

Chapter 09

The Things I Wish I Could Say to Anthony

My precious Anthony,

There are so many things I wish I could say to you.

So many words that I carry in my heart because I never imagined there would be a day when I couldn't simply pick up the phone, hear your voice, or sit with you and tell you what I needed you to know.

I wish I could tell you one more time how much I love you.

I wish I could look into your eyes and tell you that being your mother was one of the greatest gifts God ever gave me.

I hope you knew.

I hope you knew that every sacrifice, every worry, every prayer, every moment I spent loving you came from a heart that was completely yours.

A mother's love doesn't have an expiration date.

It doesn't end when a child grows up.

It doesn't end when life changes.

And it doesn't end when someone leaves this earth.

I still love you every single day.

There are moments when something happens and I instinctively want to tell you. Moments when I think, "Anthony would love this," or "I wish he could see this."

I wish you could see your family. I wish you could see the love that surrounds you still. I wish you could see the ways your life continues to touch people.

I wish I could tell you that your life mattered.

That you mattered.

Not just because you were my son, but because you were Anthony. A unique and irreplaceable soul who left a mark on the people who loved you.

There are still moments when I wonder if I did enough. If I said enough. If you truly knew how deeply you were loved.

But I have to remind myself that love is not found in one final conversation.

Love is found in a lifetime.

It was in every hug.

Every "I love you."

Every memory.

Every ordinary day that became precious because it was a day I had with you.

I wish I could have protected you from everything.

That is what mothers do. We want to take away the pain, carry the burdens, and fight every battle for our children.

If I could have taken your place, I would have.

But even though I could not change what happened, I will never stop being your mom.

That is something death cannot take away.

I carry you with me.

In my heart.

In my memories.

In the love I give to others.

And in the purpose I found after losing you.

Anthony, I hope you know this:

You were loved before I ever held you.

You were loved every day I had you.

And you are loved every day I live without you.

Until the day I see you again, I will keep telling your story.

I will keep loving.

I will keep living.

And I will carry you with me, always.

Love,

Mom

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