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Humanities

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### Poisonous Purple Yam

Excitement and disbelief clouded my mind as I realized that my birthday was in three days. Even better, it landed on a school day and that meant I got to pick one of my favorite desserts and share it with my class. This birthday I went with my Uma to the Red Ribbon bakery to specially pick out my treat. The bakery smelled of sweetness, fruit, and whatever other treats were baking like Ensamada. The place strangely made me feel like I was at my Lolo & Lola's house. Maybe it was the sugary scent of Filipino desserts, or the employees who had the familiar facial structures and skin tone of the rest of my Filipino family. There were so many choices, but I knew what I wanted already. I looked through the slightly foggy glass into the rounded refrigerated display case. I was familiar with many delicious desserts in the shop, like the Brazo De Mercedes roll, Ube Coconut roll, and Mango cake. Even though those looked amazing and made me salivate, I hadn't seen the one I knew I wanted yet. As my vision kept on drifting across the case, my eyes paused on exactly what I was looking for. The cake sat tall covered in purple icing hiding the pleasant surprise of what it looked like inside. It had white whipped frosting along the round edges making it look ever so elegant. This cake, was the one I wanted.

As I sat through each lesson that day my mind always made it back to the cake. In math, instead of learning about time I wondered when my parents would come with the cake. In writer's workshop instead of writing about a significant event in my life, I thought about how today will be that significant time. I watched as the simple black and white round clock ticked

slower than normal, I was sure of it. I saw as the clock turned from 2:29:59 to 2:30:00. It was magnificent. At the edge of the door I saw my Apa's glasses and my face changed from a mix of worried, anxious, and anticipation into an ecstatic cheek hurting smile that went from ear to ear. As my Apa walked into the room I saw what I had been (sort of) patiently waiting for, the glorious Ube Cake. I nearly jumped out of my seat and rushed over to my Apa who was taking his time making small talk with my teacher like he always did. Thank goodness there were twenty three other kids sitting impatiently awaiting the treat they saw come into the classroom or my Apa and my teacher might have never stopped talking. The cake was brought to the back counter of the classroom and set down so that it could be cut by my Apa, with my help of course. As my Apa cut open the cake and started to put pieces on plates for everyone, I could overhear my classmates talking and I wondered what about so I listened in closer.

“What is that?” “Why is it purple?”. I hoped it was just curiosity, I mean I would wonder why it's purple too if I didn't know it was the best dessert ever. As I helped hand out the pieces I could hear behind me my classmates were still questioning what this mysterious food is and if it's safe to eat.

“It is safe to eat! The cake is made with a yam naturally colored purple called Ube”. I walk away and overhear a new name for what I just explained was Ube. The name is mixed with laughter. It freezes me. I'm hurt, stunned, and unable to speak. It feels as though I can't do anything and I'm now an empty body with no energy to do or say anything, but I keep on handing out the pieces of cake with a smile. I couldn't show that their joke made me feel like they didn't care about my feelings. I couldn't show that I then felt like what I thought was the best thing ever really wasn't anymore. I definitely couldn't show that maybe I was wrong all along. When they make the same comment again. “Poisonous purple yam!”, this time straight to

my face as I walk to their table, I laugh. In my head I'm crying and screaming out into void, but out loud, I laugh. How can they call themselves my friends when they can so easily make me feel like I'm all alone and that something that used to be my favorite is now the weirdest.