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I've gone to more funerals in my life than I have been to weddings. The first funeral I went to was my grandfather's—diabetes.

I was never really close to my grandfather on my mother's side for a variety of reasons. I was in the United States, he was in Guatemala, plane tickets are expensive, he hates traveling—the timings just never really seemed to align. I remember one winter vacation, my mother asked me if I wanted to go to Guatemala for the holidays. I immediately said yes. I've always wondered why my mother suddenly decided that specific winter to go. But now that I look back on it, she probably knew his time was near.

My grandfather had been diagnosed with diabetes for over twenty years at that point. It was something I kind of just assumed wasn't that bad since he was still alive after all that time. Since we were always so far from each other, I never really saw the effects that his illness had on him. That winter was the only time I saw the toll it had on his mental health.

I remember walking into my mother's childhood home—the home my grandfather had built during his younger days. Then I saw him. The man that built the roof over his head with his own two hands, laying in bed in adult diapers.

"¿Quién es ella?" he asked my mother, shakily pointing to me with his bony finger. He didn't know me. He didn't remember me. He didn't remember the granddaughter that he held on the day she was born. While I was looking at the man that always wore brown plaid shirts and matching suspenders, he was looking at a complete stranger. The man that I was excited to see after so long apart had no recollection of me whatsoever.

I can still remember the only time he had come to the U.S. We had gone to the park that was near my house and we fed the ducks bread as we walked along the lake. I was terrified of ducks, but I remember wanting to impress him so I could seem like a big kid. There's a box of photographs in the garage from that day. It's been ten years and

I can't seem to look at them without crying. I wish I had known that that was the last time I was going to see my grandfather in good health.

I don't really remember what happened after that. My mother and I didn't end up staying at that house that week since there wasn't really space for visitors in the small house. Or maybe because she wanted to protect me from further heartache. I'm not really sure anymore.

The trip continued and my mother would visit her father every other day, while I stayed at my father's side of the family's house. I liked it there. I had cousins to play with, my grandmother would always cook my favorite meals, but most of all, I didn't have to witness my immobile grandfather. I didn't want the image of when he was healthy to be replaced with images of him struggling to go to the bathroom or having to be mouth fed by my aunts.

Soon January 1st, 2010 came. I was burning fireworks with my cousins at midnight to celebrate the New Year. I had never done that before since it's strictly forbidden in most parts of the U.S. I specifically remember the overpowering smell of the burning wicks and the burning sensation in my eyes from the excessive smoke, but I didn't care. I was having fun. I was spending time with my cousins who I only had the chance of seeing once or twice a year. I can vividly remember burning a bumblebee firework, one that would fly and spin in the air once ignited, before my aunt called me inside. I assumed it was to tell me to get ready for bed or to ask if I was hungry. But instead, she told me to go upstairs, that my mother was asking for me. I remember being slightly annoyed that my firework time was being interrupted.

"Se murió tu abuelito Rupe," my mother told me.

I bawled my eyes out. Of course, I had cried before. I cried when I broke my elbow. I cried during arguments with my siblings. I cried when I didn't want to go to school. But nothing could compare to the way I cried that night. I uncontrollably sobbed in my mother's arms until I was hyperventilating. While I was a mess, my mother didn't shed a single tear. Or at least not in front of me.

I knew my mother loved her father. She would send him as much money as she could while she was in the U.S for his medication and would talk with my aunts every week to see how he was doing. She always told me stories of when she was younger and how she always felt like she was her father's favorite out of her six other siblings—something that she would rub in their faces. She told me how during nursing school, her father was her biggest sup-

porter. How he would always encourage her to get good grades and work overtime to help pay for the tuition.

That's how I choose to remember my grandfather. Not as someone who would scream incoherently when he was denied his sugary snacks or whose memory was becoming nonexistent, but as the man whose golden tooth would shine when he cackled with laughter or the man who was strong enough to carry me over his shoulders. That was *my abuelito Rupe*.