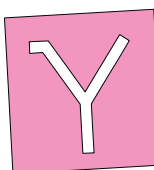


MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS GRANDDAUGHTERS & DREAMS

**"ALL THAT ONE HAS, ONE OWES ONCE TO ONE'S FATHER, AND TWICE TO ONE'S MOTHER."
(AFRICAN PROVERB)**

I started writing this a week ago. On Mother's Day, actually. Another special once-a-year Sunday had come and gone. Another frenzy of gift-buying, card-writing and breakfast-in-bedding. And, as is my custom every year, I had happily joined the celebration ...



ou see, Mother's Day is important in my book. Because MOTHERS are important. I mean, I owe so much to the mothers who've been cropping up all over my life ever since the day I was born.

My Grandma was a mother. My Nana was, too. My sisters are both mothers. And so (come to think of it) are endless queues of aunties, cuzzies and friends.

My Mum was a mother, needless to say. And I thought about her on Mother's Day. It was an unexpected, sneak-up, catch-me-by-surprise thought — because my Mum's been gone for over seven years. She was a good mum — as good as they come. And she did a darn good job with me and my outrageous siblings. But her last decade was far from easy. And I have difficulty remembering a time when she wasn't sick, when her life wasn't leaking painfully away ...

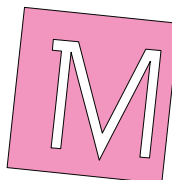
My final conversation with Mum (believe it or not) was about my aftershave. When I kissed her as she lay in her hospital bed, she complained that my aftershave was too strong — that she found it hard to breathe.

I told her it was called '*Opium*' — that it was supposed to make women lose control. And I can still hear her saying with a tired smile: "Well, *other* women, maybe, but not your mother!"

If I'd known she was going to leave us the very next day, I might've done things differently. I mightn't have been in such a hurry ... I might've sat with her longer, hugged her closer, tried to say goodbye.

I've got no *real* regrets. And a zillion great memories. However, next time I see her, I WILL wear a

different aftershave!



y wife, of course, is a mother, too. And, seeing I've had more to do with her than any other mother I know, I wrote her a card and gave her a gift and took her to a restaurant for Mother's Day Brunch!

I don't want to brag, and I'm not saying that *you* haven't got a good one too, but I've gotta tell you: my wife is one of the World's Great Mums!

She can cook and clean and wash and wipe faster than a speeding bullet. She can iron a week's worth of everything in the time it takes me to fold my undies. And she can be halfway round the supermarket before I've figured out which way the trundler's supposed to go.

When our kids were younger, it was *her* they cried for in the middle of the night ... *her* clothes, not mine, they smeared with bits of food ... *her* they first ran to on their stumpy little legs ... and *her* name they learned to say, long before they said "Dad".

As they grew older, she always knew who dunnit! She always knew who'd flogged the biscuits ... who'd put mud on the carpet ... who'd just passed wind ... and whether they'd *really* cleaned their teeth or just swallowed a glob of toothpaste.

She made them do their homework when they'd rather watch TV. She made them lunch on brown bread instead of Mars Bars. She insisted on knowing where they were, what they were doing, and who they were doing it with, every minute of the day. And she could smell a lie from 100 metres away!

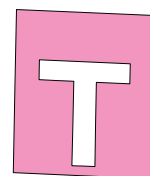


Princess Paris ... all dressed up and dreaming of Daddy

But these moments are becoming fewer and further apart. And they're mixed in with other much-nicer moments of joy and delight and gratitude.

Becks has found herself deluged with love and support. And our entire family has been blown away by the kindnesses, cards, letters, emails, prayers, offers of help, and sheer undeserved GOODNESS that we've witnessed. Countless Grapevine friends have played a part in that, and we all want to say "Thanks!"

Three-year-old Paris with her irrepressible bounce-back and fun is a tonic, no kidding, for us all! And her mother's progress is equally remarkable — still lonely and grieving (acutely, at times) but with a cheerful get-up-and-go that must be seen to be believed.



he other night, at bedtime, Paris announced that she would like to meet Daddy in her dreams: "I want to see him and

talk to him tonight!" When Becks encouraged her, suggesting that daughter and Daddy should have a date, Paris decided to do it in style. Instead of going to bed in her pyjamas, she went to bed in her beautiful pink princess frock ... plus her princess crown on her head ... plus a dash of her mother's lipstick.

"I'm ready!" she announced as she snuggled into her pillow, thinking (in the way that only three-year-olds can): "If I'm going to meet the Daddy I miss so much, I'd better look good in my favourite dress!"

Ahh, well ... that's me for another month. And no room left (shock-horror) to talk about money or the next magazine! Thank you for being there, for us and for Grapevine ...



JOHN COONEY (founder/editor)



I may well invite Becky, when the time is right, to share her "waves of grief" journey in the pages of Grapevine. There are sure to be hundreds, maybe thousands, of readers who could take courage from her honesty and her insights — don't you agree?

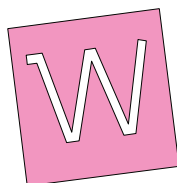


Oh, by the way, Paris reported back the next morning that she *had* dreamed of meeting Daddy. They'd played together on the swing, and he'd pushed her "... higher and higher, right up to the clouds!"

She expected them to pull their weight, pull up their socks, flush the loo, use their manners, scrub the bath, say their prayers, hang up their clothes, speak English, cut their hair, and all sorts of other cruel and callous things.

Okay. I had my moments of glory. I could beat her easily in a vacuuming contest. And she was no match for me when it came to making breakfast, throwing a frisbee, or giving the kids a fatherly-talking-to.

But in just about every other category, she won hands-down. And, as I told her for the zillionth time on Mother's Day just last week ... "I don't know where we'd be without you!"



We had another mother join us for brunch that Sunday morning. A younger mother, and her gorgeous little three-year-old. The three-year-old was my granddaughter, Paris ... and her mother was my one-and-only daughter, Becks. They lost their daddy and husband in a car crash six months ago — you may recall me writing about it at the time. And, as this was their first Mother's Day without their beloved man, we urged them to join us.

I've hesitated to say much more about this tragic event and its aftershocks. Partly because the grief that engulfs a family when something like this occurs is too painful and personal and private. And partly because life (if you'll forgive the cliché) must go on.

Speaking for myself, it's been my saddest six months ever ... and Robyn would say the same. We still catch ourselves feeling helpless and gutted and choked-up as we watch our beautiful, brave daughter forced to pick up the broken pieces of her life and start all over again.

