

Me Without You

written by

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INT. KITCHEN. SUNDOWN.

A father, ELIAS, is in the kitchen cooking. He's done this hundreds of times, dancing around the kitchen grabbing things from seemingly random places. He's wearing a faded band t-shirt and jeans.

There is gray streaking in his hair and he hums to himself as he stirs the pot of soup on the stove. He reaches for a spoon and takes a sip of the soup. His exaggerated expression makes it clear he's not satisfied with it.

There's sounds of a front door opening and closing shut. MARIELA, an eighteen year old girl, runs into the kitchen wearing a band shirt and a long flowing skirt and a flower crown on her head.

She's holding mail in her hand, her demeanor screaming there's a fire but her face looking like she set the fire.

MARIELA

Dad! Dad!

ELIAS

Dios mio, mija, don't scare me like that. How was the concert?

MARIELA

Forget about the concert, the college finally got back to me!

Elias nearly drops the spoon into the pot of soup but instead, clumsily puts it to the side to go to his daughter.

ELIAS

Mijita, before you open it, whatever it may say...

MARIELA

I know, papi. I'm ready.

Mariela is beyond excited but Elias still looks uneasy, looking at the envelope as if it'll attack him, or worse, his daughter. Mariela takes a deep breath and opens it.

MARIELA (CONT'D)

I got in... I got in. I got in!

Mariela screams and flings herself at her dad in a hug, Elias immediately returns it and for a few seconds, pride and joy fill his features.

MARIELA (CONT'D)
I'm going to Chicago! Oh my god, I
need to go tell everyone. Hold on,
I'm getting my computer and calling
my friends. Dad, I'm going to
Chicago!

Mariela rushes out the kitchen and Elias stands there alone ,
his face drained of any emotion except dawning realization.

ELIAS
(to himself)
Chicago.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

There are photos and childhood memorabilia lining the walls.
There is a woman in the earlier photos but then suddenly
she's no longer there. Elias looks at each one with a certain
grief. Elias knocks on Mariela's bedroom door. She calls for
him to go in.

MARIELA
(on her computer)
Sorry, guys, I'll talk to you
later. Love ya, bye!

MARIELA (CONT'D)
Hey, dad, what's up? Dinner ready?

Mariela gets up from her bed and walks out the door toward
the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Mariela twirls around the kitchen getting
utensils and setting the table and getting tortillas and
queso from the fridge. She goes to try the soup but is
unsatisfied with it.

MARIELA (CONT'D)
Mm, it's missing cilantro.

All the while, Elias is standing at the entry of the kitchen,
watching her.

ELIAS
Chicago is a really long way from
home.

Mariela doesn't pause in her whirlwinds of motion, just
adding bits of herb to the soup and getting the pitcher of
water.

MARIELA

Sure it is, but anywhere is a really far place from here. At least in Chicago, it has the best majors to offer me. That's not even mentioning the scholarship they're gonna give me.

ELIAS

Wouldn't you rather go to a school closer to here?

Mariela finally notices that something isn't right.

MARIELA

Dad, where are you going with this?

ELIAS

I just mean that there's nothing wrong with the colleges in this area. You wouldn't have to move away. And you wouldn't have to pay for your dorms if you just stayed in the house

Mariela begins chuckle nervously but stops when she sees that her dad isn't smiling.

MARIELA

Oh, you're not kidding.

Mariela puts a tortilla on the comal.

ELIAS

What's that supposed to mean? What's wrong with you living here for collage? You could save your money and I'd be here to help if you-

MARIELA

So that's what this is about. You just don't think that I'd be fine on my own?

ELIAS

I just think that in Chicago, there's no family to help you out, I won't be there.

MARIELA

I'm eighteen. I'm nearly a full adult, and while I do agree that there's some things I don't know, I'll still be staying on the school campus.

ELIAS

Mariela, I won't be there for you.

MARIELA

Why are you getting so upset about this? I've been telling you that this is the college i've been wanting to go to. What's all of a sudden changed?

ELIAS

It wasn't as real. Now, you could actually be going halfway across the country.

MARIELA

What do you mean 'could'? I am going there.

Elias, who has been getting progressively more agitated, finally throws his hands up.

ELIAS

I had to explain to you just last month how to change the tires on your car!

MARIELA

What does that have to do with anything?

The tortilla has been slowly burning this whole time, Blake smoke drifting to the ceiling. The fire alarm goes off and they both startle from the standoff they were in.

Mariela goes to take the tortilla off the comal while Elias goes to the other room to turn off the alarm.

INT. DINING ROOM.

Elias and Mariela are sitting on the dinning table both with a plate full of food. The tension from the fight is still there but there's something subdued about it.

MARIELA

This isn't about you thinking that
I can't take care of myself, is it?

Elias doesn't answer, instead, staring off into space.

Flashback to a younger Elias in a hospital, the world around him has dulled down colors. Then through the glass of the wall, a nurse comes in with a baby, placing her in a crib with the name Mariela in it.

The baby seems to be glowing, colors immolating from her. Elias stares at the baby with a new sparkle in his eye.

Flashback to a slightly older Elias, his head is in his hands and there are overdue bills around him. He sighs loudly. Then a babies laughter cuts through the silence.

A toddler Mariela is struggling to her feet across from Elias. She stands and he stares. She takes a step and he stares, papers falling to the floor as he kneels. She walks all the way into his waiting arms and he weeps.

Flashback to calendars filled to the brim with dance practices, and sport events, and school fundraisers, and sleepovers. Months flipping to years as pink glitter ink smears with office blue handwriting.

Back to the present with Elias and Mariela sitting in the dinning room.

ELIAS

No. It's not.