

The time of the lights⁴⁵⁶

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I never thought my life would suck the way it sucks right now. I know it could be worse and sometimes I feel too guilty for complaining about it, but I feel so frustrated that I wish my life was different from what it is. I always wonder if there is someone to blame or whether our fate is established and there is no escaping from it. I know I would blame my parents for the way my life turned out to be and it may be selfish to say this but that it is just how I feel.

I guess it all started before I was even born. My mother fell in love with this absolute stunning young man from the neighbourhood; she was four years younger, insecure and, therefore, so naïve. My father, this young man from the neighbourhood, was already in his twenties, he was so extroverted, so charismatic, absolutely handsome and so funny that every girl wanted to be around him. I guess my mother fell in his trap, like many others had fallen before. They had an on and off relationship until my mother got pregnant when she was twenty years old. I guess she must have been scared, nervous and hopeless. I understand that abortion was the most rational way to go, but my father loved her so much that he told her to have the baby or else he would abandon her, I mean us. My mom was so in love that of course she had the baby, I mean, she had me. Nine months later I was born. Then, reality hits. What they thought was going to be perfect turned out to be almost a nightmare. I was always sick and hospitalised since my mother never produced enough breastmilk, so I was malnourished. While my mother was there taking care of me, my father was who knows where, perhaps hypnotising some other woman with his charming face. All

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I know is that before I was one, they got a divorce because my father was a cheater. Despite all this, I remember having a very happy childhood with my friends, my mom and my grandparents. Besides, school was great since I always got excellent marks.

However, I guess life needs to remind us that happiness does not last forever. My father migrated to Spain, and he wanted me to be with him as well as my mother. It was an extremely difficult decision for my mother to make. Giving up my custody to a person that was almost never around and whom she did not trust at all. But she thought Spain was a better place for me, for us, in order to have a brighter future, not like the one we were doomed to have in Cuba. And so, the time arrived and I moved to Spain first. I was so joyful; I can't deny it. It was a new country, I was with family, and I am sure my father wanted to redeem himself for all the lost time and he gave me the best of him and all his loving, and I accepted it, gladly. I arrived in December, and it was magical. I had never experienced Christmas the way they do it here. I had never had presents on Christmas day because in Cuba people were so poor that could not afford it. I had never tasted such delicious food. I was living in paradise. I did not even think of my mother, I had not had the chance to miss her nor my grandparents. But reality hits again and I have to start school, which turned out to be a bilingual primary school and I had never even heard a word in English. And so, my nightmare begins. I was bullied by my classmates and by teachers. I was told by a teacher I would be expelled from school because I was just ignorant. I had the worst time during those two first months.

Luckily, March arrived, bringing spring as well as my mother. I was so relieved to have her once again near me. She was the one who helped me with homework like she had always done before migrating to Spain. However, I was failing so I had to retake the year. We thought it was a disadvantage, but it was actually the best thing that could have ever happened to me. During that new year I got so much better; then came the fifth grade which made me an expert in English. During the last year of primary school, I was at the same level as any other of my classmates. In the graduation day I was awarded with a diploma that recognised my academic progress. I felt extremely proud of myself.

During my adolescence years life did not get any better. Mom and I were living alone, but she was struggling with bills and rent so we had to separate from each other again. She moved to a smaller house, and I had to move with my father and his wife, again. I was so numb. It was so awful that it made sick. It was the time when I became obsessed with being skinnier, since I had always been a chubby girl. I did not eat enough, and I often forced my vomiting. Nobody knew about this, and nobody knows up to date. There were constant fights with my father. He made me cry all the time. He made me miserable. I was so unhappy but, again, nobody knew. Nobody cared. Since I had had enough, I moved back with my mother two years later. My father has not talked to me since.

I now realise I have this need to please and be accepted by people, just because I am so scared that they will abandon me or stop talking to me. But, anyways, I got older and I was accepted in college to do a Degree of Law. I was so excited but, soon after, I discovered that was not meant for me. I ended up hating the degree and my classmates. They were all so stiff and so mean, that I felt as an outcast. I cried, I was frustrated and depressed. But I was not strong enough as to abandon my studies because I did not want to disappoint my mother. I found a way to calm my anxiety and to increase my so deteriorated self-esteem. I found night clubs, alcohol and sex. I went out almost every weekend, I drank too much, and I had a lot of sex with many different boys. They were all so handsome that I felt lucky that boys like them had set eyes on me, so I had to give them what they wanted and required from me in exchange. Not only my self-love did not rise, but it even got smaller. It even disappeared. I felt used, a whore. I guess now I am to blame. It was then when my first suicidal thoughts appeared. They have not stopped since. But I am still here. I guess I am not that weak after all.

Mom and I still live together. I managed to talk to her and tell her how I was feeling in that career, so she encouraged me to start all over by doing something I really loved. So, I applied to an English Studies degree and here is where I am. I am twenty-five now. I still struggle with life. Life is so damn hard, especially to poor people, let alone women. I have to work in shitty jobs in order to help my mother as much as I can. This frustrates me even more

because I have to deal with all types of people, which I don't have the patience for. Besides, I have all these dreams that I don't know if I'll ever achieve. I still think about death. It comes and goes. But I still do. It is very scary not being able to control my own mind. Those intrusive thoughts drive me crazy and when they are gone, I am so at peace but always expecting for the time they may return.

I used to have sporadic and meaningless sex with beautiful boys. I don't do that anymore. I guess I got tired of being their object in which they could get rid of all their frustration and stress. What about mine? What about my feelings? Some of them still reach out to me, however, I am not the girl they knew anymore. I have changed. I am still changing. And for that I am so grateful. Life still sucks to me, though. I still feel I am going through this dark tunnel in which I entered years ago. But I am hopeful that someday I will find the time of the lights.

Notes on contributor

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