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Expect The Unexpected

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Expect the Unexpected

Gabriela Emelyn Torres

Third Grade...

I am young, I do not pay attention to any negativity that is going on around me, I feel happy and there is no reason why I should not. My parents are happy together. Every day I go to elementary school and back home. It is like being in paradise, everything is just right. I have no worries about anything.

I wake up, my mother is playing Banda, making breakfast for my father and all us kids. I see my siblings wake up one at a time, all excited for a new day. I see my parents hug and kiss. I hear a "Te amo," from my dad's deep voice as he heads out the door for a long day at work. He places a kiss on my forehead with the words, "Te miro al rato chaparrita." These are the ordinary moments of our everyday mornings.

I am lazy about going to school yet am also excited to be with all my third-grade friends. The day passes by. I spend my day playing in the playground, learning new vocabulary words, new math problems. The hours go by, getting closer and closer to the time when we can go home. Sitting on my chair, waiting for the bell to ring, I wonder how my sister is doing in her first-grade class. Finally, the bell rings, time to head on home, the home I long for. I can't wait for the late night soccer practice tonight. My mom and my dad take turns between my siblings and I and swing us holding our hands. We take pictures.

My siblings are too small to understand what was happening in the field, all they see are people running up and down. Everything is going well. We are constantly looking for my siblings, wondering where they have run off to now. My parents talk about the preparations of the carne asada we'll have this coming Sunday after my dad's game, as well as getting ready for the América vs

Cruz Azul game. My mom is planning what to cook. Will it be pozole or maybe ceviche? Back on my parents' bed we are hit with a sudden wave of feeling tired, and one by one we start falling asleep. My mom's fingers stroke through my hair, I fight sleep, I do not want to leave the happiness of this day just yet. The last things I do feel are my dad's arms picking me up and placing me down on my bed, "buenas noches campeona."

Four years later ...

It is a new day, we are living in a new house, in different city from four years ago, I am a seventh grader in a high school environment. Things have been tough lately, at home, at school, emotionally, mentally. I do not know my place right now.

I am an emotional wreck.

I am strong at home for my siblings but I do not know how to be strong for myself.

I am scared to go home now.

I am scared of anything that will start a fight, start an argument.

I am staying late at school today for softball tryouts, this is how I stay away.

I have homework to do.

I know some days are just great but I am constantly scared that today will be an off day.

I am tired of yelling, "Stop!"

I am tired of telling them to shut up.

I am tired of trying to calm my siblings' tears because I cannot do so.

It has been a good week and the weekend is coming up. My dad's sister's birthday is just a couple of days away, and I am looking forward to meeting up with everyone in my family and continuing the happiness of this week, I hope this weekend will be pure happiness.

The weekend...

Today is Sunday, the last week of August, normally a great day. We are all getting ready, getting all the drinks we are taking to Pico Rivera, the food is already in the car. "Happy Birthday Tia Elvira," my sister says into my mom's phone. I am excited, all my cousins are going to be there, we are all expecting a sleepover and do the most we can during one of our rare get-togethers. I put the sodas into the trunk of our Chevrolet and suddenly I hear screams, my heart drops, I drop a box of sodas. I run back home, hoping I just heard the neighbors or something. I see my siblings crying by my parent's room. I am telling them to get into our room and stay in there. Here I go again, I try to stop the vocal war, I tell my parents to be quiet.

I tell them I am tired of living this way.

I tell them that enough is enough, to separate already.

My mom says, "Enough is enough," and she walks away. I get my siblings and tell them to get in the car quickly, I tell my mom to get in the car. I am disappointed in the way our Sunday is progressing. My dad is crazy, speaking words, making no sense; he repeats over and over again that we are not leaving. I fight, he tries to get the keys to our other car but I close the window. My mom continues to pull out of the driveway and I am crying. Why did it have to come to this...?

I shatter into a thousand pieces. I want to turn back and delete this day from our lives. My dad is not a bad person, having grown up with him, I know that for a fact. He cares, he loves, he gives but what I can't understand today are his actions.

As I am writing this freewrite...

I am typing and looking back to these memories and see how none of us expected it, none of us saw it coming. I never expected the falling out of love. I still feel pain, but I see how things are way better now. My parents now can actually hold conversations and be at the same place with all of us. I do not see my mom with pain anymore. I see her happy, I see her better. I see my siblings better. I am better. I think my parents see their mistakes now.

I do not think they realized that by staying together for our sake it actually was hurting everyone more and more. I feel pain because my dad has not moved on, he still wishes he had done things differently, he admits his mistakes. I feel like that is why my parents have done so much better for us. They're friends with a past full of love, but parts of that past they do not like.

I wish they hadn't separated but I am glad everyone is better for it. I look back and can think of possibly better outcomes for my family but this outcome now is better than I expected. We are a family that does not see their parents together on a daily basis but we're a family who still lives connected, we have some boundaries rather than regret.

REFLECTION

How does one build the courage to write about moments in one's life where everything felt so low, with no escape? Throughout every expected freewrite in the class I felt a pulling back telling me not to write about a specific event, to keep to myself and not let anyone know about the wrongs my family did or even ones I did. I worried about the judgment my peers might have about my life. What if the story I write does not express the impact it has on me. Freewrite after freewrite I felt a little sudden spark, the insight that overall I am writing these stories for myself. I relive moments in my life and analyze them in a whole different way. Most definitely I thought so much about the details I should include, what to say and what not to say, what I wanted to keep to myself and what I was okay with sharing. The biggest challenge to the process of writing my freewrites was wanting to write about someone I am not.

Each and every prompt had its own voice and I just wrote and wrote. One of the hardest parts was reliving the low parts of my life, coming to the realization that so many aspects of my life are not the same anymore and that is a good thing. Through the process, I was worried about not making anyone seem like a bad person because, in reality, no one included in my cuentos are, but their actions were. I remember sitting as I was revising my own story, I sat and sat and stared at my laptop, happy that I gathered the courage to write about things that have had a huge impact in my life, for the better.

I was an emotional wreck here and there, from a letter to my mom, a letter to my grandparents may they rest in peace, to the heartbreaking moment when my parents' separation was established in our lives. How do I let it all out without it coming back to haunt me?

I feel like I was scared to relive the moments through the writing process, but I see now that writing about them did me good. I see that things are better now, the relationship I have with my parents, the relationship that my parents have with each other, even after being separated. These freewrites have allowed me to open up to things I have wanted to open up for a while. They took time to write and plan accordingly but these freewrites came along just as life did, all I did was let my hand go freely, and my heart did the speaking.

I want to thank everyone involved in this process, for finally including a class where I felt comfortable letting my stories come out. I never felt judged. I can say that although I do not have a close relationship with everyone in our classroom, I felt like I could express anything and do so in any way I wanted to. Thank you for the creation of this amazing process, I am most grateful for being allowed to be a part of it, for giving me the opportunity to write my very own CouRaGeouS Cuento.