



SHORTS

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Reflections

The wind howled outside as I sat in the corner. The house had never felt so empty. I couldn't hold it back any longer. A salty tear wet my cheek. I gritted my teeth. I couldn't cry. I promised. I let my head tumble back and touch the wall. I could feel my lungs fill up with the warm air that circulated in the room. I pulled my knees close to me and let my head fall on them. I felt the anger and sorrow begin to pour out of my eyes as I finally realized she was gone.

I must have cried for many hours before I realized tears wouldn't help. Nothing could help. Nothing could bring her back. My chest felt as if it would collapse, but I knew it wouldn't. I wiped my eyes on the green sweater I wore. As the sweater touched my cheek, I remembered Mom had given up something for herself so she could buy this for me. It was a small sacrifice on her part, one of the many she had made for me. As I thought of the day we had bought it, I pulled the sweater off. I hated it. I hated everything because everything hurt.

I slumped over to the mirror on my wall and looked at myself from all sides. I was an exact copy of Mom. I wished I could pull off my looks as I had the sweater, but I couldn't. I couldn't take away everything that reminded me of Mom. The empty feeling seemed as if it would always be there and no one person could ever fill it. It was there and it would lurk inside me for the rest of my life.

I must have sat there for the longest time thinking, because it was well into the night when I pulled my limp body into the bathroom. The cold washcloth felt relieving on my face as I washed away the traces of the tears I'd shed.

I looked into the mirror and saw a scared child. I wiped away that impression of myself. I couldn't be afraid: I had to be *strong*, not only for me, but for Dad. This would be especially hard on him. I had to be tough.

I took a second glance into the mirror and felt my eyes betray me—it was Mom looking back at me! She spoke in a soft, caring voice. "Now, Amy, I'm not really gone . . . I'll always be with you. Please, for my sake, for Dad's, remember the happy times we spent together. Let these memories fill your emptiness inside. I know you feel alone, but you aren't. Daddy's there, and me, I'm with you. We love you, sweetheart. Remember, I'll always be close to you."

Mom's image faded out along with her voice. Fragment of my imagination or not, Mom's words meant the world to me.

I spent the rest of the night repeating every word Mom had said to me. As she assured me, my emptiness began to fill with every memory of our good times together. When I finally let my heavy eyelids fall, I felt a peacefulness inside me. My tears no longer flowed, my anger had turned to love, and my emptiness filled. At last, sleep came.

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