

sample chapters of always too soon

Hope Edelman

My father died a year ago, at the age of seventy-four... When my mother died, I was dealing with my own grief and wasn't really old or mature enough to help my siblings through it. But when my father was dying, I was conscious that it was not only my grief I needed to be aware of, but my children's as well. And that I had to find the right balance. I couldn't focus only on them and put my own needs aside, and I couldn't get so caught up in my own needs that I ignored theirs.

My siblings and I are still close to each other, but in terms of being bonded as a family since my father died, what has happened instead, from my point of view, is that they've married into families that are close, and have become very involved with their spouse's family. My father was not a strong force. He didn't host family dinners or anything like that. But when he was alive, he gave us all a reason to go to New York and be in the same place at the same time. Now there's no longer that excuse. My husband and I are close to his family, but they live far away. We don't get to see them often. So I feel that we are kind of adrift, in terms of having an extended family. It's not about emotional closeness—I speak with my siblings frequently; it's really about the holidays and the traditions.

It's heart-wrenching and painful and difficult to go through the loss of a parent. I have a sense of relief that I don't have to go through it again. A lot of my friends are going to have to go through this once or twice still; they have it ahead of them. And I don't; it's in my past. That's a little bit freeing—to know that I don't have that fear ahead of me.

Ice-T

My mother passed away when I was in third grade. I was there when she died. We were sitting together, watching Batman on TV. She tilted her head back and started to breathe heavily; she was having a heart attack. My father knew something was happening, and he told me to go next door to our neighbors'. I was there when the ambulance came...

Four years later, when I was in the seventh grade, I was called down to the principal's office. I knew I hadn't done anything, so obviously it was something about my father... He'd had a heart attack, just like my mother.

I've always felt like an outsider. Every Thanksgiving, every Christmas, it was me, sitting at someone else's table. It was that vibe like when you're over at somebody's house and they're whispering in the kitchen, "Why is he here?"

It was only recently that Coco and I were married. It's hard to trust that when you give yourself up to love, it won't be taken away from you like everything else. You're afraid to fall truly in love because you don't want something to happen. You cross your fingers every day.

Roseanne Cash

I've learned something subtle about loss and love: Love survives loss. Relationships don't die; they just change. In some ways I'm closer to my parents now that they are gone... With my dad, I've felt it plenty of times. Once, I got into a taxi and I could smell his aftershave. I felt a sense of being very present and feeling love in that moment. Or I'd walk into a store and hear my dad's music playing. That happens all the time, but sometimes it will be a

particular song or line that's meaningful to me at that instant. Things happen to remind me that my parents are still around, that they care about me.

Having experienced the death of my father, I didn't have that gut-wrenching shock when my mother died because I knew I could survive the death. I was stronger. But that didn't make the intensity of the grief any less. Since my parents died so close together, it was like a one-two punch. I was walking into walls for the first six months after my mom's death. But my mother's death didn't require the same emotional discipline that my father's had. She was a very private person, so I was able to grieve for my mother with more ease than I did with my father.

I'm looking forward to getting past the first anniversary of my mother's death. Everybody said, "It'll take a year" when my father died. I didn't know what they were talking about until I got through that first year. The weight lifted a bit after the first anniversary of my dad's death, and I said, "Oh, I get it." It takes a year because you have to go through every first holiday and birthday without them, and then the first anniversary of their death. Once that's done, you feel like you've completed the most intense part of the cycle.

In the privacy of my own home, I grieve, and remember, like everyone else... I have my father's private desk that he used every day in his little office. He taped the edges with gauze because he kept banging the sharp corners into his knees; diabetics have to be careful of their skin. So I kept the gauze on the corners. I love that desk; to me, it just signifies him.