

Dear Ben,

I haven't really met you yet, but you're my son. Your mother is still exhausted from the trial of your birth and you're in ICU with more tubes in you than I can imagine. I almost didn't know you were a boy; they whisked you away so fast. I never thought blue could be a scary color until I saw your skin deprived of oxygen. I'll never look at pale blue the same way again.

Your birth was 36 hours long and your heart stopped with every contraction toward the end. A C-section wasn't possible, though I don't recall why. Your cord was wrapped around your neck three times and you'd managed to knot it twice. I'm told we're in the best hospital to give you a fighting chance. I'm praying you pull through before your mother wakes up. I don't know how I'd tell her if...

No. You will make it. You're my son and nothing has been more precious to me. I had no idea though until this morning. The idea of you has been wonderful these last 9 months. We looked forward to baseball games and ice cream, and as your mother swelled we thought we had a sliver of what it's like to be parents, but we had no real concept. Time enough to discover after you were born.

It's almost funny. The trauma team was assembled when they discovered this would be a dangerous birth. I remember thinking most of them looked younger than me. It was all I could do to keep my wits about me, and they looked calm and confident. As your mother pushed for what seemed the thousandth time, the doctor said if the next one didn't take she'd risk a C-section. To everyone's surprise, you tumbled out as if by accident.

I didn't know what to do. I was helpless to take care of my wife and clueless how to help you. A young man stepped in and snatched you up and as he forced a tube down your tiny throat, I wanted to stop him, it so looked like he was doing damage. There was barely enough energy in me left to realize he was helping you; he was the only help for you.

Now I'm waiting wondering if you'll live, and if you do, if you'll be whole. I know this, I'll love you no matter what. It's a fierceness in my heart I didn't know I could possess. I feel as if I could slay dragons for you. But waiting is harder. Dragons would be cake next to this.

I'm asking God to spare you. I'm reminded as I do that He didn't spare His own Son. And I remember that young trauma nurse who looked like he was harming you when in fact he was your only hope. Is this waiting somehow God's hand that looks harmful but is actually my only hope? If you do pull through, I won't take you for granted. I promise to love you out loud, to take time for you, to raise you with values and hope. And if the lack of oxygen has stolen away much of your life, I pledge to take care of you with the Father's love.

Please, Ben. Pull through.

Love always,

Your Dad

*Ben pulled through just fine, thanks to a merciful God and the fine people at Arnold Palmer Hospital. He played baseball for awhile, but switched to basketball. His father and mother love him fiercely, as they do his two younger sisters. Ben is 13 years old now, a fine young man, who has, himself, found time in the waiting room to be difficult. He lives in Orlando, has a fondness for whales and dolphins, and has a heart that burns for God.*