

## Saudade

“Dad, I’m here!” I called out placing the shopping bags on the dining table, “Dad? Where are you?”. There still was no response until a loud crash came from the kitchen, metal sounds reverberating against the walls, clanging together until it all fell quiet.

“Honey? Is that you?” a low deep voice laced with pain called back. Never in my 23 years of life had he called me that before, it was always reserved for mother, but I brushed it off as a simple mistake. I walked into the kitchen to make sure that everything was alright only to be met by a pair of eyes staring back at me, slightly confused and unaware of his surroundings. I reached my hand out to help him back onto his feet making sure he hadn’t dislocated a joint, and that he wasn’t going to either in the process of getting back up.

“Oh, Delia,” his eyes met mine, anchoring him back to the ground, back to reality, “Thank you for the shopping. I really appreciate it.” He embraced me, wrapping his arms tightly around my body. I reciprocated by swinging my arms around my dad a little gentler than usual, aware that he just fell.

I walked back out to get the bags from the table while my dad, Icarus, rushed over to get the mail that was just pushed through the door. Something about his behavior had changed, I couldn’t put my finger on it exactly but my concern started to grow immensely when I found his phone in the ice tray in the freezer. I could tell it had been in there for a significant amount of time because the screen had cracked under the temperature of the machine. Recently he’s been putting his belongings in the wrong places and I brushed it off as carelessness but it’s been happening so often now that I’m not sure I can ignore it any longer. However, I decided to act as if I had never found the phone, he put too much pressure on himself and I wouldn’t want to add to the burden.

The rest of the day I chose to stay with him just in case he lost his balance again or an accident were to occur, at least I would be close enough to give him the help he needs. Plus, I enjoyed his company and I had nowhere else to go the rest of the day.

Saturday, May 23 2003

Today was not a great day, he tumbled over in the kitchen and accidentally left his phone in the freezer... again. I hope this is just an effect of old age but something is telling me it isn’t, at least not anymore. I also think he forgot that mother isn’t with us anymore, maybe I should take him to the doctors just in case. I’m really worried it’s something serious but I’m praying it isn’t.

Delia xx

I was encapsulated by the bright white lights that shone from above and the ever so clean shiny walls that surrounded me on all sides. The distant squeaks of shoes running past and wheels rolling could be heard down the corridor. Rarely heard any voice but there were muffled sobs that escaped through the wooden doors of consultation rooms each delivering the news no family would want to hear.

“Ms Whitlock?” I snapped my head into the direction of the sound, the room right next to me a head peering out grasping the edge of the door, a soft smile splayed on her face, “You can come in now.” Slowly I got up from my seat, every possibility of my dad’s diagnosis flashing through my head, I did my own research and what came up was Alzheimer’s, a brain tumor, dementia and more dementia so naturally, I was on edge.

“It looks like early stages of Alzheimer’s Ms Whitlock, but there are...” his words echoed through my head, nothing else registering in my mind except for ‘Alzheimers’. This couldn’t happen, not to my dad. I will not watch him slowly deteriorate month after month, year after year and lose all sense of his life. This will not happen. “As you know this disease can be inherited so you may want to get tested as well.” I just nodded plainly not actually understanding all that was said in the whole exchange.

As I walked to the front desk I was handed a stack of fliers, each one plastered with ‘Home Care for Elderly’. I couldn’t put him in the care of strangers, he’ll be scared and lonely with nothing but a television and a stack of magazines to keep him occupied. That is not the life I am willing to let my dad live for the little time he has left.

We got in the car, him in the passenger seat, I tried to pull myself together, tried not to let the mountain of tears spill over.

Ashley 11 White

“Honey, why are we here? Where are we?” my dad asked, sounding slightly scared and worried, “Delia? When did you get here?” I just smiled and started driving back home.

Thursday, December 10th 2003

He's got Alzheimer's and by the looks of it, it's progressing rapidly. I'm not sure how much time he has left. He has his good days and his bad days and today was one of the worst. He still think mother is alive, he is placing objects in places he shouldn't and I'm terrified he is going to put himself in danger. He almost out the knife in the toaster today and he left the house with no notice, I'm not sure how much I can support him any longer. I know I can't watch him every hour of the day, maybe putting him in a home might be the best option for him.

Delia xx

Friday 16th December 2004

It's been a year since his diagnosis and the doctors say they have not seen a case worsen so rapidly ever. He forgets to eat his meals, he's forgotten how to open doors, in fact a security watch had to be put in place so that he wouldn't wander out into the open without supervision. Last time he did that, he fell and wound up with a broken hip.

Leaving him in the care of someone else was tough but I was too busy with work to look after him everyday. He's losing his memory now and sometimes I can see it in his face, he doesn't recognise me when I walk through the door but when does, his face softens and we can have a nice conversation. Saying that watching him slowly lose control of himself is hard us an understatement, I cannot begin the describe the pain that I get when I look at him. He doesn't look like himself at all and I wonder how long more until he really cannot remember anything. How long more till the Icarus that I know is truly gone.

Delia xx

Wednesday, 28th June 2005

Dad has been getting worse, I can see it in his face everyday, he looks less and less like himself. His speech is slurring and he isn't able to do daily tasks by himself anymore. Thankfully we have this lovely nurse Tate who cares for him just that way that I would, I think they really have a special bond.

Dad's bad days are getting worse, he wakes up in cold sweats and starts shouting and screaming that he's not supposed to be here. He talks to himself, well more like he's talking to mother but she isn't in the room, those days are better than most. He's had one lucid day and I went straight from work and spent the whole day with him, but by 5pm it was like a switch clicked and everything went back to the way it was. I'm scared he'll fall back into his younger days and just never come back from it.

Delia xx

Today was the day I just got my big promotion, I was finally executive director, the role I had been working towards my whole career. My dad had been my biggest supporter throughout the whole process when he was still my dad. I know that he probably wouldn't be able to really process the news but he was the one and only person I wanted to tell when I was promoted so I decided to pay him a visit after work.

Everyone greeted me the same, bright smiles on their faces as I walked up to his room. His door was closed which meant he was being attended to so I sat in the corridor waiting. Nerves built in me just like that day in the hospital, I wasn't sure how he was going to act.

Finally I was able to go in, I placed my bags on the table and started rambling on about my promotion and how it was my dream come true and that I couldn't have done it with him. I got no response so I sat down in front of his bed gesturing to him to say something in response, but still I got nothing.

"Dad, what's wrong?" I asked, a strange feeling brewing in the pit of my stomach.

"Who are you?"