

# *Passed Down*

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Age 14  
Language Arts Short Story

## *Passed Down*

It was raining heavily outside the dark, tinted windows when I sat in the chair beside her hospital bed to say goodbye. I had dressed elegantly to ensure that her last memory of me would be perfect. Her pulse beat an even rhythm on the monitor, as she slowly awoke and flashed me a smile. I could tell she was sick; her eyes told me of her pain.

‘Martha,’ she wheezed, and then began to cough. Something about her saying my name made my heart skip.

‘Shh,’ I hushed, trying to comfort her, ‘hold on to your energy.’ She tried to smile at me while recovering from her coughing fit.

‘Listen,’ she wheezed and I nodded, ‘and remember what I’m about to tell you for your remaining years of life.’

‘Mother!’ I interrupted nervously. I felt her death nearing and feared that what I didn’t want to happen was drawing nearer.

‘*Listen!*’ she repeated. ‘There’s a right path and there’s a wrong to doing everything you do in life. It is wrong to keep trying to force everybody else to do it the right way. Forgive me, my child.’ I looked at her, confused and the heart monitor slowed down to a point where I could no longer hear any silence...

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‘But, *Mom!*’ my daughter nagged at me. ‘It’s spring break—I do *not* need to learn from another one of your proverbs right now!’

‘And, exactly who told you that? You know that you learn more outside of school than you do in it, right?’

‘Whatever.’ She turned her back to me and marched up to her room without looking back, something I *never* would have been able to do to *my* mother. Ever since the divorce, Danielle and I hadn’t been getting along as well as one would hope. She wouldn’t accept my advice, or

help on how to do things right. ‘Let *me* live my life,’ she replied. ‘I want to make *my own* mistakes!’

‘You come back down here, young lady!’

‘Urgh!’ she scoffed. ‘*I wish you were dead!*’

That night, I endured a horrific dream that contrasted my past, present and future. It began with my mother talking to me in her hospital bed seventeen years ago. *It is wrong to keep trying to force everybody else to do it the right way. Forgive me, my child.* Her last words echoed in my head. Then, unexpectedly, I saw myself at a younger age looking up to my mother as she scolded me about my studying methods. I tried to explain how I understood things differently than she had, but she wouldn’t listen. It seemed she wanted me to live life the way she did, and I felt a burning anger inside of me. *I hate you,* I had thought in my head. And then I woke up startled.

I didn’t know where I was, or what had happened to me. I was in a room I did not recognize. Scared, I looked around and heard a beep somewhere in the distance. I cleared my throat and called; ‘Danielle?’ My voice came out wheezy.

‘Shh,’ she walked up to me.

*It’s repeating,* I thought.

‘It’s okay, Mom.’

*She cares,* I assured myself, with thousands of other words rushing through my head. A tear trickled down her face. I knew there wasn’t much time left. No time to ask questions... no time to waste.

‘Listen,’ I whispered, and she came close to my hospital bed trying to stay brave, ‘and remember what I’m going to tell you for the rest of your life.’

‘Mom!’ she interrupted worried. I knew exactly what she was going through, and I desperately wanted to tell her what to do—how to withstand what she was about to experience. But I had known better than that, by then. I had learned from my own mistakes just like I had wanted to and just like she would want to, too.

*Telling her how won’t work,* I thought. *She’ll have to learn what I did on her own. The way I did.*

‘Listen,’ I repeated. ‘There’s a right way, and a wrong way to doing everything that you will do in life.’ I took a deep breath. ‘It is wrong to tell others how to do

the things right. I'm so sorry, Danielle, for not understanding this sooner.'

My daughter watched me, confused, as I died wondering if my mother had gone through the same thing.