

I Have Two Mothers

This is a story of a girl named Maya. She has two mothers and she's been both struggling for and avoiding their attention at the same time. In the middle of all this, she is trying to fight the monsters under her bed, who her grandmother believes are all in her head.

I Have Two Mothers

I have two mothers.

One is a nice lady who is soft spoken and has a weak smile. Her long wavy hair is always set loose, delicately framing her beautiful face. I love being around her. I call her Mama Marie.

She always stays inside her room, lying down in her bed. She is always tired so she rarely gets out of bed. She would spend her days looking out the window, longing to go out, but she is too weak to do so. When she sees me, she would smile and would ask me to come over and give her a kiss. She would ask me to bring one of my books over so she can read me a story.

But almost always, we will not be able to finish the story. Halfway thru, she would either have that raspy cough or her eyes would roll over out of dizziness. My father would then ask me to leave the room as my mom needs some rest. And then she would sleep.

She sleeps most of the day. She is so weak that her mother, my grandmother whom I call Nana, who lives with us would give her a bath because she couldn't do it herself. She would eat her meals in her room, at her bed. Then she would drink some medicine and go back to sleep.

So although I want to spend more time with her, I cannot.

My second mother is worlds apart from my first mother. She is strict and stern, her lips always pursed into a thin line. She keeps her hair up in a tight bun, without a single strand loose. I call her Mommy Lyn.

She walks purposely around the house, cleaning every nook and cranny. She aligns the furniture properly, keeps the floors waxed and shining, makes sure the bathroom is squeaky clean.

She is very strict. She would tell me to sit up straight, remove the creases in my bed, tie my hair up, clean up my mess, or finish my food. I am scared of her.

Sometimes, I would watch her sweeping the leaves in the garden or pruning the flowers, all the while saying something about how nobody can take care of the plants but her. No one knows how to do anything in the house but her. One time I saw her throw the pruning scissors into the grass, shouting at someone I couldn't see. I ran back inside the house and bumped into my father, who was hurrying on his way to Mommy Lyn. I watched as he tried to calm the angry woman down. Then my grandmother, Nana, passed me by with a pill and a glass of water in her hands. I ran to my room and closed the door. I opened one of my books and began reading, trying to keep the scene out of my head.

My name is Maya. My Nana told me my mother named me after the chirping bird who hopped on the window right after I was born. They said its singing made my mom happy.

That was ten years ago, and I didn't know if the sound of my voice delighted my mom anymore.

So I mostly kept to myself and instead explored the wonder of books. I love the adventure! Of people diving deep in the ocean, of men walking in the moon, of cities above the clouds, of cities kept secret in the darkness of the forests. And the monsters they encountered! How huge, hairy and scary they are!

One time, I fell asleep in the middle of reading a book. When I opened my eyes, I could barely see my room. The only light came from outside my window, and the tree branches leaning over my bedroom window were casting an eerie shadow in my room. Suddenly, a movement under the table next to my bed caught my eye. My heart racing fast, I leaned over the bed and tried to peer through the darkness. Then I saw eyes. Emerald eyes looking straight right at me.

I screamed and moved back to the farthest side of the bed.

Suddenly, the door opened and a bright light engulfed the room. It was Nana; she turned the lights on.

"What is it? What happened?" she asked, eyes wide and worried.

I pointed to my table. "There is something underneath the table!" I said.

She looked over and said, "There's nothing there."

"It must have gone under the bed," I said, slightly trembling at the thought.

Nana bent over and looked under the bed.

"Ay iha, there's nothing there!" she said as she stood up.

"It must be your imagination, or maybe a dream! You should stop reading those books before you sleep, they're giving you nightmares," she said, with a hint of anger in her voice.

"Go back to sleep, the monsters are all in your head," and she left, turning the lights off on her way out.

I wanted to turn the lights back on but I was scared to get out of bed, thinking that something might grab my feet. Instead, I curled up and covered my whole body with a blanket. I wasn't able to go back to sleep that night.

What happened did not stop me from reading though. I read and read more books, loving every turn of the page, every adventure.

So it is small wonder that it happened again. I fell asleep reading this book about a young girl falling into a hole while following a rabbit. I dreamed of a huge scaly animal with wings, speaking to me and telling me to go home. I woke up with the sound of someone screaming. Then I realized it was me. I immediately clapped my hands over my mouth, trembling.

I heard footsteps hurrying to my room. Oh no, Nana will scold me again. I wanted to hide my book under the bed so she wouldn't see it, but I was also afraid that the creature might grab

my hand. True enough, I heard a weird eerie sound seeming to come from under the bed. What if it left my dream and followed me into the real world?

Too late, the door opened and the lights turned on.

Only, it wasn't Nana ready to scold me, it was one of my mothers, Mommy Lyn. With her hair tightly wound up in a bun, I knew she didn't come from sleep.

"What is happening? You are going to wake everybody in the house!" she said in an angry tone, but without raising her voice.

"I... I..."

I couldn't speak. I was afraid she would spank me if I told her that there is a monster under my bed.

"Speak," she said sternly, walking over to me and standing next to my bed. Oh no, she's standing too close, it might grab her feet!

I swallowed. My mother's eyebrows were knotted now, and I'm sure if I didn't say a word, either she or the creature would hurt me, and none of the options seem pleasing.

"The-there's s-something u-under my b-bed," I said, whispering so that the creature won't hear us.

In a heartbeat, my mother's expression changed. I saw understanding in her face. She turned her back to me, walked over to the door and closed it. Then she walked right back and climbed on my bed.

"Come here," she said, and motioned me to her.

I came closer to her, and I was surprised when she took me in her arms. Mommy Lyn was never this gentle. She was never like Mama Marie. "If we stay together like this, the monster won't get to us" she said. There was an unusual warmth in her voice.

"Why were you afraid to tell me?" she whispered.

"I was afraid you won't believe me," I whispered back. "Nana said the monsters aren't real. They are all in my head."

"Ah, they might be in your head, but that doesn't mean they aren't real," she replied.

"Your Nana means well, though. She is just afraid that you'll become like me."

"Why? What are you?" I asked.

"I..." she looked away, lost with words. I waited.

"I'm different," she finally said after a few minutes.

We were silent for a few moments, with my head resting against her arms.

"Can you sleep?" she asked.

"No..." I answered.

"Hmmm... I have this song that might help you. I created it right after you were born, listening to the birds chirp by our window. It goes like this," she began to sing. Her voice was lovelier than anything I've ever heard.

Come, little birdy, sing me a song

Take away the nightmares

And everything that's wrong.

Come little one, sing me a lullaby

Bring me the light of day

That you carry with you when you fly.

*All the fear will leave me
when you sing along
Share to me that tune
Of love and beauty in a song."*

It was the first time I heard Mommy Lyn sing, and it brought tears to my eyes. Mama Marie was always the one who sings for me, however rarely that may be. For the first time in my life, I felt that my two mothers were one. I fell asleep to her beautiful lullaby.

I woke up with my father shaking my mother awake. I did not open my eyes because I still wanted to get back to sleep.

"What are you doing here?" he whispered to her, thinking I was still asleep.

"Maya couldn't sleep because of the monster under her bed. I stayed with her so it wouldn't get to her," she explained sleepily.

"You can't talk to Maya like that," my father said, half sad and half angry at the same time. I wonder he was mad.

I felt my mother's body stiffen, like a cat ready to pounce.

"Dear, please," there was sadness in his voice. Father loved my mother very much.

"Let's go and get you back to your bed. You should drink your medicine." He took her hands and helped her up. For a moment, I thought Mommy Lyn would scratch his face and run off; she was fierce like that. But instead she grudgingly obliged.

I wanted to reach out to my mom and tell her not to leave. I wanted to tell my father that there really was something under my bed. But I felt afraid. With a heavy heart, I went back to sleep.

Mommy Lyn never went back to my room again. Actually, she hardly left her bedroom afterwards.

Mama Marie was always tired and sleeping. I wanted to come in and talk to her sometimes, but my Nana and father would forbid me to do so, saying my mom needs to rest. I wanted to see my mother, it doesn't matter which one.

I wanted Mommy Lyn to hold me close again. I miss her. I wanted Mama Marie to read me a book. I long for her. I want them to sing me that lullaby once more. I feel so scared and lonely.

I still wake up in the middle of the night, with the light of the moon creating shadows of monsters with long claws reaching out to me in my room. Sometimes, there's something scratching the window, trying to get in. At these instances, I would curl up under my covers and remember the warmth of having my mother beside me. I would remember her song and sing it to myself. Her song works like a charm. When I peer from under the covers, the shadow monsters disappear and the scratching stops. I would sing it again until I fall asleep.

One day after school, when I jumped down from the school bus, I immediately noticed something wrong. My father's car was in the garage, when I knew he wasn't supposed to be home yet. I went inside the house to see it in total disarray. One seat was turned upside down, the sofa cushions were on the floor, some display items were overturned. I heard shouting so I immediately ran upstairs to where the sound was coming from.

Right outside my mom and dad's bedroom were Nana and my father, pleading to a closed door.

"Please, open this door," Nana begged.

"No!" it was Mommy Lyn's voice, followed by the sound of something hitting the wall. Then I heard a whimper from Mama Marie.

I saw the keys jammed into the door knob, but there are other locks inside the room. Maybe that is why they still couldn't get in.

"You have to, dear. Maya's already here, don't do this to her," said my father, who saw me run up to them.

"You don't understand! No one understands me!" she shouted.

"You will feel better once you drink your pills, so please let us in," my father begged, trying to push the door open.

"What is happening?" I asked, trembling for a bit.

My father knelt down beside me and put his hands on my shoulders.

"Don't worry, dear. It's just that your mom didn't want to drink her medicine today. Everything will be fine in a few minutes. Can you please go downstairs first?" he asked gently.

"It must be the monsters, Daddy! The monsters are trying to get to Mommy!" I cried.

"No, Maya, there are no monsters! They are not real!" said Nana, who seemed angry at me for mentioning the monsters again.

I shook my head. They are wrong. Only *I* can help my two mothers now.

But if I want to help them, I have to be true to myself. I keep evading the truth, but to help my mothers, I have to accept it.

Because the truth is, I have only one mother, and her name is Marilyn.

She is both the women I described. She is Mama Marie and Mommy Lyn at the same time. I named them differently, because they seem like two different people to me. Mommy Lyn

is plagued by monsters that no one can see, but she is a fighter. Mama Marie surrenders to the medicine she is given, which makes her weak and unable to do anything with her life.

"Daddy, please let me talk to Mommy, maybe I can help her!" I removed my backpack and hurried to my parents' bedroom door, but my father quickly grabbed me by the wrist.

"Stop it, Maya. Please go downstairs and wait for us there!" he said sternly.

"But Daddy, I can help her! She helped me make the monsters go away, I know I can do the same for her!"

"Stop it, Maya. There are no monsters!" I can see that he is now angry.

But I was stubborn. I will help my mother just like she helped me.

Tears flowed down from my eyes.

"Just because you don't see it doesn't mean it isn't there. Just because it's not real for you doesn't mean it's not real for her," I said.

I saw surprise in my father's eyes. "No... Maya..."

"But what is real, Daddy? F-fear is real! My... my thoughts are real! Love. Love is real, too! And I love my mommy." I was sobbing. Why can't they understand?

My father cried. He fell on his knees and hugged me tightly. Then he let me go.

I walked over to the closed door.

"Mommy, it's me, Maya," I knocked on the door.

"Leave me alone!" she shouted.

I was afraid. I was trembling. This is real. This is happening. *I love you, Mom*, I thought to myself. I breathed deeply and let all my fears slide away. I started to sing.

Come, little birdy, sing me a song

Take away the nightmares

And everything that's wrong.

Come little one, sing me a lullaby

Bring me the light of day

That you carry with you when you fly.

All the fear will leave me

when you sing along

Shared to me that tune

Of love and beauty in a song.

Silence.

So I sang again. I will sing again and again and again until the monsters go away. I will not let both of my mothers down.

I was singing the song for a third time when I heard the bolt unlock and the door swung slowly open. My mother was kneeling on the floor. Her hair was unkempt; there were streaks of tears on her face. She held out her hands to me. I slowly walked towards her and fell in her arms. She cried. Nana cried. My father cried, and so did I.

"You have two mothers," she whispered against my ear.

"I know," I said. "And I love you both."

End