

When You Stay

By Ali

Some people think being brave is jumping off a cliff, running into a burning building and saving a person, diving in front of a bullet. Well, I think being brave is also telling off a bully, not running away from something you're scared of, waiting. And at first you may feel like you let someone important in your life down, that you weren't as brave as you wanted to be. It could be you don't hardly see your braveness. That is what I think being brave is.

I stood in the dark hallway in front of my parents' bedroom door, which led to the bed where my dad was lying. I pushed open the door. It swung all the way back to the wall and made a little clicking sound when it hit. I saw my dad, a pile of pillows and blankets all around him. I didn't go in, not yet. I am going to go in there and act normal, as if nothing is wrong. I will tell him about my almost goal and my 95% in spelling. This time he will say, "Good!" to me.

I walked in, then started to turn around. I stopped mid-turn. "No, Ali, stay," I told myself. I took a deep breath. I began to walk toward the bed again. I crawled up onto the bed, being very quiet, trying not to wake him if he was asleep. He wasn't.

"Today at soccer I was running down the field. I wound up for a big shot, kicked it . . . ! It stopped about two feet from the goal. We can work on my shooting together," I said.

No reply.

Does he not care? Is he in too much pain? That was it, that was the whole reason he was in bed. Too much pain! The pain had not only taken over my dad's life, it had taken over mine.

I stared at him with tough eyes. I wanted him to know that I was upset with him. He had caused me a lot of pain. He didn't get to see my almost goal and he didn't get to help me study for my spelling test.

He looked back at me with sad puppy eyes. He was sorry.

I don't know if I wanted to forgive him. Giving me a little twitch of his eye, a little brush of his hand against the blanket. That wasn't normal for him. It amazed me. He was such a full guy. His movements were always full, not half. I had to forgive him, though. He needed me and I needed him. I stayed, waiting for him. I sat next to him, holding his hand, watching the clock tick by . . . 3:33 . . . 3:34 . . . 3:35 . . . I gently let go of his hand and placed it by his side. I got up and walked back to the doorway. I stood leaning against the wall, looking at him. I stood there, waiting. Expecting him to talk to me, expecting him to push his pain behind him. If I stood there long enough, he would come, get up, and practice my shot with me.

No, he couldn't. I knew that. So I guess I was just going to have to wait awhile. So I stayed. When you're done falling off a cliff, when you're out of surgery to check for infections from when you were shot with a bullet, people clap and cheer for you and on your return home, news cameras are waiting to interview you. Those people's signs of bravery are on the outside. But when you walk away from a bully that you left behind wide-eyed, or when you stand close to the thing you were once scared of, those people's signs of bravery are the feeling of proudness, the feeling of people clapping that is on the inside of you. My sign was little sparkles, like a fairy sparking her golden dust over me.