

The Sound of Yesterday

She is as bright as a ray of sunlight. Her complexion is flushed red under the gaze of the yellow sun and her cheeks are full of laughter and warmth. Waves tumble over one another, racing to the shore, their fingers tickling the crevices in between our toes. We both giggle.

Abuela loves it here. After all, Santa Monica is home away from home. Mornings on the beach remind her of Honduras. Of days spent in the scorching heat chasing you and tío Mateo in the backyard and late afternoons under the Cabana, watching the tide roll in. Of nights under a pale moon, dancing with Abuelo until their eyelids are heavy and the tips of their fingers go numb.

“Mariana!” your name tumbles out of her lips and echoes into the distance. I tentatively reach for Abuela’s hand.

“Marian-aaaaa!” It’s no use. I watch as Abuela cups her face, and screams at the crashing waves, calling you home. She waits expectantly, a grin plastered on her face. I watch frozen from behind, my arm three inches away from hers.

“Abuela I-”

“Camilla, where is Mariana?” Abuela asks, turning her face toward me. I stifle an inhale before letting the tension rising within me dissipate.

It’s these moments in between, the glimpses of both heaven and hell, that make me wish you were here. That make me wish you never left. Mama. Mornings on the beach remind us of you.

We’re making sandcastles now. Well, I am. Abuela makes divots in the sand with her fists and fills them with rocks and shells. We’ve been at the beach for hours, but these days, time no longer feels real. Faintly, she hums an old Honduran song, bobbing her head to a pulsing internal rhythm. She starts to sing, slow at first but picking up the

pace as she goes along. Her words are offbeat and mumbled, but as always, perfectly in tune. Abuela is most beautiful when she's singing. She feels the rhythm, swaying from side to side, reclining further and further back into her world. I close my eyes. "Sin tu amor
estoy perdido..."

(Without your love, I'm lost...)

It's the same song you sung while rocking me to sleep every night, the one I'd ask you to repeat over and over again. You'd chuckle softly, rustling my hair. "Tomorrow, Camilla," you'd whisper, planting a kiss on my forehead. "Tomorrow". I remember wondering why those tomorrows started to disappear. Why at twelve years old, I waited hours after school for our rusted sedan to pull into the parking lot but it never did. I spent nights walking the twenty minutes back to our condo on the other side of town, only to tuck myself into bed, and rock myself into a restless sleep. *Tomorrow.*

"*Tomorrow*, I won't take the late shift at work," you said.

"*Tomorrow*, I'll dump my boyfriend," you sighed.

"*Tomorrow*," you promised. A duffel bag and keys in hand. "Tomorrow, I'll be back."

But tomorrow never came.

I remember arriving at LAX last September, infuriated, and helpless. Tío Mateo, who had been sober for years, had finally given in and I guess I couldn't blame him. Having to take care of Abuela all on his own, living day to day having to be reminded of you and his fading past was surely enough to break him. But receiving that call, having to quit my desk job in New York and give up my entire life, it was all too much to ask. Of course, I felt guilty. I knew Abuela hated nursing homes and being treated like she was sick. I knew the only people she trusted were family. I knew that most of our relatives were in Honduras, and returning would be too much for Abuela, but I loathed her for it. I

resented her embrace on tío Mateo's porch. I squirmed when she rustled my hair and kissed my cheeks with her pursed, dry lips. I hated it when she called me Mariana. *Your* name.

Despite everything, I love Abuela. After all, she's the only one I have left and the one link between my past and present. She's happy and distant from my reality. I close my eyes so that I can follow, I want to see where she's going.

"Buscando felicidad

Aquí encontrarás al pobre,

Que por siempre te amará."

(Here you will find the poor, that will love you forever.)

Abuela and I both open our eyes, staring at each other in comfortable silence. The only sounds are of the waves, reaching further and further up the sand.

"Mariana?," Abuela reaches out to grab my hand. Hers is coarse and rough to the touch. I gulp, forcing down the bile lining my throat. It's been three months. Three months since Abuela has called me your name. I can feel those months flush down the drain and the resentment now pulsing through my veins.

"No, Ab-"

"Mi amor. I've been looking for you. Come, come, it's dinn-"

"Abuela. No." My words are like daggers. They come out cold and raw. "I am not Mariana."

Abuela stares back at me, her lips pursed and her eyes perplexed. Minutes pass in between us.

"Mariana, go call Mateo," her brows furrow in discontent. "It's 10 past, the food will get cold."

My body shakes now, and tears trickle from my eyes. I hate you. I hate you for making

me this person, for leaving me with *her*. You're nothing but a selfish coward. The trickles turn into streams, wet and warm.

"Mariana," I say through my clenched jaw, "is gone. She's *gone*, Abuela." Abuela's gaze is blank and unmoving. I clutch her shoulders with my hand, shaking her violently, willing her to listen.

"She left us, okay? She didn't care about you, she didn't love you! She never did."

Abuela breaks her stare, turning her head toward the ocean. My hands pull at my hair, grabbing the knotted ends and I let go.

I scream and scream, my head to the sand, until I collapse, gasping for air. It feels like hours have passed when I finally sit up, my throat dry and raw. Abuela sits by my side, her arms around her legs, rocking back and forth.

"Abuela," I sigh. I can feel her distancing herself from our present. Her face is solemn and her body pensive. "I'm sorry."

She doesn't say anything in response, only stands up, and dusts the sand off her skirt. I can still hear her faintly humming as she turns to walk along the shore, picking up loose pebbles as she goes.

Mama.

Please come home.

Song: *Pobreza Fatal* - Grupo Miramar(1977)