

Scorched- a personal story

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This is life from MY eyes and MY life while my mom was diagnosed with cancer and going through treatment

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July fifth, 2012. That day will forever be burned into my memory. The day my mom had surgery that would change my entire persona in life. Up until that point I was a normal teenager: going out with friends, staying up till three in the morning playing, senseless video games, sitting around, living life, and having fun. I never gave thought to what my mom did when she got off work for the past 5.047 days of my existence. When she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and an autoimmune disease, she was room-ridden. Basically she could not leave her room. I was given the jobs she had to do after a full day of work. I will never forget the burden of strength I carried, the masks, and the dreams.

Firstly the burden of strength, most of the time we hear that you need strength to carry a burden, but a burden due to strength? That's just crazy. All my life I have been the type of person that wanted to make others happy and allow them to use me as a shoulder to cry on, but I didn't want to receive that. I wanted to be the same happy, fun-loving, goofy guy that hoped to be a pillar of strength to others, but my pillar was crumbling. People would come up to me and say, "Oh I'm sorry about your mom," and, "If there is anything I can do just let me know." My reply was, "Thanks, but I'm fine," I lied.

No matter where I went it was the same story, but at home I let it out. At four in the morning I would lay there and read the same messages over and over; I wasn't fazed the entire time, until I received one message. It was from my friend in Lexington. "Matthew, I know times are hard now, but just be happy that your mom is still here. Love ya buddy." The sound of my pillar falling radiated around the neighborhood, my pillar was down.

The pillar that I used various times before not only for my friends and now myself was a strong, stainless white pillar; now, it was a decrepit pile of black soot. The tears started flowing. The burden broke my pillar, broke the Hoover Dam inside of me, I was not myself.

Next, the masks. If I was to see myself during this time I would say I was the Phantom of The Opera. Whenever I looked in the mirror I saw a white canvas of a face ready to be defined by the experience of life. Then it struck me, "Maybe people are treating me different because they can tell I'm sad!" Every day a new face appeared: the face of a child begging for recognition, the face of a trauma victim, the face of liars, and the face of my mother. Each had its perks, but none hurt worse than the mask of my mother.

Days would go by when I would be doing house chores in a pair of work clothes and something covering my hair and my dad would yell, "Hey Sherry! I mean Matthew, where are my khakis?" I remember days when my baby cousins would ask me, "Matthew, is Aunt Sherry with Jesus?" I couldn't get mad because they were little, but after hearing the C-word, that is what I feared. The masks are still hanging up in my skeleton closet waiting to be used again when the treatments start back. Hopefully, I won't lose the mask I wear now, because I've lost my original.

Now, the dreams. Well, the dream; every night for three weeks I had the same dream. In the dream, I was at home alone, or so I thought. I needed to go into my parents' bathroom to get something. Up the stairs, through the living room, the hallway, yet not a word or noise was uttered. I reached my parents' room and saw books on the floor in disarray, a bed which was noticeably slept in, and on the end-table a vase full of roses. I walked over to them and touched one to smell it and, right in my hands, it withered into a dead

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blossom.

I left the flowers and walked into the bathroom. My eyes focused on one sight, a person lying beside a toilet, and the scent of vomit in the air. I ran over to the person and tried to soothe them. I see a glimpse of a face, a face I've never seen before. A hood is covering their scalp. They remove the hood and it hits me. It's my mother. Her face has been aged due to the radiation and the hood hid the bare-skin covering the scalp. Her hair is falling out and she looks at me and says, "Matthew, I love you. I will always be here in your heart and mind. I'm proud of you, and I'm sorry."

In my dream, I held my mother as she took her last breaths. The dream that made me see the world different, and made me realize life was fragile. I can't see my mom in a hood to this day or I break down in tears. This dream altered my perception of illness. This dream has made me miserable.

You can see how my life changed. The pillar has fallen and is no longer there. The masks that I choose from have overtaken my being. The dream haunts my very rest and contorts my perceptions of the simplest things into symbols of agony. Each of these things has helped scorch the date July fifth, 2011 into my brain for the rest of my life.

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