

Seung-Eun Yi Pastreich

이승은

July 17, 1968 - Jul 26, 2022

賢母 良妻 孝女

Wise Mother

Thoughtful Wife

Filial Daughter

Memorial Service

August 3, 2022

Mondrian Hotel

Seoul, Korea

Tribute
Benjamin Yi Pastreich
Son



As humans we all have flaws and those flaws are what make us human. My mother was not a flawless being, but she was always my mother.

My mother was beautiful; she is now and she was then. She will be forever beautiful in my memories and in my heart, even as the passage of time ages me, as it ages us all.

As I sit here reflecting back on my memories of her, all I am able to grasp is just how much she sacrificed for us. She made our home, home. She was the person we came to about everything, anything. She was the person to whom we told all our insecurities, problems, worries; we showed her our tears.

She also had an endless sea of worries of her own, worries that were hard to understand, sometimes not rooted in anything. But clearly what was the best for us, for our family, was always in her mind.

I will forever be indebted to her for her bravery and for her sacrifices.

I heard stories all the time from family members of what she did in her youth, about who she was. There were sides of her that she never showed us. I sometimes wished that she had not kept her past so hidden away from us.

I remember that back in fourth grade I was not the best student. I was attending CCS, an international school in Seoul. My teacher and the office workers were tired of my behavior. They handed me suspensions like candy. The first few times my mother scolded me.

Then around the fifth time things changed. She took me to a movie theater and she bought me a Lego set as a present.

At the time, I thought she must be tired of me and my misbehavior.

But now I can see, I can truly feel, the love and the compassion that she had for me at the time. These events of long ago rocked my life, but knowing that she was there for me, knowing what she was willing to do for us, allowed me to build a solid base in my heart.

That base of love and compassion in my heart is built on my mother's sacrifice and bravery.

This is my first motherless visit to Korea. I think I am starting to understand now what motivated my mother back then.

I know you're in a better place now, Mom, free from suffering, free from our mortal bodies.

I just want you to know that I am going to be OK; you didn't do anything wrong, it's just how things turned out.

I will be OK; we will be OK. It was you set us up to be like this, to be OK.

Thank you, Mom, I love you.

Tribute
Rachel Yi Pastreich
Daughter



My mom was the most selfless person I even knew. She was a mother by nature. She always was my number one supporter and she encouraged me to push forward, through the hard times. Although we were 7000 miles away for the last two years, our connection was always strong and she called me often, whenever she was available.

From childhood, she was always the generous mother planning all our family trips, showing affection every minute, and making sure that Ben and I received the best education possible. In the 4th grade, I remember visiting my mother at the hospital after her lung cancer surgery. She had lost a lot of hair and was lying in the hospital. But for me she looked as strong as ever. She had beaten cancer. She had beaten a disease that seemed unbeatable. The years following she grew stronger and stronger and no one would have suspected that she had survived a battle with cancer.

She didn't tell anyone about her personal suffering. Back then or more recently. She didn't tell my family that she had lung cancer in 2014 until she had scheduled the date for surgery. She didn't tell my family that her cancer had returned this year. No one suspected that it had come back because she didn't display any kind of suffering. When I last saw her, she told me that her doctor told her that she didn't have to come to the hospital often because her health condition had improved tremendously.

It is uncanny and unnatural being back in Korea without her here beside me. I find myself thinking of her whenever I walk through the streets in Seoul, streets where we walked together. Although she isn't not with us anymore, I can say that she is peaceful now. She doesn't have to face painful chemotherapy treatments again and the suffocating atmosphere at the hospital. She is not fighting for her life everyday anymore. I believe that she is looking after my brother and me every day, standing by our sides spiritually. And she can rest in peace now.

My mother and I loved traveling together. We went on trips just the two of us. I remember the trips to Hong Kong and to the Philippines that we took together so vividly. Her presence warmed my heart and she was my best friend the whole way. We planned out the trips to make the most of our mother and daughter time together.

One of my most vivid memories of her is from when we lived in Buam-dong, 부암동 Seoul. She was so fastidious and attentive. She was the best cook that I've ever seen and I can't forget all of her delicious dishes - especially her chicken teriyaki. I miss the everyday events of family life then. I miss going to the grocery store with her and picking out dinner ingredients for our next meal. I miss going to cafes with her where she would watch me attentively as I did my homework. I miss going to volleyball clinics with her where she would give me advice on how I can improve my game. I miss hugging her small body and smelling the 엄마 smell of my mother. I miss calling her up after school to tell her everything that happened in my day. She was the greatest listener in the world. I will always cherish those moments in my heart. I will always be grateful for her generosity and for her hospitality.

It breaks my heart that she passed away so young. I promised myself from a young age that I would buy her a house in the U.S. She had promised me that she was going to come to my high school graduation next year and to move back to the U.S. It was all planned so perfectly.

Now I can't fulfill the promises I made anymore, but I still want to fulfill her wishes that I be successful and thereby make her proud.

사랑하는 엄마에게

너무나도 일찍 돌아간 엄마가 그리워. 아직 나 20 살도 안됐지만 엄마를 위해서 열심히 살게. 엄마뫼까지 합해서 엄마가 자랑스러울수있는 딸이 될께. 엄마 이제 하늘나라에서 안아프고 평화롭고 행복하게 살고있다고 생각할께. 이제 더이상 고통을 안받아도 되니 부디 편히 쉬어. 일년전에 여름에 엄마랑 지낸게 너무 좋았고 이제 생각하면 후회도 많아. 전화를 더 많이 할께... 엄마랑 시간을 더 많이 보낼 걸... 생각이 많은데 그래도 엄마가 늘곁에 있다고 생각하면 마음이 평화해져. 엄마가 하늘나라에서 행복하게 쉬고 있다고 생각하고있어. 다시 태어나도 엄마가 내 엄마였으면 좋겠고 다음생에는 엄마가 더 행복했으면 좋겠어.

엄마를 위해 많이 기도 할께.

내가 많이 사랑하고 많이 보고싶어.

사랑하는 엄마의 외동딸 레이첼, 이정민

Tribute
Emanuel Yi Pastreich
Husband



Seung-Eun was a highly creative and loving woman. Her creativity was devoted to the spaces that she inhabited and articulated in the subtle ways that she expressed her love for those around her.

Family was the canvas on which she wrote her generous spirit broadly. Even in the midst of the worst setbacks, she found time for family, and managed to create a home. Marvelously and mysteriously, she found deep meaning in the smallest things and led us to understand better ourselves without ever speaking a word.

Seung-Eun 승은 was the name given to her by a Buddhist monk on a trip when she was 28 years old. She bravely decided one day that it would be her name and she never changed her mind. That alone is unusual in Korean society. Her original name was Lee Young-mi 이영미.

She had a radiant smile, and a tremendous enthusiasm that brought light, and energy, to the breakfast table, to the carefully laid out plates and tea cups in the cabinet, and to the cans and pasta stacked up in the pantry.

I was struck over and over again by the deep sense of respect that she showed for all people. The first time we had lunch together, in 1996, I noticed that she treated the woman running the little restaurant with a glowing warmth.

A slightly round face, brilliant eyes, perfect teeth, and a subtle beautiful voice defined Seung-Eun.

She played elaborate games with the children, Benjamin (born 2001) and Rachel (born 2004). Engaging them in fantastic worlds was her specialty. And the snacks she made were especially for them--and for no one else.

She became deeply involved in Buddhism while we lived in Daejeon. At her command, we all loaded up in the car and drove out to various temples deep in the mountains, especially to Bongamsa 봉암사 Temple near Mungyeong.

Bongamsa Temple is a deeply spiritual place near a quick flowing river that threatens to carry you away in its current. We spent our days there wandering the paths around the temple, wading in the pools on top of the great boulders further up in the mountains, and speaking with the monks on the wood verandas of the temple. I still remember her dragging us to the services at dawn when the drums rumbled in the stillness.

After we moved to Seoul in 2011, Seung-Eun started to study Buddhist art history at Korea University and for a few years she was buried in books. She even took off on a trip along the Silk Road all by herself from which she brought back hundreds of photographs of odd and intriguing temples and carvings.

I feel that the family unit that the four of us became was so incredibly close because of the loving attention that she gave to us without hesitation. We did not know that she was the cement that held us together, a kind of invisible cement.

Poem
Seonggwon Sunim
성관스님

Dear Spirit of Seung Eun

When I grabbed your sleeve and pleaded with you not to go, my hand lost all certainty.

Even when you knew what was going to happen, still you wanted to go.

Walking along the ridge of tears, you had finished your preparations for a trip to somewhere far away.

Your stubborn faith, along with your pure will, and brilliant light, illuminates the heaven and earth.

When I sing a song for you,
When I sense that you are there,
When I call out to you so desperately,
You do not send back a reply.

When trying to grab the tail of desire, the obsession melts into a spellbinding freedom that in a flash burns out.

You departed yesterday on a long road.
But on that road your feet will be light as feathers.

Now our prayers will transform the pain of separation into beauty. That other world offers colors that will paint an ocean of wisdom.

Karma blooms and that karma turns the wheels of reunion.

When that cup of fragrant dew fermented from eternity is offered to you, your touch of warmth and fragrant mercy envelops me.

When I offer up to you that sweet dew, I become the Buddha and in that offering, I become one with you.

In the heavens the flower petals are blowing, bringing news of you.

My spirit longs for you across the great canvas of the universe.

With the help of the Mañjuśrī Buddha, we roll the dust into diamonds

Our meeting will be among the clouds, high in the blue heavens above.

Written at Jaseong seonwon Temple, Buam-dong, Seoul

All things are created in the mind

一切唯心造

이승은 영가님께

가지말라고 님의 소매를 붙잡은 내손은 확실함을 잃었습니다.

님이 기꺼이 가신다 하시니

님은 눈물의 능선을 타고

먼곳으로 가실 채비를 마치셨습니다.

그의 견고한 신념은

푸른 의지와 찬란한 빛으로

온 천지를 비추옵니다.

내가 님을 위하여 노래 부를 때

내가 님을 느낄 때

내가 님을 간절히 부를 때

님의 답이 되돌아오지 않음은,

바람의 끈을 잡아 보는 집착은,

황홀 한 자유로 녹아내려

눈부시게 흩날립니다.

어제 먼길을 떠나는 님의 발길은

깃털처럼 가벼워지셨나이다.

이제 우리의 기도는

이별의 아픔을 아름다움으로 음집시켜

이승의 색감으로 지혜의 바다를 그립니다.

인연으로 피어서 인연으로 지는 수레.

영겁으로 삭혀진 한잔의 감로수를 님께 올리면

님은 따스하고 향기로운 자비의 손길로 날 보듬어 줍니다.

님께 바치는 감로수는

내가 부처되어 바치기에

나는 님과 공존 합니다.

천상에서 꽃잎이 날아와

님의 소식을 전합니다.

님을 그리는 나의 혼신으로

우주의 캔버스에

문수의 찬조로

금강을 빚어봅니다.

우리들의 만남은

푸른 창공에서 구름으로 ...

자성선원에서

일체유심조



Do not stand
By my grave, and weep.
I am not there,
I do not sleep—
I am the thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond glints in snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle, autumn rain.
As you awake with morning's hush,
I am the swift, up-flinging rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight,
I am the day transcending night.
Do not stand
By my grave, and cry—
I am not there,
I did not die.

CLARE HARNER