

This is the short story Elizabeth wrote two months before her transition. "Mother" was written October 2004. Elizabeth won the Bolton Library Short Story Contest with her story. I believe it was a message from her soul, to our family and to everyone who reads her story. It still saddens me to read it, but I also take great comfort in knowing her soul left us an everlasting message through her exceptional gift of writing. The contest was renamed "The Elizabeth Scavetta Memorial Short Story Contest". Young people continue to be inspired by her words and write their own stories for the contest .The contest continues to grow and we are proud to be co-sponsors with the Bolton Library in putting on this competition. I am also deeply honoured to return each fall to the library and be Elizabeth's voice and read her story to the contestants and their families. I hope you enjoy her story...

MOTHER

BY: ELIZABETH LOUISE SCAVETTA

It was one of those winters. Those winters where the defiant wind blew right through you, like it knew all your secrets. The trees shivered in the cold, amused, daring you to fight back. Their bony figures rocked in the wind, taking it while they could, until they'd admit that it *was* the wind that was the strongest. After a life of peaceful struggle, their weakened forms would kneel before their master, and collapse into the snow,

dreaming of the endless slumber that awaited them. Just looking outside, you could feel their icy branches, like arms, wrap around your skin. Protecting you from the storm that was coming.

My mother got up from the window seat. The blue cushion, thick as a memory, inflated with the absence of her weight. She walked into the kitchen and selected a carton of milk from the fridge. She glanced around the room, taking in the sight of unopened mail on the counter, and the smell of buttered toast. Finally, she settled at the kitchen table, in front of yesterday's newspaper. She sipped her tea and listened to the gusts of wind blowing past the windows and through the porch. She looked so peaceful. Quiet, but entirely content. I smiled at her, and then she looked at me.

"It's gonna be a cold one today," she said, looking out the window now. Her velvet voice soothed my spirits. I loved Saturday mornings in December, for reasons like this. We'd sit, warm and comfortable, eating our breakfasts and staring out at the snow. I would look at the trees, cradling families of snowflakes in their arms. I wondered if they envied us, warm in our pajamas and housecoats, on the other side of the glass. *I* thought they did.

"It's a good day for staying inside, sitting in front of the fire," my mother continued. "What do you think? I'd like to read my book, actually, it's getting really good." She smiled playfully, and preceded to describe the last passage she'd read, her bright eyes animated with delight. "Here, come on, I'll read to you." She jumped up

from her chair, excitedly, and pulled me to the couch. I laughed, jumping on the living room sofa, and then snuggled in next to her. I closed my eyes against her warm, fuzzy sweater, and waited for the sound of her voice.

She read to me. In a rich, melodic tone she recounted the story, giving beauty and meaning to every line. And I listened. We laughed together sharing the characters' joy, and then fretted during the plights. We stayed there, on the couch, feeling every word as if we were in the pages ourselves. I kept listening, my head resting on her shoulder, until my mother had reached the very last page. After reading the last line, her hypnotic voice still dripping with enchantment, she gently closed the book shut.

"I love when there are happy endings," I sighed, pleased at how the story had finished off. "So do I," my mother agreed.

"There can always be a happy ending," she continued. "But sometimes it's up to you." I nodded dreamily, and gave her a hug. She stroked my hair and kissed the top of my head. Then I curled up on the couch contentedly, and fell asleep.

When I awoke, I didn't know how much time had gone by. I opened my eyes and stretched. I sat up, slowly, and looked around the room. My mother was no longer beside me. I stood up from the sofa, and noticing it had grown cold, wrapped the blanket around my shoulders. The gray wintry sky had not since given way to sun, and the glowing light from the fire had gone out. The walls, formerly reflecting a golden sheen, now appeared lifeless. A cheerless ashen.

I walked into the kitchen, and called out to my mother. She didn't answer me. I called again, but heard nothing. I stood there in the kitchen for awhile, wondering where she had gone. A crow called sharply from outside the window, startling me, but there was no other sound.

I walked down the hallway, thinking that she may be in her room, and saw that her door was closed. I quietly opened the door, careful not to disturb her, but realized upon entering that she wasn't there. I stood in the doorway, staring at her vacant reading chair. The faded green chenille appeared lonely, clinging to the woolen blanket laying overtop. The room was dark, as if it had been so for years. A musty smell of bed linens invaded my nostrils, defeating the familiar scent of sweet perfume. Confused, I glanced at her desk. A layer of dust covered the top, disguising the wooden detail, and yellowed papers rested collectively in the center, immobile.

“What are you doing?”

I turned, quickly, to the sound of the voice, the blanket falling from my shoulders. I looked out the doorway. Patrick. “What are you doing?” he repeated, sounding quieter this time, although apprehensive. I stared at him, not knowing how to respond. I wiped an unnoticed tear that had fallen on my cheek, and turned away from him. “Thinking about her?” he asked softly. I stood in silence for awhile, not hearing him. The wind blew strong against the window, and the cold, wood floor chilled my feet. I could see the frozen trees outside the window, the snowflakes hugging tightly in the wind.

“She was here again, you know,” I said after awhile, distantly, still standing in the middle of the room. Patrick looked at me, and then at the floor, not knowing what to say.

“I keep seeing her,” I continued, gazing out the window. “She was here again. She was right there, it was so real.” I could feel tears well up in my eyes. “I just miss her so much...I don’t know what to do.” I brought my hands to my face, covering my eyes from the truth I didn’t want to see. “I know you miss her,” Patrick finally replied, gently. He walked up to me and put his arms around shoulders. “But it’s going to be okay,” he said. I nodded, but my tears didn’t subside. We stood in that room for awhile, just standing there. I was so grateful to him at that moment, but I couldn’t find the words to tell him so. I couldn’t shake the guilt I had for putting him through all this. My illusions of my mother were, undoubtedly, just as hard for him as they were for me. I hoped he understood that I was sorry.

We had not spoken of my mother much since her death, two years ago. I kept trying to push her out of my mind, but the more I tried to forget her, the more I saw her. I didn’t want to talk about her then, but now, I felt it was time to. I wanted to talk about her; I needed to. Patrick and I left her bedroom, and sat together on the living room sofa, in front of the warm glow of the fire. I told him stories about her, and we spoke for a long time, sharing our memories of joy and solace. I missed her so much. I guess that feeling never really goes away. Yet, I still believed in a happy ending.

After that, I saw her less and less. My vivid imaginings of her went from a weekly occurrence, to a few times a month, to nonexistent. But I never stopped loving her, or thinking about her. I never totally let go of her. Someone who had taught me, inspired me, and loved me like she did would be in my heart forever. She was my heroin.

Yet, I finally learned the acceptance I needed to go on. I learned it from her. She told me there could always be a happy ending. It was simply up to me.

Now when I look outside at the bright winter sky, the snow covered ground, and the trees cradling snowflakes in their arms, I think of her. I think of how she cradled me, at the kitchen table, on a December morning, in the warm glow of our home. I can think of how I've recovered the peace I had known in those days. Those days I spent with my mother.