



The Coronavirus Collective

The Daughter

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The morning when everything changed was annoyingly normal. I'd like to say that a mysterious fog dripped from the windowpanes, that the air had the clammy chill of anticipation. But it wasn't like that at all. The morning my Mum realised she had Coronavirus was bright and still. Pleasant, even.

Mum was stood by her bed, dressed up for work, with her bags neatly packed in front of her. With the strangest expression, she said, "I think I've got Coronavirus."

We exchanged a look like guilty children who had gotten away with some huge prank. My sleep-scattered mind struggled to process this sudden development.

What are you meant to say to a statement like that? After failing to find an appropriate response, I chose to say nothing. Yes, absolutely nothing. I lingered just inside the door frame, wanting to laugh at the surrealness of it but not sure that was appropriate. Looking back, I think not laughing was most certainly a good call.

"Probably shouldn't go to work then," I offered, with the boundless wisdom of a teen at seven in the morning. The virus had been hanging over our heads, like a ball waiting to drop. Which one of us would get it first? Suppose we made it through untouched?

But when the virus actually came, these worries vanished. It was as if the disease itself was easier to process than the uncertainty that had preceded it.

Next, my mum decided to call my dad with the news. He didn't seem surprised at all. In fact, his tone was rather amused; we'd gotten used to a kind of gallows humour that would seem a little disturbing during any other time.

The weeks following that morning were some of the strangest I've ever experienced. My mum spent the entire time cooped up in that room, and the only way my sister and I could communicate with her was by standing in the doorway, just like I had done that morning. Indeed, we spent so much time in our mum's doorway that my dad had to put in a chair for us to sit on. Over the fortnight, that little chair took on a certain formality. At times, it felt like I ought to make an appointment to sit there.

All in all, the fourteen days of my mum's illness were not as terrifying as I'd expected them to be. Of course, there were challenges. But my family managed in the same way we manage everything: together.

Aria Chakravorty is a high school student who is passionate about the arts, the sciences and the environment.