

A MOTHER'S JOY

By Kimberly Walker

Early Saturday morning Joy woke up to check on her mother's condition. As she peeked around the hallway into her mother's bedroom, she could see her mother was not getting any better, in fact Joy never saw her mother look so weak, tired and pale before. A tear fell from the young girl's cheek. She looked at her father sitting at the edge of her mother's bed. He called out to the twelve-year-old girl, "Come here." He held his arms open wide. Joy climbed into his lap.

"When is she going to get better, Dad?" Joy's voice quivered.

"We don't know," her father sighed. She crawled over to hug her mother and crawled up beside her. She held her mother tight; she did not want to let her go.

"Mother, please don't give up; you've made it this far," she whispered in her ear. "Jesus," she silently prayed "I'm sorry if I've done something wrong; please forgive me; don't take her away." She closed her eyes and dozed off into a comforting sleep, nestled in her mother's arm.

She woke up to the sound of her father's voice: "...Rt94, there is a blue and white mailbox, the drive way is quite long; yes I see, okay... so around what time should I expect the oxygen tank to be delivered to the house? Okay, thank you." Click, he hung up the phone.

"Dad, why do we need that?" Joy asked.

"Because dear, your mother is having a little trouble with her breathing."

"Will we need this forever, is this one of mother's new gadgets?"

Her father hesitated, "Yes, well for now it is."

Joy leaned over to kiss her mother on the cheek, but this time when Joy looked at her mother's eyes something was strange. Joy was very scared. "Dad!", she cried. Joy touched her mother's face softly and lifted her eyelids gently, "What is the matter with mommy's eyes?" Joy became hysterical. "Why?" she cried. It hurt her to see her mother this way. "I can't, I can't..." her father came over and held her.

"She's ok, she's not in pain; she is just in a deep sleep."

"I can't see her eyes, why!!!" Joy cried harder and louder. "Mommy wake up, wake up!"

Faith, Joy's sister came to the room and laid soft, wet, white paper towels to cover her eyes and keep them moist.

The rest of the day Joy watched visitors come and go. She hated them all; "What does it matter that they visit today? She has been sick for nine years; why didn't they visit then?"

Joy's older brother, Paul, tip-toed to his mother's bedside. Joy noted the pain in his face; he was hurting inside too, but he wasn't quite sure how to let go of his emotions. Paul knew he had to stay strong for his little sister and family. He explained to Joy that the deep sleep mother was in was called a coma and that some people snap out of it. He reassured her everything would be all right.

That night Faith, Mrs. Mac (their live-in nurse), Paul, Joy and her father sat quietly around her mother's bed.

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"Joy why don't you go get your mother's day present?"

"NO." Joy argued "Mother's Day isn't until tomorrow. I don't want her to get it until tomorrow."

"It's after mid-night now; I think it would be a good idea."

"I am waiting until she wakes up, Dad."

She sat quietly and thought to herself, "I have to be mature and accept that mommy is really sick this time and she might... might not make it." She brushed a tear from her cheek.

As Joy left the room she heard her father say, "The blue dress she loved best. Yes, it brought out the blue color in her eyes."

"Can you please stop talking about that." Faith snapped, "Does it have to be discussed now?"

Joy's father began to cry and she hated to see this, now more than ever. "What blue dress?" She knew her mother owned a very pretty one; she wore it to church once. "Why were they discussing her blue dress now?" She did not understand what they were talking about.

When she returned the room she curled up next to her mother and began to open her mother's present. "It's a bathing suit, it's... a two piece bright yellow and black polka-dot, I picked out special for you. It's..." She looked at her father's sincere face.

"It's okay, keep talking; she can still hear you."

Joy put the present down, it didn't matter right now. "I love you mommy, I love you." She kissed her soft, pale skin and squeezed her arm tight.

Joy's eyes followed Mrs. Mac's as she looked at her mother's chest moving up and down. The breathing was slow Joy began to count her mother's breaths per minute as Mrs. Mac kept a record on paper. The time 12:58 A.M., 14 breaths per minute. Time 1:06 A.M., 10 breaths per minute. Time 1:16 A.M., 8 to 6 breaths per minute. Joy ran out to the kitchen, quickly folded her hands and prayed on the Bible out loud. "O kay God this is it I know it; you're going to heal her in front of everyone on her last breath-- this is it dear God, I love you and I believe in you you are going to make this a miracle so everyone will believe in you. But God," she paused and held back her tears, "if, if you take her I will understand it was best for her and I will trust she: in your hands in peace."

Joy ran back into the room they all held their mother's hand on her last breath repeating, "We love you mother." There just wasn't enough time.

Joy's mother knew they were all there with her holding her hand saying their last goodbyes. At 1:28 A.M. May 13, 1986 Joy's mother's soul left and entered Heaven.

They understood that God had to take her and must learn to cope, and accept their loss. They were grateful for the extra nine years she was able to live. They were thankful to share her smiles, tears and laughter, and they felt she was a gift from God.

You see, Joy's mother had been very ill with a serious disease titled A.L.S. that should have killed her in the first two years it was diagnosed, according to the doctors. Because she put up a struggle and fought to live and raise her children she stayed as long as she could.

Joy missed her mother and still today would give anything to hug and kiss her again. She will never be forgotten, because the love Joy holds in her heart for her mother is so strong it will never fade.

Mother's Day today for Joy's family is a day for them to remember a very special mother who touched their lives.