

Requiem and remembrance for Mother's Day

I get that tortured feeling that there was something I could have done to stop the pain.

The gentle smile, in virulent anguish. Both hers, and mine.

She came here with no fanfare, like other immigrants of her vintage, wrestling hope from the stocks of despair. And over the course of her life, a life yet finished, lost the battle against fate sometime ago.

A pale rider was always there, at the ready, next to her, to cleave into even a fractional joy, and while her faith sustained her, alongside, wealth-legitimized evil – black and thick with hubris, but taut and nimble. The pummelled were left to pantomime.

“Don't worry, Alex, no problem is too big for God,” she once wrote me, after I was gone and away. I left, annoyed and conflicted, because I couldn't bear to watch anymore. Often, when I went back to see her it became almost perfunctory, and thus, painful.

That kind, gentle smile, in perpetual an-

guish. Hers and mine.

I wondered, and still do, what could possess a man, an upright man, to allow for such angst, such sorrow. Fear gripped me, some time ago, that I had started to become what I loathed. Frustrated by my impotent lot in the pecking order of her life, with no influence, without equal resource to fight for her, when youth trumped sense, I left again. And then again.

What if I were to one day find myself in evil's eclipse, perpetually lost and equally vacant? What if my life became an unending lie, too? Love led me and wickedness repelled me – at the same, always, and without fail. But children never forget. Do they? I didn't.

Sometimes, in my grief over her loss, and mine, I am bewildered that I might have made a subconscious choice not to want to understand, more paralyzed than broken. Perhaps. Except for her, to help her with her life, to return the favour, the greatest gift. Life. Then only, is the regret as palpable as the aching.

Those pained, perhaps worst of all, are the ones left hardly standing to bear witness, bleak and beaten.

A day has never passed when I haven't thought of her and what could have been.

I learned so very much, though I retained relatively little. My memories became desolate, thwarted by her pain – which I could never make go away. Damn.

My fondest memories of her will always be in the times, early on, before the ruins, when she taught me to sing, without necessary music, and to laugh with absolute abandon.

And to pray. Not as a crutch.

That kind, gentle smile, in perpetual anguish. Hers and mine.

I'm sorry if you're disappointed, that this wasn't about flowers and chocolates, brunches and bows.



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REBEL WITH A CLAUSE

It is just utterly absurd, to me, that a heroine be remembered only once a year.

Perhaps you know one too.

“I watched the stars fall silent from your eyes,” wrote Michael Stipe. That could have been written for her, from what remains my favourite song.

People don't have to die for you to lose them. Do they?

Men and women can never be equal peers, and the world will never find symmetry in her collective soul until the men who hurt are banished. But children never forget. Do they? Big boys don't cry, after all. Should they?

When lives are shattered and good is overwhelmed by cruelty, nothing can bring them back. Nothing. Nothing.

A broken back might one day heal, but an extinguished spirit, is gone.

Forever.