

# An Innocent Mistake

By Mildred Hilbrich

The 15 year old student sat mesmerized as she listened to the young nun in front of her religion class.

Sister Angela was one of several nuns who had been sent from their convent in Monterrey Mexico to the border towns in South Texas to recruit new novices. The young student, Dolores, was enchanted with Sister Angela's presentation. She visualized the convent, the gardens and the religious statues in the gardens. Sister spoke of their daily life, duties, meditation times, prayer times, classes. She spoke of their total commitment to Jesus Christ, how they vowed to do His work to the best of their ability. She asked the class if there were any girls willing to give their lives to Jesus Christ and would they like to come forward.

Dolores and another student went forward. Sister Angela spoke softly to them and told them she would be in touch.

Dolores went home and told her mother about the visiting nun. She was so excited that her mother had to slow her down while she spoke. She then told her mother that she and another girl had told Sister Angela that they wanted to go to Mexico and become nuns. Her mother was so shocked at this news that she couldn't say anything for several minutes. She was thinking of Dolores' father, and what his reaction would be. He was out of the country with a job and wasn't due back for a year and a half. Both Dolores and her mother knew that he wouldn't like the idea at all! So her mother told her it was out of the question. She couldn't go.

Part of Sister Angela's duty was to get in touch with the parents of the girls that showed interest in joining their community. She did, and Dolores's mother was very impressed with what she had to say. The parish priest accompanied Sister Angela during these visits. As the days passed the mother was relenting more and more. She asked a lot of questions. Could they write to each other, could they phone when they wanted to talk, could they come visit? Could she come home if she didn't like it there? All these questions were answered with a yes.

Sister's time was running out. She needed an answer soon so she could take care of all the necessary paperwork. Dolores's mother finally gave them an answer. She could go.



She decided she would wait to tell Dolores' father when he got back. Dolores and her school friend were finally on their way to the convent in Monterrey, Mexico. The trip was an adventure for both of them.

From the moment that Dolores set foot in the convent, she felt that she had come home. She loved the ambiance of peacefulness, the quiet as you walked the halls, the loveliness of the chapel. All the new novices spent their time studying and doing assigned work. They had recreation and time to write letters home. Dolores wrote home often and tried to describe to her family what it was like living in the convent, and how much she loved it there and also how she loved them. Time passed and soon it would be a year and a half

since she had arrived there. In another six months she would take her first vows. She was so excited!

One day she was meditating in the chapel when she felt a touch on her shoulder. It was her friend from home. She said Mother Superior wanted to talk to her. As she approached the door to Mother Superior's office she had a feeling of fear, or dread. She didn't know how she felt, but knew it wasn't good. She tried to remember if she had done anything to make Mother Superior unhappy. She heard her tell her to come in. As she walked into the office she saw a very tall man standing near the window. It was her father!

Mother Superior said to her, "your father has come to take you home." Dolores felt like someone had poured ice water on her. She faced her father and told him she didn't want to go home. She was happy there. "You will come home with me. You are under age and I could make a lot of trouble for your friends here." Mother Superior told her that they had already discussed all the options they had, and this was all they could do. She had to go home. But the convent doors would always be open for her in the future. Dolores was devastated! She was so happy here, her whole life had changed. How could she go back? She promised herself that she would return when she turned 18. That wasn't too far away.

A few days after her 18th birthday, Dolores wrote Mother Superior a letter asking if she could return to the convent. She was of age and she had been faithful to her faith all this time. Please answer soon and tell me I can come back. Dolores placed the letter on a side table with other mail, ready to go out.

## I Actually Like Myself At This Age

Sure, my knees crackle  
when I get up.  
And it takes longer to learn fresh habits.

However.  
The quiet.  
The stillness. The knowing.  
YESSSSSSSS.

Give me  
white hair  
laugh lines  
and plum blossoms in my cup.

My inner critic—  
unmoored, bashful—  
waits. I grab a second mug.

I ask her,  
“Wanna sit here with me?”

—Violeta Garza

## SPARKLEBZZZ (en San Antonio)

I want to feel like I'm  
being held by  
the sun of my Ancestors,  
meciéndonos, así despacito,  
con la música de La Santa Cecilia  
on my speakers. Órale.

Under the silk of bouncy clouds—  
a susurrus of West Side honeybees  
and wildflowers.

—Violeta Garza

She would go to the mail box several times a day to check for an answer from the convent. But, none came. Time went by and no letter. Weeks and then months. No answer. Dolores was so crushed and unhappy when she realized that they didn't want her back! That they didn't bother to let her know the reason why. She so wanted to hear from Mother Superior why she couldn't come back. To her, failure to receive an answer was a form of rejection.

Five years later, she heard a knock on the door and saw a mailman at the door who asked, “Are you Dolores?” She said yes—and he replied: “Apologies from the US Post Office, but we are moving from our present location and among a lot of other things, we found this letter with your return address on it. We would have mailed it, but it has no postage nor a complete address.”

Dolores took the letter and read: Mother Superior,

## La Vida Es Agua, Amor, Y Fe (Cuando Te Fuiste, El Sol Se Puso Frío, Frío)

Te fuiste, y me tuve que cobijar con mis propios brazos míos, míos.  
Te había comprado comida y medicina. Todita se me echó a perder.

Cama ligera, tierra cálida, yo se que no te pudiste quedar.

Yo, llorando—y eso, que estaba sanando de otras penas.

Y apenitas aprendí. Del dolor, no hay descanso.

Pero la vida sigue, y no es la última vez que volvamos a amar.

—Violeta Garza



La Santa Cecilia band



## Violeta Garza

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Monterrey Mexico.

Tears welled up in her eyes, and soon the tears were running down her cheeks.

## Mildred Hilbrich

*Mildred De Long was born on the Westside of San Antonio, Texas in 1940. She was educated in San Antonio and Del Rio, Tx. She has five adult children and is married to her husband of 39 years, Lawrence Hilbrich. She became interested in writing when she was asked to write about her family for a project, Still Here, Homenaje al Westside de San Antonio, sponsored by the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in 2017-18. She has written poems, stories and monologues and is now writing her third book.*