

A Warm Embrace

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Mom always made sure I had new clothes for school, as she would tell me, “When I was growing up, the kids at school would make fun of me for wearing clothes that I got from the thrift store or that were handed down to me.” Each morning, she and I would walk to school together since my school is close to home. Before I walked inside, she always gave me a warm hug and told me, “I love you, stay safe and be smart.” Mom works very hard for us, and usually by the time I get off from school, she is very tired but still makes time to help me with my homework and play or read me my favorite stories each night before bed.

As the air cooled and leaves changed colors, Mom began Halloween preparations. Mom was sewing a costume for me to wear. Sonic the Hedgehog, my favorite character! Each year mom makes me a new costume to celebrate, and this year I am looking forward to Halloween since it’s the first time I will be going with my friends. I can show off my costume and run up and down the sidewalks as I race to get my favorite candy, a Snicker’s bar!

Two weeks before Halloween, I was called by my teacher during recess to gather my backpack and sweater. At first, I was enthusiastic to leave school early, but when I spoke to my teacher, Ms. Heather, her face wasn’t as bright and smiley as it typically was. She told me, “Your father is coming to pick you up soon, make sure to grab everything before leaving home.” I was lost. I didn’t know what was happening. I just wanted to know if everything was alright.

When Dad came to pick me up, he had tears in his eyes. I had never seen Dad cry before.

On the car ride, Dad told me, “We are going to the hospital, Mom had an accident.” My heart raced. I did not like hospitals. I kept asking, “Why?” but Dad wouldn’t respond. The sadness in his eyes said everything. I began to weep as I stared out the car window. All the neighborhood homes were decorated with pumpkins and lights, as the sun slowly went down. I imagined a world in which Mom was okay, one where she was hugging me. I then drifted off to sleep.

We arrived at the hospital, and Dad held my hand as we walked along the corridor. He didn’t seem like himself. Dad always knew how to make tough situations less scary like the time the electricity went out after a bad weather storm, and he told us stories with the flashlight puppets he made. His spark was gone. Not once did he make a joke or smile since he picked me up from school.



I. C. U. I had never heard of such a thing. I think it means that the doctor is visiting Mom. I hope the doctor can make Mom feel better so we can all go home and be normal again. We were in the waiting room for several hours. My cousins were coming, which meant I would finally have someone to talk to. All around me are adults, white coats, and blue gowns. It's all very scary. I just want to go home.

When everyone arrived, it was nighttime. Before we visited Mom's room, Dad told me "Mom can't talk right now, she is asleep, but she loves you very much." I wondered why he needed to tell me that she loved me. I already knew that. She tells me that every day. As Dad and I slowly walk to her room, I hear loud beeping sounds and see a lot of nurses sitting in the center on their computers. We opened the door. Something was incredibly wrong. The person in the bed couldn't be Mom. Her eyes were swollen shut, her face was bruised and cut, and she couldn't move. I ran over to her bed and begged, "Mom, please wake up, I'm here." She had tubes spilling out of her mouth and stomach. Panic seized me. *Why would this happen to Mom? What did she do? Why was God punishing her?*

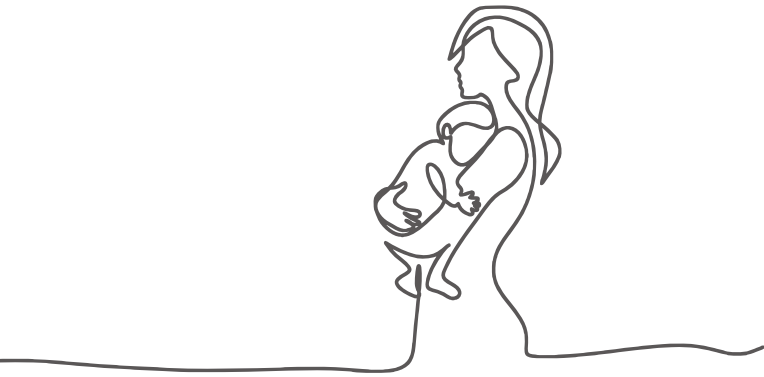
Dad immediately recognized that it was too much for me, and he lifted me up to tell me everything would be okay. Other members of our family began to pour into the room, and lots of emotions began to flood in. Tears fell on almost every person's face in the room. My grandma led a family prayer for Mom, praying for strength and healing. I grew restless. I didn't want to be there anymore. Everything was wrong. I didn't understand why she wouldn't talk to me. *Did she not love me anymore?*

That night I nearly cried myself to sleep. Grandma tried to calm me down. She mentioned that Mom would be in the hospital for some time, and for now, she would help Dad take care of me.

The next day, we went back to the hospital. In Mom's room, a large group of people were standing outside her room talking about her. I didn't know what they were saying, but I remember hearing the word "coma." A lady from the group stepped aside and walked into our room. She mentioned she was a chaplain. She wanted to talk to me to comfort me and give me something that reminded me of Mom. She sat down on the chair and opened her bag to give me a box of crayons so I could draw pictures of me and Mom. She also gave me molding clay and paint to let my creative side run free.

Before leaving, she told me that she knew that Mom was in the process of making me a Sonic the Hedgehog costume and wanted to give me something special to remember Mom's warm embrace. She pulled out a fluffy Sonic the Hedgehog blanket and told me to wrap myself in it anytime I felt sad or overwhelmed, and it would be like Mom hugging me all over again. Mom can't hug me right now, but I know that if I have this blanket, I will always have her with me.





“A Warm Embrace” is a narrative medicine piece that is written from the perspective of a child experiencing the medical field after a tragedy. The story emphasizes the depth of human connection and love in the face of medical adversity and personal grief. It is inspired by the teachings of Dr. Gellman’s Introduction to Medical Humanities course (HUMA 3300), the clinical ICU staff at Arlington Memorial Hospital, and the experiences that the author had through the Internship for Medical Humanities and Bioethics (HUMA 4395) course in the Fall of 2022, intended as the final course for MH&B minors.

