

Mourning

by MrsQ

It was a phone call we never expected. You were so full of life and joy and the sound of your laugh was pierced in our minds. Two strokes. That's what they said. No explanation, no back story. We worried we would lose you. Immediately, all of our memories with you started to come to mind. The last time we saw you, you were as cheerful as you had always been. Your spirit always so lifted and your soul always so inspiring. A strong woman indeed. Through trials and tribulations, you fought like a warrior. You lost a battle against life and you found the way to get back up and fight again. Another surgery. Another phone call. You didn't make it. You were now in life support and we wanted to say good bye to you. We drove eight hours to meet you for the last time. We brought our infant son so you could finally meet him. The drive was brutal. Our hearts raced due to the anticipation of what we were about to encounter. A final goodbye. This is not how we wanted it to be. We had planned for you to come visit and stay with us for a few days. Not like this. Not now. Not yet.

We finally arrived. The last time we saw you, just the year before, you had asked us to not allow a funeral be the next time we got together as a family. We failed you. The worst part was that it was your goodbye what brought us together. The entire family was in the waiting room of the hospital. We had a few minutes to go see you and pay our respects. Your body was lying in the hospital bed. The tubes helping you breath gave us hope that maybe you would wake up and we would have you with us once again. We cried. Your nephew, my beloved husband, held my hand with a strong grip. He was never good at dealing with goodbyes ever since he lost his father at a young age. We did not know what to tell you. There was so much we needed you to know. Your nephew kneeled down beside your bed, held your hand, and sobbed like a little boy while telling you how much he loved you and appreciated you. We all cried. I couldn't speak. I told you in my mind how much you meant to me

and how much I appreciated having you in my life. I knew you could hear me. I could hear you telling all of us that you were ok. We saw you yawn. We all stopped crying immediately thinking you had perhaps woken up. The nurse explained these were just reflexes and confirmed you were indeed not with us anymore.

The entire family gathered around your bed. Mike lead a prayer for you and said a few words thanking you for bringing so much happiness to our families. We all cried as we heard your sons say a few words to you. We all realized you had been a mother figure to many of us and we shared our appreciation for you. Our Titi. Smiles, laughs and funny stories were the main things we would remember from you. Strength, compassion and charisma were many of the words we heard describing you. Mama cried by your bedside. It struck me that, in spite of her Alzheimer's condition, the one thing she continued to remember was that she was losing her daughter, her baby. And then I thought of my son, my only five-months-old son who was waiting in the lobby accompanied by grandma, and I felt the pain mama must have been feeling. I then understood the pain a mother feels when losing a child. And I missed you. And I wished it was all a misunderstanding and you would wake up any minute to tell us how much you loved us. I then remembered the many memories we shared together: the Puerto Rican Festival, alcapurrias, salsa dancing, thanksgiving, the Brooklyn Bridge, your garage sale, our home. I remembered every single instance we had together and I couldn't help but cry because I didn't want you to go. I wanted you to stay with us. I wanted to selfishly keep you in our lives, your body alive, and your laugh intact. We ended our prayer and left the room. It was now time for the doctors to pull the plug and liberate your body; time to set you free.

We left the hospital and gathered to remember you, to honor the wonderful woman you are, were and will always be. Many stories were shared and many tears were shed. I still couldn't believe you were gone. We received a phone call at 2:30am. Mama, who hadn't left your side since she got there, held your hand as she finished a prayer for you. You took a deep breath and parted peacefully. Your

body had finally rested. Your soul was now on a journey and we all prayed for you. A new angel was now looking over us from above.

