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A Not-So-Hidden Treasure

In the first week of July 2018, a little over a month since my high school graduation, I had just moved into my grandparent's home here in El Paso. Before moving, I had been living in Phoenix, Arizona, with my mom since I was seven years old. I spent eleven years of my life there, eleven years of meeting new people, making friends, making choices, making memories, and becoming who I am today. Granted, I was born here in El Paso, and over the years, I've visited my family here many times, but that didn't make moving any easier.

After unpacking two large suitcases filled to the brim with clothes and shoes, and a large box containing miscellaneous items, such as my electronics and bedding, I finally got to the last box. This one was by far the smallest box, but it held something that has a very big place in my heart. As I tore off the clear packing tape, I recalled the annoying screech the tape had made while fighting me when trying to seal the box just a few days before the move. Inside the box were a few decorative items. Right away one of them stood out more than the others. I pulled out a pecan shell brown, wooden, mini treasure chest. It wasn't dusty, besides the hard to reach nooks and crannies I never got around to cleaning, but it is apparent that it's nowhere near being new. The twenty silver rivets lining the chest from front to back are no longer shiny but instead seem more like a matte gray color. Whenever I see the trunk lifter handles on the sides of the chest, it reminds me of the pirate-themed movies where the pirates help one another lift the

heavy, treasure-filled trunk back to the ship. On the face of the chest, there are two metal lion heads that actually look more like demonic gargoyles with only a few tufts of hair.

My maternal grandmother gave me this treasure chest when I was little. She told me that her mom, my great grandmother Gila, had bought it for her when she was only ten years old. They had noticed it while walking down a vendor-lined street in Juarez when my grandma stopped to look at the chest. My grandma didn't expect her to buy it since they usually didn't have the money to buy unnecessary knick-knacks, but to her surprise, she did. When my grandma had the chest, she used it to hold her jewelry. Ever since she gave the chest to me, I've used it to keep rocks and seashells from places I've traveled to. There are crystallized rocks from Carlsbad Caverns National Park, seashells from a family trip to San Diego, and a few iron-on patches from my graduation trip to Seattle and Vancouver.

The chest is my physical memory keeper. It holds items which initiate mental playbacks of memories as soon as I open the chest and see them. The seashells bring to life memories of baring the freezing waters in San Diego during winter time to scavenge the beach for seashells. My crystallized rocks hold memories of going to Carlsbad Caverns with my grandparents and being told that the bats would rain guano on me if I didn't behave myself. The iron-on patches remind me of when my two moms took me on a graduation trip to Seattle, Washington, and Vancouver, Canada. As time goes on, the souvenirs in the chest may be swapped out or things added. For instance, my little cousins, more like little rascals, have always asked if they could have the shiny rocks from Carlsbad and soon I think I'll be ready to give in to their pleas. The patches from my graduation trip will eventually end up on my suitcase or a tote bag, and the seashells will probably make their way to my shelves for decoration.

As of now, my treasure chest sits on top of the highest shelf in my new room, in the same fashion as I'd had it back in Phoenix. Its medieval appearance stands out among the more modern things in the room. The chest has one wooden leg left on it, making it sit tilted instead of entirely level. I know it seems ridiculous and that I should just amputate the leg, but I can't bring myself to do it. Instead, I plan on repairing it altogether. I'll take out the worn green felt that looks like dusty artificial grass lining the inside and replace it. The interior of the chest used to have a tier insert, which has since been lost or broken, leaving it to be one level rather than two. Maybe I can also find some not-so-scary looking lions to replace the ones on the front.

The chest has been through a lot, just like its past and present owners. It's gone through ups and downs, going from brand new to old and beaten up. I've been through good times and bad times, and I keep pushing forward. I repair my broken feelings, and I plan to restore my treasure chest to its former glory. I want it to last for another fifty-nine years and more. I want to be able to pass it down to generations after me, so they can learn from it as I have.

My treasure chest has taught me that things change over time and that change is good. It's time to make new memories in a new place and to keep moving forward. Life is filled with treasures, and I'm not talking about the monetary value kind; I'm talking about the amazing memories and time we spend with family and friends. My treasure isn't buried or hidden at all; instead, it is actually in plain sight.