

WHAT I WANT FOR YOU

Nicholas J. Pirro

I want you to work hard,
but never so hard
that your body becomes the price
of your ambition.

I want you to dream big,
but never measure your worth
by titles,
money,
degrees,
promotions,
or applause.

Achieve things.

Great things, if you can.

But know that I was proud of you
before you ever accomplished
a damn thing.

I want you to help people.

Give.

Be generous.

Be the person who reaches back
when someone else is struggling
to climb.

But you do not have to carry everyone.

Some people will hand you their weight
and call it love.

You are allowed
to hand it back.

I want you to know when to leave.

A job.

A friendship.

A relationship.
A dream that became a nightmare.

Anything that demands
everything you have
and returns almost nothing
is allowed to end.

Leaving does not always mean
you quit.

Sometimes leaving means
you finally chose yourself.

I want you to rest.

Without explaining why.

Without earning it first.

Without lying in bed
making a list of all the things
you should be doing instead.

The world will still be there
when you wake up.

I promise.

And you will fail.

God, I hope you fail sometimes.

Because I don't want you
so afraid of disappointing me
that you spend your whole life
only attempting things
you already know you can do.

Fail spectacularly.

Call me.

We'll figure it out.

But never mistake
I failed
for
I am a failure.

And never believe
you failed this family.

You couldn't.

You are this family.

Most of all,

I don't want you to inherit
the belief that life
is something you endure.

I don't want you waking every morning
already exhausted
by everything expected of you.

I don't want survival
to become such a habit
that one day you look around
and realize
you forgot to live.

Build something different.

Build a life with mornings
you don't dread.

Find work that leaves
something of you
for the people waiting at home.

Laugh loudly.

Take vacations.

Waste an afternoon.

Fall ridiculously in love.

Change your mind.

Start over.

Sit outside when the weather is beautiful
even when there's work to do.

And when life inevitably becomes hard,
be strong.

But please-

don't become so good
at surviving hell
that you start calling it home.

I spent much of my life learning
how much a person can carry.

What I want for you
is simpler.

I want you to learn
how much you can put down.

And if everything I have done
means that you get to live
a little more gently
than I did,

then none of it
was wasted.

About the Poet

Nicholas J. Pirro is a writer, researcher, and publisher whose work explores the intersections of human experience, leadership, resilience, and change. Founder of Pyrrhic Press and Ink & Echo, his creative writing turns toward love, loss, memory, family, and the complicated experiences that shape a life. His poetry favors emotional honesty over convention, finding meaning in the things we carry, the people we love, and the words that remain after a moment has passed.

Published September 21, 2026

Ink & Echo · Pyrrhic Press

pyrrhicpress.org

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Published by Ink & Echo, a literary collection from Pyrrhic Press.