I slept
socially distancing myself
in person and over the phone

Wondering how I could
fill these holes
that I've created

Feeling proud that
I've lived for my family
and didn't fail them financially
for the past year
but still feeling so empty
because I couldn't
see who I was anymore

I acknowledge
I accept
I forgive

I acknowledge that
I did what had to be done
for those around me

I accept that
it is now time to
take care of myself

I forgive myself
for not putting myself
or my priorities
first

I cannot give an
estimate when I
will be back
insync with myself

But I will try

And that's the least
that I owe
myself

Work Cited

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