

The Tunnel of Grief

In Loving Memory of my adored only child

Alexander Tomei

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Losing a child catapults us into a surreal world of agonising pain. A world no one can imagine, a world no parent wants to imagine. Yet it happens... too often.

My son lost his life in March 2007. Alexander was my only child. I could have followed him, but something kept me here.... and so the journey began. I was violently hurled into the tunnel of grief. Head over heels I was sucked into the darkness of indescribable despair. Blindly I had no choice but to feel my way through.

I went back and forth with all of the emotions described by Elizabeth Kubler Ross in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*. Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance ... Acceptance! Acceptance? I wasn't even able to think, let alone consider acceptance. Yet it came, eventually, to a degree, and in my own time. What other choice did I have? Denial, Anger, Bargaining and Depression taunted me, but not in that order... not in any order. Those emotions and more came and went. At times I was stuck in one or another. Other times they all came at once, suffocating me in my fragile state of inconsolable grief and longing for my child.

This painting came to me spontaneously. I had no plan, no vision, my heart and soul guided the brush, and the images appeared and made sense to me. Through intuition, I was painting my journey. When I first entered the tunnel of grief, I felt trapped in a vortex of the deepest pain. I didn't think it would ever release me, but somewhere, stirring in my subconscious, I knew I had to find the light. I had to go through and process all of the emotions and frightening challenges the darkness held, because I knew that if I was able to conquer my fears and trust in that elusive light, at the end I would find my son.

My Sun ... My son. He would be there safe and sound, held by the Angels with the orange curls.

No one can tell you how long you must spend in the tunnel, or what sequence of emotions you should feel. It is a personal journey... your courageous journey into your self. In your own time, you can resurface out of the dark and into the light.

• I know this, because I've been there, and I have come out the other side.

Donated to The Compassionate Friends of Victoria by Laura Tomei
Author of: Footprints in the Sand – A Symphony of Grief