

The Court Order

Miguel Cortes's court hearing was one week from today. He didn't have much emotion regarding the matter, but this isn't unusual. It's hard to engage Miguel in conversation. He doesn't talk much about anything. Miguel was an outsider his whole life and I didn't see much change throughout my involvement. However, there was one thing Miguel was inside on. Miguel had connections for most drugs and utilized them to sustain a life for himself.

It was a Friday afternoon and all the boys were at Dylan's house. We were hanging out and planning on pregaming before the party tonight:

“ So I picked up two thirty racks and a handle of Tito's! Whose got the Kush?” Dylan said, eagerly.

Ryan countered,“ Dylan, no one picks up weed but you. Personally, I don't even know where to get it”. Dylan snarled and ignored the comment.

“So whose going to pick up tonight”, Dylan continued. Nobody volunteered and the awkward silence reappeared.

“”Jimmy, how bout you do something for once”, Dylan targeted me.

I was nervous at the thought of going alone. “I don't have a problem going if someone comes with me”, I exclaimed.

“Well that just defeats the purpose you dumbass. All I know is I'm not going”, Dylan blurted, ruling out any negotiations.

I looked around the room and analyzed for any sign of sympathy from one of the other boys.

“So is anyone coming with me.”, I said.

“Looks like this one’s a solo mission brotha”, said Alex, my least favorite of the group.

I didn't want to express any of my various concerns, so I looked at Dylan and said, “Call Miguel and let him know I’m coming”.

Some of the boys were mumbling doubtful words as I confirmed my task. I walked towards the door, picked up the car keys, and flipped the boys off on the way out (the gesture was mostly for Alex).

I have encountered Miguel before, but for some reason I was hesitant in regards to this meet in particular. Part of me felt nervous, while the other half of me was excited. I did not really construct a set of expectations regarding the event. This may have contributed to my conflicting emotions. This and the fact that I didn't know too much about Miguel. However, I did know a little.

The thought that Miguel would not be available had never occurred to me. I knew selling drugs was a job that Miguel took quite literally. But before I could think much more of this concept, I received a text from Dylan: “Miguel will be at the high school soccer field in fifteen minutes.” I started my 15 year old Honda Prelude and headed toward the school. I had a feeling

that the high school would be our decided spot. He lived right by our high school and usually executed his transactions there.

I wasn't too surprised at how quickly Miguel had become available, but became disturbed by the thought that he would have to wait. As this thought consumed my mind, I felt my foot increase the pressure placed upon the gas pedal.

I arrived at the school 3 minutes past our appointed meet. I wasn't sure if he would administer me a tardy slip, but I concluded that this wouldn't be enough to cause him upset. I remained in the car for some period after my arrival with my eyes fixated upon the soccer field. The sun had just set and I was reminiscing the numerous games I've played on the field. As I continued to scan the field I located a figure sitting on the sideline bleachers. It made sense that it would be Miguel, but for some reason my anxiety was persisting.

I slowly and steadily stepped out of my car and walked toward the soccer field. I balanced out my unease with the familiarity around me, particularly the grass. I felt my feet sink millimeters into the dirt, which was still moist from the residue that the sprinkler system had left behind earlier that day.

"You wanna walk any slower or what dog", I heard the figure in the distance say.

I laughed uncomfortably and quietly, but I don't think he heard. I picked up my pace in the most subtle way and reached into my pocket to confirm that I had my wallet (something I should have done prior to leaving Dylan's house). Miguel's proximity was closer then the amount of steps I made it out to be.

Finally I reached the bleachers, and skipped up to the highest metal panel, which Miguel was comfortably seated. He was dressed in ragged clothes primarily made up of two colors: black and white. He had a off-white backpack hanging from his shoulders, with a black hoodie cushioning the straps rested upon his shoulders. The sleeves of his hoodie were rolled up and I noticed a Rolex watch on his left wrist.

Being the introvert that I am I awaited for Miguel to commence conversation.

“So you Dylan’s boy, huh?”, Miguel said.

His eyes were half shut and he was clearly high. He didn't give me time to respond and confirmed it himself.

“Yea I know you, you that white boy with a new pair of shoes every week.”

It never really occurred to me how often I get new shoes.

I brushed the comment off and said, “ Can I get that quarter”, hoping to speed up the appointment.

“ Whats your name again G”, ignoring my comment in an attempt to even the scoreboard.

I hesitated, “Jimmy”.

Miguel laughed for some unknown reason. I turned my head in the direction of the goal at the far end of the soccer field pursuing comfort. Miguel became aware of this.

“You ball?”.

I guess I didn't respond quick enough, “Nah you Americanos can't ball.”, Miguel exclaimed.

“You wish homie. Me and you grew up in the same place. We ain’t that different.”, I confidently responded.

“What you mean we ain’t different. I don’t look like you. Most people don’t see me like you. Most people don’t treat me like you. You better rethink your definition of different.” Miguel said in a firm tone.

“Well maybe I just ain’t like most people.”, I responded confused by the thought.

Miguel sparked a pre-rolled joint, took a couple hits and offered it up to me. I declined and with this notion Miguel realized there was some urgency to this meeting. He weighed out my quarter and I offered up the money before he asked.

I left with countless thoughts in my head. I expected Miguel to walk in a similar direction as me but as soon as I turned to confirm my thought, I couldn’t locate him. He simply disappeared in the darkness of the open space.

It was significantly darker, and the thought consumed my mind.

During the drive home I enjoyed the silence enraptured inside of the car. I appreciated moments like these. After all, it was in moments like these that I did the most thinking.

The silence was broken as soon as I parked my car outside of Dylan’s house. I walked in the front door and was met with various claims of where I was. Everyone was blurting out predictions of where I was but I ignored it with the facilitation of the truth.

“He probably stopped by Caitlyn’s house to get it in real quick”, Dylan shouted.

“No girl would want to touch Jimmy”, Alex said as I flipped him off again.

“That’s not what your mom said Alex”, I said defending myself.

There were a couple of “OOOO’s and Ahhhh’s” acknowledging my joke, but Dylan quickly reverted our attention back to the matter of business.

“So did you get it?”, Dylan anxiously yelled.

“Obviously.” I replied.

“Well what took you so long then” Dylan said, looking for some sort of explanation. “Nothing I was just hanging out with Miguel for a bit.” I said in a timid voice.

“Why would you do that, everyone knows that you don't make friends with your drug dealer.

Thats the whole message in “Pineapple Express”. Dylan quickly countered.

“Were not friends, we were just talking.” I said defensively.

I got a a few weird looks from the remainder of the room, but these looks were slowly diminishing. I tried to contribute to the speed at which we change the conversation.

“Alright well lets get fucked up”, I said with fake confidence.

We pulled up to the party and some of us had somewhat sobered up, including myself. The party was at Jack Thomas’s house. He was a senior who was known for throwing parties at his parent’s mansion when they weren't home. His parties were always remembered and talked about at the school multiple days prior and after.

There were around 200 people that I could see from the outside view of the house. I was never a fan of large social events, and usually scanned the surrounding environment to obtain an estimate of how many people were present. It was absolutely packed and we struggled to maneuver our way into the house. After some pushes and shoves we exchanged dirty looks with some of the larger guys and finally managed to get to the front door.

Dylan was at the head of the group. This was usual since he was the most social compared to the rest of our group. The rest of us followed behind in a near single file order. I was at the back.

Dylan reached his hand out to open the door, but before he could get a hold of the knob, the door swung open and Miguel walked out. He was wearing the same clothes from earlier today, and still had his low hanging backpack barely attached to his shoulders. None of my friends acknowledged his presence, but I don't think he really acknowledged them either.

I wasn't sure how I should approach this situation and followed my friends lead. "Was good", Miguel bumped in to me separating me from the rest of the group.

For some reason I was relieved Miguel said something.

"Hey", I simply replied.

"What are you doing here?", I realized that my first response wouldn't transform into conversation.

It was a stupid question, and Miguel made note of it in his response.

"Well where are you going now?", I phrased, proud that I put together a coherent thought.

"Nothing, Im done for the night." he exhaustedly stated.

"Well lets party then." I excitedly said.

Miguel was hesitant, but after a couple persuading points I got him to hang with me and the rest of the group for a bit. We went inside and posted on the couch with Dylan and Alex. The rest of the group got separated on long trail that led to the couch. I wasn't worried and knew that we would meet back up with the rest of the group before the night concluded. Dylan and Alex were in deep conversation talking about drunken bullshit that is hard to participate in if you are relatively sober. Miguel confirmed this difficulty with his quietness and timidity. I followed his actions in attempt to ease his comfortability.

We mostly just sat and analyzed the scene around us. It was evident that we were both a bit overwhelmed at the amount of people present, but this doesn't mean we weren't enjoying ourselves. It was sort of a mutual agreement established to allow us to quietly sit in one another present without awkward silence coming to mind.

Time went by quickly and I started to realize how late it was getting. I knew my mom would be up worried about me. I shot her a text to let her know all was good and I would be home relatively soon. I tried rallying together the boys to let them know of the hour, but no one was interested in leaving just yet. I was too tired to stay any longer and figured it wouldn't be inappropriate if I decided to head home a bit early. Miguel noticed my discomfort and asked if I was leaving.

“You out of here dog?”, Miguel asked curiously.

“Yea, I think Im going to go home, Im mad tired.” I responded.

“ How are you getting home.” Miguel questioned nosily.

The question didn't immediately resonate with me, but as an awkward silence was established I comprehended the reasoning for Miguel's question.

"Im probably just going to order an Uber, you are more then welcome to tag along." I asked in hopes to relieve his nerves.

"While I do have my bike here." Miguel responded to display that he wasn't trying to be aggressive.

"We can worry about that tomorrow, lets just get home for the night. Like I said I'm exhausted.

"Word.", Miguel said submissively.

I pulled out my phone and ordered an Uber. I tried interrogating Miguel on his exact address, but he was insistent on just dropping him off near the school. As I told him the UBER was arriving he became skeptical.

"Actually dog, its all good. Ill just bike home, it's a nice night. He was very hesitant about the situation.

I tried encouraging him to come and I was close to getting him to come.

I refused to take no for an answer and he finally agreed.

He restated that he just wanted to be dropped off at the high school. I thought maybe he had one more transaction to make before he went home, but I didn't process it any further.

The Uber arrived two minutes ahead of schedule. John was our driver for the night. He was an older man well aware that we were two inebriated kids. He was pretty mellow about the situation which made me conclude that he was a veteran at this task.

We didn't talk much in the Uber. This might have been due to the lack of effort from John, but I didn't relieve myself of fault either. I also realized that silence was a simple normality to Miguel. I enjoyed this about him.

We arrived at the school moments later. Miguel quickly thanked me and escaped off into the darkness. I eagerly tried to track where he was going but I couldn't manage to follow him. For some reason I didn't see him for a couple days after. It wasn't unusual since he didn't show up to school too often. His lack of presence may have been due to the fact that I was actually looking for him... for once.

A few days passed and my group was posted in the cafeteria during lunch hours. A lot of bickering was going on, but what is a friend group if there is no bickering.

“Dylan, whats the plan for the night.” Alex said.

It was a Thursday night and I had no interest in convening with the group. A kickback with the boys always leads to unnecessary belligerence. Also it was Alex's suggestion so I didn't want to get behind anything he lead.

Before Dylan could create a plan or even respond Miguel walked into the cafeteria. Silence occurred. It felt as if silence was something that followed Miguel's trail. He had his head down when he walked in and his sunglasses covered the rest of his visible face.

I was intrigued by his posture and met him at the line in the cafeteria. He ignored my greeting but acknowledged my presence.

“You tryna kick it tonight?” I asked in hopes for a response.

He failed to respond and I retreated from the objective of engaging him in conversation.

The next time i saw him his face was bruised up. He had sunglasses on and his hood pulled over his head, but I saw the scratches cautiously peaking out from underneath the shades. As I approached him, he lowered his head. I didn't interrogate him or say anything immediately. I just sat next to him. Later that night I went home and spoke to my parents about Miguel. We have three adopted siblings so they understand the traumatization that occurs in kids whose ages are still so minimal. I was pretty open with my parents and didn't eave out much detail when I spoke of the situation. I think they always appreciated this gesture from me.

My parents offered emotional support, but they always had physical support which facilitated situations like this much better. They said that I could offer to Miguel to come stay with us. My parents were angelic in this sense. They were in touch with there emotions and were some of the most empathetic people I have ever encountered.

When I saw Miguel the following day I immediately declared the proposition. I told him that he can come stay with me and my family. He was taken back by the statement. He didn't say anything, but the look on his face confirmed that he was a fan of the declaration. However, a large part of this proposition was that Miguel must leave behind his past.

Miguel enrolled in my elementary school when I was eleven, but I was told to stay away from him. No one thought much of him, but this doesn't mean they weren't thinking about him. Born and raised in Mexico, Spanish was Miguel's native language. He didn't talk much, partly since his English was poor. However, it was clear that he had no motivation on improving this.

Miguel gained a lot of attention in high school. Not the type of attention that provides human beings with basic social necessities like love and affection. This type of attention derived from juvenile teenagers eager to try different drugs that Miguel claimed he had. This is when Miguel started talking. And we, we listened. Miguel's status as the drug supplier of our school was established quickly. Within weeks he was selling drugs at every inch of our school. He would obtain a new drug every month (one that I would have never heard of).

I wasn't very involved with drug culture at our school, but on occasions, my friend group would smoke weed. Usually it would be Dylan, the biggest stoner of us all, to suggest this activity.

I didn't meet Miguel until my junior year of high school. I had classes with him in the past, but he never really showed up. When he did, he would fall asleep within the first fifteen minutes of lecture. Miguel was three years old when he came to the United States. He never knew his father, but his mother raised money for a coyote to get him across the United States Border. He grew up with five other of his cousins and his Uncle. His uncle was a good man who succeeded in the American Dream (however, he was a bit selfish). Through his connections at work, he facilitated Miguel in the process of obtaining DACA status. Miguel didn't really know the details of the deferred action for childhood arrivals, but he did understand that it maintained his safety amongst.

Deep down Miguel was grateful for the actions of his loved one, but on the surface area he never showed this emotion. On the surface area, he took advantage of everyone.

When he was eleven years old his uncle enrolled him at one of his restaurant chains. His uncle was hopeful that some discipline and work ethic would aid Miguel in the long run. However, Miguel never really found interest in any type of labor. He worked with him for about two years until his uncle was fed up. Miguel embarrassed him on various occasions and would often show up incoherent to work. He was either high or drunk, sometimes both. It wasn't that his uncle was impatient, it was that he was too patient with Miguel. Miguel told me that whenever he would do something wrong his uncle would just say:

“Miguel, eres solo un niño, pero pronto serás un hombre.”

Which translates to:

“Miguel, you are just a boy, but soon you will be a man.”

Miguel's relationship with his uncle was a rollercoaster ride. At points in time he would be beaten with the belt (usually when his uncle drank too much). At other points in time, his uncle would bring home a surplus of leftovers from a local chain of his. This was when Miguel would usually decide that his uncle did care for him.

However, as time went on and the cousins grew older their affiliation with the drug culture skyrocketed. Miguel was introduced to selling dope when he was about thirteen.

It wasn't so much his obsession with the dope as it was with the concept of money. He decided one day that he would keep selling dope until he could pay for a coyote to get his mom and sister across the border.

About two years have passed since Miguel had started living with us. My family was well aware of Miguel's interactions with drugs and set a strict guideline with harsh consequences regarding the matter. I grew up with three adopted sibling in my family and my parents like to think they have mastered the art of discipline. Miguel struggled abiding by the boundaries in the beginning. However, it didn't take much more then a few stern warnings and disappointment from my parents for him to get back on the right track.

My family was keen on adopting him, but his status with DACA made this difficult. Miguel never really asked about it so we never urged to make moves. It seemed that there was a mutual understanding that my family was willing to provide him with the support and love that he lacked. Miguel never really said thank you but I know he always meant to.

Time continued to pass and my relationship with Miguel grew stronger. I didn't think about the past and in the present I thought of him as a brother. I enrolled in college and Miguel followed me. Mostly to find work, but the hope was that he would soon enroll in college with me.

He got a job at a local food truck rather immediately. I was happy for him because one of his dreams was to start his own food truck. I believe this is due to the fact that the kid loves food.

It's funny how all things happen for a reason. Miguel was enjoying his time thoroughly at the food truck and was really finding something that encouraged him to wake up in the morning. He

often would come home and share experiences that he encountered and what he was training in. My parents always encouraged Miguel to talk, especially about things like this. However, sometimes sadness needs to be so happiness can be.

Miguel told us a lot about the food truck, but I will never surely know everything that he knew. Apparently the food truck that Miguel had started to work for was also a front for laundering drug money. The DEA had been watching the movements of the food truck for months now and they were eager to seize them. The workers at the food truck were somewhat aware of this and were attempting to move the goods out of the vicinity of the truck.

One of there ways to do this was by using one of there employees to casually transport the drugs to a trap house (a house known for either making or distributing drugs). And who better to take on this task but a newly hired employee.

It was his second week working at the food truck and he talked to me about how he felt that he finally had a purpose here. He also told me how he planned to get his mom and sister into the country and how he had never forgotten about this plan.

The morning Miguel was arrested he was up early. I walked out into the living room and Miguel had a joint in his hand. I didn't mind that he smoked since I knew he was getting his act together. And it was better then all the other drugs that he used to put in his system. He seemed up beat lately and I felt like things were finally getting together. I had an early class that morning so I didn't have time to tell him all of this. We acknowledged each others presence and carried on with no thoughts of how the day would unfold.

I was out of class at noon that day. I got a call from Miguel at 2:30. It was from an unknown number. Most people ignore those calls but my curiosity won't end if I didn't.

"Yo what's good", I heard Miguel on the other end of the line.

I ignored his question, "where you at bro".

"I'm at jail, the police picked me up. I don't know what's going on dog. I was just delivering food to one of our customers and I got pulled over. They searched the car and said they found narcotics."

"God dammit Miguel," I interrupted.

"They're not mine homie... I don't know anything." Miguel countered.

I was sick and tired of giving Miguel the benefit of the doubt, but for some reason I believed him this time. I told him to calm down and I would be over there very soon.

When I arrived at the Police station I saw my parents waiting. I approached them eager to ask if they had heard any news.

"So, anything?" I asked anxiously waiting.

"No, we haven't spoken to anyone yet", my mom said with a tear in her eye.

As she completed her sentence a large man approached us.

He informed us that Miguel was being charged with numerous counts including drug possession, and intent to sell. He also informed us that Miguel's Court hearing would be two months from the day he was retained. He would be facing deportation charges. Miguel hasn't been back to Mexico since he was 4.

He sat and listened. This was something special that I noticed about Miguel immediately. He would often sit and listen. Many people do this, but Miguel would sit and listen, then ask questions, and then sit and listen again.