

# Abuelita

*Sofia Solares*

It was my abuelita's favorite season—Spring. It was around the time when the flowers would blossom in unison, creating a beautiful pathway of colors leading to our front door. Every afternoon when I would come back from school, I would be greeted by my abuelita, who would be sitting outside on a plastic lawn chair sewing different floral designs onto the fabric attached to her embroidery hoop, or *costuras*, as we'd call it in Spanish.

Seeing that I had gotten home safely, she would get up and open the door for me. As I folded the plastic chair and carried it back inside the house, my nostrils would be filled with the smell of whatever food she decided to make for the day, usually black beans, fried sweet plantains coated in sugar, and homemade flour tortillas.

This was an everyday routine throughout my adolescence. Even on the days where she wasn't feeling her best, she never failed to make our house feel like a home.

On rainy days, she would poke her head outside the door during every commercial break of her favorite series, *La Rosa de Guadalupe*. From a distance, I could see her small silhouette against the glass window frame of the door, usually wrapped in her red and gold tiger cobija. On days it rained, she would have hot chocolate ready on the stove for me. The cold weather was no barrier when it came to my abuela.

It wasn't until I left for college did that routine break. Winter had come. The flowers were gone. The plastic chair was gone. The *costuras* were gone. When I'd come back from class, my nostrils were no longer greeted by the smell of homemade foods, but instead were replaced with the smell of wooden furniture and the musty air from the lack of ventilation. It wasn't home. It was a dorm.

Eventually, weeks turned into months, and slowly, I became accustomed to this lifestyle. Thoughts of my abuelita's *costuras* soon were pushed aside and I no longer craved black beans, nor the sweet taste of the plantains. I grew to love the dining hall pepperoni pizza and the savory breakfast bagel that they sold in the campus cafe. I grew to love my bed on the top bunk, despite hitting my head several times on the ceiling. I grew to love the navy blue patterned

carpet that spread across my dorm room.

Soon, it was finally time to go back home. My first home.

After driving down the California coast for six hours, I finally had arrived. And there she was. My abuelita. Waiting for me on the plastic foldable lawn chair with her costura in hand, as she always had done as if nothing had changed. With the miles that had separated us for so long minimizing itself to only a mere few feet, our eyes met for the first time in months and I looked at her. I really looked at her. I had never realized how the corners of her eyes had begun to wrinkle without the need for her to smile. I noticed how the loose skin underneath her arms would wiggle with even the slightest motion. I didn't know we shared that same birthmark on the right side of our nose. What I remember being only a couple of age spots on her cheeks were now constellations across her face.

She propped herself up from the chair, her underarm skin swinging from side to side, and embraced me. With my arms around her frail body, I inhaled the top of her now predominantly white head.

"Te extrañé, mija," she said at a barely audible volume.

"Yo tambien, abuelita," I responded, hugging her back even tighter.

That was almost five years ago. A lot has changed since then, the plastic lawn chair now remains empty, but the flowers continue to blossom.