



Stories from Under the Umbrella

Five words hung between us, and in a blinding rush, I felt them achieve what nothing else in the world had been able to do. They pulled me from the suffocating quicksand of hopelessness.

The accident which cost me my two sons was one of those seminal events by which you define the eras of your life. Everything happened "before the accident" or "after the accident". Life "after the accident" was a swirling black vortex of savage pain. Purpose: lost. Meaning: unknown. Justice: non-existent. Love: gone.

Until those five quiet words, spoken with freshly realised anguish, by their little sister.

"I'll never be an auntie."

She was ten. She'd had less than a decade, then encountered this. The boys had done everything with her; they were her world. They'd grown up together, shared milestones together, planned and adventured and experienced together. They showed, she followed; they encouraged, she succeeded. They'd protected her while she braved the world.

Now she braved it without them. And without their future children to call her 'auntie'. And without cousins for her own future children.

She sat beside me, staring ahead, and suddenly I knew she was re-thinking her entire life. Quietly, bravely. Ten years old.

The vacuum left by my beautiful boys had sucked my love for them into it, and the rest of me went too. Nothing was there but terrible, desperate, bewildering grief. I thought the only escape was to stop loving them. Therefore, I thought, there *was* no escape.

But there she was. Just as beloved, suffering every bit as much as me, with the addition of a mother in a black hole. She was contemplating the loss... of all of us.

Purpose: regained, urgently. Meaning: realised, wholeheartedly. Justice: not mine to make worse. Love: as boundless as ever.

And in that blinding rush, life "after the accident" returned. It wasn't easy, but it wasn't impossible.

Because it wasn't about me.

To talk to someone who has also experienced the loss of a child, contact the Ladybird Care Foundation on 1800 954 224 or mentoring@ladybirdcare.org.au