

Dear Rudolfo Anaya,

I don't have a special story. I have never moved to a different city or experienced a horrible sickness. I have never been bullied or gone through the death of a loved one. What I enjoy about your story is that it relates to everybody. I can connect with the characters easily in *Bless Me, Ultima* and I feel an understanding to your characters after reading your book.

I am fourteen years old. I have an older sister who is eighteen years old. When I was younger, I remember the fights between my sister and my mom. My sister ran away several times, never wanting to face her emotions and the fury of my mom. During these fights, I would hide in the safety of my room, listening intently with one ear pressed to the wall. On the other side of the wall, I would hear my mother raising her voice and my sister screaming, sobbing, and hiccupping so loudly I would have to muffle my ears. Then, my sister would stomp down the stairs and slam the front door behind her, leaving me alone with a mother who only wanted the best for her child. I would get up and peer outside my window, watching my sister run away from what she thought was a prison. On the days that she left, the house was so silent and still that I almost wished they were still fighting.

The fights that Antonio's brothers had with their parents reminded me of those fights. Each person was stubborn, yet in the end, both Antonio's brothers and my sister understood that their moms' first instincts were to care for them. I remember that after fights, my sister and I would discuss behind closed doors the cruelty of my mom. We would have a small pity party and express our annoyance. But now, deep inside, I realize that I was just a child. I hated when my mom told me that I would understand when I grow up. Yet she was right. I might not be able to change the silent treatments I gave my mom with my sister, or the harsh words I spoke. But *Bless Me, Ultima* taught me that it is not too late to love my mother.

Now, my sister is off in college. I remember during one fight she told my mom that she would never look back after leaving for college. She wanted to have fun and experience the rest of the world, enjoying her life without my mom's rules. That day came quickly. As we drove to the airport, my mom lectured her, reminding her to always bring a jacket everywhere and other small details. My sister smiled and hugged my mom, not really listening. Instead, she was excited and eager, thinking about all the fun she would have. She grabbed her suitcase from the trunk and waved goodbye as she walked into the airport, disappearing into a crowd of people and leaving my heartbroken mother behind.

Now that my sister is gone, all the attention is on me. Every day, there is something new that my mom complains about. "Julia! You didn't unplug the cord!" or "Julia! You didn't put your dishes away!" Then, I will walk slowly down the stairs, exasperated. But only until after I read *Bless Me, Ultima* did I realize that I have an Ultima in my life, somebody who loves me as deeply as how Ultima loved Antonio. When my mom is screaming at me about chores or my grades, I realize that she cares about me and she wants the best for me. When my mom calls my

sister for three hours, I try not to get exasperated while I try to do my homework. Your book taught me the strength of the love of a mother, or a motherly figure in the case of Ultima. I cannot think negatively about somebody when there is so much positivity and love radiating from that person. All that my mom is trying to do is to be there for her daughter, and I know that as much as I want to understand that right now, I will come to appreciate that love even more when I too go to college in three years.

When Antonio's mother begs Antonio's three brothers to stay, I see my mother in her. I see the mother who stayed by my bed when I had severe asthma. I see the mother who drove for hours searching for her daughter who had ran away from her. I see the mother who silently cried when her daughter left, shameful for showing her emotions. Your book has taught me to appreciate the love of a mother and to never forget a mother's advice and support. Just like how Ultima and Antonio's mother nurtured Antonio, my own mother has cared for me and been there for me. I will never forget that I should always remember to be grateful for my mother. Whenever I am upset or frustrated, my mother has always been there for me. Your book made me reconsider what I have been doing the last fourteen years. Have I been there for my mother when she needed me?

Now, there is a gaping hole in a wall from when my sister kicked it out of rage. The window blinds, destroyed by my sister, are bent and twisted in opposite directions, like the differing opinions of my mother and my sister. These scars are there for a reason. They are here to remind me of the pain and emotions my mother has suffered through to raise her children in the best way possible. After reading Bless Me, Ultima, walking down those stairs past that hole is different. I have a new respect for my mother, my friend, and my constant supporter.

Most gratefully,  
Julia Wang