

Robin's Egg Blue

I tie my beaten-down tennis shoes in a triple knot, probably tighter than I need to. As I put one foot in front of another, I feel my breath fall into rhythm with the crunching of leaves underneath my feet. While it was nearly silent on the outside, except for the rustling of leaves and occasional squirrel scurrying by, my brain was far from quiet. The houses that I had run past countless times before, now reminded me of all the things I would have to leave. The cool fall chill in the air that's just enough to rose your cheeks, but not enough to put on a jacket only made me think about how Florida's warm weather will probably never even make me shiver. I wonder how Dad could do this to me. He wants us to leave the place we have lived together since I was born just for some job. He wants us to leave the neighborhood and community that supported us through everything we've been through. He wants us to leave Mom's garden and the neighborhood she chose for me to grow up in. He said we could have a "fresh start" and that "it could be nice," but I don't want to live in a neighborhood whose streets aren't lined with memories of Mom teaching me how to ride a bike and to run with the proper form. Dad doesn't understand that we wouldn't just be leaving our 2-story brick house with creaky floors and creepy hallways. We would be leaving the house where he and Mom taught me how to cook mac and cheese and where I watched *Home Alone* for the first time with my head lying in Mom's lap, covering my eyes during the "scary parts."

I felt a tear roll down my cheek slowly as I passed the house that was Mom's favorite. I watched it soak into my cotton t-shirt, leaving a small splotch of gray on my off-white shirt. The house was a pretty pastel teal, but Mom always said it was robin's egg blue. When we went on runs together, it would always be the house that Mom would let me take a rest at. I remember collapsing on the tree stump in the boulevard in front of its perfectly trimmed hedges, breathing heavily and wishing I could stay there forever. Mom would always smile at the spacious front yard and verdant garden before pulling me off the stump to continue with our run.

I would always ask her why we ran on cold or rainy days when all I wanted to do was crawl into my warm bed and fall back asleep. She always responded with a cheesy quote by some athlete then said: "But really Charly, we run together because we can."

I smile, thinking about our runs together made me feel like she was still here to tell me that everything was going to be alright.

I turn the corner and see my house. The overgrown garden had mum buds poking up into the air, and the flower boxes were full of the Petunias that Dad planted this spring. I walk up the cracked steps and open the rusty, brown door with a creak. Inside, I untie my shoes and place them in the dusty boot bench next to Dad's black wingtips. I walk into the living room and sit down on the worn out leather

couch. As I reach for the remote, I glance at something else. A picture of Dad with his arm around Mom with me on her shoulders. We were standing next to a marquee sign that said, “The memories we make with our family are everything.” When we were in Arizona, Dad insisted we pull over to take a picture next to that sign. He got the old lady who worked at the McDonalds next door to take the picture and it’s still his favorite family photo. When I asked him why, he said, “Most photos only help you remember one or a couple memories, but that photo helps me remember all of our memories together.”

I look at all the other photos on the side table: my first birthday with my face covered in bright red frosting after smashing the cake into my face; the selfie of us on the Santa Monica Pier during our trip to California; and my first track meet, me holding my second place medal proudly. All of them reminded me of special memories even though I’m not in the place that they were taken. Even in Florida I can still remember Mom just as well, even though I’m not living in the house I lived in with her. I can still go on runs and imagine I’m running with her even if I’m not in the same neighborhood. I can still remember the memories with her because they are everything.