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### A Drift in Time

I'm at home cooking dinner, when I hear, my oldest son, Ernesto walk through the front door. I say, "How was your day? "

"Good. I have a project for school and need some baby pictures to go with it," replies Ernesto.

"Ok babe. I'll get the album of photos after you eat dinner," I tell him.

"Mom, I need them now because you will forget later!"

"Ok. I'll get them." I turn off the stove and walk to the hallway closet. The smell of new rubber tires draws my attention as I go to the back corner of the top shelf in the closet; neatly stacked is a black plastic binder. I reach up and pull it toward me, and when I do, I feel all the dust that has collected on my fingertips. As I open the binder, bright yellow Happy Birthday letters yell for my attention. This piece of wrapping paper might be insignificant to whoever comes by it, but to me, it symbolizes a special part in my life that I like to remember. The worn wrapping paper folded in the shape of a card is taped to the inside of the binder. The tape now holding the paper is aged and has a brownish color. I grab the corner and start to open the card. I notice a tear halfway down the middle of it from being opened and closed too many times. On the wrapping paper, there is a faded pencil inscription from my Aunt Rosa and cousins for my eighteenth birthday.

I'm at home getting ready to go to Aunt Guille's house. I'm blow drying my hair straight, thinking to myself, "No one has remembered my birthday." Usually, my mom and dad will call and wish me a happy birthday early in the morning as is tradition. Not today. Aunt Guille's house is where everyone gets together, and everyone feels more than welcome. She is like my second mom, my best friend. We talk about everything, and she takes my husband and me everywhere with her, even to her friends' houses. Did I mention she cooks extremely delicious Philippine food? She is Mexican with a brown complexion, and jet black curly hair, short, and on the heavy side. When we are at her house, she cooks food for everyone, which includes her older sister Sandra, her husband, and her two daughters, her younger sister Yvette, and her husband, plus her two boys, her mom, her younger handicapped sister, and her own husband, three daughters, and of course my husband and me, all while smiling and cracking jokes.

It seems it's just another day of all the family getting together at Aunt Guille's house. Even though it is my birthday, I do not expect a party anymore since I moved out of my parents' house. I have not had one since I was fifteen. My husband comes by and says, "I'm taking you out for your birthday after we leave Guille's, so think of where you would like to go."

"He did not forget my birthday," I say to myself, and that brings a smile to my face. I get all dressed up in my favorite beige plaid dress, do my make-up, and we are on our way to Guille's house.

We arrive at a red brick house on the corner of the street. We get out of the car, and I start to smell strawberries as we enter her house. My husband walks in first, and I follow, not paying attention to my surroundings; I am still trying to decide where I want to go when we leave Guille's house. All of a sudden I hear, "Surprise! Happy Birthday!" I could not believe my

eyes. My mom and family had come together with my husband's family and given me a surprise birthday party. Guille had really worked hard and made eggrolls from scratch, noodles, beef and broccoli, and of course, my favorite dish, Glu Glo. A big pink cake was the centerpiece on the dining table. I was overwhelmed with joy. I had never had my two favorite families together. We ate, had cake, and to top it off, they gave me presents.

To receive presents is a big deal; they did not have to because they had already done so much. My Aunt Rosa and cousins all came together and handed me a big present with black happy birthday wrapping paper covering it. This was a big deal for me, since my mother's side of the family is not wealthy, and to give presents cost a lot of money. When they gave me my present, I was extremely grateful. The black and bright yellow wrapping paper hugged the big box that my Aunt Rosa handed me. I hugged her and thanked her. She felt fragile in my arms. She had a smile on her face. My Aunt Rosa is an older lady who has worked all her life in hard labor. As I was going to start opening the present, I saw the handmade card. I opened it, and it read:

*(To) Para: Jessy*

*(From) De: Fam. Pinales*

*Jessy que este dia sea de mucha felicidad y que vivas muchos anos mas. Pues tienes mucho derecho de vivir pues eres una linda munequita que de nina sabras combertirte en una senorita que comprendas las malas situaciones.*

*Jessy son los mejores deceos de tu tia y primos,*

*Familia Pinales*

NB: I took liberty with spacing here for readability. If you're thinking of something like this, talk to me and I'll help.  
-Kelli

The dedication in English reads:

Jessy may this day be full of joy and may you live many more years. You should live life to the fullest. You are a beautiful little doll; we hope that you will become a woman that understands life's circumstances.

Jessy, these are our best wishes from your aunt and cousins,  
The Pinales Family

Inside the present there were a lot of different things, but what they were didn't matter, because what made it special was the thought and love they showed me.

When I got home, I took the piece of wrapping paper with the inscription written on it, and taped it to my black binder for safe keeping. This way I would have a memento to remember my wonderful and exciting eighteenth birthday that I had with all my family together. I softly close the black binder with a warm feeling in my heart. I cherish the time I got to spend with all my family. The thoughts in my head were lingering as if I had just lived my eighteenth birthday again. This wrapping paper, not worth anything, holds my memories of my birthday. It is priceless. I have lost some of my family members, and we are not as close as we used to be, but the memories we shared will always be in my heart.

"Mom! Did you find them?" yells Ernesto from the other room. I'm brought back to reality and find the pictures my son was asking for. I walk back to the kitchen. "Yes, Ernesto. Here they are," I say as I hand the pictures to him. Then I go back to the kitchen and finish preparing this evening's dinner.