

Stones

by Fred Osuna

"I have something to show you," Mother says. We drive to the memorial park that overlooks the rolling landscape as it rises up to the foothills of the San Jacintos. Snowcaps have just begun to appear on the peaks. Behind us, less than two miles away, is the Pacific Ocean.

I pull the car up to the highest crest. The manicured lawn rolls down either side of the knoll, punctuated with flat granite plaques, the occasional bouquet of cut flowers, a smattering of faded eight-inch American flags. A ten-foot Christ of the Ascension stands atop a pedestal, arms outstretched over the grass, angled to encompass both the mountains and sea with its alabaster gaze. "Here it is." She takes a puff from an inhaler and slips it into her purse.

We walk a line along the tops of the headstones that are nestled in the thick Bermuda grass. I offer my hand to her and balance her unsteadiness. At the marker, we stand astride the undug grave, looking down at her name. Two roses frame the words, In Loving Memory. A simple cross is carved between her birth date and the smooth blank surface that awaits the stonemason's chisel and rasp. I glance to the side, to the green stretch of sod that parallels hers.

"That belongs to you," she points with her free hand.

I stare at the turf in silence. I can't imagine what that stone will say. I've never been much of a planner.

