

**HUSBAND ALONE**

**LEE BUTLER (1922-1993, age 71)**

**Cause of death: natural causes, died in sleep**

I could tell my son was crying. I put my hand on his shoulder to comfort him. Regrettably, it was the only time I had ever made any effort to console him.

He reached out and touched the face of the man in bed whose eyes were closed. It was my face--it was me.

Huh.... I hadn't felt a thing. Spent the whole day trying to get my bearings I guess. It never dawned on me that it was over.

*It was all over.*

And the moment I realized that, was the moment I finally heard her voice. Maggie. I turned around and saw her standing in the doorway, looking young and lovely, smiling at me. I was overjoyed to see her. I couldn't remember the last time I felt so happy. And a moment later she was in my arms, kissing me.

Then she took my hand and whispered "Let's go, Sweetheart."

I didn't hesitate. Even after sixty years I still couldn't say no to that woman.

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**PANICKED MOM**

**JESSICA ALLS (1967-2009, age 42)**

**Cause of death: brain aneurysm, died in sleep**

I could see Tommy was crying and I tried to take the phone away from him but he turned quickly and left the room. He said "I have to go unlock the front door." I thought "He's unlocking the front door to let somebody come in? Who the hell is supposed to come over now? We have to leave!"

I was in the hallway, about to catch him before he opened the door to some stranger when the twins began sobbing. I rushed back to them to find out what was wrong--what was going on--and oh, Jesus, the next thing I knew I was looking at me lying in bed.

Tommy ran back in the bedroom and I was hysterical. "Call your father!" I yelled at him but he didn't hear me. Instead, I heard him say to the girls "I think she died."

I thought "You've got to be kidding. I didn't die. I can't die. I've got too much going on--and I just turned forty-two. No one dies when they're only forty-two!"

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## **GRADUATION DAY**

**KRISTY LUND (1995-2013, age 18)**

**Cause of death: auto accident; killed by a drunk driver**

I don't know what was worse--me being dead, or me getting killed by an underage drunk driver who had been in a couple classes with me in junior year. Or seeing my mom try to cope with it. She took my death way harder than I did...

I know I don't sound very emotional about the whole thing. And it's not like I wasn't invested in my life--because I was. But, honestly, I was never even that pissed off at the boy who killed me. For some weird reason, I feel like I'm okay with everything that happened. I mean, I had pretty great life for eighteen years. I had really good parents and their divorce gave me the chance to get to know my mom better--to see her as a person and not just as my mom. That made me appreciate her a lot more, and love her more than I already did. I had great friends and we had great times together. I even had a great boyfriend for three years until we broke up. Even after that we stayed friends, talked, got along.

And I had a great dog--Morgan. I still play with her and talk to her when I'm around the house. My mom will see Morgie wagging her tail or barking as she looks up in the air and Mom'll say "Who do you see, Morgan? Who are you looking at?" And I always say "Me--she's looking at me." And my mom will look in the same direction and say to me "Hello Kristy, my pretty girl. I love you." And I always say "I love you too, Mom. I love you too."

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## **HAPPY FATHER'S DAY**

**SAM COOPER (1973-2017, age 44)**

**Cause of death: heart attack**

In celebration of Father's Day... my oldest spent the night at a friend's house so he wasn't home. The sixteen year old refused to get out of bed because he wanted to sleep in. That left Krissy, strictly by default, with the task of putting in an appearance and representing all of my children at the breakfast table. With her cell phone in one hand and three tie boxes in the other she informed me "These are for you, Dad." She wasn't able to tell me which box was from who because they all looked identical with the store's gift wrap paper. She probably didn't even see the tie she supposedly got for me. My wife, Lonna, undoubtedly stopped in at Herbert's, the men's clothing store, on her way out of the hair salon next door.

I waited for my daughter to finish texting her friend, and read a return text, before I opened the three boxes. I wondered what the hell happened to the relationship I used to have with my kids. It would be easy to put the blame on computers and video games but there was more to it than that. They seemed to be so unbearably indifferent about everything that didn't explicitly concern them. And how the hell do you fix that? Or change it? How do you make someone care?

I have no idea.

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