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SOULFRITAS

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1 INT. ALVINO'S APARTMENT

1

Two individuals are seated by a desk. One is wearing a fancy suit and is seated next to the desk; he is staring at paperwork. The other individual is Mateo De La Cruz, short Hispanic male (18). He is wearing baggy/dirty clothes and is on the outside of the desk.

INTERVIEWER

Okay... Mateo... was it?

The interviewer flips through the paperwork.

INTERVIEWER

I'm afraid I'm going to have to decline your application.

Mateo's eyes widen. Takes a deep breath

MATEO

Really? How come?

INTERVIEWER

As you know, I represent a very prestigious cooperation; it just doesn't seem like you meet the high standard that we anticipate in our employees.

MATEO

What do you mean by that?

INTERVIEWER

Well, for starters, you have no work experience. You didn't mention any references, and you even forgot to include your contact information.

The interviewer flips the paperwork around and points to a section labeled "Phone Number/Email." It hasn't been filled out.

MATEO

Sorry sir, I don't own a computer.

INTERVIEWER

What about a phone?

Mateo shakes his head no. The interviewer looks surprised.

INTERVIEWER

Well then... clearly, you can see my point. Our workers are responsible for the satisfaction of millions of customers annually; we are a billion-dollar corporation. I think you should look for work elsewhere.

Mateo sighs and then nods his head. From a distance, we can see him leaving the building; it is a Burger King, and he is wearing the Burger King crown.

2 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

2

Mateo walks around the vacant streets. It is cold, yet he isn't well dressed. He is shivering. In his hand, he has a sheet of paper. Mateo stops. He enters a dark alleyway. Right at the end, there is a small tent surrounded by trash; Mateo enters the tent.

3 INT. INSIDE OF TENT - NIGHT

3

We can see a sleeping bag surrounded by loose papers. Mateo picks up a lamp and turns it on. He grabs a notepad that has different business names written on it, and most are crossed off. Mateo picks up a pencil and crosses off Burger King, and it's towards the bottom.

MATEO

That's another one down... I guess...

Mateo rests his head against the sleeping bag; the tent suddenly collapses. From a distance, we see Mateo goes into a fit of rage. He leaves the tent and kicks around the papers. He leaves the alleyway.

4 EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

4

Mateo finds his way to a bench. He sits down and looks at people eating food across the street, and his stomach rumbles before falling asleep. Later into the night, he wakes up to find a hot meal in a box sitting next to him, still steaming. On the box, there is a note that reads, "Some food for the soul" The note was left unsigned. A tear drops from Mateo's eyes.

FADE OUT

5 EXT. STREET CORNER - AFTERNOON

5

Mateo returns to the same corner where he slept, holding the note in his hand. There is a food stand set up with a big sign that reads, "Al's Sofritas." The stand is being run by one man, and Mateo approaches him. The man, Alvino Marín, is a tall, rather chubby, old Hispanic man wearing a flannel and baggy pants.

ALVINO

Hola Mijo. What can I get for you?

MATEO

I wish I could get something; I just don't have any money. That's not why I'm here.

Alvino grins.

ALVINO

I didn't ask if you had money. I asked what you wanted to eat, mijo.

MATEO

Thank you for the offer... but I'm not hungry.

Mateo's stomach rumbles.

ALVINO

Your mouth may be able to lie, but your stomach speaks only the truth. Take a seat, this meal is on me.

Mateo takes a seat next to Al, and he is mesmerized as he watches him prepare the food with meticulous technique. Some silence passes between them.

MATEO

Last night... I was out sleeping on that bench, and when I woke up, there was food next to me.

Mateo takes out the note and shows it to Al.

MATEO

Was this you?

ALVINO

Maybe...

Alvino's smile widens.

MATEO

Why would you do that for me?

ALVINO

Better question, mijo, what's a young boy like you doing sleeping on a bench at night? Don't a home you should be at?

Mateo shakes his head no.

MATEO

For the past few months, these streets have been my home.

Alvino goes silent. The dish that he prepares is ready, he sets it down in front of Mateo.

ALVINO

What's your name, mijo?

MATEO
My name is Mateo.

ALVINO
You know what, Mateo? Every boy
deserves a home. If you are willing
to help me out around the stand, I
have an extra room in my house that
you can sleep in.

Mateo glances up at Al in shock.

ALVINO
What do you say, mijo? Sound like a
deal?

Mateo smiles widely. And shakes his head yes.

MATEO
Thank you, Al.

ALVINO
Then eat up quick mijo, so that we
can go home.

6 INT. ALVINO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

6

Alvino and Mateo both enter the apartment, it looks very cramped and bland. There are antiques and upholstery, with several framed pictures. Mateo is hauling around his tied-up sleeping bag and other belongings.

ALVINO
Alright, mijo, welcome in! I know
it's not much, but this is home.

Mateo's eyes widen.

MATEO
No, no, no... this is perfect.
Thank you so much for letting me
stay here.

ALVINO
Remember, you don't sleep here
rent-free...

Alvino smiles.

ALVINO
My food stand won't run itself.

Alvino chuckles. Mateo nods his head.

ALVINO

This right here will be your room.

Alvino gestures his hand towards a small room that contains only a bed and a nightstand. The mattress has no sheets, and there is one small pillow.

ALVINO

Here, You won't be needing these anymore.

Alvino Grabs Mateo's sleeping bag and tent out of his hands and sets them in the cupboard.

ALVINO

Now get some rest, mijo. You have a hard day of work ahead of you tomorrow.

Mateo steps inside the room and lays down on the bed.

MATEO

Al... thank you.

Alvino smiles, then leaves the room. Mateo rests his head on the pillow and starts closing his eyes. Before he falls asleep, he hears coughing coming from outside the room.

FADE OUT.

7 EXT. STREET CORNER - SUNRISE

7

Alvino and Mateo both approach the corner, lugging around the equipment for the food stand. They stop and set up shop.

ALVINO

Alright, mijo, it's time to get to work!

MATEO

Where do I start? Should I pack the orders? Do you want me to talk to customers? Should I run the kitchen?

Alvino tosses a broom toward Mateo. Startled, he catches it.

MATEO

How am I supposed to cook with this?

Alvino laughs loudly.

ALVINO

You thought you were cooking!?
Leave the cooking to me, mijo. I want this sidewalk to look like they paved it yesterday. Now let's get to work!

For the next couple of hours, Mateo sweeps the sidewalk, clearing all the trash. He watches Alvino cook while interacting with the customers, making them laugh and smile. They both work into the night after the final customers leave. Mateo looks exhausted, he sits by the stand next to Alvino. Alvino begins to prepare him food.

ALVINO

Good work today, mijo. I knew you had it in you.

Mateo is still sweating and catching his breath.

MATEO

I don't get it, Al... Why sweep the sidewalk when we don't have to?

Alvino sets down the spatula and stops cooking. He looks at Mateo directly. (Beat)

ALVINO

Listen, mijo, this corner may not belong to us, but we take good care of it. I may only be here from 6 to 10, but during that time, we keep it clean and inviting to our customers.

A moment of silence passes between them.

ALVINO

You are what you put out into this world, my boy, I put out the best tacos you've ever eaten, and you help keep our corner nice and tidy. Either way, it's hard work. Nobody said this would be easy...

Alvino starts to cough heavily.

MATEO
Al you okay?!

Alvino continues to cough

MATEO
What's wrong do, you need help?!

Alvino's coughing slows and then stops. He lets out a forced chuckle.

ALVINO
All good mijo, it's just a cough.

Mateo looks concerned, but he stops asking questions. Al hands him the food that he's prepared, and Mateo eats in silence.

From a distance, we see them disassemble the stand; not a word is spoken.

FADE OUT.

8 EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

8

MONTAGE:

We can see Alvino and Mateo working the stand. Alvino continues to cook, and Mateo continues to sweep the streets. Over the course of several months, Mateo begins to help more and more with the cooking. The line for the food stands gradually increases.

9 EXT/INT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

9

Mateo and Al are about to close the shop. This time, Alvino sits down by the stand while Mateo prepares food for him. Mateo sets down a plate of Sofritas next to Al, still steaming hot. Al smiles, then takes a big bite.

MATEO
So, how you like it?

ALVINO
It's good, mijo! But not as good as mine.

Al bursts out in laughter, and Mateo smiles.

ALVINO

You know Mateo, you really have come a long way... Seeing you grow into the fine man you are makes me very proud. I'm sure one day, you will be able to run this stand all by yourself.

MATEO

Oh please, Al, I don't know how I could do any of this without you. I truly have to thank you. I owe you everything for giving me a chance.

Alvino smiles.

ALVINO

You're the one who put in the work. Keep staying true to your ways.

Alvino finishes the food, and he wipes his face with a napkin. We can see the two of them pack up the food stand and head home.

10 INT. ALVINO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

10

Alvino and Mateo get ready to go to sleep. Mateo gets into bed, and Alvino walks to his room.

MATEO

Alright, Al, ill see you tomorrow! Goodnight.

Alvino cracks a smile but looks saddened.

ALVINO

Thank you, mijo... Goodnight.

Alvino slowly walks away to his room, and Mateo falls asleep.

FADE OUT.

11 INT. MATEO'S ROOM - MORNING

11

Mateo wakes up calmly and is very well-rested. He looks towards the clock and sees that it is 10:00 AM, four hours past his regular wake-up time. Mateo abruptly jumps out of bed, organizing his things.

MATEO

Al? Al?

Mateo begins to raise his voice.

MATEO

Why didn't you wake me up? We gotta go fast. The stand won't run itself!

Mateo hears no response. He approaches Alvino's room. He is lying down in bed and appears to still be sleeping.

MATEO

Come on, Al! We have work to do! Time to wake up.

Alvino doesn't respond. He continues to lie still on his bed. Mateo walks closer to him and taps his shoulder.

MATEO

Alvino? Alvino!

Mateo becomes very concerned and starts shaking Al. He still doesn't respond. Mateo begins to panic as Alvino won't wake up. Mateo falls to his knees and begins to cry.

FADE OUT.

12 EXT. HOSPITAL - THAT AFTERNOON

12

Mateo is sitting on the steps outside of the emergency room with his hands on his head. A nurse steps out of the building and approaches him. She begins talking, but all of it is muffled. Mateo is only able to make out a few words.

NURSE

I'm so sorry... Alvino Marín... he has passed away...

Mateo starts to walk home by himself. As he passes the usual corner where they set up shop, he stops for a minute. In his head, he can almost see the food stand set up, with him and Al hard at work. Mateo continues to walk home.

13 INT. ALVINO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

13

Mateo enters the house once more and goes to his room. he slowly walks towards his cupboard to grab his sleeping bag and tent. He pulls his gear down from the cupboard and a note in an envelope falls out with Mateo's name written on it As he begins to read, we hear Alvino's voice saying the words.

ALVINO

Mateo... I don't know how to say this to you in words. As a matter of fact, I wish I didn't have to say this at all. But Mijo, I'm dying. In truth, I've been ill for a while. My body can't keep up with my spirit anymore. But please, shed no tears, mijo. Over these past few months, you have brought a light into my life that I didn't know I needed. I'm the one who should be thankful. I'm leaving the stand in your care. The same goes for the house. What you do is your decision, but no matter what, never stop putting good out into this world, Mateo; make it come from the soul. With love... Al.

Mateo looks down at the paper. We can see a single teardrop on the page, which starts to smudge the ink.

14 EXT. STREET CORNER - SUNRISE

14

Mateo approaches the usual corner, lugging all of the equipment by himself. He begins to set up shop, but instead of hanging up the usual flag that has the name of the stand, he hangs up a new one. In a big, bright, red text, it reads, "SoulFritas." From a distance, we can see Mateo smiling as customers begin to approach.

15 EXT. STREET CORNER - MIDNIGHT

15

A stranger is sleeping on a bench, in the street corner where Mateo normally works. It is late at night and nobody is around. A dark figure approaches the bench with something in hand and drops it off right next to the stranger. We can see that the item is a hot meal, still steaming, with an attached note that reads, "Some food for the soul. - Mateo."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.