

A Nurse's Son

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He was five weeks early. The infant lay with tubes and wires enfolding his tiny body. His mother sat beside the incubator, fatigue etched in her posture, hand pressed against the plastic. She whispered, "Don't worry, son. I'll take care of you." And she was glad she was a nurse.

He was three at Grandma's for Sunday dinner. Sitting high on catalogues, his bib stained with mashed potatoes and gravy, he announced, "Do you know when you eat, you makes poop?" His Grandfather rolled his eyes, "Well, you can tell your mother's a nurse."

He was seven; it was Christmas. She stood at the door, gathering lab coat, bandage scissors and stethoscope. Tears streaked a path down his cheeks, "Can't you stay, Mom?" "I told you, honey, the sick people need me." He cried. "I need you too." And for once, she was sorry she was a nurse.

He was nine; his dog was dying. Old, faithful George, who greeted him at the bus stop everyday despite arthritic hips. "Can't you do CPR or something, Mom?" he begged. She rubbed his back, telling of suffering and indignities. And she was glad she was a nurse who understood the dignity death could bring.

He was 13 when she found the magazines, under his dresser in the garbage sack. After all, a mother had a right to clean. Puberty, her baby boy. And she was glad she was a nurse; somehow all those medical terms had made it easier to explain.

He was 16, new driver's license in hand. His first solo trip, just to the mall. She cheerily waved good-bye while beseeching the heavens for safe passage. Then, came the call; a friend from ER, "He's fine. It wasn't his fault and he wants you to know he had his seat belt on." And she was glad her friends were nurses.

He was 18, how could he, a tattoo! But, she had to stifle a giggle every time she thought about Yosemite Sam maintaining cover where a diaper had long ago. And she was glad nursing had taught her tolerance.

She lay in the bed, tears silently rolling down her cheek. The lump was positive. She felt a hand touch hers. She saw her son, his long athletic form, encased in navy scrubs and a gold wire hoop in his left ear. He whispered, "Don't worry, Mom. I'll take care of you." And she was glad her son was a nurse.

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