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Forgive Me

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Death surrounds me,
Sixteen entities within a room,
Clothed in blue and white garments,
It is not heaven that they experience,
but instead the cold steel of the blade,
I feel guilt, guilt having been lost over
time.
A question arises, Will they forgive me?

Yes, I have experienced death.
Grandfather, great grandmother,
Fellow high school student,
Victims of something inescapable.
Lives lost to the wind,
Returning to the earth
To decay into nothingness.
Life is precious I know,
I claim to have experience

Yet these bodies fallen to blackness,
They lay before us still and mutilated.
Looking upon them, cold and pale,
We rank the bodies according to
their color and smell.
The ease of isolating and identifying
has become their worth.
How sad that I have forgotten
What these men and women have
endured.

I have lost sight of your real worth.
I ask for your forgiveness.

Perhaps it is a necessity that
We distance ourselves from their plight
To fully learn the intricacies
Of their physical domain.
I am thankful for their sacrifice
To be torn apart and sliced to pieces
So that we could perhaps one day
Save someone from the darkness.

I will not again forget your value and
worth.
Forgive me.

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From *THE HEALER'S VOICE* - www.amsa.org/humed/hv
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Being Here, (here) being

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being here

It is the same yellow and orange and red that surrounded me when I was fourteen and pissed off at my own mom for making me wipe table after table, so I guess I shouldn't blame her for her smart-ass attitude. I tell her to pull her shoulders back, stand tall, present herself as the five-foot-ten beauty that she is - but her response is the same as today, a sideways glance just long enough for me to recognize the sharpness of her unfounded teenage resentment, and a huffy sigh to emphasize the unfairness of it all. Her father and I both love her, as my mother and father loved me, but sometimes between the rush of lunch and dinner I wonder if I somehow left behind a piece of my own teenage angst, if I stuck it under some table back in the day and now Maria had picked some of it up by accident.

Today, like most days, the lunch crowd is familiar. I stride over to Brad Carlisle and his twins and jostle the hair of the quiet twin before letting the excitable one pick out which table he wants. It is not a choice really. Everyone in Las Cruces knows that the back, right booth is casually reserved for either the Carlisle family or the Romero family. I send the crew back to their table with one plastic menu for effect despite the fact that the father orders the cheese enchiladas every time and in the Carlisle family, like father, like son. The boys like to play a game with me where they say they want the Combo Platter 6 since it is the most expensive thing on the menu and Brad always widens his eyes in pretend anger, gives me a scowling consent and a wink from his left eye. I always bring three cheese enchilada platters in the end.

There are other regulars eating today too, there always are. The other twins are even here today. Jessie and Jenny Bertrand. Same grey-green eyes and deep brown hair as their father. I dated him back in high school before Susy got a hold of him, but we are all still friends. I remember Susy and Dan sitting at that very table twenty-five years ago, Suz gigantic and round and Dan just about losing it laughing about how she couldn't hardly fit between the table and the cushions of the seat. Those little girls always ordered the same thing over the years, too. Maybe it is a twin phenomenon. Perhaps this is the type of repetition Maria huffs around about. On some level I know that she is not wise enough yet to appreciate the comfort of stability without cursing it instead as small town suffocating monotony. That is how it is in Las Cruces though, these kids grow up here playing with kids of the same last name their parents once played with, sneak out to the desert on hot nights, order their chimichangas the same way every time. Jessie and Jenny order chimis. Plain, lettuce only, with a side of sour cream each. We play a game also, but this one is more subtle, an understanding that when I come to take their order, no one speaks, while we all know. I had wondered today when I walked towards them if they would remember our game - Jenny had been away at college so long, the two of them looking so much more mature than the bouncing teenagers they had once been. But, they remembered, and our smiles grew wide in the moment before I dashed away, and I wondered if my own daughter might someday cling to the comfort of the expected and appreciate the stability of her own small town life.

(here) being

The red vinyl seats were torn at places and there were nodules of hardened chewing gum studding the underside of the fake wooden table. The waitress, Diane, was middle-aged, her father, the long-time owner, and her fourteen-year-old daughter, the bus girl after school

Monday through Thursday and mornings on Saturdays. Diane briskly darted from table to table refilling chips and delivering deep fried chimichangas. Stale chip odor circulated in the air, mixing with the moisture of the swamp cooler which feebly attempted to counter the dry New Mexico heat that was sucked into the building each time the door jungle bell rattled. In the right back corner, two permutations of one face sat opposite one another, chattering as if they were not in a restaurant, but were instead perched on a kitchen counter in some neighborhood home. Diane caught one of their eyes, winked, grabbed two plastic menus and made her way over to the table. Sliding the menus face down onto the table, she pulled out a small white pad of paper and wrote: 1 - cheese crisp w/ side beans. 2 - machaca chimis, plain, lettuce, side sour cream. 2 - water. Diane flipped the pad of paper around to show the young women and the three women smiled broadly at one another, not saying a word, before Diane dashed away.

"This is one of my favorite things about being home. How great is that - we didn't have to say anything. People just know you here and you don't even have to explain anything."

Both faces sitting at the table were shining and slightly cocked to the right. Jessica's bob hair cut was about the only thing that visually distinguished her from Jennifer at all.

"Jen?" Jessica looked into eyes as grey-green as her own.

"Huh?"

"Do you ever miss it so terribly you just want to jump on a plane and come home? I mean, everything is so stable here. Diane, she knows about the sour cream, and you and I - everyone here knows us."

Jennifer's head was bowed slightly as she attempted to balance the two forks and two spoons into a teepee over the salsa bowl. Her eyebrows were furrowed as if in deep concentration. Across from her, Jessica stuck her fingernail into an unpetrified piece of under-the-table gum. The blob of gum popped off the underside of the table and Jessica studied it, smiling sadly before slipping it into her pocketbook beside her.

"Jen? I asked you a question."

"Huh? Oh, I know." Jen paused to glance behind Jess's bobbed hair at Diane balancing five ceramic dishes of combo

5's. "No. I mean, yes, I miss it sometimes, but Chicago, it's always changing, there is nothing you can count on. I thrive on that now. I can't just waste my life away eating the same meals and talking to the same people everyday."

Diane stepped up from behind Jessica, placed the chimis on the table, and as she walked away, brushed the back of Jessica's shoulder with her hand. Jessica's grey-green eyes focused on the fried burrito and then on her sister. Jennifer spoke again. "Hey, look, it's not you, or Las Cruces, or Diane, or anything here-"

"I know, that's the point."

The two identical heads turned to glance out the window across the restaurant. Jessica's glance caught the couple sitting in the window seat, ogling at the plump baby clinging to her mother's neck. Jennifer's gaze went farther out, she strained to make out the shapes of the summer monsoon clouds tumbling in from the east.

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