

They did not knock when they arrived.

They did not tell when we asked.

They did not spare when we begged.

Like lightning in a bottle, it disappeared almost instantaneously. My childhood. My belief in humanity. My parents. Taken by tall men in uniforms with a three-letter acronym. The only thing that came out of their eyes was death, when mine were bawling, and the only thing their lips could spare when mine were shivering was spit. The rest of the night passed by almost unnoticed.

The next day, Uncle Rafael came by to check up on me and to console me. Or so I thought. He and my father did not get along, even before I was born. Just because of politics. But after we found out he voted for the man who turned cruelty into policy, something shifted. It wasn't "just politics" anymore. A small part of me desperately hoped this moment would be an exception to the feud. For naught, perhaps.

"Your father had it coming, I tell you." He said as he exited the car. "I told him he couldn't run forever. I'm not saying I ratted him out or anything, but ever since He came to power again it was only a matter of time before your father's tricks would catch up to him."

His words rang deaf upon my ears. Perhaps I could not comprehend the sheer coldness of the man, how he could not notice the barbarism of His administration, how now I was left without my parents, wherever they could be now. Although Alligator Alcatraz was no longer, it was only a matter of time before similar "facilities" would spring up across the country. I pictured my parents behind one of those fences, and my stomach turned. I stayed on the porch, staring at the road where I'd last seen them—two hours, maybe more—until something inside me finally shattered.

"Why'd you do it, uncle?" I gasped.

He didn't flinch. So I pressed on.

"They're gone, and all you can say is 'he had it coming'? Can't you see you helped make this happen?" I wasn't shouting. I didn't have the strength.

He looked down, hands on his hips.

And in that moment, I wondered if he remembered what it meant to be afraid in this country.

"I can see just fine, alright. I can see that He's getting the job done, whether I like it or not. But you wouldn't understand. Not with all the liberal crap your parents' been shoveling at you."

At that point Uncle Rafael was standing outside the porch, most likely waiting for me to grab my things and get in the car. Instead, I rushed back inside and shut the door behind me. Backed up against the door, I slid down it to the floor, ready to fall into a state of opaque sorrow once more. But before that could happen, I heard a muffled voice behind the door, snapping me back.

"I'll be in the car, buck," he said. "Ain't no time for crying now. This is a celebration, when you think about it. After all, when it's all done and dusted, we'll finally have our country back."

I watched him getting back into his chrome-covered pickup. In the reflection, I saw our run-down house—and myself, a brown figure standing in front of it.



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