

The truck flew past, bringing in a refreshing current of air which Pablo could not completely appreciate because it meant that another car had driven past him. He dropped his arm and looked down the road to where the truck was becoming smaller by the second. He took off his baseball cap, ran his hands through his dampened hair, and put it back on. His jersey stuck in sweaty patches to his skin, and he pulled at it in places. He had spent the better part of the morning and early afternoon walking along the desert roadway, and five - or as of now, six - cars had passed him, not a single one of the drivers looking his way. He turned away from the shrinking image of the truck and looked up at the sun and the cloudless sky. The day was not even halfway gone. Turning away from the sun, he let out a breath, and started walking again.

Moments later, Pablo heard the zip of tires on asphalt, and he turned around. He stuck his arm out again pointing his thumb down the road and looked at the approaching car. It kept coming without slowing down, and when it passed Pablo, he looked at the driver's side and saw a white woman trying her best not to make eye contact with him. When the car finally drove past, Pablo got a better look at the back of it and saw the car was a station wagon. It reminded him of the car Alicia had used to drive him to his first junior varsity baseball practice.

Because their mother did not know how and their father had died years before, Alicia was the one who taught Pablo how to play baseball. Each day after she came back from softball practice, Alicia would take Pablo out to the backyard and go over the drills she'd learned hours before. Soon enough, Pablo was became better than she was and was able to make their school's junior varsity team. But during his first practice, his teammates made sure he knew exactly how they felt about him being part of the team.

They began by shoving him to the back whenever they were all in line for drills, telling him to go back to Mexico. Then, when they were out of ear and eyeshot of Coach Robinson, they sang "The Macarena" and danced around him. Finally, when Pablo was making his way past first base during a running drill, a foot appeared in his path and he tumbled over it. He heard laughter and got up mad. He swung at the first baseman and that Robinson saw. After separating the boys, Robinson called out to Alicia. She walked down from where she was sitting in the stands, and Robinson told her to take Pablo home because he was done with practice for the day. On the way back home, Alicia said nothing until

Pablo began to cry. Then, she pulled off to the side of the road and turned off the engine and looked at Pablo until he stopped.

“Pablito,” she said, “You can’t take these things seriously. What they say about you doesn’t change who you are.”

Then Pablo looked up at her, his eyes red and strained, and saw that she was holding up an advertisement showing a dark skinned man with a poncho, a sombrero, and maracas with the caption *“Tony’s Taqueria has the Tastiest Tacos in Town”*.

“This is not who you are,” Alicia said gesturing to the advertisement. She then reached into to the back seat and got her purse and put it on her lap. She looked through it and then took out a wallet, and from the wallet, a picture. She handed the picture to Pablo.

“This is who you are,” she said. It was a picture of Pablo as a baby dressed up for Halloween in a Mickey Mouse costume. Pablo had told Alicia how much he hated that picture and once in a fit of rage he tore up what he thought was her only copy, but here it was in one piece without tape or anything. And now, seeing it again, Pablo felt annoyed and embarrassed. But then he saw Alicia was smiling and looking at him with arched eyebrows, and against all effort Pablo started smiling too. Then Alicia ruffled his hair, and started the car and drove them back home.

Later, Pablo found an advertisement with an Asian man wearing glasses tutoring a Hispanic child in what appeared to be algebra and showed it to Alicia.

“Good one!” she said and after that it became a running joke between them. From nursing school, she had sent him a set of dolls of various races with each of their favorite foods in their right hands: the white doll was holding an apple; the light brown doll was holding a rice ball; the darker brown doll was holding a folded tortilla. Earlier today, after the taxi had dropped him off in a gas station, Pablo bought a snow globe featuring an adobe house in the middle and off to the side a grinning brown man riding a donkey. When the globe was shook, a tan confetti sand storm blew around the adobe house and the small brown man swayed on the donkey. Pablo was going to give the snow globe to Alicia when he got down to Albuquerque. If he ever got down to Albuquerque.

Half an hour later, Pablo heard another car coming up behind him. The sun was lower now, and it was right in his line of sight when he turned around. He held his hand to the bill of his hat to get a better look at the oncoming car. From far away he saw it was a blue pickup, and it was speeding hellishly up the concrete, the chug of the motor audible from where he stood. Pablo squinted as the truck approached. He stretched his arm far into the road and jerked it back and forth trying to make it more visible to the driver. When the truck was within 100 yards of him, Pablo knew it wasn't going to stop. Moreover, it had even picked up speed and moved into the middle of the road, driving partially against traffic, in an apparent attempt to get as far away from Pablo as possible.

"I know you see me!" Pablo yelled into the road "I know you see me!"

Suddenly, the heat around Pablo seemed more oppressive than before, and the air gained a humidity which made breathing impossible. His heartbeat quickened and this time Pablo knew he wouldn't try to look into the eyes of the driver in order to discern why he wouldn't stop. Instead, Pablo looked down at the side of the road for a projectile, but all the rocks at his feet were small and pebbly. Then he had a better idea. He dropped his backpack to the ground and began rummaging through it. He took out the snow globe and stood up.

When the truck sped past him, Pablo was already in position, his body angled in the direction the truck would be in a few seconds. Looking out into the road, he was not thinking about the possible repercussions. He was not thinking at all. The only thing which remained in his mind was Alicia's pitching advice: "Breathe. Pull the knee in tightly. Use your body in the follow through, and remember: when the ball leaves your hand, you no longer have any say in where it goes." The car was quickly speeding out of reach when Pablo whipped his hand forward flinging the globe in a straight line towards the back window.

A tarp was tied over the bed of the truck, protruding at odd angles because of the items hidden underneath. If Pablo's throw had been off to the left by a few inches, he would have hit the tarp which was hiked well above the windows of the truck, and if it had been off to right, he would have hit the passenger side window, glancing off of it and missing the driver but probably nothing more. But Pablo's throw was dead on, and the globe went right where he intended it to.

It was Pablo's first straight pitch of the day and he wished it had come earlier. That morning, he had played his fourth varsity game of the season. The Wildcats were in the seventh inning and they were up and comfortable, when Coach Robinson switched out Paul Larson, who pitched consistently in the upper 80s, and put in Pablo because Pablo needed the experience. But then Pablo threw some wild pitches that gave the other team a walk, and Robinson made him sit out the rest of the game, but it was already too late. That walk filled the bases and put Troy "Hammer Hand" Johnson at bat, Troy who had led his varsity team during his freshman year, Troy who had been talking to MLB recruits but ultimately decided to go to LSU to get an education to fall back on.

When Troy stepped up to the plate, Coach Robinson put up Paul again to pitch, and Pablo looked at Troy's eyes and he could tell that Troy wasn't afraid of Paul like all of the other hitters, and even before Troy sent one of Paul's pitches far over and above the back fence, Pablo knew he had cost his team the game. And after the final man reached home and Troy's team ran onto the field to pick him up and carry him, Pablo looked at Coach Robinson and could not catch his eye. And after the game, when the rest of the Wildcats were giving Pablo the silent treatment and Pablo was trying to make himself as small as possible, Jimmy Philips opened his big mouth and said "This is why wetbacks shouldn't play baseball". And Pablo looked into the stands, but, of course, his sister was not there because she now lived in Albuquerque studying nursing, and so he repeated to himself the words she had told him before, but they rang feeble and hollow, and so he picked up a bat, walked up to Jimmy and swung as hard as he could, and a second later he wanted to stop and take it all back, but he couldn't because Jimmy was on the ground, still and quiet.

His other teammates stood silent and stunned. "What did you do?" He heard one of them whisper, and then it was all a blur and the only thing Pablo remembered was running, running out of the baseball field, running down the street, running back home where he took as many clothes as he could fit in his back pack and his stash of \$54.21 and didn't even wait for his mother to come back home from the diner. He just called a taxi and used his money to go as far as he could go towards Albuquerque.

From far behind the truck, Pablo heard the sound of shattering glass and then immediately afterwards, two screams, one deep and low and the other high and screeching. The truck ceased its speedy

straight line drive and suddenly swerved to the left. But its momentum carried it on and the left front and back wheels of the truck quickly lifted off the ground turning it over. After the first roll, the tarp hung loosely from the back of the truck and many of the items inside had already spilled into the road. The truck flipped again and then once more, spilling the rest of the back bed's contents before it wobbled and settled onto its side. No sound was coming from the truck except for a steady hiss which seemed to emanate from the hood. Pablo remained motionless, his mouth agape and his eyes wide for a few seconds, and then he was running, breaking into a full sprint towards the wreckage.

Pablo ran fast and hard, his legs once again finding the speed his fear demanded, the wind whipping across his face, clearing the tears from his eyes. Alicia had told him he was the fastest guy on his junior varsity team, and now Pablo still hoped it was true. But even with his speed he could not miss seeing the debris of the wreckage which marked the trail up to the truck. The first things Pablo came upon were cigars spilling out of a wooden box and broken wine bottles draining their dark red contents off the side of the street. A few yards ahead, he ran past a suitcase which lay open with women's clothes and a pair of sneakers nearby. He then came upon a large quilt with pictures of small animals scattered in the networked patches. Closest to the truck, a small woven basket lay overturned with a teddy bear and a tiny maraca nearby.

By the time Pablo swung around the overturned truck, he knew what he was going to see. A dark skinned man and woman lay motionless inside, the man stretching the seat belt which held him up against the pull of gravity and the woman with her head against the window, one arm pinned to her side and the other arm cradling her swollen stomach.

Pablo brought his face to his hands, but before he closed his eyes he saw an object reflecting light from the interior of the truck. He squinted to get a better look and saw the snow globe, overturned but intact, nestled between the dashboard and the windshield.

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