

**“Duelo Inesperado/Unexpected Loss”**  
**By Guadalupe Villaescusa**

Losing a loved one is hard. August 2019

My sister calls me. My mother is in the hospital. I ask for time off from work to be with her. Her last week of life. A lot of relatives and friends supported us at her funeral.

It is hard, sad. But not unexpected. The circle of life.

February 2020

Covid-19. We don't take it seriously. It is far away, and we are in America. We are safe.

April 2020

News about deaths, cases, empty streets, empty schools and stores. Tired front-line workers.

August 2020

My friend Maria is like family. Her husband has Covid-19. He is in intensive care. He passes. We cannot believe it. Two weeks later Maria's older son also has the illness. His lungs are destroyed by the virus. Their family tries all they can to save his life. Still he dies.

Maria cannot say a final good bye to them. And the funerals? Only 6 family members are allowed to attend . . . in front of a small container with ashes.

Losing my mother was hard, but I think it was better that she left before Covid-19.

Spring 2021

People think that Covid-19 is not serious. I get frustrated when they refuse to isolate, wear masks, or wash hands frequently. How can I convince them that it is real . . . that people are dying?

Now a vaccine came. However, many people reject it. Some friends tell me that the vaccine is a trick from the government to control us. They joke about my concerns. I know so many people who are suffering from this illness.

Covid is not just an annoyance. Covid is not a political game. Covid is real. The worst pandemic of my lifetime . . . It kills.

Maria still struggles with grief and I don't know how to help. My heart hurts. She lost half of her family in just a couple of weeks. What should I do? How do I give her some comfort?

I join her to look at pictures: her son and his girlfriend; her husband singing his own songs; the brothers together. Smiles during family reunions, hugs on Christmas Eves.

Maria talks about her husband and son as if they are still alive. In present time as an intent to keep them with her. They are here with her, in spirit. She talks with them. And I respect that.

So, I talk about them in present time too. Her husband IS very talented. Her son IS strong: he loves her very much. They are here. They will always be.

In memory of Manuel and Ibis Campos