



# My Change

By Esmeralda Alcalá

**I**AWOKE WITH blood on my hands, tears in my eyes, and no more parents. I lost my angel when I was seven years old; my angel that guided me through life. Even though I do not have her close now, I know that she watches over me every day and helps me through rough times.

My name is Esmeralda Alcalá; I am a senior at Mabton High School. I never noticed there was anything wrong with my parent's relationship. It was always peaceful and great and I never saw them argue. I noticed that my father drank alcohol every day after work but I did not think (at the time) that it was a bad thing. My Father worked year round in a hop's company; an ingredient that is used to produce beer. My mother worked long hours during the week at Washington Beef and had weekends off to spend with her baby (me). Life with my parents was the most perfect family anyone could ever ask for. That is why I always ask myself, "How could this have happened?" Never once in our house did I hear any yelling or arguing. I did not even see my mom sad or mad. The only things I remember were all the smiles, kisses, and hugs (mostly for me) but still, there was only love in our home.

We had our occasional family trips to Mexico and visited family. In Mexico, when my mom and dad got remarried, my sister and I got to be the girls in the back that held the dress. That was the best trip of my life, which was when I still had my mommy and daddy by my side. When we got back, it was January. When February came, we went and took Valentine pictures. It was a loving family picture with a background of hearts. That is what we had in our family: love!

The day that changed my life was the day I lost my angel. It is not a scary story. It is just the worst experience that someone could have, especially as a little girl of seven years. We had only lived a couple of months in the house that my parents were buying. For some reason, that house always gave me the creeps. I don't know why, but I never wanted to sleep in that house. I always wanted to go to my Grandma's house and sleep there. February 27, 2000 was a scary night. Like every night, I went to sleep with my Mom, which was something that I usually did when I was scared.

The night was rainy and spooky (well, to me anyway). As I cuddled in my Mommy's arms, I fell asleep. Just as I fell deeply asleep, the light went on and my Father was there, furious. He started yelling at my Mom and I was terrified. This was the first time that anything like this had ever happened. As they kept arguing, my Mother looked down at me and told me, "No le entiendas tu papi esta loco" which means, "Don't listen to your Dad he is crazy". After she told me that, she covered me with the blanket. As I lay there with my eyes wide open I just waited and hoped that they would stop fighting. After about an hour of my Dad and Mom fighting, there was a **Bang! Bang!** Once I heard that I sat up. I looked at my Mom... all I saw was a gush of blood running down her mouth. Her mouth was open and it was so agonizing for me to see her like that. I sat there for about ten minutes looking at her. I felt I was paralyzed for those ten minutes.

When I stood up, I looked down and saw my Dad gasping for air and just looking at me. I was eye to eye with the person that had just killed my Mother. But killing her had not satisfied his anger; he had shot himself.

I always think of that day and wonder if my sister and I ever crossed his mind. I do not have hatred towards him at all; he is my Father and I love him. People make mistakes and I know that his was a major one, but I have learned through time to forgive. I cannot forget, but I can forgive. As he lay there looking at me I started to disparage my Father. I felt so disrespectful because my Father was dying and there I was, a little seven year old girl yelling at him. "Porque lo histe; porque Dad; que te hiso ella? Dad porque? No pensate en mi? Dad porque?" ("Why Daddy? Why? What did she do to you? Why did you not think of me?"). He looked me right in the eyes, trying to tell me something but I could not understand him. He was just laying there on the floor looking at me, and he could not stop gasping for air. After five minutes of looking at my Dad, I ran into the living room. Once I was out, I ran back in because I had forgotten about my little sister. My sister had just turned one in October. When I went in, she was sitting on the bed,

witnessing everything with her eyes wide open so I led her to the living room.

At my Mother's funeral, everyone who knew, loved, and cared for her was there. There was a tremendous amount of people at the reception where my Mother's body was viewed. I remember seeing the casket and feeling scared. My Mom still looked like my Mom, she just seemed to be sleeping. I wanted to go and wake her up, but I did not dare touch her.

There was a picture displayed near her of she and I. During the memorial everyone expressed their sorrow to me. It didn't help. How was that going to bring my Mom back to me? My Grandmother told me it was time to go; to take my Mother to the cemetery, where it would be the last time we were ever going to see her. One of my Aunts took my sister and I to give my mother that last kiss. I watched my sister do it and when it was my turn I looked at my Mother. I was terrified because I thought that when I went to give her the kiss, she was going to pop up, grab me, and not let me go. I did not have the courage to give her the last kiss... I regret that so much. I cannot believe that I did not give my Mother that last kiss. I did not say goodbye to her; what a daughter.

Everything is a blur when I try to think of all that happened. The night after her memorial, I realized that I had to be a Mother for my sister. I had to step up and show her that even though we lost our angel that I could be her angel. Through the sympathy, the hugs, kisses, and all the tears, I realize that everything that happened to me has made me a stronger person. I know when I'm walking down that aisle (whether it is graduation or getting married) that my Mom will be with me in my heart and I'll send a prayer to heaven, "I love you Mom!"

This is my story. I'm an ordinary girl with a hard past. I do not feel sorry for myself because my tragedy has made me a stronger person. I still cry some nights thinking about it, but I know my parents are in a better place.

At first, I did not think I was going to be able to make it, but as life goes on I keep my head held high. I would not like to see anyone go through what I have endured because it is such a hard tragedy to overcome.

At 7 years of age I didn't think of alcohol as a problem. It had been in my life every day and my family seemed happy, but I believe that if my Dad had not been drinking my family would still be here. Now that I'm older I can see that alcohol is a big problem but not many people realize how potentially devastating it can be. It only took one moment of poor choices under the influence of alcohol to forever change my family's life. I hope people can learn from my story and think twice about allowing alcohol to impact their lives. So if you plan to drink or someone tries to influence you to drink, please remember my story. 🚫

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

*Esmeralda Alcalá is a high school senior from Washington. Alert Magazine congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We also encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.*