

Personal history

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Last night I had dinner with my father at the local restaurant. We laughed and talked about everything there is to talk about between a father and her daughter. ‘ You remember mother?’ he asked after the meal. ‘ Yes father. There is no single day that goes by without me wondering how things would be had she been alive.’ ‘ I often feel the very same way, my child. She would have been proud of you.’ ‘ Thanks father. She would have been proud of you too.’ That short yet hearty conversation with my father that warm evening sparked my memories of when I was young, when mother became sick, and life took a turn for the worst.

It was my first Monday at work after a happy long vacation. I was walking through the aisle of my Walgreens, when I suddenly heard from the Vitamin’s aisle a sweet voice of a little Cuban girl. ‘ Mami, mami, manana es tu cumpleaños (mom, mom, tomorrow is your birthday)!’ said the little girl with a huge smile and happiness in her face. In that moment, a rush of emotion invaded my mind, and I could not stop the tears of my eyes falling to the floor. As I was looking at the mother’s girl with an immense smile, I saw a cheerful girl during the spring of 2000 in Cuba, when I was only 10 year old, and I saw the radiant smile of the woman who gave me life. In that age, I had a straight black hair, brown eyes and red lips. Although I was a skinny and stylish girl like a Barbies’ model, I did not like to brush my hair and dress up my bed in the mornings, and every day I was waiting for make a new mischief with my friends at school. In that time of my life, my favorite place was a little space that I created for myself with rocks and small pieces of wood at the back yard of my home. I was the leader there! My school friends and I went to there to do homework, study for the tests, make some

food and of course, play games endlessly. I had a very unique family. I lived with my father my brother and my Queen: my mother. She was my teacher, my best friend and my witness. Always, every single plan that I did, I had told her before. I almost forget! I cannot fail to mention my little and adorable Blanquito, my funny and crazy puppy! These are some of my most precious treasures of memories, but the storm that would come and the darkness that would surround me, along with the anguish and pain that destroyed my heart would forever leave me wanting to see her face again. Mum had been seriously ill in the days leading up to her painful demise. In the latter days, as her condition grew worse, my father had her fully admitted in the hospital center. Sometimes I was allowed to see her but on other occasions dad would insist on going alone. I recall her frail but delighted voice a week before her demise when we had gone to visit her, ‘ You are getting bigger every day, my child.’ Unsure of what to say in response, she went on jokingly, and with prodding eyes, ‘ Has your father been feeding you with junk?’ At that point we broke out into a short fit of laughter. Mum was well known for her distaste for junk food. On such visits, mum would embrace me so tightly, even in silence, and when it got late, father would urge that we leave. ‘ You know you have to finish up your homework, go to bed early so that you can go to school tomorrow feeling fresh.’ Mum on the other hand would try to persuade him to let me stay longer, ‘ You’re leaving too soon. Can’t a mother spend more time with her child?’ ‘ Ha ha you know she will be back tomorrow. Come on, it’s getting late,’ said father with some heaviness in his voice. ‘ Alright, good bye sweetheart,’ mum said to me as she kissed me on my forehead as was her

norm. ‘ Goodbye mother. See you tomorrow.’ And so we went, unknown to me that it would be the last time I ever saw mother alive.

On the ensuing nights, father would not return home and he would call my aunt to come and pick me from school for the night as he spent the nights on mama’s bedside. On such days when I was away from home and mum and dad were away too, deep and untold melancholy and nostalgia would relentlessly haunt my nights. I longed for the days when my strong and vibrant mother would busy herself in the kitchen preparing dinner for us while I strived to complete the rest of my homework. I missed the sight of my reassuring father seated on the living room couch, feet spread on top of the table, with the remote in his hands, browsing through the cable channels for something ‘ decent’ to watch. I longed for the comfort of my parents and the familiarity of our house. Noticing my melancholy, my aunt would often prod me into conversation, ‘ How was school today?’ ‘ School was okay, we have a new English teacher.’ ‘ Ooh, what happened to Madam Carol?’ ‘ She has a big tummy.’ ‘ Ha ha what’s the name of the new teacher?’ ‘ Mrs. Raines.’ ‘ Is she cool?’ ‘ Yes, she makes us laugh a lot, and sing too.’

Despite such light moments, the nights at my aunt’s place felt cold and strange, and I could barely manage to complete my school assignments then. For some reasons outside of my knowledge, my usually strict teacher would pardon my otherwise ‘ unbecoming’ behavior, as she would often refer to it when it came to other students in the class. She would simply say, ‘ Do your best to complete the assignments next time.’ ‘ Yes teacher,’ would come my feeble reply. My classmates got curious as to the cause of this softness when it came to me. My friends and I barely met anymore. Life had

changed all of a sudden and the fact tortured my spirit beyond measure. But I confided in father's reassuring words, 'Mum is very ill, but she is under the best medical attention.' When he told me that mother was comfortable, and I never understood what he meant until I came of age. Although I harbored hopes of mother's speedy recovery and return home, there was an irresistible innate and resident fear in me that portended otherwise, and I would struggle with it. At the time, I was too young and ignorant to understand what my mother's breast cancer meant, and no one told me that the disease had metastasized to lethal proportions. It was eating her alive, unknown to me, and it is the thought of such pain and anguish that my loving mother underwent that causes me to often lament in the solitude of my rooms the more when I recall those dark years.

I vividly remember that chilly morning when my aunt escorted me to school and drove away as I walked to class. 'Go on and have a brilliant day child, won't you?' 'Yes aunt.' 'Pass my warm regards to Mrs. Raines.' 'Okay, bye.' 'See you in the evening,' she said. As I walked away, I realized that the day strangely felt different and gloomy. It was cloudy with a chance of rain, and the air was uncharacteristically still. The giant tree by the classroom window stood there, silent and reserved, with sleepy solidity, as if mourning.

Somewhere mid-way through the math class, I spotted father's car entering our small school's compound. I was in between delighted to see him after three days and fearful for the reason of his visit since it was rare of him to do so. I saw him get out of the car and walk into the principal's office before the teacher called out to me to pay attention. A few minutes afterwards, the principal came into the class and had a five minute chat with the class

teacher in what seemed to be a very solemn conversation, from the look on their faces. In a moment I caught the teacher steal a glance in what seemed like utmost sympathy but she quickly withdrew her glance. For a patronizing teacher I had never seen her like that. After the chat, she came over to me, 'Pack your belongings into your bag child, for your father awaits you in the principal's room.'

In the parking lot, seated in the car with my father, the same sorry and beleaguered sight of the father I met in the principal's room struggled to speak. 'Are you okay?' I asked. 'Is everything okay?' It was I who initiated the dialogue. Dad replied, 'There is something I have to tell you but you have to promise me you will be strong.' 'Yes father.' 'I'm sorry baby, mother has slipped away silently in the morning. She is no longer with us.' When he said it, I understood that for sometime I had half heartedly expected the news for sometime now but I never knew it would feel the way it did. As I came to understand, there is nothing that can prepare one for the death of a loved one even after a year of hopeless illness, neither any amount of drugs or therapy. I felt sad for mother. I felt life slip right out of me when I saw her lifeless self afterwards. It was unreal. Deep inside my crushed spirit, I understood that life would hence be but a shadow of its former self, an empty and hollow noise without my mother. Though I live, I died with mother the day father informed me of her death in that parking lot amidst uncontrollable sobs.