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Premature

In today's culture, a moment that represents a coming of age is when a boy receives his first wallet. I have been very mature ever since I was young, and this was evident because when I was ten years old, I asked my *tia*, Alejandra, for a wallet. Two years ago, I began to take care of my *tia* after she was diagnosed with liver cancer. The wallet is a sign of maturity, and my maturity was tested when I took on the role of a caregiver.

I have always shown that I am more of a mature individual than others in my age group. When life suddenly introduces unexpected situations, it is kind of a moral obligation to take on certain roles. My family was deeply impacted by the news of my aunt having cancer, my immediate family even more. She did not have an immediate family of her own, so she grew close to mine. She was more than just my *tia*—she became like a best friend, like a second mother.

Having a natural trait of helping others, I became a caregiver for my beloved *Tia* Alejandra. I started taking her to her chemotherapy sessions that sometimes lasted up to six hours or more. She would feel bad that I would go, but I always did it with love and a smile on my face, making sure she felt motivated to keep on with the battle that she was facing. Putting aside things in life is another example of maturity. I put aside my social life, my academics at times, and my free time. From chemo in El Paso, to chemo at MD Anderson in Houston, they were very special experiences to share with my *tia*. For once in my life, someone depended on me. At first,

it was very unfamiliar, but as time passed, it started to become second nature to check on her. She saw me as the son she never had.

My Tia Alejandra gave me that wallet. Now that I look at it, I think of her and all memories we had together. Holding that wallet in my hands, which has begun to grow old, I notice it has gotten better with time, like a fine wine. It is a black leather wallet that has embroidery of the Denver Broncos Football Team logo on top of it. The wallet has become perfectly creased to my bottom. I hear my *tia*'s voice telling me, "*Gracias por todo, mi amor*" which means, "Thank you for everything, my love."

Years have passed, and the wallet has more and more of a purpose to me in my life, and sometimes it seems like it is a part of me, like I cannot live without it. I look at it now and start comparing it to life and how we have ups, which is having money in our wallets, then lows in our lives, which is having no money. The stuff we carry inside of them can compare to our loved ones, how we keep them safe inside. The actual physical wallet can be our bodies and how they start to wear out. The stitching starts to become unstitched. The leather starts to become smooth with subtle cracks, but the most important thing is the memories we had with them.

My *tia*'s life can be looked at as a great example of living life. She traveled the world, enjoyed her young age, and also loved her family. Tia Alejandra was a very important person in my life. She kept me motivated about school. She gave me words of wisdom in my time of need, whether it was a problem at home or with girls. When I carry the wallet with me, I think of all the times I spent with my *tia*, all the car rides we shared, all the meals we came together for, all the discussions we had about her travels around the world, and, of course, all the love I received from her.

Among the numerous things that my *tia* taught me were to be humble and that less is more. She herself was always very modestly dressed and encouraged me to do the same. She enjoyed the moment, which I would like to follow. She also taught me to be patient. I would have been an extremely different person if I did not have her as a part of my life.

I decided to major in nursing after the experience I went through. Seeing what kind of a difference people can make in someone's life it is self-rewarding. Knowing that I can make a difference, like providing comfort or breaking down the language barrier in someone else's life motivates me every day to proceed into this field of work.

So is a wallet really an item of a man? I believe it is not, it is the man who that makes the title, not the title that makes the man. Hopefully, I can keep this wallet for a very long time to come. I would like to hold on to it even after it cannot do the job. Keeping the memories close to me will help me remember Tia Alejandra and all the times we shared.