

The Bahia

What time is it?

Still dark and cold outside, my eyes can barely open to look at the clock on my nightstand. *Is time yet?* my brain whispers. I feel the reluctance to check the time and my heart pounds with anticipation. *Not this time*, says the voice in me. When I finally make sense of the numbers *It's 5:57 am*, and a sense of relief fills me. Since there is no need to be up yet, not until 6:10 am; I start to make plans for those few more minutes of sleep. *What should I do?* my mind asks, falling back asleep will be challenging without knowing what will pass. *Yeah, let me look again*, it's still 5:57 am, and my mind starts to count. We have thirteen...the clock changes to 5:58 am, *twelve minutes*, now I am anxious.

5:58 am

Through the blinds of my bedroom, the bright moon reminds me to self-reflect while lying down on the bed. The room feels so cold, and so quiet, that I can hear my heartbeat. At that moment, my mind starts to spin around, my thoughts are slowly overtaking me, and I'm still trying to decide how to enjoy these few minutes of sleep. I start making a list in my head.

I could get up, Naaah! that is too obvious.

I could get up, and read the book I keep avoiding.

I don't need to get up and don't want to. The plan is to stay in bed until 6:10 am... *Buzz buzz buzz*, the alarm goes off and startles me. *What just happened!* my mind shouts trying to make sense of how the time flew by or was sucked in by the Twilight Zone.

That buzz is horrible. One of these days the horrible buzz needs to go. Even after turning it off, I can still hear it inside my head– the feeling is unpleasant– it stiffens my muscles and my thoughts.

I have changed the alarm sound before, I don't know how many other sounds this clock has, maybe it is just a standard sound, *yeah !!* Now I remember trying to change it, but the clock only has one alarm sound.

But why could I not remember that, it was just yesterday that I tried to change the sound, or maybe a week before that. For a moment I think that I might be going crazy, that would be depressing. Maybe the reason is, is that I'm not fully awake, I tell myself. A cup of coffee and something to read while my brain decides to wake up might help.

I stand at the edge of my bed and pause for a moment, taking a deep breath, and inhaling as much air as possible. I hope my back pain will not make itself known today. From the corner of my eye, a picture on top of my cherrywood stand catches my attention. I don't have a lamp on my stand, so making out the image is difficult. I reach for the light switch and grab the picture, blinking a few times to give my eyes time to adjust.

I see the kids and grandkids in the picture. It's an old frame from a few years back that I have kept close since we have not seen each other in a while. The kids are grown and are taking care of their families. I take another deep breath while placing the picture back, but this time inside the drawer. *Yeah, I remember, my mind tells me. How to best describe this? Why is this picture so important to me?* The answer is inside my brain but it feels blurry. I just want to relive that moment and somehow travel back: smell the air, touch the hands of my children, and hear the cute voices of my grandkids. I just want to remember again, and never forget.

Bahia Solano

Bahia Solano is a very poor town, the region is cut off from the country by three mountain ranges; roads are small, and not a lot of traffic makes it in. The locals grow their food and fish daily, they also pay for small airplanes to deliver medicine, and other necessities to the town.

There is electricity and water, but no police or emergency services in the town. My ancestors loved this area for being untouched, uncorrupted, and peaceful side on this side of the Pacific Ocean.

It was the summer of 1989, William, Elizabeth, Guido, William's wife, Ana, Elizabeth's husband, Ruben, their kids, some friends, and my wife, Leda, made the trip to my family's beach house. I remember the day; it was overcast and the smell of salt and fish was strong in the air. I remember being agitated about why we picked this day to go to the beach. I just wanted to stay in bed and just listen to the rain fall. In this area, the rain turns the roads into a muddy bath for whoever adventures the town, and more often, it floods the streets and drains sewers. I remember my dear Leda bringing me coffee, eggs, and an arepa with cheese. I can still taste the bitter-sweet flavor mixed with a little bit of burnt butter and the crispness of the arepa. I remember being grouchy about the weather, but Leda's kindness relaxed my body. We headed out to make it early to the water. That way we could get a few minutes before it rains. I could smell the salt and the moisture in the air getting stronger by the second; my skin was sticky, and I could see the salt accumulating on my arm. I kept my eyes on the looming gray cloud out in the ocean. It was an amazing view. The water was green, calm, and everyone was playing around the water, I just sat on the sand with my dearest. The sand was soft, *how I miss that*, and her hand was on top of my hand, like whispering to me, *I got you*, but not saying it— she did not have to, she never did. I knew she was always loyal and genuine with me. Leda was able to bring me out of my darkness, and just her presence made me calm.

Leda takes her hand off and reaches for her bag. I think something is wrong, *Did I do something to make her pull away?* I remember thinking that she might have lost interest due to my attitude that morning, maybe she is hurt because I did not tell her to thank you for the breakfast, or

maybe because I did not kiss her or smile at her— my heart rate goes up. What a dummy I was, always anticipating rejection. She pulls out her camera, she wanted me to capture “that” moment: our kids and grandkids all in one place. I got up and asked everyone to get in the picture while I held the camera. I felt a soft touch on my right shoulder. I quickly turned and it was Leda, she was staring into the horizon like she could see the future.

“Get in hon!” I told her.

“No,” she said, “not today, this time I want to commit it to my memory.”

I was happy to hear that she and I could just be the ones telling the story, in our perspective, in an encrypted way, the only keepers of that memory.

6:12 am

That picture means so much to me. I chuckled. Those memories are still there, I don’t know how to fully describe them to others, but I feel like I’m still there, *con mi familia*.