

Brianna Garcia

Dr. Lowe

English 101

16 September 2018

Taking the Training Wheels Off My Name

A lone bike sat at the curb, beckoning those driving by to stop and take a look. The age of the bike was obvious, that was for sure. The pink paint had faded into a mere soft white, remnants of a few sad streamers falling from the handlebars. It was old, and yet seeing it lying there caused a small pain to fill my chest as I sat on the old brick steps to my house. It pained me to see something so special to me left as trash. Waiting for some stranger to pick it up before the garbage truck did. Waiting. Like the bike, that was all I had been doing that morning. I was sitting and waiting for my aunt to come with the papers that would change my life drastically. I was giving away a name that was never mine, a name that connected me to a father who never raised me. I took a deep breath then, watching the pink and white streamers of the bike move silently in the wind as I wondered if I was even doing the right thing. My name was never my own name, but it was familiar. It was like running a finger down the worn spine of an old book I had read thousands of times. It was familiar, but the feel of it against my tongue was wrong. The name Garcia wasn't mine, and as my aunt pulled into my driveway with the adoption papers, I knew it would never be mine again.

She got out of the car with her two daughters trailing behind her. My hands were shaking as she approached me with a small stack of papers and a dark blue pen. I took them from her tentatively and turned my back to her as I held the papers against the front door of my home. The red paint clashed with them as I read through the lines, but I couldn't make sense of the words. I

wanted my dad to adopt me, didn't I? I almost couldn't bear to think of what would happen if I didn't sign. The man who raised me was my father; there wasn't a doubt in my mind about that. My dark blue pen hovered over the dotted lines, begging me to sign, to give up a name that was never mine to begin with. Garcia would never be the name on our family wreath, so why keep it? It made me the odd one out, the only non-Mandujano in the family, though, I was always his daughter. Without question, whenever anyone asked, my dad told them I was his. He was the man who raised me in place of the faceless donor who gave me my genes and nothing more. He listened to my awful pop music; he taught me how to drive even if my driving made him fear for his life. He cried when I graduated, a man that had never cried in front of me. It was a taboo, and yet there he had been, in tears hugging me close and telling me he was proud of me. He taught me how to ride the bike that now sat abandoned at the curb, and that memory seemed to resonate within me for a split second. It made my hand shake to think that there, on the morning I turned eighteen, that I would finally feel happy. I would feel accepted, but that doubt was still there. My thoughts wandered back to the pink bike, a small smile spreading onto my lips.

I was flying.

I was sure of it. I had been waiting in excitement for days on end for Papi to finally have the time to teach me how to ride without training wheels. It was the best thing that would ever happen, I was sure of it. I'd learn how to ride my pink bike before any of the other second graders, and I'd be pedaling circles around Justice Powell, who always took the opportunity to push me down on the walk home.

I watched eagerly, practically bouncing on my heels as my Skechers lit up red with my movement, asking my mother over and over when Papi would be done. A few twists of a tool and one wheel was off. My heart practically leaped when seeing the other come off, my dad

gesturing for me to follow him to the backyard as my mom stayed with my younger brother. I could hardly handle the excitement as my dad helped me onto the bike. He held it in place, making sure I didn't tip over, but fear welled within me. What if I fell? Or worse. What if I broke a bone? Suddenly, it was a horrible idea. I had rather let Justice beat me up for the rest of my life than stay on the death trap that was my bike.

"Once you start pedaling you can't stop," My dad said, still holding me and the bike steady. "If you stop you'll fall. No matter how scared you get, I'm here." All I could do was nod, my heart thudding so fast I could practically hear it as I slowly started to pedal, my dad pushing me from behind. Over and over we would do this until he told me the worst thing I had heard in my entire life. "Okay, I'm going to start letting go and you have to keep pedaling," he said loudly.

"What if I fall?" I protested, already panicking and ringing my bell over and over as if that would even help.

"Ay Brianna, you'll be fine. I'm right here." But I wasn't ready when he let go. I honestly thought he already had, convinced I was flying as I pedaled as fast as I could. It wasn't until I looked back that I realized he was still holding onto me. Before I could shout or scream he let go, and I pedaled furiously only to fall over into the soft patches of grass and dandelions. Defeated, I lay in the grass, convinced that I would just have to let Justice tease me and torture me by asking where my real dad was for the rest of my life. My dad didn't even let me wallow, making me stand up as he steadied my bike, even if I huffed in annoyance. Again and again, we went through the same torture that was riding a bike without training wheels. The very last time we had started over, my dad held on longer. I couldn't let him down. I just couldn't. He was too excited to teach me how to ride my bike, not to mention I had begged him for weeks to take off

my training wheels. I was convinced that this was the start of being a big kid, and he was convinced this was the start of family bike rides.

“Ready?” He asked me again, moving to let go as I nodded my head eagerly, a single word leaving my lips. I couldn’t even look back at him if I wanted to, the harsh glare of the sun forcing me to squint as I looked ahead. I just had to trust that he would be there behind me.

“Ready.” My legs moved on their own, and I was halfway down the block before I even realized he had let go.

I was flying. I was sure of it.

My eyes fixated on the dotted line in front of me. When I signed, I would finally be accomplishing what my parents tried to do but couldn’t. I would be a Mandujano. Someone with a wildly unpronounceable last name, but it would be his. I would finally be his by name. I wouldn’t hesitate any longer, deciding the man that gave me half of my genes was just that. Genes. I signed the donor’s last name for one of the last times beside my first and felt my shoulder’s ease as I looked at the signature that would no longer be mine. His identity was not mine, no matter how familiar it was. Who my “real dad” was would never be a question again. I would finally be seen as his and no one else's.