

Hello Gorgeous,

To sit and write to you seems so “little”, so “trite”, so “empty”.....I hope you can understand. Trying to write about the difficulty of living without you can only be understated; I don't think there are words, or sentences, or books or actions that can even begin to describe the constant tugging on my heart.

With good intentions, close friends have asked how it feels inside...I've described it as brick tied to my heart, always tugging and pulling me down. I know I'll never be able to achieve the true level of happiness I had during the years you were alive. I am slowly learning though how to “shelve” my sadness for a short time, and enjoy a particular moment. I hope you understand that during those times, I haven't forgotten you...it's just a matter of trying to learn how to live without you.

I'm not sure if you know this or not, but the night of your funeral Adam, Mom and I were lying in bed, talking about you and sharing a few funny stories. Adam mentioned that one of the teachers guessed that the reason you died was that God needed someone up there to kick a “little butt” and get things organized and under control. We laughed for a long time about that, because we pictured you in heaven, with your planner in one hand, your pager on your hip and a cell phone in the other, planning, directing and leading the hordes of angels on a certain project! Hey, a question we had that night and we really need to know, do angels wear clothes?????

The weather today is beautiful. A few clouds, blue sky and the 50 degree weather provides just the right crispness in the air. It's spring, everything is just beginning to come to life. On days like this, I wonder what heaven is like. I wonder where you are, what part of the world you're in, what you are doing. I wonder if you are the clouds. I wonder if you are the wind that makes the trees rustle. I'm puzzled. I can't understand “heaven and life after death”.

I'm convinced there is something after we die. I mean, how can you be so full of life and energy, and beauty and then within a tenth of a second, be lifeless, still, dead. Your energy, your being....your soul... it's still there, you are still with us, but in a different way. I wish you could tell me about it. You know Pumpkin, I can feel you near me when I really concentrate. I feel you with me when I need you; however, I feel guilty trying to get your attention. You have better things to do than visit Dad all the time. But I do love it when I feel you near me.

Mom, Adam and I are still trying to understand why you left us so much in your diary. We had no idea you even kept one. I hope you aren't too mad at us for sharing parts of it with the world. Remember our conversation about death the night before you died, in the car on our way to Builders Square to buy flowers for your graduation party? Remember the Wednesday before you died, you told me not to worry

so much about you being killed by a drunk driver? You said, "Dad, relax, you know what the odds are....." I had forgotten about that until Mr. Sealy reminded me soon after your death, he was there that night and heard you. What did you know in the back of your mind that we didn't? Why did you leave so much, so many fears of being killed on the roads?

Remember the night you wrote your own epitaph for a school project? Well, I found it about a year ago in a computer file. You had huge dreams Ashley, and you know, it wouldn't surprise me at all had you accomplished some of those things you wrote about.

I have to tell you something. And this hurts. You left us wonderful memories and your diary. But one thing I wish you hadn't done that night, and that's left your identification at home. As a result, I had to identify you in the morgue. I can't get that picture of you out of mind when you were at the morgue. I'd like to say that you looked beautiful in death but I can't come to grips with that. I can't really be honest and say you did.. I get so upset when that image comes back in my head. Your stare. Your beautiful blue eyes, fixed open. Your beautiful smile, your perfect teeth....., gone. Your beautiful body, crushed. The pain in my stomach, my throat when I think of you lying there. PLEASE...If you can do any one thing, please, please, help me delete that picture from my mental file.

I want to hold you Ashley. I want to rub your back like I used to. I want to tell you the "pickle" story one more time before you go to bed. I want to have a disagreement with you so we can sit at the kitchen table and debate the issue. I want to be there for you when you need help in making a decision. I want to visit you at campus. I want to be a part of your life. I want to see you walk down the aisle on your wedding day, to be at the hospital and see your children the day they are born. I want to buy you gifts at Christmas, and on your birthday. I want to open a gift from you. I miss you so much. Come to me my angel, lighten my load a little more. Help me deal with the pain, the tugging. Help us all.

Well, I must go now. I've cried enough for one day. Stay in touch as you do, and I will stay in touch with you through my thoughts. We love you Ashley, We miss you and want you to know you are still a part of our life.

Love,

Dad