

She asked me what I would say if I spoke for her when she died. I often get asked to speak on behalf of the dearly departed and the not-so-dearly departed. I smiled a bit and said yes, thinking that this would be the end of it and that the question was merely a way to give a compliment but then she insisted that I tell her what I would say. This made me take a step back and give a pause – a rather long pause in fact, but it is in her nature to leave nothing to chance and she was very used to getting her way. It speaks well of her childhood that she was spoiled in exactly the way every father wants to spoil his daughter, and she was free and strong in knowing what she wanted just like every mother at least secretly wishes for her daughters. She was energetic in life practicing gymnastics and just being a girl.

But then she discovered apples. I don't know how old she was when she discovered them. I suppose it is a bit of blessing that she never revealed that to me. I just know that to my way of thinking she was young when she did. She found that the world was full of apples for her and she had them in every way she could. It was her love of life that drove her, along with a powerful curiosity. The apples brought her power and authority that was hers and did not come from her father. She loved the independence of it. For her eating the apple was all about finding just the ripest juiciest one, the best one on the best tree and then finding a way to get it. It made that first bite ecstatically delicious and never to be forgotten.

Life never leaves one without a challenge and she got hers. One day she found a sapling growing and had to chop it down. She cried.

In time she was in an accident. It changed her and now she became a different woman as her independence was endangered. She found the love of her life and married. Her love of apples never ceased, she just shared it with her love. It drove her to try her hand at different things like painting, decorating and screaming at the guy who said her son could not play on his baseball team. I also suppose it is what allowed her to drive so fast or maybe it was that she loved life so much that she was just in a hurry to get to the next thing.

Yes, she loved apples, but she never let it get in the way of her duties as a mom and a wife.

Always considered her family first in everything. Even over apples. She would tell me how she loved to spend time with her son's girlfriend. It was not the kind of empty braggadocio that some might say to impress one, but genuine enthusiasm. She told me much about the things she did to make sure her boys would grow to be men, real confident men. Sometimes my face would turn red even though she never saw it and I was always impressed by that.

I was always amazed at how open and free she could be talking about things that you could not beat out of most people. She was honest. Not the kind of honest that people mean when they say "to be honest" and then they lie to you anyway. No, if she thought it, she said it. Sometimes she would say it so fast that she might skip some of what she meant to tell you like a record needle skipping on an old vinyl album with bad scratches in it. Perhaps a better way to say it is that she was truthful. She told her husband of everything, even about the apples.

She wore a black leather exterior, complete with every blue word there is. She liked to believe she was tough and I suppose she was. Inside was a sensitive girl, easily hurt and needing attention. A large heart that loved so many and she loved to be in love. This fueled her need to stalk her apples. The hunt, the dance and the romance. It is hard to imagine that gang girl with a love for romance and flowers, but that was her. Leather and Lace all packed into jeans and a tee shirt going ninety miles per hour in a S.U.V.

She never let a challenge go unanswered. It did not matter what the subject was, if she had an opinion, the fight was on. And she was a very spirited fighter and she valued thinking for herself. Even when she was wrong. She would play games and even if she was not winning them she

would fight on to improve her skills and despised it if she thought you let her win a game. We played a lot of games together and I wish I could tell her of all the times she made me smile and laugh during them.

She was a muse - my muse. Always providing me encouragement to write and never afraid to let me know if I was writing excrement. She had an innate sense of what was good reading and what was not, even though she would always tell me different. I think it was her passion and curiosity that pushed her to inspire me. She seemed to believe in me in ways I needed someone to believe. It made me a better person.

Rather than believe that God would allow bad things to happen, she decided to believe that God does not exist. This simple decision made her life more bearable under the constant awareness of the bad things that happen outside of her control. God would forgive her because she did it out of love for humanity, at least I know I would. I think she loved apples because they took her to a time in her life when she was unchanged and had great independence. It let her dream of what could have been.

She was a great friend, a great mother, a great lady. And she loved apples.