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## True Strength

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# True Strength

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Michael Hernández Martínez

We all have a person in our life that we believe encompasses the true strength of a strong-willed human. That man, with an incredible willpower to overlook his physical, psychological, and biological needs for the sake of his family is Miguel Hernandez. As I grew up and got wiser, I began to realize what I had failed to see at a young age: true strength is the will to prosper through adversity even if that means forsaking one's own happiness.

When I would go to work with this man, I would see the diligence and his meticulous force at play. When he would work, he would not leave the job until he was 100% satisfied with his work. He is fond and proud of every job he does because he gives it his all every day. The way he regenerates his body and spirit with such an amazing speed every night and get ready for the next morning astounds me. I am only nineteen years old and I find it extremely hard to do myself. His job is in construction. He puts his life at risk for the sake of bringing bread and butter to the dinner table at home. While he was coming home tired from a day's work all I did was sit around and watch television.

This man is my hero, my role model, and my will to not give up. When he bestowed his few words of knowledge on me – all of which were said in a state of intoxication – I was too naïve to realize he had spoken through pain, wisdom, and experience. I never understood his use of alcohol, but I knew it gave him an ability to pour out his struggles. This man – who when sober seemed impenetrable – is a broken-hearted, injured, and shattered man. The alcohol allowed him to be weak for the night, at that time he would not feel ashamed of exposing his agony. He was too stubborn to admit he needed a friend or someone to listen to him. My mom detested seeing him drunk and would disregard him for the night. Drinking at nights, however, that was the only way he knew how to vent his pain.

One night will forever be ingrained in my heart and my memory. He was drunk but playful, he showed his love to me by play-fighting. He always called me his “chaparro” but it wasn’t until now that I realized how much hearing him call me that name really means to me. It gave me so much orgullo because that’s the nickname he gave me. I always wanted a nickname, but I hadn’t realized that I always had one. This night was the night when my perception of him changed from a drunk man to one of a strong-willed and powerful man. He was completely covered with dirt from head to toe, wearing his job’s company shirt, raggedy black jeans, and shoes.

He was drunk. I was in my room and he called me to the living room. I saw him and instantly got frustrated because I hated talking to him while he was drunk. He sat me down next to him and immediately he started crying. This was the first time I saw my dad cry, tears running down his cheeks as he balled up his fist tight with frustration. He was crying, he said he was tired, that he “Was done doing this.”

I didn’t know how to respond. I asked myself, “Had my dad been this miserable for so long?” He looked directly into my eyes, with tears still running down his face, and asked me to look at his hands. I looked and my heart broke into pieces. By the time I was done examining them, my heart was completely shattered. His hands were bruised, torn, and full of scars. His work was torturing his hands but he never had said anything. He was breaking his back, brutalizing his hands, and tormenting his head to pull his family out of poverty.

All that time all I was doing was going to school and doing my homework. Despite my efforts, I felt inept because I couldn’t help him from decaying at his work. From that moment forward I put more effort into my own work and made a promise to myself that I would not let all his pain be taken for granted. That night I started the process of becoming a man. Though I did not know it at the time, he had been sacrificing his life for mine – and he still does. I am the proud son of Miguel Hernandez. I will work hard and become successful no matter how great the challenges will be. I will make my father proud.