



A Mother's Courage

M.W. Story 18

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*Father of 2 boys,
grandfather, and
great-grandfather.*

Written for his mam:

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The fierce cold, heavy snow winter of 1943 could not have come at a worse time as Nazi's occupied The Netherlands. Rationed food was barely enough to stay alive, electricity was only occasionally available, there were no adequate heating supplies and the days and nights were disturbed by thundering armadas of bombers on their way or returning from Germany.

It was during this time, I became ill as a teenager with diarrhea and abdominal pains. After weeks of waiting, we received permission to visit the medical university hospital in a nearby city. I went there on the backseat of my mother's bicycle. After waiting an entire day, I was seen by a professor and three assistants. They prescribed some medication that caused my eyes to be out of focus, and I had difficulty grasping things. But my condition became worse. A curfew did not permit any travel between eight pm and six am and no emergency assistance was available.

Against all odds and ignoring strict laws and protocol, my mother took unprecedented action. She put me on the back of her bicycle again and entered another hospital where we were not allowed to be. With the courage of a lioness and relentless bravery, she pleaded to have "just ten minutes with a doctor!" After hours of relentless exertion, we were allowed to see a



doctor. The physician was an elderly gentleman who took his keys and swept them over my belly. "Acute appendectomy" he concluded, "It can burst anytime!" Before antibiotics were developed, a broken appendix was a death sentence. If the appendix had broken during the night, we would not have had a chance to get medical help because of the curfew.

They operated on me the next day, and I stayed in the hospital for three weeks. The ether anesthesiology made me miserable and the terrifying howling of wounded planes, random falling bombs, and anti-aircraft noise and explosions intensified my sense of fear, vulnerability and helplessness.

Yet I survived because of the love, strength and courage of my Frisian mother.

She saved my life.