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Faces of Mom

By Vic Peters

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I grew up living with my mother, and sometimes my father when he wasn't underneath the ocean in a submarine. I wasn't the only child at home, but it often felt that way, and not just when I would lock my sister in the basement, either—my mom was good at making me feel like the best pumpkin in the patch.

My mom was a working mom. She scrubbed the floors and washed our clothes and sometimes even finished my science projects for me. I don't remember her ever just sitting around. If she wasn't in the house, she was at the blood drive or the elementary school or outside crying because she had just put another dent in the car. Our car had lots of dents.

She was a woman who wore lots of different faces. I called them "looks," and I knew all of them. Being the kind of kid that I was, this was a handy thing to know—especially if her look involved my rear end and her left hand.

When the kids were gone and Mom's house was empty, she got herself a "real" job in town. Although it was a respectable place of employment, I never had any desire to visit her there while she was on duty. One day, though, I had to. It wasn't what she did that bothered me; rather, it was that look on her face—the one that I knew I would have to see when they brought me in. My mother ran the ER desk of the local hospital.

She saw lots of things every day—the kind of things that would land on the counter and make a mess. Things like blood and throw-up and tears. She was good at her job because she was a strong woman. Even I knew that. She had beat up Billy Whitehead for me in the fourth grade; he was a bully. My mom was tough and could take a lot, except when it came to children. Then she acted like every little one carried through those mechanical doors was hers. I had even seen her tell great big blubbing men to sit their butts back down and grow up, if they complained about having to wait. Mom was no one to mess with—I remember what she used to do with those thermometers.

Faces of Mom

I tried to put on a smile for her that day, as I slid down the wall of the emergency room, desperately fighting the effects of shock. My pale white appearance couldn't lie to her, though—the concern in her eyes told me that. Though the injuries to my hand were not that severe, I still wondered as the world around me began to darken.

My mom isn't that much different from anybody else's mother, although I'd like to say that she is. I'd like to say that she is the best mother in the world, but then where would that put my wife? Married guys hate this dilemma, because even broaching the subject means only one of two things—sleeping on the couch or going into one of those little "card shops." Ugh.

As I grow older I notice that my wife has those same looks that my mom does, and it scares me. I thought I had seen every look that there was to be seen, at least once. I have a mother, I have a wife, and for extra torture in my life God saw to it that I have a thirteen-year-old daughter whose face is

ALWAYS twisted into some kind of look or another. Of course, I am wrong about knowing all of the looks, but I'm ALWAYS wrong, and old and fat and bald—just ask my daughter. Or don't ask her; she'll tell you anyway.

I know looks better than most folks, and I'm pretty good at calming down tense situations. I'd even say that I am an expert. If a woman is sad, I can do a little cheering-up magic, or, at the very least, just make her mad enough to want to kick me. Face it: I'm blessed. But the problem with being an expert is that sooner or later you'll get humbled.

There is a certain look on a mother's face that a child will never see, and I'm glad for it. I saw it for the first time the other day at a funeral, and it nearly broke my heart. Children see all the looks that a mother has to offer, except one—the one they wear when you die before they do.

I could find no words to speak to this woman, nor could my eyes find the courage to stay off of the ground. I wasn't alone in the shadow of cowardice, which told me that she was. And though there were others who have shared her experience, she would remain alone. Time would heal—that's what the preacher said—but nothing would be the same. Everyone knows that.

As I consider my own fragile relationship with my mother, it is clear to me that this distance will ultimately separate us. Who of us, I wonder, will cross this void first? Never will I hold the look that the woman at the funeral bore, for I know nothing of the bond a mother feels between herself and her child, only that which a child feels for his mother. Is the look that a child carries different from what I have seen? I do not know and do not wish to. Denial lends but weak hands where reality lives, yet softens its bitter edges none the less.

Do I prepare myself for this face to come? Will being prepared enable me to avoid another slide down a wall into the black? Perhaps, but I fear that this embrace may take me further into the darkness that I hope to avoid.

If I listen to my heart, I know that there is but one path in this life. The path is of the present, where I know my mother to be, and I will walk with her as far as the trail leads. Anything else would be a lie—or

perhaps a sin—if I did not appreciate what life has given me: my mother.

Vic Peters is the author of *Mary's Field*, a new Christian novel from Millennial Mind Publishing. More information is available at www.marysfield.com

5 Ways To Tell If A Preschooler Is Living In Your House

By Deborah Shelton

1. You reheated the same cup of coffee three times this morning.
2. There is always one more person in your bed in the morning, than there was the night before.
3. You can't imagine life without the Cartoon Network.
4. The lock on your bathroom door is purely for decoration... After all, no locked door could withstand, "Mom? What are you doing? Mom? Can I come in? Mom? Can I show you something? Mom? Can I give you a hug? Mom? Can you hear me? Mom?"
5. You have started—or signed—a petition to banish the word "why" from every language known to man.

Deborah Shelton is a mother, freelance writer, and author of the brand new book, "The Five Minute Parent: Fun & Fast Activities for You and Your Little Ones." Visit Deborah's website for more family-friendly ideas:

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