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The Day Mother Cried
Gerald Moore
Coming home from school that dark winter's day so long ago, I was filled with anticipation. I had a new issue of my favorite sports magazine tucked under my arm, and the house to myself. Dad was at work, my sister was away, and Mother wouldn't be home from her new job for an hour. I bounded up the steps, burst into the living room and flipped on a light. I was shocked into stillness by what I saw. Mother, pulled into a tight ball with her face in her hands, sat at the far end of the couch. She was crying. I had never seen her cry. I approached cautiously and touched her shoulder. "Mother?" I said "What's happened?" She took a long breath and managed a weak smile. "It's nothing, really. Nothing important. Just that I'm going to lose this new job. I can't type fast enough." "But you've only been there three days," I said. "You'll catch on." I was repeating a line she had spoken to me a hundred times when I was having trouble learning or doing something important to me. "No." she said sadly. "I always said I could do anything I set my mind to, and I still think I can in most things. But I can't do this." I felt helpless and out of place. At age 16 I still assumed Mother could do anything. Some years before, when we sold our ranch and moved to town, Mother had decided to open a

day nursery. She had had no training, but that didn't stand in her way. She sent away for correspondence courses in child care, did the lessons and in six months formally qualified herself for the task. It wasn't long before she had a full enrollment and a waiting list. I accepted all this as a perfectly normal instance of Mother's ability. But neither the nursery nor the motel my parents bought later had provided enough income to send my sister and me to college. In two years I would be ready for college. In three more my sister would want to go. Time was running out, and Mother was frantic for ways to save money. It was clear that Dad could do no more than he was doing already farming 80 acres in addition to holding a fulltime job. A few months after we'd sold the motel, Mother arrived home with a used typewriter. It skipped between certain letters and the keyboard was soft. At dinner that night I pronounced the machine a "piece of junk." "That's all we can afford," Mother said. "It's good enough to learn on." And from that day on, as soon as the table was cleared and the dishes were done, Mother would disappear into her sewing room to practice. The slow tap, tap, tap went on some nights until midnight. It was nearly Christmas when I heard Mother got a job at the radio station. I was not the least bit surprised, or impressed. But she was ecstatic. Monday, after her first day at work, I could see that the excitement was gone. Mother looked tired and drawn. I responded by ignoring her. Tuesday, Dad made dinner and cleaned the kitchen. Mother stayed in her sewing room, practicing. "Is Mother all right?" I asked Dad. "She's having a little trouble with her typing," he said. "She needs to practice. I think she'd appreciate it if

we all helped out a bit more." "I already do a lot," I said, immediately on guard. "I know you do," Dad said evenly. "And you may have to do more. You might just remember that she is working primarily so you can go to college." I honestly didn't care. I wished she would just forget the whole thing. My shock and embarrassment at finding Mother in tears on Wednesday was a perfect index of how little I understood the pressures on her. Sitting beside her on the couch, I began very slowly to understand. "I guess we all have to fail sometime," Mother said quietly. I could sense her pain and the tension of holding back the strong emotions that were interrupted by my arrival. Suddenly, something inside me turned. I reached out and put my arms around her. She broke then. She put her face against my shoulder and sobbed. I held her close and didn't try to talk. I knew I was doing what I should, what I could, and that it was enough. In that moment, feeling Mother's back racked with emotion, I understood for the first time her vulnerability. She was still my mother, but she was something more: a person like me, capable of fear and hurt and failure. I could feel her pain as she must have felt mine on a thousand occasions when I had sought comfort in her arms. A week later Mother took a job selling dry goods at half the salary the radio station had offered. "It's a job I can do," she said simply. But the evening practice sessions on the old green typewriter continued. I had a very different feeling now when I passed her door at night and heard her tapping away. I knew there was something more going on in there than a woman learning to type. When I left for college two years later, Mother had an office job with better pay

and more responsibility. I have to believe that in some strange way she learned as much from her moment of defeat as I did, because several years later, when I had finished school and proudly accepted a job as a newspaper reporter, she had already been a journalist with our hometown paper for six months. The old green typewriter sits in my office now, unrepaired. It is a memento, but what it recalls for me is not quite what it recalled for Mother. When I'm having trouble with a story and think about giving up or when I start to feel sorry for myself and think things should be easier for me, I roll a piece of paper into that cranky old machine and type, word by painful word, just the way mother did. What I remember then is not her failure, but her courage, the courage to go ahead. It's the best memento anyone ever gave me.

NEW WORDS

anticipation n. 期待
expectation n. 期待
anticipate vt. 期待
issue n. 发行物 (刊物的) 一期
tuck vt. put or push into a desired convenient position so as to hold tightly. 塞 (进) ; 卷 (起)
draw together into a small space 塞 (进) ; 卷 (起)
bound vi. move along quickly by jumping or leaping movements 跳跃
flip v. turn or move quickly or with a jerk
tight a. drawn, fixed or fastened together firmly 紧的, 牢的
ad. firmly, closely
couch n. a long comfortable seat with a back and arms on which more than one person may sit. 长沙发椅
sofa
approach v. come near or nearer (to)
cautiously ad. very carefully 细心地, 谨慎地
cautious a. type vt. write (sth.) with a typewriter
line n. a row of words in a poem. a row of words on a page of writing or in print (诗、文的) 一行
helpless a. unable to look after oneself or take action to help others, powerless
assume vt. take as true without actual proof. suppose 假设, 主观认为
ranch n. a very

large farm for raising horses, cattle or sheep 大牧场，大农场
nursery n. a place where small children are temporarily cared for
托儿所
day nursery n. a place where small children are cared for during the day
training n. the process of training or being trained.
instruction
correspondence n. the act of exchanging letters 通信
correspondence course n. an educational course in which instruction and work are exchanged between the teacher and student by post
函授课程
formally ad. according to proper rules or lawful forms 正式地
formal a. qualify vt. make fit or competent for a special purpose 使具有资格
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