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Dulce Esperanza-Father Boland Memorial Scholarship Application

05/20/22

Planting Season

I hate onions. Everything from the invasive smell to the bitter taste, unfortunately, I am surrounded. My mother is a farmworker, and by default so am I. Since the moment I was able to properly hold the detestable vegetable, I have stood alongside her planting away. Dread replaced excitement as I knew I would have to work alongside her all throughout Spring.

The morning sun had barely risen when my mother barged into my sister's and I's shared room; apparently, we were late. We were out of the house in less than ten minutes. Although we had no reason to rush except for the fact that time was money. Every minute wasted at home was a minute that we weren't at work, meaning less food on the table. After we arrived, it was time to get the boxes, filled to the brim with onion seedlings that weighed over forty pounds. However, on my tired body, it felt like double. My mother placed the nightmare box on my head, claiming it made it easier to carry, it did not. The fields, varying in size but always ridiculously long, had raised beds and it took a minimum of three hours to finish one, and that's only because there are four of us: my mother, my two older sisters, and I.

The morning frost still lay gently on the hardened soil, having been plowed days before, it had turned the once lush soil to rock-solid dirt. The hard surface cut my fingers, hurting my already aching hands. As I picked up the seedling bundle, it was more dirt than not. These are the worst. Nevertheless, I bent forward and reached once more to put the dirty little thing in the hole. Those taunting little holes, never-ending, always more. I hated them.

In order to lessen the burden on my mother, it's something that I have to do. There is no alternative, my father's departure made sure of that. It made no difference whether the sun burned against my back leaving behind its ugly dark traces or if the wind threw dirt against my face momentarily blinding me, I had to work. No matter how hard it was, how much my back ached, or how my shaking hands stung from dirt ingrained on my skin, I trudged forward. I had long since been old enough to carry my own weight. I would not be the anchor that drags my family down.

As a child, I would hear my classmates excitedly chatting about the exotic places they would travel to. Naturally, I grew jealous. I envied the freedom they took for granted, hated how I couldn't do the same. From a young age, I have experienced the unfairness of the world, but I have harnessed it and forced it to make me stronger. If I could plant onions from dusk till dawn, why couldn't I handle the other curve balls life hurled at me? The same onions I can barely stand to smell have made me resilient. They have forced me to stand tall against the world and face it--one seedling at a time.

I will never like spring. However, it won't be because it's planting season, but rather because of the bugs and constant downpour. An onion will continue to be the dreaded vegetable with the foul odor, but it has made me who I am. I am grateful for what it has taught me, and for how it has prepared me for the challenges of life. I am not afraid of change or adversity; I know I can handle it. Whether I accomplish my goal of being a fearsome businesswoman or end up doing something entirely different, it doesn't really matter. Furthering my education, and seeking more knowledge that is the first step in all scenarios, one I will always strive to take. My mother has always dreamed of watching me walk, not in the fields, but across the stage as I reach for my

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diploma. I want to be something more, to leave and plant my roots elsewhere and I intend to do that.

The fields, they hear me, watch me, know *me*. They have felt the drops of my tears when I was on the verge of surrender. The drops of my sweat when the sun felt like it was targeting me. The drops of my blood when that one stupid piece of glass was forgotten on the field and left joining paths with my pointer finger. There is no shame in what I did, what I do but now it's time to part. I was never meant to stay; this was simply my yellow brick road to bigger and better things