

ALMOST THE SAME: A DEDICATION

S A L I N A S I A S

IN 1999 I MET MY PROSPECTIVE MOTHER-IN-LAW, NORRIS CHURCH MAILER. I was in a t-shirt that barely covered my bottom. Needless to say, I was embarrassed. I was fresh in a relationship with her son, Matt and, had I known that I was going to be meeting his parents that day, I would have at least put on some make-up. I managed to smile at her and Norman while they were having their breakfast, but that's about it. For days I thought that I would never see them again, because where I come from a girl who "sleeps over" with someone before getting married is considered disrespectful. I was relieved to find out that Norris knew exactly how I felt—she, too, was from the South.

Norris and I had much in common—and the biggest thing was our love for Matt. During the first five years I was dating him, she would pull me aside and have woman-to-woman talks about relationships. Our first one took place in 1999 at Thanksgiving when Matt's ex-girlfriend was also invited by Norman, whom she was tutoring in German. Norris must have known how I felt about the whole thing. She spent an hour in the car—it was parked outside the house—telling me how crazy he was for me. It was a good thing, too, because I was ready to take the first ferry back to Boston. Over the years, she shared stories that made my jaw drop and belly ache with laughter. She also managed to instill a little confidence in me—she had a sweet way of making people feel good about themselves. She was prideful when her sons were happy, and yet she was still able to vent about the frustrations of motherhood and marital relations. She had great timing.

In May, 2010, she asked Matt to accompany her on a book tour to San Francisco; she had not been feeling well enough to travel alone. At that time,

I grew slightly cold. I had feared that life was soon to change, and I didn't know how I was going to deal with it. My biggest concern was my daughter, Mattie James, Norris's first biological grandchild. They were inseparable. Norris was so proud of her, and I could see how much she wanted to see "her girl" grow up into a beautiful, young, woman. She watched on in admiration as Mattie applied eyeliner and eye shadow, doing a remarkable job without proper instruction, and she couldn't take enough pictures of the young model in her incredibly creative outfits. So I had become a bit distant before, during, and after the San Francisco trip. I panicked and thought, ". . . What am I going to tell Mattie? How am I going to explain?"

And so I wrote a song—and I only told Matt about it. It was the fourth song I had ever written, and even though I tried to revise it and rework the melody, (I still think it's way too long), I couldn't bring myself to change it. Now it is the fourth song on my self-titled debut album, and I suppose I'm wondering if she can hear it. It is simple, it is pure, and it is from the heart.

ALMOST THE SAME

*There's someone you used to know and she watches you wherever you go
I don't know if that's really true, I can't prove it to you
There's nothing I can do*

*But how can someone who looks like you forget
You're still here
How can the trees grow new leaves if they never let the old ones fall?
Isn't it funny how we're almost the same?*

*You can laugh and you can cry
There's no need to know why
Sometimes we try to find a reason to say goodbye
But we regret, we forget
We can laugh and we can cry*

*She told me to tell you that she'll be with you when a cold wind blows
When you don't know what you feel inside, you can't laugh, you can't cry
When all you want to do is hide*

*But how can I tell you something I'm not sure I believe in?
How can the clouds begin to change
If they never let the raindrops fall?
Isn't it funny how we're all almost the same?*

*You can laugh and you can cry
There's no need to know why
The difference is time
Sometimes we try to find a reason to say goodbye
But we regret, we forget
We can laugh and we can cry*

*But I can see her in your smile
You can watch yourself in my eyes
There's a magical surprise
With your face, you can't go wrong
You're the reason we go on*

*And still we laugh, and still we cry
There's no need to know why
Sometimes we try to find a reason to say goodbye
But we regret, we forget
We can laugh and we can cry*