

# The Moment between Sunset and Dusk

PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

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Sometimes, when a rare gust of cold wind ripples through my sweat-drenched hair as I am biking with my sister on a hot summer day, or when I am standing next to my *lǎo lao* (grandma) meticulously folding sticky rice cake around circular blobs of red bean to make mochi, I want to hit pause on the song of life and live in that singular, euphoric moment forever.

Since I was little, my *lǎo yé* and *lǎo lao* (grandparents) have taken care of me while my immigrant parents struggled tirelessly to support the family. Every night, while we waited for my parents to finish work and come home for dinner, *lǎo yé* (grandpa) and I would walk to the highest point in the neighborhood to watch the sunset. Arriving thirty minutes before dusk, we eased ourselves into the small patch of grass at the top of the hilly road, watching the clear, cloudless blue slowly blend itself with warmer hues. I remember staring at the sky with such wonder and amazement, thinking God was the greatest artist in the universe, as he painted strokes of vivid oranges, crimsons, and purples across his vast canvas, the sky.

“Look, so pretty,” said *lǎo yé* in his broken English.

And even though I wanted it to last, soon, the brilliant sun became enveloped by dark clouds, and the colorful swirls melted away into nothingness. The most magical, breathtaking part of the sunset was over, and the once golden-tinted landscape that reflected the orange sky took on the look of an old black-and-white photograph, signaling that it was dusk already. I then realized that I, an insignificant 7-year-old girl living in the suburbs of Silicon Valley, could not do anything to stop the divine powers and way of the universe. The song of life would not pause for me just because I wanted it to,

nor would it replay, and the best I could do was to live in the moment and appreciate the people I spend time with.

In February of last year, *lǎo yé* passed away after being diagnosed with dementia for almost five years already, during which his memories had slowly blurred and faded with every visit, to a point where he could not even remember my name. That day, I remember rushing to the hospital with my family and blankly staring at the flat, green line displayed on the heart rate monitor. Yet, for some reason, deep down, beneath the sorrow and pain, I felt a sort of peace—because I knew in my heart that in every second, every hour, and every day we spent together, I embraced with joy.

Even now, I sometimes walk along the same path, reminiscing about evening walks I shared with *lǎo yé* and recalling fond memories. And every time I watch the sun sink into the horizon and the color drain away from the sky, I am reminded of the little time we have with those we love, and to live in the present. ■