

A Mother's Day Tribute to Those Who've Passed On

When I first envisioned my Mother's Day column, I intended to write some light tribute to all the moms I know. I would raise a glass to all the good you moms bring to the world, thanking you for being the foundation of our culture, and for those hundreds of little things you do every day – brushing away tears, tying shoe laces, explaining how to cross a street – that go into forming human beings.

Then I read about Emily Jones.

Emily, age 7, was playing under the supervision of her father in a park in Bolton, England when a knife-wielding Somali immigrant stabbed her in the neck. Emily died shortly afterwards in the hospital. The woman who attacked her was arrested and is now incarcerated in a mental health lockdown unit.

This senseless murder took place on March 22, the day England celebrates Mother's Day.

Losing a mother to death leaves a hole in the heart that nothing can fill. My mom died nearly thirty years ago, and it's a rare day that I don't think of her and wish she had lived to see and know her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. My oldest child was 20, and my youngest 8, when my wife and their mother died, and for them Mother's Day brings a mixed bag of emotions.

But to lose a child to death? That surely breaks the heart forever.

When I came across Katie Hopkins' [article](#) about Emily, I stared for a long time at the photograph of a little girl with a smile as sweet and secretive of that of the Mona Lisa, her

eyes shining, her blonde hair in braids, and then I thought of her mother, as Hopkins does in her article, and of what an absolute wreck that poor woman must be.

Most of us have known mothers who lost a child to an accident, a disease, or even a murder. Over the years, I've met two mothers who were backing their cars from their driveways and ran over and killed their toddlers. I've stood beside a hospital bed and grieved with a young couple whose baby died at birth.

It seems unnatural, a child preceding a parent into death. My mother-in-law lived another sixteen years after her daughter's death. When she visited my children and I in Waynesville, she always insisted on making a trip to Kris's grave, which was nearby. Each time she became so upset that we returned home after just a minute or two.

We hear much these days about the death of the family, of high divorce rates, of single moms and dads doing their best to raise their children. In "[Defending Motherhood](#)," Nicholeen Peck offers an excellent look at the attacks on motherhood and how and why we must defend it. We even have some wicked people who refer to mothers as "breeders," an obscenity that in a just world would result in a hard punch in the offender's nose.

Despite these circumstances, most of us still pay homage to our moms, living or dead, not just on Mother's Day with cards, flowers, and luncheons, but whenever we think of them.

To those of you whose mothers are living, I encourage you to make this Mother's Day special by giving the gift of yourself. Thank your mothers for those thousands of diapers changed, meals served, and lessons taught. Tell them how much you love them and how much they mean to you.

To those of you who for whatever reason have broken with your mother, think carefully about what you are doing. Maybe she

did you some horrible wrong, but if at all possible, use this Mother's Day to try and reconnect with her. You may fail, but at least you can say you tried.

To those who, like me and my children, have lost their mothers to death, we can offer our appreciation in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers. We can remember the good they did and make a vow to pass along what they taught us to our family and friends. Moms are the gift that keep on giving, if we make it so.

And to those of you who, like the parents of Emily Jones, have lost a child to death, I have no words. Only the unashamed tears of an old man who can scarcely imagine your pain and sorrow.

Thank you, Moms, for all you do.

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