
THE MOMENT I KNEW

ANDREA CHACON BORGES

He was the kind of man who would suit up for every occasion. Cufflinks neatly polished, leather shoes on point, beard shaved to perfection, hair meticulously combed to the side, and just the right amount of cologne. He was the kind of man who would always be the first ready for every occasion... But now, things were different. We all sat down at the dinner table, waiting. The only movement came from our eyes, as they searched for a place on the wall or floor to lock themselves onto. They were searching for anything but the eyes of the others because, in them, we would have to face the truth. In them, we would have to confront what scared us the most.

“Happy Father’s Day!” exclaimed one of my cousins, as my mom and aunt slowly brought my grandfather into the dining room, one on either side of him. Instantly, everyone started engaging in mindless chatter to mask the fear and despair that hung in the atmosphere. I was the only one who remained silent, stunned. It was the first time I ever saw my grandfather in his pajamas-- other than when it was bedtime. Slimmer than yesterday, pronounced bags under his blue eyes, ruffled hair, beard scruffy and unattended. That single sight hit me like a thousand needles piercing into my body. The reality and severity of my grandfather’s cancer always lurked around the corners, silently weighing on me. However, this time it came without shame and punched me right in the stomach. My grandfather was still my grandfather, yet his disease had somehow changed him; it was slowly stripping him of his characteristic vitality, dissolving any need or desire to polish himself and to wear the suit and tie he probably would have worn for dinner that night. Holding back tears, my heart started racing and my eyes desperately searched for a place to take refuge when, suddenly, I realized that my grandfather’s eyes were doing the same. Taking a deep, deep breath, I finally decided to lock my eyes onto his. It hurt. So much. It was devastating understanding everything that single look entailed, but at least it made us feel together in our fear, our grief, our heartbreak. It made us feel together in our hope, as if we were one facing everything that was to come.