

And her child

by Kevin Hunter

He lay on the bed, turning under the covers from the heat from the radiator, nose running from his three day old cold. The mother walked up to the door. She knocked on the door. From inside the boy moaned, turning once more beneath the covers, shifting slowly, then getting up from the bed, making sure not to walk too quickly. His legs would not let him. My legs are still too weak, he thought.

In the hallway before the door, the mother stood waiting. She was worried. It had been three days since the onset of the fever. Her boy was not one to be sick. There was a time when both she and the boy's father succumbed to a stomach virus. They laid out on their bed, legs sprawled out, eyes puffed and red and watery. And the boy came in the room, carrying soup. "It's not necessary," she said. "I don't want you to get sick." And the boy said, "you know that I don't get sick. And who else is there to keep you both healthy. We can't afford a doctor's visit. Who else can do it for you?" Then he laid the container of soup on the table, steam rising from the bowl, the smell wafting. The mother got up halfway so that her back lay against the head rest. Holding the soup in his hands the boy fed his mother. He dipped the spoon into the bowl, allowing the soup to gently fill the space, then raising the spoon cautiously to her mouth that it would not spill and burn her, he fed the sick woman a spoonful. The father was asleep by her side, on his side of the bed. He had always slept when he was sick. However, the mother could not. She did not deal with sickness well.

"It's so warm," she said.

"You like it?"

"How could I not?"

"I'm not a cook. I could barely do it without burning the house down"

"It's fine. Anything you do is fine."

And then she was quiet as he fed her. She stared into his eyes the entire time, he thought. Later on that night when the soup finished,

she fell asleep. I hope she is comfortable. I hope that I made her comfortable, he thought.

Now, in the hallway she was not comfortable. The boy was not either. He was sick for the three days, and she stood outside his door, waiting for him to reach it, unlock the door, and then let her in. I wish he was faster, she thought. Then the door was open and he stood before her. Covered from head to toe in his covers, he was there but only barely. He could only barely stand tall and firm.

"Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. Why are you here?"

"Because I'm worried. Its been too long." She reached out her hand and touched his forehead. "And you still have this fever."

"Its fine. I'll be all right. Go back to bed," the boy said. But it was not fine. His legs still dangled from his torso. He thought that if he could not see them there beneath him, he would think that they were half gone. I wish she would go to bed, he thought.

"Dad doesn't like to sleep alone."

"He can manage. Don't do it" she said.

"What?"

"He can sleep alone for a little while longer."

"Well either way I'm fine."

"Really. My boys is fine? And what about your fever?"

"Its nothing I can't handle. I'm rarely sick. Its not a big deal"

"Of course it is. Its been four days"

"Three. Don't over react, Mom. It's just been three. And I'm rarely sick"

"And that makes it worse, Adam."

Adam shuffled under the covers he was wrapped up in. He had felt a sudden flash of chill through his body.

"Its cold. I'm going back to bed," he said.

"Let me inside. I just want to check up on you."

Inside the room the boy lay on his bed. The mother had been cleaning the mess he had made on the floor. The clothes, the papers, and all else were picked up by her. She closed the window and

stopped the cold breeze from sneaking in. Now, she sat next to her son.

“Do you remember when I fed you soup when I was younger?”

“Of course I do,” she said. “Why?”

He turned over in the bed, no longer facing his mother.

“It just popped up in my head. I’m tired. I want to sleep.”

“I’ll just be here for a couple more minutes. Go to sleep.”

“Sure,” he said.

She sat there. She sat there and thought about her son. He has grown so much, she thought. And so fast. And while she sat there she thought about many things. She thought about the night he fed her the soup and how she stared into his eyes all that night. She thought about how small he was then, and how innocent and how much she had loved him, then. Tomorrow, she thought, I will make you soup, and I’ll feed it to you in bed.

In the morning, the boy awoke. His mother was still there, sleeping by his bed side. She had been there all night. In the afternoon, when the boy came back from school, he was still sick, though his fever had subsided. He had developed a sneeze and still felt slightly weak. The mother was happy, though. She was happy because she could make him some soup and then she could feed it to him in bed.

