

"Of course I was scared, Little Man. Everybody gets scared sometimes, and I wasn't sure I was coming home."

"Why didn't you make someone else go?"

*For an eight-year old, he sure asked some hard questions.*

I thought hard before I answered. "Because you never ask someone to do a thing you wouldn't do first. It's your job to stand between harm and the people around you."

"But what if I don't want to get hurt?"

I smiled, I hoped warmly, and said, "Nobody wants to get hurt, but not everyone is strong enough to be hurt so someone else doesn't have to be."

"Were you always strong enough?"

"No. No, I wasn't."

"What happens when you let someone get hurt?"

*Oh geez...*

"Well, that depends on how bad you let the person down. Sometimes you regret it for a little while, and sometimes you regret it forever."

"Auntie Allison, do you regret things forever?"

"A few," I admitted.

"So, you hurt all of the time?" He asked.

"Yes, I guess I do, a little. I didn't want to, but it's a part of life."

"So, strength can overcome fear, pain, and regret?" He asked.

I mussed his hair. "You're smarter than I am. You know that?"