

Yasmine Ztintzun  
California State University, Los Angeles

## Como La Sal: Life is Flavored with Love

### Abstract

Yasmine Ztintzun is a Cal State LA graduate. She is originally from the San Fernando Valley and is the first born daughter of Mexican immigrants. She has always had a deep appreciation for her heritage and the connection she maintains to her culture and traditions. Recently she has struggled with a familial loss and the resulting grief. However, through the struggles she has endured she has come to appreciate the simple moments in life that offer comfort and solace. This narrative is a collection of snapshots that are unified under the themes of joy and family.

---

### Recommended Citation

Ztintzun, Yasmine. "Como La Sal: Life is Flavored with Love." *Text & Type*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2024. CSU Open Journals. Available at: <https://journals.calstate.edu/textandtype/issue/view/451>

Articles printed in *Text & Type* are published by CSU Open Journals under a Creative Commons (CC) copyright license. Authors retain ownership of all rights under copyright in all versions of the article. Specifically, the journal uses a CC BY-NC-SA license. This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.

## Como La Sal: Life is Flavored with Love

*Cuando yo era pequeña, mi abuelita me contó un cuento. Era de un rey que tenía su reino en el lago y él tenía tres hijas. De esas tres hijas, él tenía sus preferidas que eran las dos mayores.*

*Un día le preguntaron, “¿A quien les vas a dejar todas tus riquezas?”*

*Y él dijo, “A la que más me quiera.”*

*“¿Cuál es la que más te quiere?”*

*“Eso es lo que tenemos que ver.”*

*Y el rey estaba seguro que iba a ser la mayor.*

*Él le preguntó, “¿Cuánto me quieres? ¿Cuál es el amor que sientes por mí?”*

*Y la hija mayor dijo, “Yo te quiero como todo el mundo como todas las cosas bonitas, así te quiero.” Después, le pregunto a la segunda y ella dijo, “Como todo el lago que tu estas viendo aquí y todas las cosas preciosas que tu ves aquí con sus peces, sus hojas y todo.” Y finalmente le pregunta a la chiquita, “Y tu como me quieres?” Ella dijo, “Señor rey yo te quiero como la sal.”*

*“¿Cómo que me quieres como la sal? ¿Si ves como me quieren tus hermanas!”*

*“Si, señor pero yo te quiero como la sal.”*

*Y a la chiquita la mandaron a castigar por su respuesta. Pero entonces, el dios también como castigo al rey paró la sal. Porque como se puede vivir sin sal si todo, todo lo que comemos tiene sal. La azúcar tiene sal, toda la comida contiene sal. Y el rey dijo “Ahora entiendo cuánto me quieres porque sin sal no podemos vivir. No podemos sobrevivir.” Y sacaron a la chiquita del castigo. Y colorín colorado este cuento se ha acabado.*

Except, my story has just begun. As much as I wish I was a princess with an exciting and fabulous life, I'm just an ordinary girl. Wake up. Work. Sleep. Repeat. It is so easy to fall into a routine and let those days blur together into a cloudy haze. The blurry gray space that makes up most of our lives. However, there are times when the most mundane moments become the most cherished. Those little actions where we wring happiness and find bliss in the ordinary. When I think of joy, I see a string of memories like a film reel of beauty, light and love.

*Click.*

My little sister's beautiful face, full of teasing laughter. A mischievous smile plays across her lips, and her eyes fill with a love and admiration that sometimes I feel I do not deserve.

*Click.*

Summertime trips to the beach throughout my childhood. The sea has always soothed my soul, filled my lungs and stung my face with salty breezes, warming my body and mind bringing me back to life when I have felt the gloom of despair looming, stalking my every move.

*Click.*

A warm cup of tea with honey and an enjoyable book. Sitting on the couch with Yael, a book opens in my lap, and my mind wanders to far-off lands with the soundtrack of his current video game playing in the background. As I lean into his side he presses a kiss against my forehead. I close my eyes as a sigh escapes my lips. My heart feels full and a smile tugs at my cheeks.

*Click.*

But truly, the most joyful of these snapshot-like moments are the ones that take place in a light blue house on a street corner in Burbank. A slightly too warm kitchen, recently remodeled, and the person standing by the stove is my dearest supporter and my first and truest confidant. My grandmother, my Carmen. We stand by the stove, cooking the next meal for our family. ESPN blares from the TV in the small room adjacent to the kitchen. My grandfather has fallen asleep watching some sports game, although he will deny it if we ever point it out. Music playing from the old radio sitting on top of the bar. Something old, with words full of meaning. It makes us both smile as we occasionally sing along. The two sounds seem incompatible, appearing to be in competition to drown each other out, but to me they create a sweet symphony, the soundtrack to my childhood.

The smell of *arroz*, the crackle and snap of hot oil frying *taquitos*. Carmen and I talk about life, a wooden spoon or spatula in our hands as we stir in new ingredients. I catch her up on all that has happened in my life from work drama to new things I've learned at school, and she catches me up on all the juicy *chisme* going on in our family and our neighborhood. We reminisce about my childhood. About the shenanigans I got up to as a little girl and the schemes that we concocted under my parents' noses. We talked about my dad. Laughter bubbles up and bursts from our mouths like water flowing down a river. Tears spring to our eyes, one moment from the giggles that rack our bodies and the next from the stinging ache that always accompanies us when we remember my father, her oldest son. And we do remember him, I feel his absence more acutely when I'm with her. We suffered his loss together, held each other as if we were the only things keeping each other from falling apart. We have always been this way. We wear our hearts on our sleeves, and we show our emotions all too freely when we are together, especially when we are together. I have never been able to hide anything from her, Carmen knows my own heart better than I know it myself. She is the one who taught me how to harness my emotions, to channel my anger and frustration into fiery passion, to laugh unabashedly, to cry freely and know that I am strong, to love fiercely and unconditionally.

As the conversation shifts to my dad, and the tears fall down our faces, I lay my head on Carmen's shoulder. I am now four inches taller than her, but at this moment, I am a little girl again who just needs to be held. I feel her place a delicate hand on my face and neck. She pats me once. Twice. I inhale deeply and try to ingrain her scent in my memory. She smells of clean laundry and perfume. She smells like home. I tell her how much I love her. *Como la sal*. It is how we tell each other that we love one another more than anything. She, of course, returns the sentiment. After another moment, I pick up my head, and we dry our eyes and promise not to cry anymore. A blatant lie that we pretend to believe. We resume cooking and our chatter once again joins the chorus singing throughout the house.

*Click.*

These moments are small, they are mundane, a quick text in between classes, a way to unwind at the end of the day, a day trip on the weekend to revisit the peace and happiness of

my childhood. The work that I do, the hardships I experience, the routine that I fall into and sometimes feel like I cannot escape, it all represents an experience. Who you bring with you and who you cannot bring with you, the joy and the sorrow, they all go hand in hand. All of it is quintessential to my experience. When I think of joy, I think of the people who have put so much faith in me, who have held me up when I was knocked down, who guided me through the darkness, and who have loved me through every moment of despair, triumph, and most of all through the ordinary.

Salt is a necessity of life, the sharp flavor on its own is enough to evoke tears in any person, but sprinkle some in a dish and it makes everything feel colorful and alive. Our memories are like salt. In the everyday blandness of life, we think about our past and remember the flavor that was there, the flavor that will come again. The memory of my father is like the saltshaker on my table, whenever my food needs a little extra, I think of him and suddenly I am six again, my mother's food is in front of me, and I am content eating my *sopa de fideo*. I am 12 again and his arms squeeze me tight into his side as we watch TLC. I am 18 again and he is in the hospital. I can sense him everywhere in my life, and despite his absence, his love is still felt. *Daddy, te quiero como la sal.*