

The Three of Us

By: Eloise P.

After a long night-shift at the hospital, I come home early in the morning. I stumble into my room, and peek into the crib by my bedside. I see my six-month-old boy, Charlie, sleeping peacefully, curled up in a ball. Charlie has bright emerald eyes and dirty blond hair. I then walk into Evelyn's room, she is 5 years old. Evelyn has ocean blue eyes and blonde hair with a gentle curl. I wake her up and get her dressed in her favorite pink sundress. As she sleepily rubs her eyes, she says, "How was work Momma?"

"Work was good. How was Miss Molly?" I asked.

"She colored with us!"

"Fun! Go out to the kitchen, your oatmeal is waiting for you," I whisper, as I straighten out Evelyn's bed.

Evelyn runs out of the room and I follow her. I walk into the living room where Miss Molly, my children's nanny, is sprawled out on the couch. Molly is young with straight black hair. Evelyn loves her. As I wake up Molly, I hear Charlie cry. I go into my room to see him sitting up, with big tears rolling down his cheeks. I pick him up, and carry him into the kitchen where Evelyn is eating her oatmeal. While I make Charlie some milk, Molly walks in and says her goodbyes. Between mouthfuls, Evelyn says goodbye and gives her a big hug. "Bye Evelyn! I'll see you Wednesday," She pats Charlie on the back and says, "Bye Irene. The kids were great."

"Thank you!" To Evelyn I say, "Go brush your teeth! We have to go to school."

Evelyn walks to the bathroom, and I set Charlie down in his playpen with a bottle. I clean up the kitchen and get Charlie dressed as he babbles contently. Evelyn comes out of the bathroom, singing to herself. "Evelyn, please grab your lunchbox and backpack!" I say.

Evelyn strolls into the kitchen and grabs her matching blue and pink lunchbox and backpack. I pick Charlie up, and Evelyn follows us out the front door and into our small black car. After I buckle Charlie into his car seat, Evelyn has a coughing fit. I give her some water, and start the car. "Are you okay, honey?" I ask Evelyn, glancing in the rearview mirror while backing out of the driveway.

"Yes! Can we turn on music?" Evelyn asks cheerfully.

"Of course!" I reply, turning on the radio.

After I drop the kids off at preschool, I turn off the music and drive home, enjoying the few hours of quiet I have to myself. I turn into our driveway, and look at our small, light blue house. It obviously needs some work. The one story house used to have fresh flowers in pristine windows, a well kept lawn and looked friendly. As I walk into the house to take a short nap, I think of my late husband. James died when I was 7 months pregnant with Charlie. He was coming home from working as an accountant

when someone ran a red light and hit his car. James had green eyes and blond hair, just like both our kids. Evelyn and Charlie don't look much like me. I have brown eyes and shoulder-length brown hair. I don't have any siblings, and my parents both passed away when I was in college. I crawl into my bed and fall asleep, thinking of James and my two children. My loneliness feels overwhelming.

I wake up one hour later to the sound of the phone ringing. It was Evelyn and Charlie's school saying Evelyn had a fever and felt awful. I picked both kids up from school, and went straight home. I tuck a pale Evelyn into bed, and put Charlie down for a nap. I cancelled my shift at the hospital for the next day.

I pick up around the house for about an hour, before I hear Evelyn coughing from her room. I walk in to check on her. "Momma I don't feel good." She says as she starts to cry.

"I know honey; it'll be okay," I say as I sit next to her on her bed.

As I take her temperature, the color in her face slowly drains away. The thermometer beeps, and reads 102.9. I lay her back down, and grab her a cool compress for her forehead. When I come back into her room, she is asleep. I put the cool rag on her head, and check her pulse. Her heart is beating roughly 190 times a minute, a very high heart rate, especially for resting. I gently try to wake her, but she won't wake up. I keep monitoring her heart, and it is slowly rising. After 10 minutes of Evelyn being non-responsive, I call an ambulance. Her fever rose to 103.2 before the paramedics came, a few minutes later. A tall man walks into her room, and after I explain the situation I grab a wailing Charlie, and go back into Evelyn's room. "She is very short of breath, and isn't waking up. We're going to take her into the ER," the paramedic informs me.

I frantically grab my purse and a couple diapers for Charlie, and we go in the ambulance with Evelyn. I hold her hand the entire ride to the hospital and wish James was here. I ask if we can go to the hospital I work at, but the paramedics tell me we have to go to the nearest one because of Evelyn's condition. The three paramedics wheel Evelyn into a room in the ER, and hook her up to an IV and oxygen. I dig through my purse to find my phone so I can call Miss Molly, but she won't pick up. Charlie starts to fuss, so I find him a toy to play with. "Your daughter is going to be okay. This evening, once her heart rate and breathing go back to normal, we will move her to the children's hospital wing. Until then, we'll run tests on her to see what is wrong," a shorter, red-headed nurse says to me.

I thank them all, and they say that they'll be back in a few minutes to start the tests. I slide my chair closer to the hospital bed, and look at my small Evelyn. Her skin is white, and her hair is tangled against the pillow. After ten minutes I call Molly again, but she still doesn't answer. A few hours pass, as nurses come in and out of the room doing different tests. A doctor comes in, and informs me that she is stable enough to be transported to the children's wing of the hospital and next morning, they are going to take Evelyn in to have an X-Ray done on her lungs.

On the way to the children's hospital wing, Charlie starts to cry. I realize that he hasn't eaten since that morning, and as soon as we get a still sleeping Evelyn settled into her new hospital room, I go to the cafeteria. I am able to find Charlie some carrot flavored baby food, which he devours happily, putting him back in a good mood. I buy myself a salad, I don't eat much of it. As Charlie and I are wrapping up, a tall, female nurse, with long brown hair tied up into a messy bun, runs into the cafeteria, yelling "Is Evelyn Greene's mother in here?!"

I quickly grab Charlie and follow the nurse back up to Evelyn's hospital room. When I enter the room, I see a sickly Evelyn sitting up in her bed, with two other nurse, one male and one female, around her bed, coughing harder than she ever had. I laid Charlie down on the couch with a toy, and ran back to Evelyn's bed. As I grasped her hand, Evelyn suddenly laid down, her eyes closed, and her entire body began to shake. The male nurse rolled her on her side, and asked me to back away. I picked up a whimpering Charlie, and watched the nurses stand there, keeping an eye on her monitor. Her heart rate went up to 200 beats per minute. "She's having a fever-induced seizure. We just have to wait for it to pass," the female nurse told me, though I already knew.

After a few heart-breaking minutes of watching Evelyn convulse, she finally calms down.

Later that evening, after I pulled the couch out into a bed and put Charlie to sleep, Evelyn began to stir. I pulled my chair up besides the bed as she woke up. "How are you?" I whispered as I reached for her small hand.

Evelyn groaned, and then whispered, "Where are we?"

"We're at the hospital. It'll be alright, though." I coaxed.

Evelyn began to whimper softly. I stroke her hair, and a nurse walks in and gives Evelyn some medicine and says to me, "Irene, after running some tests, we found out that Evelyn has a severe case of Pneumococcal pneumonia. We want her to spend a couple nights in the hospital, but she will be home by Thursday. Keep her in bed unless she has to use the bathroom."

That night, Evelyn and Charlie are both asleep. I sob softly to myself, wanting James to be here. Things have been a little tight on money recently, and between work and taking care of the kids, I don't get a lot of rest. After a few hours of lying in bed, I finally drift off for a fitful night of sleep.

Over the next two days, Evelyn continues to improve. I haven't been able to get ahold of Molly at all. As long as he sleeps well, Charlie stays in a good mood. Evelyn, Charlie and I are curled up watching Finding Nemo, when the red-headed male nurse comes in and informs me Evelyn will be discharged tomorrow. I thank the nurse and he gives me a prescription to pick up on our way home. Evelyn looks at me and says, "When are we going home, Momma?"

"Tomorrow, honey. How do you feel?" I ask her.

She turns back to the movie, and answers, "Tired."

I smile and settle in for a comfy evening with my two children.

The next morning, Molly calls me and tells me she dropped her phone and it was in the shop. After informing her what happened, she came to the hospital. “I am so sorry Irene!” I showed up to your house on Wednesday, and when I found your car there and the door locked, I thought maybe you had gone for a walk or were spending the day in,” she continued to ramble on her apologies until I interjected.

“It’s alright! You’re here now. Can you stay with Charlie and Evelyn for an hour or so? I need to go grab my car and get the house ready.”

“Of course!” She chirps, grabbing Charlie from my arms.

“I’ll be back soon Evelyn! Bye, Charlie!” I say as I grab my purse and walk out of the room.

I catch a cab home. Once I get home, I unlock the door and walk into the house. I walk around the messy home, and I break down once I reach Evelyn’s room. Not just out of sadness, but partly out of relief. We made it through this week, just me, Evelyn and Charlie. I compose myself, and straighten out Evelyn’s room. I change the sheets and make the bed. I call Molly and let her know I’m going to be a little longer than planned. She tells me that the kids are doing great, so I hop back in my car and go to the store. There, I get some food, and some charming flowers, all different shades of pink, Evelyn’s favorite color.

When I get home, I sweep, clean the windows, put the flowers in vases, and clean the rest of the house. I go to the car, and as I am backing out of the driveway, I look at the house. The fresh flowers make our home look more friendly. It still has a long way to go, but it is a definite start.

After checking Evelyn out of the hospital, and getting her and Charlie situated in the car, I thank Molly. She offers, “Do you need me to go back to your house with you?”

I look at Evelyn and Charlie in the backseat, both giggling at each other. I look back at Molly, and decline her offer. “We’ve got it, thank you. We’ll see you on Monday!”

The three of us arrive home, and we all curl up on the couch together to watch *The Lion King*. I look at Charlie, asleep in my arms, and then I look at Evelyn, giggling sleepily at the movie, and for the first time since Charlie was born, I feel truly happy, and I know the three of us are going to be just fine.