

Perspective #1

(Maria Lopez: Mother)

I know what is happening to my body. I have accepted my fate, my destiny. September 14, 2016, two years ago when the first stroke hit me. My daughters, Deby, Alondra and I were going over to my sister Norma's house. We would go occasionally for a small get together to drink coffee and gossip about our everyday lives. It was around 5-ish when we arrived. Both my daughters disappeared from my sight into one of the bedrooms to watch TV. My nephews came out to say hello and joined in the gossip. As the night went on, I began to feel this piercing thumping in my brain. *Thump. Thump. Thump.* The pain increased every minute, little by little. *Thump. Thump. Thump.* I had the need to speak up but I never did until Norma noticed me. "¿Mija? Are you alright? You look very pale." *Thump. Thump. Thump.* "What are you talking about? I am pale. Whiter than you." She wasn't very pleased to hear my jokes when I looked like a ghost. "I think I just need to rest. I am fine." Norma offered a ride and my daughters and I left to go home.

When we arrived I immediately went to look for some pain medication. I felt like an addict trying to find the pills because I was so desperate and when I found them I was so pleased. Deby and Alondra went to bed while I sat down at the dining table with pills and glass of water in my hands. I knew taking two was probably gonna get rid of the pain but now I just felt I

wasn't fully there. As if my inner self was absent and now I was only a couple of organs, bones and tissue. I decided to go to bed and try to ignore the headache. *Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump...Thump...Thump...Thump...Thump...*

It was four o'clock in the morning and I felt like I was floating in thin air. My eyes were closed, and I was scared to see what I had woken up to. Once I opened them, my vision was blurry and my eyes felt like a camera lens trying to focus on an object. I felt weak and fragile. *Thump. Thump. Thump.* I ignored the pain and stood up from the bed. *Thump. Thump. Thump.* I walked to the bathroom and my left arm wasn't comprehending at all. I looked into the mirror and noticed my face was drooping. This was starting to worry me and I needed to advise someone because this seemed pretty serious. I grabbed my phone and I dialed one of my close friends, Pancho. He told me he was willing to help, and he would come pick me up. I waited and waited for him to get to my house and minutes felt like hours. I tried to make things a little quicker by changing out of my pajamas to regular clothing. I put on a shirt, sweatpants, and socks. I grabbed my shoes and slid my left foot in nice and easy, then, I tried to put on my other shoe on. The shoe wasn't letting me put my foot in because the tongue of the shoe was rolled up inside; Therefore, I *tried* to grab it. Fear filled my eyes as I distinguished my actions. My left hand was far from touching my shoe. I kept trying and it was as if I was replaying the same moment. I had no control over myself, mentally. I lost my ability to control. I didn't choose to feel this way. I didn't choose to wake up like this.

I was taken to the ER and a lot happened that morning. I don't remember much but what I do know is after that stroke, I knew a lot was gonna come my way. Throughout the year up til' now, I have been in and out the hospital for the same reason: Strokes. My house looks like a

pharmacy with all the medication they send me home with. I was getting the feeling as if the doctors didn't know what else to do with me and my defected brain. I developed lupus, arthritis, decrease in blood circulation, and blood clotting in my arteries. The strokes have damaged more of my body and will continue. Currently, I am not able to move my lower body and my left part of my upper body. I had a stroke affect three parts of my body and it included my left side of my face and the inside. I can't breathe on my own and not that long ago, I couldn't eat anything that wasn't pureed and thick as the sweet nectar found in flowers. I have seen the damage I've caused to my dear family and friends. Especially my beloved daughters. My doctors have told me what could happen. I am in a state where my life could be a risk at any moment. I could have a stroke that completely blows me out or a heart attack that will kill me. I have realized I have entered reality as a whole. It ate me up and here I am. I would just wish someone, anybody, would understand the condition I am in. Everyone thinks I don't put any effort in living. I don't. I don't want to be here. I wanna be free next to my mother and my father in heaven where I will be at peace because here, I will never be at peace.

Perspective #2

(Debora Navarro: Daughter)

I lived a perfect life. I had a mother and a father. I had a sibling. I had everything. Reality had its first round with me at nine years old when my father was deported. Afterwards, it just kept picking on me. It bothered me and it was hungry for the vulnerable and the innocent. It absorbed every cell in my body, engulfing me whole. I was so young and I became old with time. I doubled in age when I wasn't supposed to. My mother took both roles and took about a

third of what I felt, anger, frustration, unhappiness, and made it into something beautiful. She nurtured me, she *was* my mom. Was. Might that be the right word. She isn't the woman who cared for me. She isn't the woman who helped me grow, who watered the seedling I was. Not anymore.

After the incident with my father I was in a dark place. My mom was my light. She guided me, making sure I wasn't cutting myself with the knife of depression. I thought all the bad in my life was over, and I was almost out of the maze of pain but I ran into a dead end. My mother is ill. It isn't a cough or a common cold, it is a disease. A disease that could kill her. There isn't treatment to help her, and the stroke could hurt her more or less. The next one could claim her as "brain-dead" or a heart attack will take her away from me. *Again...again*. I saw the end, I knew I was leaving the place reality put me in. I was tricked, I was fooled, and I am an idiot for falling for it. Reality is like a drug for those who understand it. It is a drug that causes the pain we all know is bad for us, but we can't stop. I was sober and I wasn't in pain again, but my mom. The person who has been there for me when my father wasn't; including all of my childhood. Reality courses through my veins. I notice how it shackles me to the ground where its friends, depression and anxiety, decide to tag along and inject themselves into me. I feel I am a bird without wings, a lion with no teeth, a dog with no bark. I am stuck and I can't move. My mom, the blessing some of us have. I am slowly being ripped away from her.