

There Are No ‘Five Stages’ of Grief

November 10, 2022

It was early springtime here in Australia when my son died. I took jasmine and dark-red sweet peas from my garden to his funeral and laid them carefully beside him, wondering how I could even keep breathing through the pain.

His name was Adam. He was 38, and more than six feet tall, but he was still my baby. His birth, as my first child, brought me to the most joyous life turn I’ve ever gone through; his death, the most shattering. I’d spent the first weeks of his existence obsessing over him around the clock, preoccupied with the basics of survival and longing for a snatch of sleep. Now, in the first weeks after his death, I reeled through a twisted mirror image of the same experience. It left me buckled over my kitchen sink, an awful, primal sound tearing from deep in my lungs. That sound—of keening—was one I’d heard just twice before: once from an animal, and then from a friend at her 12-year-old’s funeral. I hope to never hear it again.

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