

I WAS ONCE YOU

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Bereaved Mother

I have never met Carlie Brucia's mother, Nicole Brown Simpson's mother, Polly Klass's mother, Princess Dianna's mother, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy's mother or Laci Peterson's mother. But I know them all intimately. I know what dwells in their hearts and souls everyday. Like them I buried my daughter.

What am I now? Am I a daughterless mother? That sounds like an oxymoron, two words that contradict themselves. My eighteen year old daughter, Amy Marie, died on May 25, 2001. My life is forever changed. Burying a daughter is a surreal experience. There are no words in Webster's Dictionary that can explain the grief, the heartache, the pain, the depression or the anguish. Heartbroken is too small a word. The words don't exist because it is not supposed to happen. There are no plausible definitions that could accurately describe "bereaved parent." Groups of words can't be strung together on a typed page to accurately explain the grief. It is impossible to bury your child, yet it happened.

Logically, the factual part of my brain processed the information. The emotional part of my brain argues with the fact everyday. Each and every morning it is still a shock to my entire being! I still peek into her bedroom and expect to find her perfectly made bed a mess of jumbled covers with my daughter snuggled deep inside of them. Parents don't bury children! Headstones read "loving mother," "cherished wife." They don't read "beloved daughter." That is not the natural order of the universe. This was not supposed to happen to me. It always happens to other people. I see reports on the evening news, articles in the newspaper describing horrible events that resulted in the death of someone's child. It isn't supposed to be my child. How can this be? It can't be changed. I can't say, "Amy, want to go to the mall?" "Let's go out to lunch." She can't tell me about her "freaking bio test" that she has to study for all night long.

Things I want to say to her are forever left unspoken. How will I go on? I can't go on, yet I do. My body wakes up each day. I don't ask for this to happen, it just does. My lungs take in air, it is automatic, something that I have no control over. My physical body now controls the course of events in my life. I breath, I eat, I walk, I talk, I put one foot in front of the other. I load the washer and shop for food. I can work. I can teach. I can think on the job about the job. My spiritual being merely exists. It cannot flourish or soar ever again.

When my daughter died, my emotional self was buried with her. When she died, I also buried her future husband to be, my future grandchildren, my daughter's future wedding, my daughter's college graduation ceremony, my holiday, my joy. I buried my best friend. I buried the once perfect life that I knew and lived everyday. Tucked into the corner of Amy's casket is my happy husband. My despondent bereaved husband now

lives with me. I buried my fifteen year old daughter's future matron of honor. I buried Renee's future nieces and nephews. There is not enough room in Amy's casket for all the things that died with her. Dreams, hopes, joys, lives, emotions, hearts and souls slipped into that casket with Amy. They occupy every square inch of that place. One day my fifteen year old daughter will be older than her older sister. Can my brain every understand that? Renee will have a nineteenth birthday. Amy did not. How can the impossible happen?

Bereaved parents go on. We go on because we have no other road to travel. It is just we are not "normal" anymore. We used to be you. We used to be the PTO moms and the Girl Scout leaders. We brought lovely frilly fancy holiday dresses for our daughters. We were once carpool moms and soccer moms. We sat at musical recitals and listened to the first melodious squeaks and squawks of their instruments. Forgotten homework assignments were rushed to school for our children. In our heads we planned our beautiful daughter's future wedding. Vision of the bridal gown and the reception danced in our heads. We couldn't wait to have grandchildren and baby-sit and enjoy. We wanted to tell our daughters that their children were just like them. Our daughter's christening gown is carefully preserved and awaiting to be worn by her own children. We wanted to hold our grandchildren's chubby little fingers in our hands and remember holding our daughters chubby little fingers in our hand.

We used to answer the telephone and hear, "Hey mom, what's up?" Now the phone doesn't ring. And it will never ring again with that sweet voice we so desperately would love to hear. Now we are set apart. We are not normal anymore. People choose to walk down a different aisle to ignore us. It is too painful for them to think about our lives. They might take a moment to wonder how we go on. They say, "I can only imagine your pain." That is not true. No one can imagine it unless they live it. We now belong to a new group. We never wanted to be a part of this group, bereaved parents. No one lines up for this membership. We wish our membership would never grow. I am glad you are not me.