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12th Grade

Fiction/Non-fiction Narrative

Living in a Union Household

“Amor, pass me the remote please,” my mom said to me as her gaze kept fixed on the television, which was playing our favorite show, Dancing With The Stars. School night or not, I’d always find a way to watch a bit with her every night, hoping she wouldn’t notice it was past my scheduled 8:00pm bedtime. It had always been me and her on these late nights, watching on low volume as to not wake my younger brother, who slept upstairs in my parent’s bed. The warmth of her hands stroking and brushing my hair kept me from getting up and fetching the tv remote which was a mere few feet away from the couch I’d been melting onto. As I slowly drifted off into the couch cushions, fighting with myself to not give into the sleep that I’d wanted so badly in that moment, I only thought of one thing. I cannot sleep yet. I want to be awake to hug Papa as soon as he walks through the door. Don’t fall asleep. Not until he gets home. But unfortunately being up past your bedtime isn’t for the weak, especially if it’s on a school night.

Waking up the next morning felt like a blur, seemingly having teleported to my bed overnight, but then again, I am a pretty deep sleeper. Disappointed in myself, I dragged myself over to the kitchen, being lured in by the amazing aroma of buttermilk pancakes straight from the box, with extra hints of cinnamon. I was greeted by my mom, who was mid pancake flip in the kitchen. With her was my little brother who was too short to peek over the kitchen counter to get a good look at what my mom was making. Despite the delicious breakfast that would be ready for me in the next 10 minutes or so, nothing could bring me off this nagging feeling of sadness and disappointment in myself. After a while of sitting on the wooden and rickety chair at the

dining table, I noticed something. A small yellow Post-it note, carefully placed right next to the flower arrangement on the dining room table, in front of the seat I usually sit in. As curious as any 7 year old would be, I sneakily ripped it off the table, making sure my mom had her back turned. The note was messy, but not too much that it was illegible, just a little funny to look at, which is how I always recognized my dad's handwriting. My face lit up as I read, "Have a good day at school today Nena! Love you - Papi" accompanied with a poorly drawn smiley face in the corner. It was then when I noticed my mom approaching the table with our pancakes, steaming hot. "Papa said he thought it was sweet of you to wait for him last night, but to not stay up past your bedtime anymore" she said while kissing my forehead, before going into her bedroom to go grab her brush and hair ties to get me ready for school that morning. Even if my attempt at staying up late to see him had failed, I still ended up joyfully skipping into my 2nd grade classroom that day as happy as I could be.

I never truly understood why my dad couldn't just stay home when I wanted him to. Why did he come home so late every night working late shifts? Why would he wake up the next morning after work completely beat and exhausted? As many questions as one 2nd grader could ask, it was never enough for me. Though, those were not the questions I should have been asking. How was it that on his days off he'd drive me to and from school, never once looking down in the dumps, even if he'd worked extra the night before? Why did he get up early on his days off to cook us breakfast, when could be resting up instead? Why did he always hold out his arms to hug me and pick me up whenever I asked, despite how straining work is on his body? How he sacrificed so much to provide for all of us, especially when my mom was pregnant with a 3rd child on the way? Those questions, which I still think about to this day, come to show just how much my dad has done for my family, and just how hardworking and caring he is. I always

knew deep down that his long hard days of work were for us to have a home, be fed, and be able to obtain a good education, so I applaud him for that.

My dad being part of the Union workforce has helped out our family in more ways than one, all due to his job benefits and dedication to working hard everyday. We've gone through many hardships, in which we've gone through too many to count. I recall a distinct memory I have of waking up in a cold hospital bed, surrounded by nurses in a frenzy attempting to calm me down from my hysteria. I was 4 years old, in a blue hospital gown, connected to an IV that I had to walk around with everywhere. Although it is all pretty fuzzy, I always think back to the concerned looks on both my parent's faces, when I had to return to the hospital once again for extreme stomach pains. I had to get urgent surgery to remove an organ that had contracted a serious infection inside my body, which was appendicitis. All of the hospital expenses, including the emergency surgery, was covered by the Union, and not a single extra penny had to be paid. This still applies to us today, where we are covered in medical, dental, eye, and overall healthcare by his job. Without that surgery, my appendix would've most likely ruptured, and I wouldn't be here today, and to that I have to thank all of the medical benefits we receive.

My dad has shown true commitment to his Union job, working in housekeeping for 23 years before Covid-19 hit us all hard, and he had to find income elsewhere. Even so, he is now working at a different hotel, where he is still paid fairly, and gets to come home to the family that he works hard for everyday due to a better schedule. From staying up late at night waiting for him to come home, to seeing him walk through the door everyday and greeting him at the door. "How was work today Papa?" I ask, with a smile on my face, with the exact same smile that he's greeted me with all these years. Through ups and downs, he's never faltered, and I truly am grateful for all the opportunities that are given to us due to his job and dedication to the Union

workforce. Living in a Union household has helped us financially and allowed my dad to provide for us with a stable income, so that we'll never have to worry about having no food on our plate or a roof over our heads. So now, every morning, I make sure to let my dad know how much I love him, and wish him a good day at work.