

Excerpt from Sumac's Journey: An Amankaya Life

- **Andean Mountains** -

There is a courage you summon up and call to you when needed and it fortifies your heart in a way that no earthly force can overthrow. Sumac's grandmothers used this force to move them through the lives they were given. She too would learn of this force and it would push her through every day of her life. It is their stories of courage, magic, fear and espiritu that would save her again and again.

During La Guerra del Chaco in 1932, Papi Serapio as Sumac knew him, was active in the military. Her grandmother was left back in Sacaba pregnant with their first child while he went to aid in the war effort. As the war dragged on, Mama Cruzesa worried about his well-being and would go regularly to the army headquarters to ask about her husband. She was always told there was no news, as this war was being held in the arid desert between Paraguay and Bolivia, and there was no way to communicate with them. Undaunted and without hesitation Mama Cruzesa gathered herself together and headed to el Gran Chaco to find the father of her child. Sumac's grandfather was transporting food and supplies to aid in the war effort, staying days at a time in El Gran Chaco. It was a very dangerous time with resources sparsely available. The harsh climate, isolated regions and densely forested areas caused over 100,000 people to die.

Despite the heavy scent of death and the clash of human lives, they stayed on in El Chaco until the war was over and then made their way back home to their Ilajta...where life would unfold and destiny would take hold.

This confluence of life and death, of being given and taking away is a delicate interchange we experience throughout our lives, whether we are aware of it or not. Death in this realm of existence can feel heavy...it is a passing from one world to the next...a paper thin transition...a death to one existence and a birth into another. And yet, for those of us left behind...in a world of illusions, this transition can feel final.

Mama Cruzesa swept up the corners of her home with her pollera, brushing up the memories of each child...folding their unspoken first words into each step...holding still each memory that will fade into nothing more than a watermark on her life. Her very foundation in question...this was child number four that was stripped from her still full breasts.

Each sweet, small hand turning pale, dying to a diarrhea that would not stop. No matter what the White doctors prescribed, like feathers, they slipped beyond her reach. Three brothers and one sister had transitioned to the spirit world. Three to dysentery filled with aspirin given by the doctors from Manhattan, hiking through the Andes while on a leave of absence. Lawsuit pending. *“Ve con los americanos Cruz, they will help you. Where else will you take them, con tu gente del monte? Your people don’t even speak good*

Spanish!" The fourth would meet the same fate with the local doctor, also trained in New York.

She knew that as the mother, she was the center of the home...it all revolved around the strength of her heart and yet, cracks were swallowing up her children. Questions swarmed her forehead...where was she failing? What was she missing? How could her strong arms not be wide enough to hold them all? She turned to look at who was left behind...heart beating strong, legs like small, thick tree trunks that give great promise, full head of straight, dark, black hair - a sure sign that his indigenous ancestry was coursing through each vein, pushing out flowers of magnificence.

Eduardo.

He ran through the home with precise steps and a solid vision. He could see with a wide lens the fullness of the world in front of him. A voice ancient and knowing within his small beating heart, knew it would take great courage. With one hand grounded in the roots of his people, with the other he reached into the future, pushing right through the veil that separates spirit from flesh.

Just four years old he had suddenly become feverish and overwrought by convulsions...all liquid exiting his body in rapid waterfalls through every opening that allowed liquid to move. Weeks had gone by and the medicine of the Western doctors

was once again not working. Mama Cruzesa, sitting at the kitchen table of their adobe home where earth and home clung together, her head hung in her swaying arms that moved rhythmically with the continuous open and squeeze of the invisible hand that gripped at her throat. Wails of deep loss and sadness made their way through her open lips, landing heavily on the table in front of her. This would be child number five. She had tried everything to save him. With time, his convulsions would lessen...only his red cheeks and fluttering closed eyelids would belie his still sleep.