

26th Anniversary

[115 Replies](#)

Today is the 26th anniversary of Heather's passing. For those of you who have lost children, or know someone who has, I hope this brings comfort and hope. It's a true story.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was coming in through the kitchen window. The chattering of birds resonated throughout the house and the smell of freshly-brewed coffee was intoxicating. As I reached for the coffee pot I was surprised to turn around to see Heather, who had quietly come into the kitchen, wearing a gray pallor.

Heather was my eight year old daughter. An only child, she was bright, beautiful and quite articulate. (Other people may not have thought so, but as her mother — I thought she was perfect!) In some respects, she had more sense than I, and when these times came along I would ask, "Heather, are you smarter than mama?" She never would answer and that told me everything I needed to know. She was also a lot of fun and kept me laughing on a daily basis.

Anyway, when I saw the pallor, I was mortified and wanted to know what was wrong. She said, "There's a man in my room." At that point I noticed the pink coming back into her flesh and figured the poor thing was probably scared to death. Feeling better, I took her back to see that no one was there. (Heather was a straight A student and was not the type to imagine things). However, in this instance I wasn't so sure... We checked under the bed, in the closet and everywhere else we could think of. No one was there so I asked what he looked like. "He was wearing all white and his hair was blonde and went straight back", she showed me with her hands. So I asked, "Was it a white jacket, pants? The answer was no and I didn't ask any more questions about it. I was convinced that maybe she imagined it or even dreamed it. She wasn't. And was very disturbed to think I didn't believe her. To make her feel better, I took her to my late brother-in-law's grandmother's house thinking it might be him. We pored through all of her photo albums and studied each picture meticulously. I figured if she was making it up, she would find a picture of *someone* and claim that was him, but he wasn't there.

Two years passed and we were living in North Carolina. Heather was in Florida for the summer and was at my grandmother's when I suddenly got one unexpected week off from work (a class I was supposed to take got moved back a week and I couldn't work without bringing back a certificate from this class.) So, I figured, this would be a perfect time to come to Florida to see Heather — and my grandmother. It was about midday when I got to Grandma's, and the buffet over at the Weston Hotel was calling my name. Heather was studying the photo albums and wasn't quite ready to go. After several, "Come on Heather, let's go" suggestions, the reason for her reluctance finally sunk in. There she was, studying each picture. I knew she wouldn't find it.

"Oh no, not again..." she shook her head up and down. What was this child seeing? So I asked, "Well how tall was he?" The answer nearly shook me to the core, "I don't know. He wasn't standing on the ground." As she said the words her voice quivered and I knew then that none of us would ever find it (the picture). My mother took her to have her heart checked. Nothing.

At the end of the week I went back to North Carolina to class leaving Heather to finish up her summer and received a call at the end of the week that Heather had died and that during the week she witnessed Jesus to everyone she met.

I didn't believe it and was actually trying to comfort those around me, assuring them that it wasn't Heather. When reality set in and I wanted to die along with her. Nothing seemed right. I felt like half of me got pruned off. I hated to wake up. I hated to think. I just needed to stay busy and get through enough minutes to make a day.

It turned out to be a very rare heart problem that went undetected until her death. They called it Myxoid Valvular Disease and they didn't know much about it. I didn't care... all I wanted to know was that no one did this to her, because I'd spend the rest of my life hunting them down. Misery was my whole life. All kinds of crazy thoughts went through my head, one being I felt that she shouldn't have made the trek alone — that I should have been with her — to protect her. Another one, If God wanted her so bad, He could have at least left a note!

My life was in utter chaos for about three weeks when I remembered the man she kept seeing and I realized that it was for my benefit as much as hers. That she wasn't alone. I realized then, that I was so blessed to have her for two extra years. She could have gone that day in the kitchen. Strangely enough, this realization got me through this.

I don't think I'll ever really get over this, but I'm doing okay. I hope you are too.