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A Single Rose

Kimberly Ayala-Murphy

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A Single Rose By Kimberly Ayala-Murphy

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"Hello" was the soft nurturing voice echoing through my ear as my aunt answered the phone. It was about mid-day when I called her. She said she wasn't feeling well; she had a terrible headache and had taken some Tylenol.

"I am about to hang some curtains in my room," said my aunt over the phone.

"Ok, well, get some rest and take care of yourself. I love you," I said, hanging up the phone. Little did I know that would be the last time I would hear my aunts' sweet voice again.

It was that same day when I got a phone call from my mother: "Mija, I have some bad news. Your aunt is in the hospital she had a stroke and is in surgery." My heart ached; the thought of losing my aunt was terrible. Unable to think, I rushed to the hospital to find my family members giving each other solace while waiting for news. After hours of us praying and hoping for good news, the doctor finally came in and informed us that she had an aneurism on the right side of her brain, and they were able to stop the bleeding, but the aneurism had caused severe damage to her speech and movement on the left side of her body. With relief and sadness, my family hugged one another with eyes full of tears and thanked God she was okay. We all braced ourselves as we entered the room. I remember seeing her there in her bed so helpless, so fragile, so still. I would have given anything at that moment to have the woman I cherished and loved so much healed from all her sickness and pain.

The earliest memory I have of my aunt is watching her draw beautiful roses on pieces of scratch paper as she would talk to my mom and grandmother. She would start out with a small oval her hand gracefully moving across the paper creating the petals, within minutes it transformed into a beautiful rose. I re-

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member practicing trying to perfect my rose like hers. I would start out with the same small oval, but my finished product would look nothing like hers; instead my rose looked like it had been stomped on and died. I would ask her show me again, please, hoping I'd get it right the next time. She was a natural artist. She had never had a lesson in her life; yet she would draw so carelessly as if it were second nature to her.

The next morning, I returned to the hospital where I found my family. My aunt was awake, but unable to speak. She gave me a reassuring smile that she was okay. With a heavy heart, I raced over to her and hugged her. It was a few days later that her health regressed and our family had to make the most difficult decision of our lives. We had to let her go; she was suffering so much and we loved her too much to let her suffer. That same day, the staff removed all the machines to let her pass on her own. However, two days had passed and my aunt was still with us. We cried, prayed and shared wonderful memories of her with each other. I remember sitting next to my cousin, her daughter, and we would squeeze each other's hand at the fear that her next breath would be her last. Tired and restless, I left the hospital to check on my husband and kids. It was then when I was gone that my aunt left us to join our creator. I hate myself to this day for leaving! I should have stayed. I should of waited a little longer. I rushed like a mad women back to the hospital. I had never run so fast in my life as I did that day. I finally reached the room. I ran to my aunt, holding her as tight as I could, wanting it all to be a horrible dream.

My aunt, Maria Rosario Martinez, passed away on January 2, 2010. It was the first time I had lost someone so dear to me; it was as if my heart had been ripped out, and I had this hole that could not be filled. As I said my final goodbye, I laid upon her casket a single red rose.

