

Pina's death had made my mother even more protective of me. I was not allowed to participate in many social activities. I had friends in the neighbourhood, but rarely ventured far from home. I did not want to add to my mother's worries, after all she had been through, losing a daughter. Occasionally, I resented the restrictions. I saw myself as being different from other Canadians. As an immigrant born in Italy, I was sometimes embarrassed that my parents weren't more like Canadian parents, who seemed more permissive, and less protective of their daughters. In retrospect, I can appreciate their fears, their concerns, their expectations.

I have come to realize that everyone mourns in his or her way, in his or her time. I mourned my sister's death 16 years after it happened. When I was 15, I experienced the gamut of emotions at the time of Pina's death and afterwards, but not until I was coming to terms with another loss in my life did I truly feel the loss of my sister, and contemplate what we never shared or would share as siblings.

My thoughts, emotions, hopes, and fears bombarded me as I mourned the end of my marriage in 1990, and tried to make the pieces of my life fit together. Some pieces didn't fit. Some were lost. *I was lost.*

I looked at my two innocent sleeping children at night, and knew I had to be strong. For them. For me. Somehow, my mind turned to Pina, who hadn't been in my thoughts for some time, and the dam that had been building up inside of me over the years finally burst. I felt the loss of Pina acutely, and I experienced such anguish at being unable to communicate to her my pain that I wrote her a letter, expressing all my feelings, my regrets, my love.

Dear Pina,

I'm all stressed out and I wish you were here to help me in these trying times. I'm sorry we never got the chance to work out our adolescent immaturity

and develop a strong sisterly bond. Life is such a struggle at times. I know a lot of people are far worse off than me, but I can't help feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. My spirit is low and I'm impatient and short-tempered. I burst into tears at the slightest provocation. I'm worried because there's a heaviness in my chest and I feel that stress is taking over my life. All the demands of work, the kids, and the divorce are taking their toll on me.

It's go, go, go all the time, and I think I have come to the point where I've got to make changes or I will become sick. I just want peace to return to my life, and I want my kids to have an emotionally healthy childhood, in spite of the divorce.

You know, Pina, once when Sarah was a baby, her sleeping face seemed to be a vision of you. Maybe I had seen that expression on one of your baby pictures ... I don't know. Could it be possible that there is a part of you in Sarah? I know one thing: she's artistic, like you were. Maybe what you and I never had as sisters, I'm supposed to have with Sarah....

I'm sorry if I ever hurt your feelings. I miss what we could have had. I know you would have been my friend. My only consolation is that you're in a better place, close to God.

Dear Pina, pray for all of us—me, my children Sarah and Jordan, our mother, father, brothers—that we can come to peace in our lives. I will say this prayer for you: Eternal rest grant upon Pina, oh Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen.

I never told you, but I love you.

Rosanna

November 28, 1991

When I completed the letter, I was spent emotionally, but at peace. I had finally mourned my sister. And from that moment, I felt her angel wings embracing me, giving me the strength I needed to carry on

Rosanna Battigelli was born in Italy and emigrated to Canada in 1963. She is an award-winning teacher and

writer living in Sudbury, Ontario. She has won four Best Practice Awards from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association. In 2006, she was awarded an Ontario Arts Council Writers' Works-in-Progress Grant for her second novel. Her stories have appeared in Canadian anthologies, including Mamma Mia! Good Italian Girls Talk Back (ECW Press, 2004).

APRIL BULMER

Psalm 69 for the Goddess

My heart is a fragile
shade of moon.
Yours a dandelion
broken and bloomed.

I gather
on a woman's month
among the native birch,
plant my seeds
with prayer:
Mother God, please
another heart,
a sun to light
my womb.
For it is a dark galaxy
turning there.
The organs
like constellations,
the waters
a shallow blue.

April Bulmer has published eight books of poetry. She has four university degrees in the area of creative writing and religious studies. She received her Honours B.A. from York University in 1986. She has earned many awards for her writing including first prize for excerpts from a native m.s. called ROUGE from the Canadian Authors Association. April lives in Cambridge, Ontario.