

## Six Feet Apart

By: Tarini Karnati

Taking off my mask, I start washing my face. As my eyes rose, I saw a glimpse of myself in the mirror. A red gash on my nose, sore marks on my cheeks, and deep lines running across my forehead. Bags of dark shadows engulf my eyes, and I don't know if I can stay awake any longer. Every time I walk into this hospital, fear blooms inside of me and worrying thoughts fill my head.

*Will I be able to see my family after my shift?*

*Will I make out safe?*

Driving home, I see rainbows and "Thank You" staring at me as I pass each house. Unlocking the door, I walked into my house, only to have my 7-year-old son, Ian, jump into my arms

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"Hey! How are you?"

His face glowing, he replies, "I did my homework and my chores. Will you stay tonight?"

His face was still bright, but after a minute of silence, Ian's smile fell.

"You have to go to work, right?"

I can't stand seeing him upset, but I have no

choice.

“I’m so sorry. I have to go back to the hospital in an hour. There are many people who don’t feel well. So let’s spend some time together now. Where is Ellie?”

“She’s in her room.”

Treading upstairs, I lift my hand to knock, but it becomes still as I hear sobs echoing through the door. Slowly opening the door, I see her on her phone, scrolling through photos of her and her dad while choking through her sobs. Hearing my footsteps, she quickly jumps and

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tries to wipe the tears off her face. Walking towards her, I take a seat next to her and wrap my arms around her.

“It’s OK. Everything will be alright.”

Pushing herself out of my embrace, she looks at me, trying to hold her tears in, and says, “It’s not OK. This virus has taken everything I love away from me. You and Dad. Dad died and you are never home. Instead y-you are r-risking your life to help others.”

Leaning against my chest, she lets out her worries and tears, while I hold onto her, hopeless.

“Ellie. I’ve already lost your father to the virus. And I do this, so it won't happen to anyone else”

“B-but I c-can’t lose you too.”

“Trust me, you won’t.”

Kids around the world wish they had superpowers and were superheroes. Being a superhero seems like a fantasy. Perfect. Only if reality was like that. The heroes of WWI and WWII were soldiers and militaries. The heroes of this outbreak are us. The medical staff. Sanitary workers. For the first time, the people in the back are now being pushed to the front. We are the heroes. The work is rewarding, but the pressure is intense. Being a hero is not as easy as comics portray. I'd say Batman and Captain America had an easier job. One side, one enemy. Everyone is on the same side. It's a matter of life and death, where death seems to be winning.

We are told six feet apart. By the news. Say the scientists. Yet I see family gatherings, weddings, and parties. Desperate to continue on with our lives, and escape the misery this virus has brought us. But social distancing isn't enough if people refuse to stand six feet apart. No matter how many "Stay At Home" posters we make, the music keeps on playing. We are risking our lives, and in return, all we get is a higher risk of dying. Is six feet not enough?

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Military strategists have been developing strategies and military plans for a future of what people thought World War III would look like. We expected World War III to come in the form of nuclear and cataclysmic confrontation. Unexpectedly, we were hit by a green, invisible enemy. And it has us standing six feet apart.

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