Babies Do Come Back

At any moment, Luz’s extended family would be crowding her mother’s home in mourning of the youngest member, a baby girl named Anais. Bloated and stressed, Luz was sweating like a pig waiting for the gut-wrenching ceremony to be over.

“Calm down,” her mother said softly, “Yemayá’s nature has a plan.”

“I doubt it” Luz quickly interrupted.

Everything about the Afro-Santería religion meant nothing to Luz following her baby’s sudden death. For days, she questioned all of the culture’s teachings and was willing to start yet another argument until the doorbell loudly rang.

Guests piled themselves inside to quickly view baby Anais’ cadaver in her white lacey cradle, giving their condolences and gifts on the way out. However, Luz was distracted by her grandmother suspiciously lingering around the cradle. In one quick motion, the elder bent the baby’s right toe until she heard a loud crack.

“Just what do you think you are doing,” Luz murmured as she marched over, “why did you just do that abuela?”

Kindly, the frail woman took Luz’s hands and whispered. “Let me tell you precious, your cousin Pia is at the hospital and is going to give birth any moment. Leave. Be there.”

Motioning toward the door, the grandmother begged Luz to leave right at that moment. Not even 5 minutes went by before she made up her mind and blazed out the door like a scared rabbit..

Opening the door just enough to peek in, Luz wasn’t sure what to expect or if she was even in the correct room. Pia glanced over and saw her, “Come on in, her name is Ziamara, after grandmother.”

Quietly, Luz stepped in the room where Pia was resting with the baby. Right at that moment, she was fixated on only one thing. She walked over with the image of her own baby. Those big round eyes followed her as she stumbled over to Pia’ bedside.

“Um, can I hold her?”

Very carefully, Luz cradled the newborn, examining everything about her. With hesitance, she went over every finger, looking desperately for markings. Xerosis caused dry scaling on the baby’s skin, making it frustrating to see indications, but all it took was a glance at the feet. Yemayá either was received, or Luz was going crazy. Ziamara’s right big toe indeed, was bent away from the others, with a dark line across it as a birthmark, exactly where her grandmother marked Anais.