

Ruthie Brian

Short Story: To the Frontlines (Revised)

Dear Ulysses,

I'm so tired. You've been gone for so long and I don't know what to do anymore. Your son misses you. I see it in his eyes. My god, it's been almost two months since you've last seen Thomas. He's grown up a little bit - as much as a child can grow in quarantine. The last time he saw you you were in your scrubs. I don't want that to be his only memory of you.

I don't remember the last time I saw your face. I love you, but I barely remember what you look like. I feel as if I've been stripped of all my memories of you (of us) pre-lock down. All the happy memories we shared, all the sad memories we shared. It's scary if I'm being honest. I want to remember, but I can't. Even if I try to think back to a specific day, nothing comes to mind. I tried to remember our wedding. I tried to remember the sun on my face as I walked down the aisle and the sweetness of the white cake. I tried to remember our first dance. In front of everyone. I couldn't. I opened our wedding album. It's funny, actually. The book hadn't been touched in so long that it literally collected dust. But anyway, I looked through our photos. There are so many pictures of us but I don't recognize myself. You're there, clear as day, but me...

On a happier note, Thomas and I have been writing letters to frontline workers. His are barely legible so I try to touch them up when and where I can. I know they're not much, but I'm trying. We're trying. I can't even begin to comprehend the pressure that you feel. The stress and the guilt. I'm so very sorry that you have to experience these things. You are making decisions that no one should ever have to make. I want you to know that I am so thankful for you and everything you do. But I am also selfish. I want you to come back home and be with your family. I want you to be with me. To be safe. I want you home, away from the frontlines. I want everyone else to deal with the pandemic. I know that's a horrible thing to say but I love you and I need you here with me. I understand this cannot be and that your job is crucial. You are the essential worker.

I'm sorry, I know I said that last paragraph would be happier and then it just got sadder. I can't compare my life to yours right now. But I do want to update you too. I just hope you'll have enough time to read this long letter. Perhaps in between saving patients lives, or on a lunch break. My days have been filled with Thomas. There is no longer any me time. Remember those book club meetings that I would go to once a month? Gone. At the very beginning of everything a few moms messaged the rest of us saying that they can't seem to get through more than a few pages before putting the book down. After they mentioned this I have been noticing that this applies to me as well. We all agreed to keep in touch. But as the weeks wore on less and less people responded. And now I'm on my own. Save for our neighbors that are always blaring music at 12 AM. God they won't stop. And here I am, taking care of *our* son all alone. I'm the one setting up his Zoom calls. I'm the one making all his meals and changing his sheets and cleaning the whole house when he knocks over a vase. But I know that I have nothing to complain about, especially since you're out there actually doing something about this whole situation. I know that I'm not the one that should be angry, if anything you should be the one seething about everything.

Anyways, I think this has been quite enough from me. I would love to receive a letter back from you if it were possible. I won't hold my breath though. Sorry, bad pun.

Love love love,

Penny