

April 2014

A Speechless Night

Guadalupe Astorga-Contreras
Loyola Marymount University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/fgv>



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Astorga-Contreras, Guadalupe (2014) "A Speechless Night," *First-Gen Voices: Creative and Critical Narratives on the First-Generation College Experience*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/fgv/vol1/iss1/1>

This Creative Nonfiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Academic Resource Center at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in First-Gen Voices: Creative and Critical Narratives on the First-Generation College Experience by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

It seemed as if the world was crashing down on me. My throat was suffocating and eyes were blurry. My legs felt as if they had been kicked to the point where I could not take a step without trembling first. I knew that my mom, stepdad, sister and boyfriend were all around me telling me to take deep breaths but I didn't seem to respond for I was not paying attention to them. All I wanted to see or hear was my grandma telling me, "Aquí estoy hija, ya no llores," meaning, "I'm here daughter, don't cry anymore." I could not stop crying, trying to imagine that my grandma, my second mom, was still alive and that this upcoming December I would see her getting ready for Christmas during my visit in Mexico. Then I got yet another Facebook message from my cousin saying, "Be strong just like she was. Remember that she didn't have it easy in life but was still a strong woman who never gave up. She was really proud of you, she told me so. We need to follow her example so stay strong." With this, my heart and mind accepted that my grandma had just passed away.

That night was the longest night of my life. I could not bear to imagine that the one day I decided to disconnect myself from all social media would be the day I needed to be connected. I had planned a stress free day with my boyfriend for that Thursday. We went to the mall and shopped because the following day I would start my college career by attending my university's last part of orientation leading into the first week of school. It had been a wonderful day where all I worried about was what to buy, what to eat, and how to have a good time with my boyfriend. I had been out since the morning and didn't get back home until 11 p.m. After I had finished getting ready for bed I began to watch one of my favorite shows on television and decided to finally check my Facebook account. I saw the message notification and clicked on it. I was exultant to see that my older girl cousin from Mexico whose family I lived with for 5 years had sent me a message since I had not talked to her in a while. This happiness was quickly turned into gloom. I read her message saying that my grandma had passed away earlier that day. I read it again and again trying to figure out whether she was messing with me or not, but I knew that she would not joke about something like that. My heart suddenly stopped, and I tried to grasp anything around me for I felt as if I was sinking into my bed. I tried to keep calm but tears won the battle.

Images from my time living with my grandma in Mexico rushed through my mind. Each of them quickly highlighted her face and blurred out anything else that was in the picture. The image of her bedroom suddenly paused and it was so vivid that I felt as if I was back home with my grandma. I began to look around the room and the feeling of home was smoothly surrounding me bringing a slight smile to my face full of tears. The room was very spacious and rustic. All of the furniture was made of wood and was meticulously decorated with hand-woven rugs of subtle colors. Everything had its place and was never moved from its original spot unless it had to be cleaned out which was usually my grandma's and

my duty every once in a while. Picture of babies were hung on the wall next to the heavy, dark orange curtain which covered the wall-long window. Next to them, a small catholic altar with images of Jesus Sacred Heart and the Holy Trinity stood. Candles lit up the room all day and were accompanied by the scent of a sweet cherry blossom perfume. On the vanity set, a collection of early 20th century golden hair brushes, mirrors, and clocks reminded you of an earlier era where women wore big, long, corset dresses and men wore slacks every day. This image was rapidly becoming more tangible and surreal at the same time until I saw my grandma sitting down on the edge of her bed; she sat there just the way I last saw her back in March when I visited her for a week. As I came near her, this image quickly vanished and I was taken to another memory in the living room.

In there, my 10 year old self sat by the black grand piano that I had known all my life. My grandma was playing Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven. I could instantly hear the soft and mellow piano keys being pressed down by her fragile fingers until her arthritis condition forced her to stop. I asked her if she could teach me that song because it was really nice and I wanted to play it for her. Nevertheless, her fingers were in too much pain that she was not able to play more than ten seconds of the song. I remembered her then telling me “Come on, just try it off the music sheet. It’s not that difficult and I know that you play well enough to get it without my help.” I began to play the melody but it did not sound as smooth as the music notes I had heard when my grandma was playing the same melody. I began to get frustrated and was about to give up when my grandma got up and slowly started walking towards her room. As she got to her bedroom door she said “keep on trying, don’t give up.” These words were what took me back to reality. I was still crying unstopably but I could finally get up from my bed.

I went to my mom crying and softly told her the news I had just received. She hugged me not really knowing how to console me for she knew I admired my grandma like my own mother. She knew the feeling and hence just took me to the living room where my family would then come and try to comfort me. My mom had called my boyfriend and asked if he could come over for I needed something or someone to help me calm down. He showed up and he immediately came to me. I was hugging him like an innocent little girl who just wanted to be in the arms of her mommy or daddy but in this case it was my boyfriend’s. He sat me down and just like everyone else in the room he tried to calm me down but he didn’t succeed. After I read my cousin’s message telling me to stay strong I began to think about the memory I had just had a few minutes back on my bed. I then thought of my grandma and all the difficulties she had faced throughout her life. Whether it was her arthritis, different cancer tumors, or losing two of her sons and her husband, she was still strong and never gave up in making sure our family was strong and united.

The sobbing and tears slowed down and were gradually fading away. My heart was now beating to its natural pace and the images of my grandma in my head were evaporating allowing me to see what was going on around me. As I saw my family around me I heard my grandma's voice gently saying, "don't give up," two or three times next to my ear. It was as if she was right there next to me soothing me and playing with my hair like she always did when I was a young girl and needed to be comforted. At last my night was ending and a new day was ahead of me. In fact, a new life was ahead of me. A new life where my grandma was with me only in spirit and where I would take her legacy of hard work, care and her words, "Aqui estoy hija, ya no llores."