

SO GOD MADE A  
**mother**

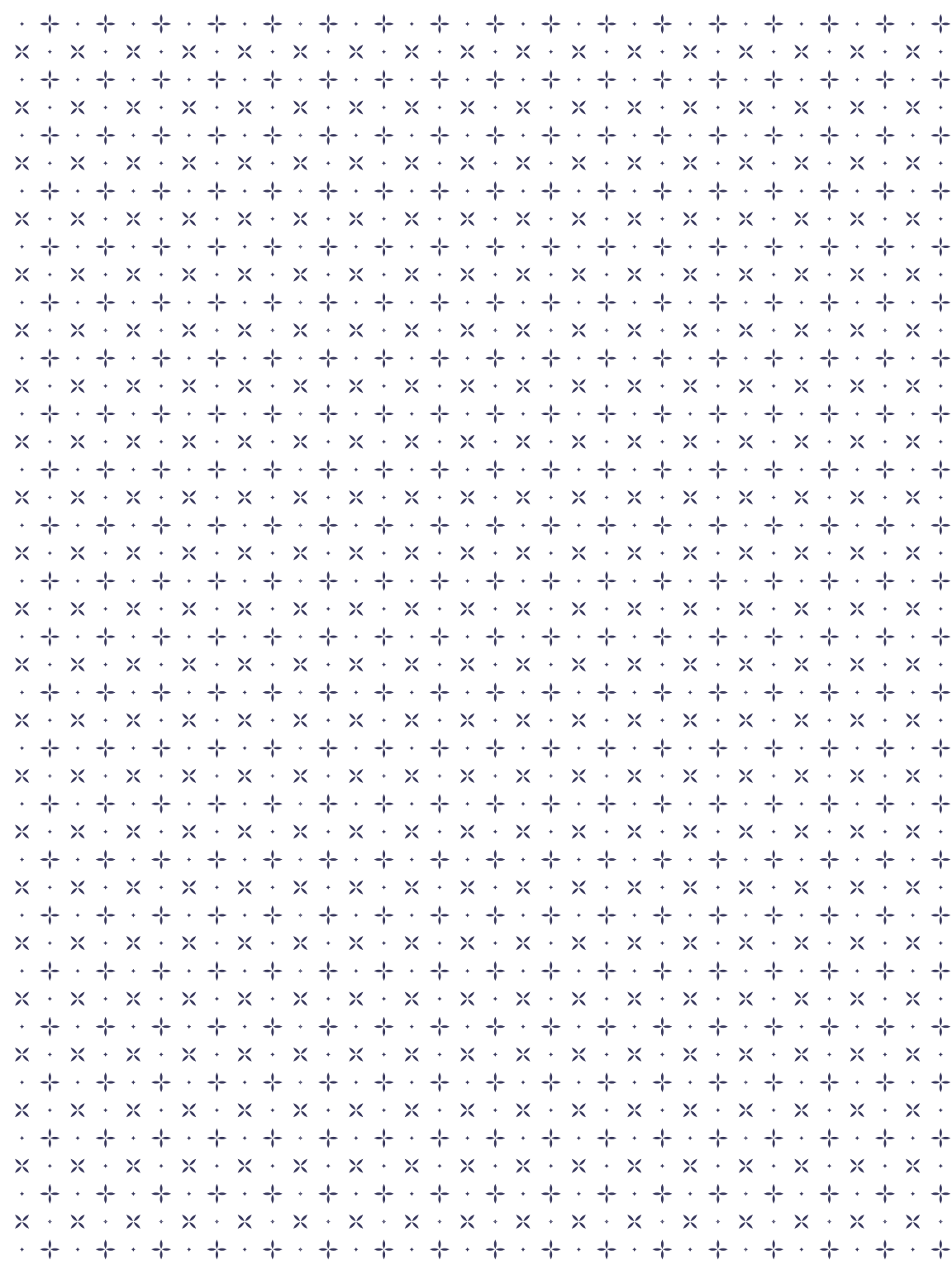
tender, proud, strong, faithful, known, beautiful,  
worthy & unforgettable—just like you

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**LESLIE MEANS**  
HER VIEW FROM HOME

SO GOD MADE A MOTHER





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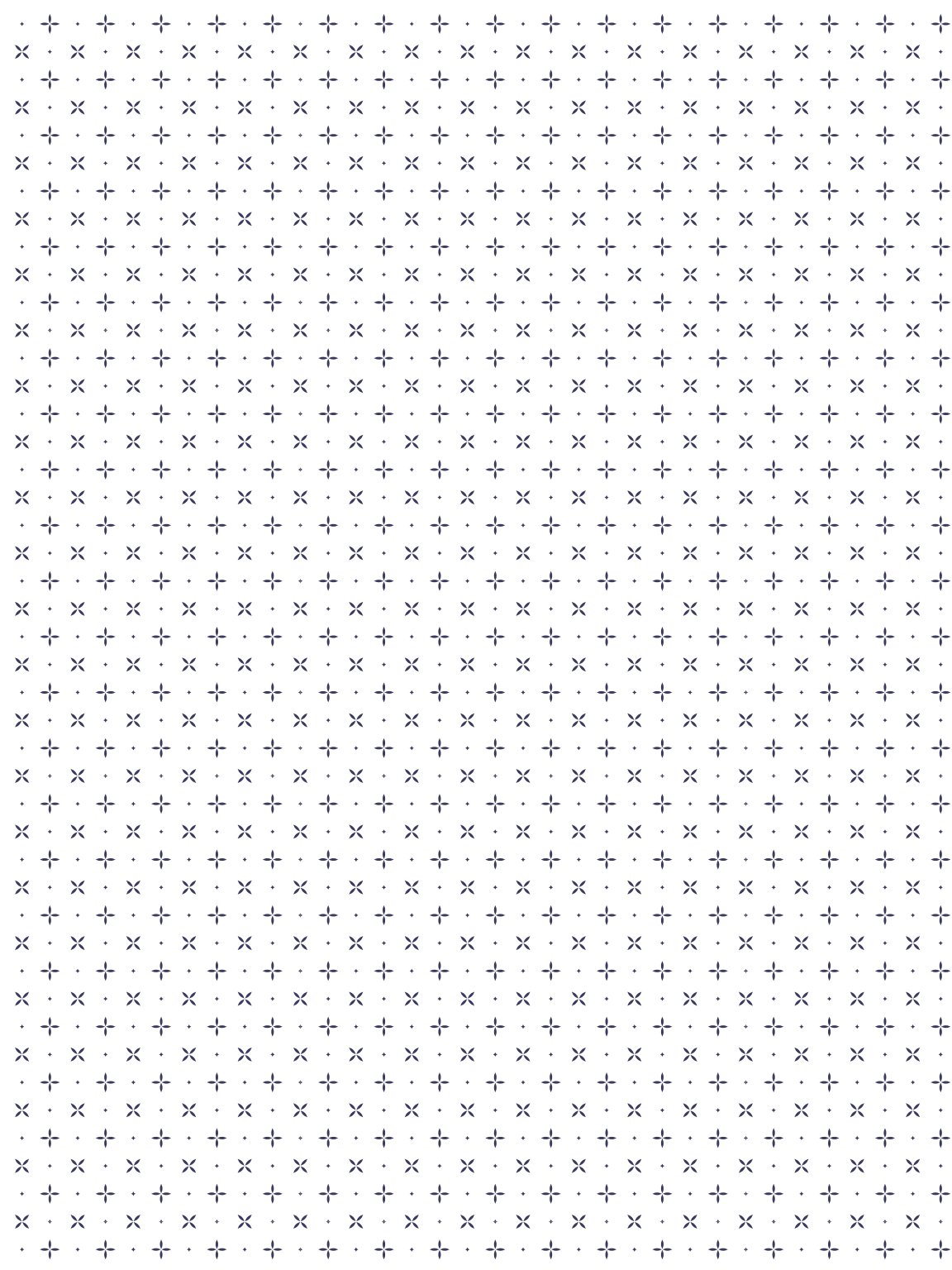
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Hey God,  
Thanks for the whispers.  
I promise to keep listening.



Leslie



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# Foreword



Last night I sat on the floor in my pantry and ate half a bag of those miniature powdered donuts alone. Was it my finest hour? Probably not. But my entire family is sick. I've checked temperatures. I've made meals. I've rubbed backs. We've had doctor's appointments. I've kept everyone's medications organized and on schedule. The only faces I've seen for a solid week are the ones on TV and the ones I live with.

I've also done the whole "Is it my fault we're sick? Have we had enough vitamins? Am I doing a good enough job taking care of everyone?" thing. I've blamed myself. I've questioned myself. I've worried. Bless the good Lord, have I worried.

At one point yesterday, a little voice from the couch beckoned, "Mo-om!" and my shoulders instantly slumped. I closed my eyes, dropped my head down so my chin almost touched my chest, and breathed one long, slow inhale, mustering all the energy in my body to come alive and answer that call again.

Just then, a friend sent me a text. *Check your front porch. We moms have to stick together. Love ya, friend.*

Outside was a goody bag with all my favorite things: fresh flowers—lilies and hydrangeas and I don't even know what else, but they were bright and beautiful and so needed—chocolate, magazines, the sweetest handwritten card, and you guessed it, powdered donuts.

That act of love, it got me through.

Years ago, after my third baby was born, I found myself in a hole. I didn't recognize it at the time, but I wasn't just overwhelmed. I wasn't just tired. I wasn't

## SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

just angry and lonely and sad. I was depressed. A mom friend with kids around the same age as mine recognized my struggle and took me out to dinner. Over chips and salsa, I opened up for the first time in a long time, with no shame, and finally found the courage to get some help.

And that act of love, it got me through.

I've witnessed so many acts of love between moms. The porch drop-offs. The encouraging notes. The little nods of solidarity as we pass each other in the grocery store. The invitations. The conversations at the park. The check-ins. And it all gets us through.

Someone saying, "I see you" gets us through. Little lifelines of hope get us through.

It's why I love Leslie and the *Her View From Home* community so much. Leslie knows how to create connections that have ripple effects, simply as women share their stories.

I think it's because our stories remind us we're not alone, even when we feel like we are. When we dig deep, get vulnerable, and say, "This is where I am. This is what I've been facing. This is what I've learned—maybe it will help you, too," we find camaraderie. We find comfort. We find peace. We find joy. We find grace. We find freedom. We find each other. We find ourselves.

I think you'll be able to pick this book up at any stage of your life and find little pieces of yourself in it, and that's a powerful thing. These stories, they hold us close. They point us in the right direction. They whisper peace. They give us hope. They ground us. They steady us. They lead us home.

These acts of love we share with and for each other, they bind us. We do it for each other. We do it for the next generation. We do it because somewhere along the way, someone dropped donuts on our doorstep when we were in the midst of a storm, and it got us through.

And what a privilege it is—what an absolute honor to reach out to another soul and help them through.

*Amy Weatherly*

*Coauthor of the national bestseller I'll Be There (But I'll Be Wearing Sweatpants)*

# Introduction

LESLIE MEANS



When I was a girl, my dad read bedtime stories to my sister and me. The books varied over the years, but one thing was constant: Dad never missed a night. At least, not in my memory.

When I was little, the stories were easy and often came from a Little Golden Book my three older sisters had read before me. The pages were usually tattered or riddled with graffiti—a side effect of hand-me-down books.

Eventually Dad started reading longer, more complicated titles, and then my sister and I started reading to him. He fell asleep sometimes, which always made us laugh.

One night his poker buddies arrived early, before Dad had a chance to read to us. I don't know if they started without him or if they just waited patiently in our kitchen. (Snacks probably helped the wait.) But I do know it didn't bother my dad. He didn't rush the process—he didn't skip a page or cut our reading time short. He made it clear that his priorities were his girls.

I'm not sure when we stopped our evening book-reading routine. I'd imagine it was around junior high, when I was too cool to associate with my parents. But I do know I'll never forget it.

What I've learned in my forty years of life is that those moments with my dad weren't about the stories in the books. Those moments helped me feel and know love. Unconditional love. The kind of love that helps a kid grow into a decent adult.

## SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

The kind of love that inspired me to get this book into your hands.  
Mom had a huge part in this too, of course.

We didn't have money. We certainly didn't have clout. But we had love. We knew love.

And I know I'm giving that same love to my kids. At least, I'm trying.  
And friend, I know you're trying too.

When you're changing diapers and cutting chicken nuggets into three hundred pieces and driving tweens and teens all over town (seriously, at some point we just become taxi drivers), it's hard to believe what you're doing is valuable.

You might start listening to the lie that makes you wonder if you're worthy of this gig. The lie tells you you're doing it wrong. You're messing up your kids. You're just a normal girl, doing normal things, with no real accolades to your name. The lie makes you wonder if this is all there is.

I know because I believed that lie too.

But at night, when the house is dark and the kids are in bed and the cat is asleep and my husband, Kyle, is snoring beside me (how does that man fall asleep in thirty seconds when it takes me an hour?), I hear God's whispers:

*You are so loved.*

*What you're doing is important.*

*Your story is extraordinary.*

Extraordinary? Really, God? I'm just an average girl in middle America. I once placed a clothespin on my nose, hoping it would make it smaller, and I nearly failed tenth-grade math. Trust me—I'm not that great.

God and I have interesting conversations.

But then I imagine Him giving me a look—the look Mom and Dad gave me when they didn't like what I was doing. The same look I now give my kids. The you-know-better-than-that look.

And somewhere along the way, I realized I'm supposed to let you know that you know better too, friend.

It's why I started the website *Her View From Home* more than a decade ago. I had no money or business experience, but I had God's whispers and a fire in my soul.

## INTRODUCTION

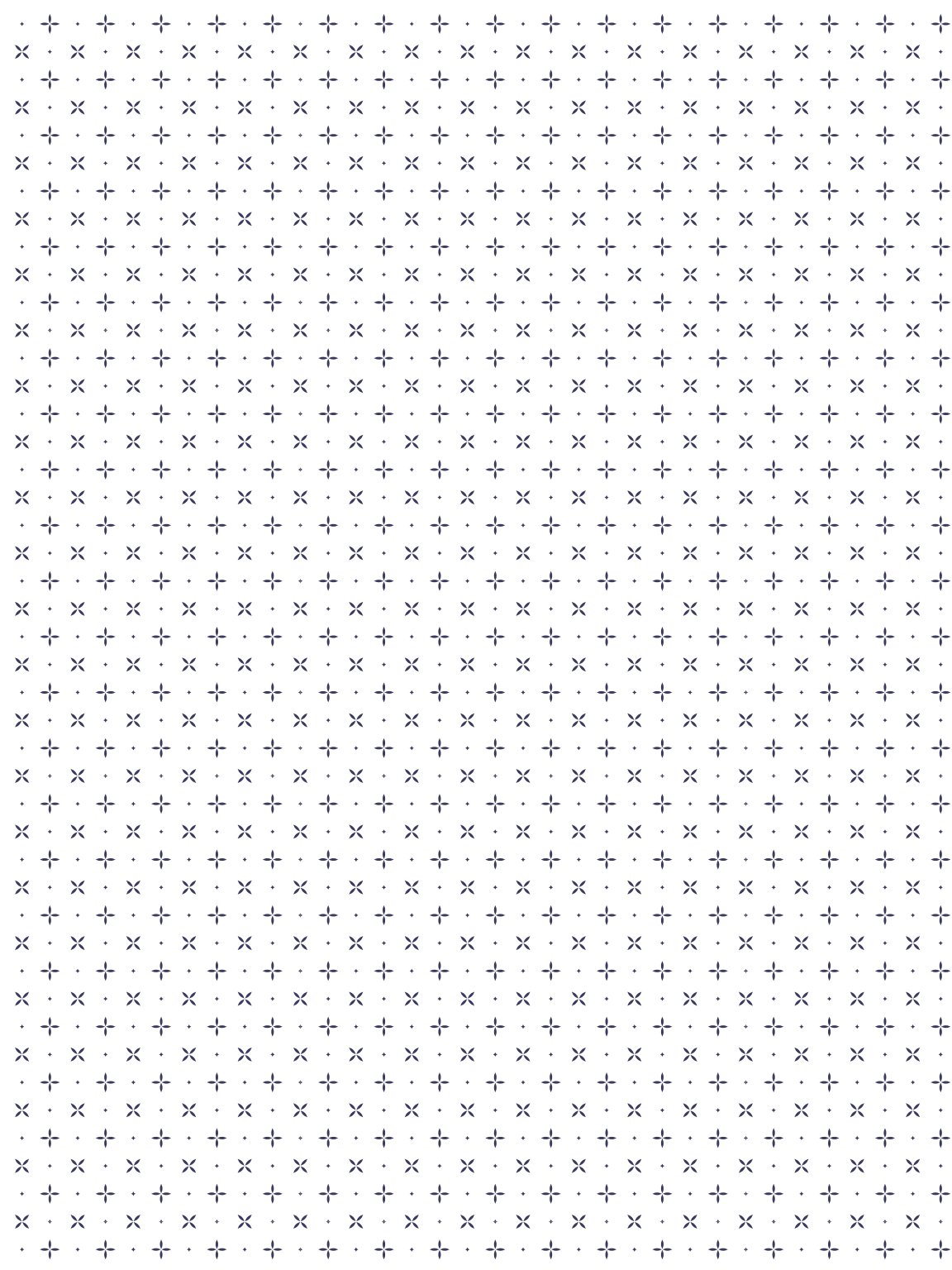
I knew the world needed a place where women could tell their extraordinary stories. Today, thousands of writers and millions of views later, *Her View From Home* is a community where women across the globe write about motherhood, marriage, relationships, grief, and faith with breathtaking vulnerability.

Now those writers are sharing their stories with you in this collection of real, honest, heartfelt stories. I pray you'll find comfort, laughter, peace, friendship, love, faith, and community in the words on these pages and the stories flowing from these hearts.

Maybe you'll even find your own story.

And if you do—*when* you do—I hope you know this gig you've been called to has always been worthy, valuable, and important. Not because you earned a fancy degree or won an award. Not because of the size of your bank account or the size of your jeans (or nose). But because you love your kids and you love your family and you are loved by God.

So God made a mother. And He made you extraordinary.



PART 1

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SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

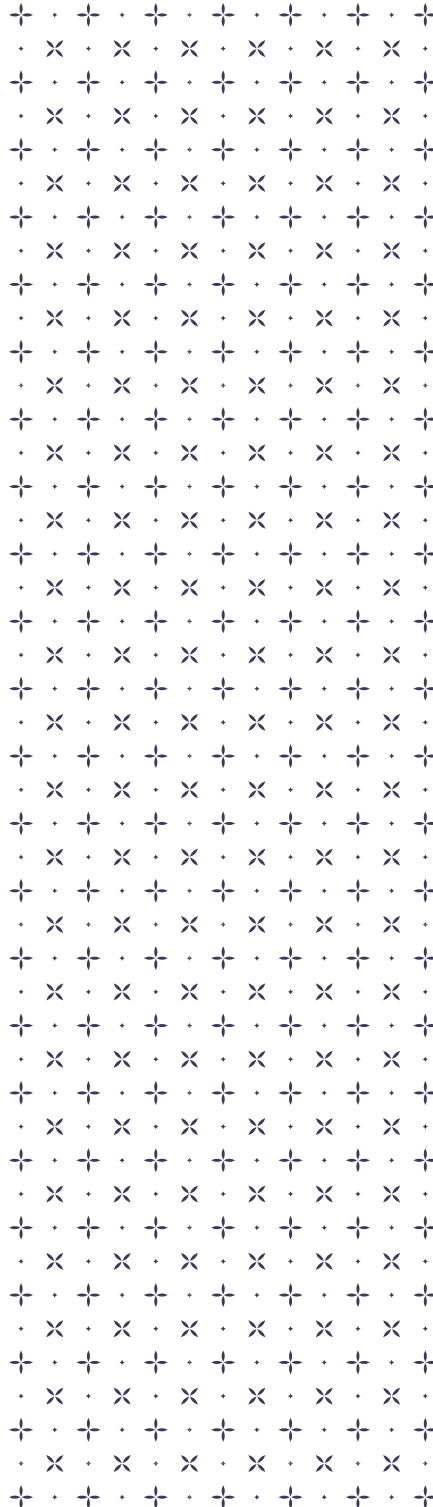
tender





**He needed  
someone with  
a heart tender  
enough to rock  
babies in the still,  
small hours of the  
night but strong  
enough to let them  
spread their wings  
and fly... so God  
made a MOTHER.**

*HER VIEW FROM HOME*



# The Shed

LESLIE MEANS



I can't remember when I first noticed it. It was probably sometime in the fall of 2008, when my newborn and I would drive (and drive and drive) to ease her crying and my nerves.

We'd pop in a Bon Jovi CD (remember those?) and hit the road until the tears stopped—hers and mine.

We spent hours together on those open roads. I often took gravel routes, hoping the hum of the car would soothe her to sleep.

On one of our adventures, I saw it. A sleepy shed at the edge of a cornfield, right along my favorite country road.

To some, this shed probably looked like the perfect setting for a scene out of a horror film. Especially right before harvest, when the corn was devouring it.

But I loved it.

Eventually I changed my route to my kids' daycare, just so I could drive by that cornfield and that shed.

Year after year, I watched it change. It grew and stretched and buckled under the weight of snow and rain and the harsh Midwest weather.

I grew and stretched too. Right when I thought our daycare years were over, my husband and I found out we were expecting our third child. A little boy.

Which meant I had at least five more years to drive by that shed.

## SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

Then one day, while on my normal route with our youngest, I noticed that the shed had changed. The shingles were worn. Its roof had started to cave.

I sobbed.

Right there in my car, on that familiar road, with my soon-to-be five-year-old strapped in his seat behind me, the tears fell.

I knew, as all moms know, this route, this road, this baby—would soon be gone.

The shed would crumble.

The gravel road would be paved.

And that baby? He'd start school in the fall. There would be no more reason to drive that route or visit that shed or take him to daycare.

A path I'd known for thirteen years would become a memory. That's motherhood, I suppose. The bittersweet journey of saying goodbye.

Mothers feel that ache deep in our souls, in that soft, mushy part of our hearts we try so hard to protect. But that tenderness? That ache? It's really just love, and it makes the road worth traveling, even when it brings us to tears.

You'll see that tenderness in these next several stories, I think—and you'll realize you're not the only one whose heart feels exposed as you love and launch your babies.

# I'll Love Every Version of You

KRISTA WARD



Every time I look at you, I can't help but see so many versions of you.

The you you once were, when I held you in my arms for the first time. As you smiled that first smile, took your first steps.

The you who mispronounced words and fell asleep in your car seat, your limp body snuggled against mine as I carried you to bed.

The you who learned to ride a bike, beaming with pride as you sailed down the uneven sidewalk, shouting, "Look, Mommy! I'm doing it!"

The you who would grab for my hand as we'd stroll to the park after dinner. The you who wore pajamas and rain boots as you waltzed up and down the aisles of the grocery store.

All the versions after that as you grew and changed and transformed before my eyes, faster than my heart ever could have been prepared for.

And oh, how my heart aches.

Because that little you—I miss that you sometimes.

Other times when I look at you, I see you years from now.

There's a look in your eye, or maybe it's something in your sweet smile, and all of a sudden I see the you you'll become.

A glimpse of your future. *Our* future.

And oh, how my heart aches.

## SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

Because that you—I can't wait to love that version of you too.

But as I soak in every precious, intricate detail of the you before me, I've decided I'll simply love you right now.

The you who you are in this exact moment. Wonderful, incredible, uniquely you.

Because though I've loved all the versions of you before and I'll love all the versions of you to come, right now is a fleeting, irreplaceable gift.

So tonight, as I allow every bit of you to imprint on my heart, I won't see the you of yesterday. I won't see the you of tomorrow. I'll love you right now.

---

Krista Ward, creator of *Kisses from Boys*, is a wife and mom with a heart for encouraging others through every messy, beautiful moment of motherhood.

# I Wait Outside My Teenager's Bedroom Door

WHITNEY FLEMING



I hear my daughter's door softly click shut from three rooms away as I stand at the kitchen sink. The mental image of an impenetrable bank vault creaking closed pops into my mind.

She arrives home just after 8 p.m., walking into our house looking tired but happy. My teenager spent her day going to high school, then sports practice, then a team dinner. I haven't seen her since 6:30 a.m.

She gives me a quick hello, then says she needs to take a shower and finish some homework.

"I'm going up to my room," she says over her shoulder, carrying an oversized bookbag packed to the gills.

Then I hear her door click shut.

Sometimes I hate the sound that door makes. It's a constant three-inch-wide reminder that my teenager would often rather be where I am not.

Where I can't ask questions.

Where I can't reach out to hug her.

Where I can't offer a solution to whatever problem she's facing.

Where I can't enjoy her presence and she doesn't have to endure mine.

The shift between us was subtle. She started doing her homework in her room instead of at the kitchen table. "So I can focus, Mom," she explained.

## SO GOD MADE A MOTHER

She would casually say she wanted to video chat a friend, then disappear for hours. I could hear her laughter through the walls, the murmur of her favorite music slipping through the cracks.

She would come home from school or practice or a social outing and, after giving me an obligatory greeting and grunt, head to her room, where I would hear the click of her door shutting me out of her world. Again.

I know this is the way it's supposed to happen—her quest for independence, for privacy, for growing up.

But even though she sits a mere one hundred feet away, the gulf between us is vast. And I miss her.

She is not an unruly child. She does well in school, she is kind and responsible, and she even puts her cups in the dishwasher most of the time. It's not that I don't trust what she's doing behind closed doors—I just want access to her.

Our relationship has changed. Where I used to be the center of her universe, I now find myself more of a spectator, often watching from a distance, waiting to be invited into her world. I am on the outside, wishing she would tell me how her day went, waiting for her to open her bedroom door and let me in for a moment.

I often don't know how to handle the emotions of watching my baby grow up, this juxtaposition of pride as I see the person she is becoming and grief as I remember the child she was. Her desire to break free is strong, and the fracture hurts me more. It's a dance we are both trying to lead.

Sometimes figuring out how to navigate this new terrain is challenging. *Don't ask too many questions. Don't comment about too many things. Don't give too much advice. Don't breathe too loudly. Definitely don't try to come through the bedroom door.*

So while she sequesters herself in the sanctuary of her room, I do the only thing I can—the only thing I can control: I make myself more available than ever before.

I fold laundry and pay bills at the kitchen counter on the off chance she will come down for a snack.

I offer to give rides and buy frozen yogurt when I am bone-tired after a long day of work.

## TENDER

I keep my bedroom door wide open in the hope she will need to borrow tweezers or black socks or a pair of earrings for a class presentation the next day.

And in those rare moments when she emerges, I am there for whatever small part of her life she will share with me.

It is different, this new paradigm. Our relationship is more on her terms than on mine, and I must be okay with that.

I listen more, I nod, I hold back on giving advice. I try to be patient, I try to be understanding, I try to remember what it was like to want to break free from my parents so badly it hurt. I try to remember what it was like to be a teenager who hid behind her bedroom door.

This new stage of parenting is an evolution in my relationship with her. It is a revolution for my daughter.

And as we continue to forge this new terrain, I am desperate for our relationship to come out stronger on the other side.

So, as painful as it is, I let her stay behind that bedroom door as much as she needs to. I let her go to hold on. I let her go, knowing one day we will find common ground again. I let her go, knowing breaking free does not mean breaking up. I let her go, knowing one day she will come back to me.

I still hate the sound of that door closing, but I love what's behind it so much more.

---

Whitney Fleming co-runs the blog *Parenting Teens & Tweens* and posts her musings about life at *Whitney Fleming Writes* on Facebook and Instagram.