

Nakia Tinsley

The Bucket List

Gasp!

‘Que? Que? ¿Lo encontraste?’

There it was! They had already been digging for twenty minutes. The anxiety of not knowing when they would find it had begun to increase. The time capsule they had buried deep in the backyard of their family home. It was Toni’s idea, of course, he was the more sentimental twin. Twelve years had passed since being at the same spot they are now and the only feeling they felt was nostalgic.

Graci leans in to pull it out; she gives it a gentle blow to get some of the dirt off and wipes the rest with Toni’s shirt.

“Really?! I just bought this shirt”

“You’ll be okay. That’s what washing machines are for.”

The first thing Toni reaches for is his old baseball. All the memories of playing softball in the back yard with Dad came rushing back. Dad taught him when to strike the ball at the right moment and how having patience will get him very far in life.

“Their Dad was a good man.”

The first thing Graci pulls out was the beaded bracelets she had made for her and Toni. She clutched them towards her heart and looked at Toni with her big hazel eyes and the biggest grin on her face. Graci was the annoying, condescending twin, at least, but she had the utmost love and respect for her family, especially for her twin brother.

There it was... the reason they decided to dig up the time capsule. The bucket list they had written when they were thirteen years old.

“I can’t believe we actually made a bucket list, nosotras éramos tan jóvenes!” exclaimed Graci.

“Ha, we were!”

toni and gracis bucket list

1. Dye our hair a crazzzzzy color
2. Have a food fight!!!
3. Travel out of country
4. Camp outdoors
5. Stay up for a full day
6. Sky-dive

“For being only thirteen years old, we made a pretty doable and reasonable bucket list,” Toni laughed.

“We’ve completed everything but cuatro y seis” Graci replies as she gives Toni a mischievous glance.

‘Que debemos hacer primero?’

“I’ve always wanted to camp outdoors! Let’s do it!” Toni replied.

So, it was decided. Toni took the time capsule with him to his apartment as Graci stayed at the family home, which she had inherited from Dad. After completing her traditional skin care routine, putting her pajamas on and brushing her hair, she sits in bed and begins looking into what they’ll be needing for their camping trip so she could make a check-list. She was the more organized twin.

Toni got back to his studio apartment, immediately kicked off his Adidas SL Loops as he walked through the front door; put his keys on the kitchen counter, took off his shirt and threw it into the washing machine. He poured himself a glass of Pinot Noir and decided to listen to a few chapters from the new audio book that he ordered from Amazon. As he finished the last sip of his wine, he turned off his audiobook and figured it was time for bed. He took a twenty-three minute shower, slipped on his pajama pants and got all snug in bed. On his nightstand was a very old, wrinkled up framed picture of Dad and Mom. He stares at it for a moment, closes his eyes and whispers a prayer.

¹“Por favor, quita todo el dolor y el dolor en mi corazon. Llénalo de amor, alegría, paciencia y comprensión.”

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<sup>1</sup> "Please remove all the hurt and pain in my heart. Fill it with love, joy, patience and understanding."

Luckily enough for them, there was a campground site about twenty-seven miles from West Sussex. Over the next week they made a solid plan on what day of the week they'd go, how long they would be there for and everything they needed to pack.

The day had finally arrived. Toni's Toyota Sienna was packed full.

"Okay, let's make sure we have everything before we hit the road!" Graci exclaims, as she pulls out her handy dandy check-list.

"Dos carpas?"

"Sí"

"Bolsas de dormir?"

"Sí"

"Enfriadora?"

"Sí"

"Portable burner y un sartén?"

Toni laughed, "you need to tighten up on your Spanish sis"

"Cállate! It seems like we have everything we need, let us get this camping trip started already!"

Their mother was never around. She went against the very essence of maternal nature and left them to go to the states when they were only two years old. She strongly held onto her view of motherhood, even after she got married. She never wanted children and didn't understand why the world still viewed motherhood as mandatory and fatherhood voluntary. Why couldn't it be the other way around? Everyone has choices to make throughout life and she made hers. She wanted to travel and absorb the varieties of the world; she couldn't do that with twin babies. Of course, Dad never told them the truth till they were old enough to fully understand and comprehend her decision. He knew they'd resent her for never reaching out or coming back, and he never wanted them to feel like that to the woman who birthed them. Their Dad was a good man.

It had been over four years since the twins had seen each other and spent a weekend together. Toni decided it was best to distance himself after Dad's death. Dad raised them to be adventurous and taught them that spontaneity is what gives life its meaning. It was their twenty-first birthday and they had planned this grand, extravagant trip back home to Peru. They hadn't been to visit since they were five years old. The rest of their dad's side of the family had moved to the states with them, so this trip was of significance to them. They never got to know their mother's side of the family.

They landed early morning, checked-in to their Airbnb and scurried off to sight-see the Machu Picchu and the Inca Trail. Hiking Machu Picchu was the first stop on their to-do list Graci had written up. The setting itself was so beautifully stunning. The mountains garnished with nearby clouds was so breathtaking. Even the air was easier to breath in there. There is no description of the feeling they felt when seeing it. They

just felt it, like if we focus closely, we can feel vibrations coming from our bodies. That certain feeling was soon to be diminished as Graci received a phone call just before her cell service went out.

“Hola.”

“Graci! Ven a casa lo antes posible que tu padre haya fallecido!” her father’s caretaker quietly sobs through the phone.

Before she even gets a word out, she loses her grip and it s-l-o-w-l-y drops to the ground. Toni rushed over from the bodega to find her quickly trying to wipe her tears away and he asked, “Que pasa?” She holds back her tears and mentally pulls herself together and picks up her phone before telling her brother the news.

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The tents were finally set up on a flat piece of land as Graci began to make a bonfire for the night.

“Hermano, por favor” she lightly cries out as some of the fire wood is falling out of her small, crafty hands. As Toni rushes over he shakes his head and lets out a chuckle.

“Sabías que no podías cargar todos esos.”

“Cállate! Empaqué pollo, pescado o lomo saltado para que comamos. Which would you like for dinner tonight?”

“¿Como es eso incluso una pregunta, lomo saltado, for sure!! It reminds me of papá. He always made it best and I’m grateful he taught us how to cook it when we were growing up.”

“I’ll cook it exactly how he used to”

They sat and enjoyed their dinner, reminiscing, while taking in the beauty of their surroundings, as they often did as a family. The softest sunset, the whispers of the leaves, the calm lake, and the variety of noises coming from, only god knows what, creatures were out there. Graci asks, ‘Hermano, pásame mi bolso por favor.’ She proceeds to pull out some aluminum foil tightly folded into a square.

“Que es eso?”

“Life in its simplest form” replied Graci as she pulled out two small round faded yellow pills and handed one to Toni.

“What’s the worst that can happen?” Toni replied as they swallowed each of their pills with some water. It only took twenty minutes for the pill to kick in.

“Sientes eso?” Graci asked.

“Sí, I feel like the universe is trying to tell me something”

“Same. I feel like something is pulling me towards the lake. Soy yo tropezar?”

“Vamos a ver”

They walk over and gaze at their reflections bouncing off the gently, flowing water. They weren't just looking at their reflections... they were looking into their souls. They continued to quietly have conversations within themselves until Toni felt a faint whisper from the wind. 'I'm sorry.'

"Graci, did you hear that?"

"Uh, No?"

Toni feels a spiritual presence behind him and swiftly turns his body. There was nothing to see but what he felt seemed so familiar to him. It was his mother. It just had to be.

"Mamá?" Toni softly asks.

"I'm sorry"

As Toni fills his heart sink into his stomach. He tightly shuts his eyes, puts his head down and shakes it in disbelief.

This can't be happening, what did Graci give me?! Am I hallucinating?!

As he slowly opens his eyes and pulls his head up, he still feels her presence there with him. "Why'd you never come back for us? I just need to know." Toni asks as his voice cracks as he fights back his tears.

Graci turns around to see her brother just standing there, quietly sobbing. She does a double take to make sure she's actually seeing what she's seeing. The drugs had begun to peak and the first of her five senses to become disoriented was her sight.

"Toni, que pasa?"

"It's mom Graci. Can't you feel her presence? She's here! It's her! She came back!"

Maybe I shouldn't have given him that pill.

"Toni, let's go back..."

"NO!"

"I am not leaving this spot until I talk to her. I need to know," Toni screams as he looks at his sister. His pupils were dilated, and she knew she needed to calm him down and keep him hydrated. She's done this a couple of times before. She runs over to the cooler to grab a bottle of water and returns to see her brother down on both knees, hands pressed together, with his eyes tightly closed as an unbroken stream of tears roll down both cheeks.

"Mamá, I forgive you."