

## Give sorrow words

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One of the best things about the community of children's authors is the quality of the friendships I have made, over the years, with wonderful people who do what I do, love what I love.

Yesterday, in one of those coincidences that no longer surprise me. I heard from two friends of many years.

Lois Duncan and I have shared some uncanny coincidences over the years, and neither of us has forgotten the time we both spoke at the same conference—both of us more or less the same age, with many things, (including lawyer ex-husbands) in common, the same color hair, and on that particular day, wearing almost identical yellow dresses, so that as we sat together on a panel, no one knew to which Lois questions were being addressed. We would receive each other's fan mail from time to time. When, in 1989, I received a puzzling letter of condolence from the California Booksellers, I realized with distress what the mistake might be. When I called Lois, she told me that her eighteen year old daughter, Kaitlyn, had been murdered.

Six years later, in 1995, it was she who called me after my son, Grey, had been killed in a plane crash.

Yesterday I received in the mail a book from Lois Duncan. Over many years she had chronicled her own life in poetry and now she has published it as a unique kind of autobiography called "Seasons of the Heart." (She points out in a note to me that if you look for it on Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com, you should accompany your search with her name, because there are a number of other books with the same title.)

So I was reading Lois's book, and being especially touched by the poems about the loss of her daughter, when I received another note from a friend, this time an email from Marion Dane Bauer, the distinguished writer, whom I have also known for years. Marion's only son, Peter,

died in February from a devastating neurological illness that he had battled for a long time. I remember how moved I was when Marion emailed me the day Peter died, to tell me that his terrible struggle had ended. Her email yesterday contained a copy of a tribute she has written to her son; it will appear in the "journal" section of Marion's website ([www.mariondanebauer.com](http://www.mariondanebauer.com)) shortly.

In the aftermath of my own son's death twelve years ago, I received a letter from an actor friend who quoted Shakespeare's line from MacBeth: *Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.*

I was struck yesterday, reading Lois Duncan's words, and then Marion Bauer's, how we who write instinctively follow Shakespeare's dictum. We give sorrow words. And we look for solace in words as well. Yesterday, as I was thinking about both friends and about how their grief has been tempered by their fluency, I happened by chance (but is there really any "chance"? The book practically leapt out of my bookcase, and open to the right page) on a poem by Jane Kenyon:

#### LET EVENING COME

Let the light of late afternoon  
shine through chinks in the barn, moving  
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing  
as a woman takes up her needles  
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned  
in long grass. Let the stars appear  
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.  
Let the wind die down. Let the shed  
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop  
in the oats, to air in the lung  
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't  
be afraid. God does not leave us  
comfortless, so let evening come.

Jane Kenyon

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