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El Sacrificio

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El Sacrificio

Diana Zamudio-Garcia

El atardecer estaba soleado. It was a victory for the blue sky. Huitzilopochtli must have woken up in a good mood. I had passed my mathematics test with a C and I was happily walking back home, to tell my mami that my grades were finally getting better. Caminaba with my carnalita down Williams Road in East Salinas, el camino we regularly took. Suddenly, three shots fired. The banging vibrations propagating the audible sounded like when my carnal, Pablo, opens up a cold Coronita and bang, the cap falls off. Then, the once trapped, white, non-transparent vape comes out to freedom.

Only these shots were much louder.

Ohh the damage that opened Corona will do.

Especialmente a mi brother.

All this rushed through my head, but I knew I needed to protect my hermanita. The shots where in that same street, I had to take cover. Le dije:

“Nancy, metete abajo del carro.”

And with tears balling out her ojos negros, she threw herself to the floor and crawled under the gray minivan. I followed. More shots were fired and we saw how the other students ran.

Pendejos, porque no se cubren.

It was too painful to watch. I held on to Nancy, covered her face, and told her:

“No mires, niña, you are too young to see this.”

We were under la ven for what felt like an eternity, when we finally heard the sirens de los Puercos y las ambulancias. It was too late once the authority was there. The vagos were gone, and so were some students.

Once Nancy and I got home, mami and papi were not there. They were still working en el campo, but the house phone had over thirteen missed calls. Mami's voicemails were all the same:

*“Miguel, cuando lleguen a la casa, me llaman.
La escuela me llamo. Se que paso mi niño.
Cuidaste a tu hermanita? Vamos en camino m'ijo.
Por favor llámame y dime que estan bien.”*

I knew mom was being brave, but I heard how much more her voice would break with every voicemail she left. I could not bring myself to call back. I was processing what had happened, and I thought about what I would say if I called. Nancy ended up calling mis padres y avisó que estábamos en la casa, pero que teníamos mucho miedo.

Since that day, I never recentered. The next day when I went to school, mi amigo, Danny, was not there, and I did not see him since. More shootings took place that year. I was triggered all the time. I was constantly on alert and I always went by my day ready to duck down and cover, como mis papis cuando ellos cruzaron y se cuidaban de La Migra. My grades dropped and I began to look for protection in the hood and la escuela. Mi carnalita and my homies started walking to school and home together. Nancy did not like this. Mis “amigos” le chiflaban and asked her to be their hyna. My mom hated them even more, me decía:

*“Que ya quieres andar de Cholito en pandillas,
O que chingaos.
No, nos venimos p'al Norte
pa'que termines con esas pendejadas!”*

Mami, nunca me entendio. Recivia mis cinturonzos y chanclazos once in a while, but this lifestyle worked for me at school y en la calle. I was no longer stressing, and at times, I was a little too relaxed in class. Maria Juana became my best friend and Perla became my hyna. Todo estaba bien and then reality took a shot once again.

I was 17, just learning how to live life. Hell, I was still a child myself. How was I to raise my son when I was

just learning to raise a boy, me. I was scared.

She was affiliated with the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, La Eme. Los azules, Los Sureños. Y yo, pues everyone knew my homies were de Nuestra Familia. I was never one of them, but Perla's crew knew, and associated me with los Norteños. Nuestra historia de amor was like Romeo's and Juliet's.

That's if I remember correctly or

I was probably too high in my English class

and I got that love story all wrong.

Era amor prohibido, como el de Selena y Chris Pérez, el guitarrista. It was as toxic as Diego's and Frida's relationship. Even so, we went against all odds and decided to raise our child in a non-broken home.

This fantasy only lasted a while. My mom would always shun her and call her Puta for opening her piernas. My mother wanted her nieto, but she did not want my son's mother. My sister isolated her. I was given an ultimatum. Not by any of these three mujeres that I lived with, I placed this on myself. I had to choose between la madre de mi hijo y mi madre y hermana. I chose my mom. Perla did not last long. She grew tired of the abuse from my familia and from me. I was living in Mictlan and I drowned myself in Pulque. So she left, took my son, and demanded child support.

If I was already doing bad, this just threw me off. I turned to the streets. El Barrio became my escape, mi apoyo. Simultaneously, El Barrio was also biologically killing me. I was dealing merca local to pay of the child support, but I got caught by a pig near the Swa'mi. The burdens felt heavier than the weights from the gym in Juvie, but I got lucky that mi mami did not like seeing me there. My parents and siblings bailed me out, but it wasn't that long before I went back to my routine. The pesas I carried, outweighed me again, and soon I was not just dealing, I was also consuming. I don't recall todo lo que me metía, I just knew it felt good being away. At least mentally. This then got me in trouble when the Boss noticed that the numbers did not add up. He threatened me. He demanded his money and said:

"If you don't get me my money by next week,

No la vas a contar, cabron.”

Pero donde iba conseguir yo, that kind of mula.

I was terrified and decided that I was not going to return. Se me hizo facil nomas no volver. Then, one night en la cual Coyolxauhqui brillaba intensamente I was walking las calles de Salinas a la casa de Perla para ver a mi hijo, Chuy. De un instante al otro, the bright night dimmed pitch black and suddenly, I became extremely cold, my goosebumps se alteraron. Me entró un escalofrío. My unbuttoned flannel shirt and my gray tee was no longer enough. I finally understood why mami yelled:

“Ponte un suéter que hace frio.”

A gang of five vicious guys came at me like when Hernan Cortés and his Spaniard colleagues went after Moctezuma and his Aztec empire. I froze in time and prayed:

“Padre Nuestro, que estás en el cielo...

Haz de tu voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.”

Then I ran. I ran as fast as my feet could take me. I ran like a cheetah, a Nagual, and my heart beat started raising and beating like the drums in the danzas de los Aztecas. I was running out of breath, and suddenly, I heard my bro’s cold Coronita again. Bang! I felt the bullet penetrate my chamorro like a Tepoztopilli wounding me. The adrenaline enabled me to run a few more steps and then the pain became unbearable. My leg had failed me. I was rolled up in pain, holding me leg.

Tengo mucho dolor, y tantas ganas de seguir corriendo.

Pero el miedo me paralizó.

They caught up to me and forced me to face up and I saw once again the clear, dark blue sky, and the bleeding Coyolxauhqui. They weren’t Spaniards or Hernan Cortes, they were mi gente. They were my Aztec warriors getting ready to pull out mi corazon and offer me to Quetzalcoatl. I felt the Macuahuitl, the hungry wood,

jabbing near my rib, and the sturdy kicks with los Cortez. I got punched on the face several times and all the teeth were knocked off. They took them for their victory necklace, and I was left there. I was bleeding out and I wanted to save myself, but I did not have the strength to move. All I could do was think of mi niño, Jesus. Mi Chuy. All that I had to teach him, all that I needed to thank mis padres, carnales y carnalitas for. And all I could do was rezar:

*“Tonantzin, ruega por ellos y por nosotros,
Los pecadores. Ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte,
Amen.”*