



Dear Matías:

Happy 23rd Birthday! I had your birthday letter all written and ready to go today but then I got an early morning text from your sweet Miia and it kind of changed the course a bit. I literally think you fell in love with her and brought her into our lives for a purpose. She continues to comfort us in ways that don't seem possible. She sent me a beautiful note thanking me for bringing such a wonderful human into this world 23 years ago but to top that off, she included an audio clip of you both on the phone, and guess what? I got to hear your beautiful laugh and love in your voice this morning. This might be the best gift I have ever received on a day that I really needed it. How lucky am I? On a day that I don't normally feel very lucky, but instead very sad, Miia changed that around in one amazing text. She is the girl version of your kindness and thoughtfulness.

I like to use this day and letter to you to visit a world where you are still here and think about some of the memories we would be making. Gosh, let's see.....after graduating this past May from Chapel Hill, you may have gotten a tech or accounting job and maybe even have moved back to Boston (which was your dream to live there again someday). I know you would LOVE being able to attend in-person Bruins and Sox games with your buds and you would have gone over to Babson to see your brother play hockey and hang with some of his teammates (who are all your age, btw). You would have, reluctantly, let me help decorate your apartment and you would have told me that you liked 'most of' it. You would take the time to make fun of me, and you would spend lots of time with friends, maybe trips to Vermont, and hopefully even have joined a beer hockey league with Jack R. 😊 It would be a beautiful thing to see.

But these are all dreams that won't come true, this is an alternate reality that doesn't exist no matter how hard we all want it to. I came across a saying recently which gave me a little comfort, "I may not have gotten to spend the rest of my life with you but you got to spend your whole life with me" The enormous amount of love that surrounded you in your 19 years is all that you will ever know. And I guess there is a little comfort in that. You knew how loved you are, you told us, that is a comfort. But these are tiny little band aids of comfort over a gaping hole of the grief. You are supposed to be here with us. I feel like I am getting less strong in my grief, that it's breaking me down. The sleepless nights are now just a part of my life, I know it's wreaking havoc in many ways, but I don't care that much. I know you would all want us to be ok and have happiness in our lives. We do and we don't. There is an underlying sadness that will never go away, a "life isn't fair" feeling that makes us ask "why us?" I still try to look for all of the bright and hopeful things that can give me a connection with you which makes me feel strong but then there are those gut wrenching, soul crushing punches in the gut reality of you not being here today on your 23rd birthday and all of the other days.... Dad describes it best, "it's the loss of all of the memories never made that is the hardest".

I want to tell you how we are celebrating you today. All three of us are in different locations, which is not ideal, but we all have ways to cherish your memory. Dad is doing a throwback to when you were in grade school. Do you remember when you would ask your friends to bring an unwrapped gift to your birthday parties for donation to a local charity instead of receiving any

presents for yourself? You knew there were kids out there who didn't have as much as you and you wanted to help make their lives a little better. Well, dad bought and brought a trunk full of gifts to [The Matthews Help Center](#) today (including a Clawdeen Wolf "fashion doll" 😊) and told them your story... they send a big thank you! I am up in Avon, CT where we used to live. Mrs. Hogan and I are going to hike up to Heublein Tower—our family favorite in years gone by. We will toast to you at the top, and cry and tell Matías stories. On Monday, I will stop by "The Village", the charity in Hartford that was the recipient of your birthday donations and give them toys in your honor. Mason will do the same in Boston, he will pick a charity to donate toys to. We know you will love this idea.

In keeping with your life's theme of trying to help others, I want to update you on your legacy, the Matías Rosado Foundation. We were pretty active this year and I think you would be proud. We gave another MRF Character Award and Scholarship to hockey player, Abigail Mitchell. Jake Ballway was there to present this award with dad. It was a beautiful ceremony, Abigail has many of the same wonderful traits you did on and off the ice, we wish her much success at NC State. MRF also participated/sponsored a mental health walk and of course re-launched your award winning: "It's Ok to not be OK" Oktoberfest beer to help spread mental health awareness with Middle James Brewery. Lastly, the 2nd annual MRF Gala was a big hit in October and we were able to give funds to both NAMI Charlotte and Hopeway which will support individual and families in need of mental health services. Both organizations are doing amazing things and we are thrilled to be involved. You will get a kick out of this, both Miia and Mason were at the gala this year and paired up to pick the raffle winners—it was really sweet to see them work together on this and have fun.....talk about a memory made! Mason concluded the gala by thanking everyone and said how much he missed his big brother. It is hard to see him sad, but he is finding his way. It was also great to have Cicely, Aidan, Harleigh and even some former hockey teammates there! It was very special and I will treasure the love that was in the room that night. To be honest, it was almost like you were there. In the picture I include above, it is me hugging Miia, and Mason is sitting next to her but if you look quickly, it looks like you. It feels like you were there.....

Love, Matías. That is the tag line that we have adopted these past few years, it started with Miss Darcy giving me an engraved necklace at your celebration of life which has your signature from my last Mother's day card, it reads, "*Love, Matías*", I wear it EVERYDAY, then last year, I turned that into a tattoo on my left arm.... a crescent moon with stars that cradles the words, *Love, Matías* (I proudly show this off), then this summer, Mason got his new Babson goalie helmet painted and while there is a lot of hockey and Babson stuff on it, the back clearly reads: *Love, Matías.* We carry you with us in so many ways.

I will end this letter as I have for the past couple of years....We love you, we cherish your memories with us and we hope you are at peace. We miss you every second of everyday. We want you to know today and always that you are celebrated. Happy 23rd Birthday, sweet Matías. ❤️🍷🥳

Please toast to Matías today, share a smile and a memory. He would love for us all to take the time this holiday season to think of others and donate our time or resources to a local kids program or to MRF. He leaves a legacy of love, caring and some pretty proud parents, family and friends who call him our son, brother and friend. We appreciate your support and friendship. Hug your loved ones and keep making beautiful memories.

www.matiasrosadofoundation.org