



Voices of Motherhood

**STAGES OF MOTHERHOOD
PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE**

2015



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YummyMummyClub.ca (YMC)

Voices of Motherhood

**Stages of Motherhood
Past • Present • Future**

2015

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**For every mom and mom-to-be who has ever wondered,
“What have I gotten myself into?”**

Ready or not, you’ve signed up for a wonderful, crazy rollercoaster ride filled with ups, downs, and more twists and turns than a *Gone Girl* novel. Your clothes may be stained, your meals aren’t always homemade, and you sometimes lose your temper, or lock yourself in a bathroom for five minutes of peace.

But you also now wear your heart on the outside of your body and you know what it’s like to love someone unconditionally.

**And no matter what anyone ever tells you,
you are your kid’s best mom ever.**

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About YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015

Every mother's journey is as powerful and unique as she is.

Earlier this year YummyMummyClub.ca (YMC) launched the third annual "Voices of Motherhood" contest. We asked mothers from all over Canada to submit their story based on the theme "Stages of Motherhood: Past, Present, or Future."

We received over 100 thought provoking stories that made us laugh, cry, and nod our heads in agreement. We opened our hearts to the different experiences these women had, all with one common bond – motherhood.

Our judges had their work cut out for them to narrow it down to these Top 10. We hope you enjoy these stories as much as we did.

Happy Mother's Day from YMC.

YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015 Grand Prize Winner

Warrior Mother

By: Rosemary O'Neill

I spend my days pretending to be normal. I act as if the pain in my gut is not there and that I can go through my days with a lack of conscious effort just like every other mother. It is, however, a pretense. I am a sham, a shell, an empty vessel and an ocean of pain. I am struck through the heart.

I am the nightmare that mothers tease themselves with. I am the toothache that you suck on to see if it could possibly hurt more. I am the mother who remains a social aberration and so much an oddity that you cannot even give me a title.

My child is dead. She died of natural causes, her body beaten repeatedly by radiation and chemotherapy and side effects that reached out their ugly tentacles years later. My daughter Sara, like the Celtic warrior princess that she was, fought tooth and nail - never even considering for once that going gently into the night was an option.

Mothers hear of my loss and imagine my pain. They keen quietly and at night shiver with the horror of me. My loss is their darkest place. They will poke at it and then beat a hasty retreat because in examination lies the superstition of cause.

People think that I am brave and stoic but what I am is lost and crushed with the pain and grief that the loss of my best friend and beloved daughter has brought to my doorstep. People assign sainthood to my behaviour but they do not know that a sound or a smell can drop me to my knees without the solace of prayer and that continuing to wake up in the morning is the only saintliness I possess.

I carry stones in my pockets so that if an experience or a place strikes me as something she should have seen or felt I lay a pebble. These pebbles are the cairn that she should have had. It is her birthright and her hard won victory for so many years spent in battle as a warrior. Each pebble allows me to stand a little straighter. Each pebble allows me to acknowledge that my child is dead but her death was a proud and terrible end to a courageous fight.

People wonder how I can walk alone without my daughter. I can because I have no choice. I cannot be a coward in the face of all she managed to live through. The noblest death for a Celtic warrior was a death in battle. I will celebrate her life and

death until I have to lay down my stones because, at the end of my life, the burden of my struggle has become too heavy.

I name myself.

If she is a warrior then I am a warrior mother.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Second Place Winner**

The Weight of Letting Go

By: Jessica Gollub

I didn't know what I had hoped for as I dipped my toe into the icy water, but it didn't work. The ice had barely melted from the lake, but my soul had not yet thawed. Thin tendrils of fog danced on the surface of the water as I watched from the edge of the dock. My feet dangled and I pulled the thick quilt around my shoulders until it was so tight that I could almost feel it holding me upright. I hadn't bothered to grab a coat. I wouldn't be here long.

It was still hard to breathe. When would that get easier? When would I be able to pull oxygen into my lungs without thought, without a conscious effort?

I exhaled and the fog from my mouth mingled with the rest, and I couldn't help thinking I had brought this upon myself.

It was too hard. I didn't want to do it anymore.

I knew it was going to be difficult to raise a child. I had prepared for the sleepless nights and selfless exhaustion, but how could I have guessed that I would be caring for two—one tiny perfect daughter and one struggling, disintegrating mother?

They call it "the sandwich generation" as if something as innocuous as a sandwich could even begin to describe the stress of being pulled in every direction. I signed up to feed my baby girl, not my mother. I chose to bathe the perfect little human I had created, not the one who had created me.

It was too much.

I yelled. I cried. I pummelled my fists into my husband's chest when the frustration became too overwhelming.

If only I had known how much harder it would be to say goodbye.

I would take those moments back in a heartbeat. I would suck my hateful angry words back into my mouth and smile through the trials.

She didn't mean it.

She didn't intend to make me want to pull out my hair.

She couldn't help relying on me, yet I was furious for it.

And now she was gone, and with her any hope of redeeming myself.

I saw her burnished casket being lowered into the ground every time I closed my eyes.

My fault.

My heart pounded in my empty chest as the tears fell, tracing their paths down my cheeks. I imagined they would make it all the way to the lake, but they wouldn't. My tears didn't deserve to be free, and I didn't deserve to let them go.

The third board creaked, like it did every time someone stepped on it, and I knew I wasn't alone.

He never judged. I did that enough for both of us.

I felt him sit behind me, his legs straddling me as his arms enveloped me. I rested my back on his chest and he held me in my grief. It was all he ever did, and all I ever wanted.

We sat together in silence until I inhaled and let the icy air prick at my lungs.

"Does she need me?" I asked, wiping the tears from my eyes.

"Yeah."

Together we stood, and together we made our way back to the house.

She was waiting for me in her bed, her blanket askew and her soft eyes watching. She too was patient with me, waiting for me to heal. I reached out and my fingertips brushed her hair from her face.

My voice was barely more than a whisper. It was all I could manage.

"Hi mom," I said.

YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Second Place Winner

Carrying Love

By: Liz McLennan

Many years ago, a young girl with red hair handed her daughter into a stranger's arms – the baby was wrapped in pink and carried in her tiny, premature heart, all of her mother's hope and regret and love.

Mostly, she carried love.

Soon cradled in arms that had longed to hold a child, that tiny baby grew and blossomed and knew, always, that she was loved beyond measure. Her parents encouraged her to explore, to seek, to question, to fly.

And so she did, for many years – on trains, planes and itchy feet. She carried her belongings in a backpack, her dreams in her eyes and her hopes gaily, in her heart.

Mostly, she carried love.

Down an aisle she carried hope to the man she had chosen because she liked his smile. Together, they set about creating a home, amid much laughter and mess, with very little sense or money. Together, quite by surprise, they created a life and soon she carried crackers in her purse and weight in new places and books about everything she had never dreamed of, but suddenly wanted to hold more than anything.

Mostly, she carried love.

He was born with red hair and the feel of his tiny, premature heart beating next to hers was the most amazing thing she'd ever known. Into a new and wondrous land she stumbled, lugging carriers and diapers and more books about everything she'd never imagined and suddenly feared just a little bit.

She cradled coffee and his fiery head, held him for days and hours and months, in slings and tired arms and through the darkest parts of every night. She carried him upstairs and downstairs and through, in, over and around all the places in between.

Always, since him, she carried love.

Now her fire-haired boy is almost 10. He has been joined by another son, whose spirit is both soft and fierce and who, like his brother, holds one half of her heart.

As they tumble through their days, they cannot know that they carry the dreams of all who have come before. They know only that into their bags she has packed lunches and books about stuff she says is important.

They know that they will find mittens and tissues she has tucked into their pockets. She hopes they remember the last-minute instructions she poured into their ears, that she loves them MORE and that they can be fearless if they choose.

Every day, like her mother before her, she hands her children out into the world – with hope, with regret, with dreams, with thanks.

And then she kisses them, on the cheek and the forehead and the lips.

So that into each day, they too, carry love.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

Symphonies

By: Karen Green

Bang, bang, bang. "Funder!"

Mischa's small, chubby hands grasp the sticks, sometimes hitting their mark on the drum skin, sometimes landing rhythmic blows on the shelf adjacent. A pause; sticks drop. The chubby hands pick up little cymbals. Crash, crash, crash. "Lightening!"

From below her perch on the toy shelf, a clatter of noise. She jumps down, brow furrowed; eyes darkening like the sky before rain.

"Cassidy," she admonishes her sister, "we're not doing funder; we're doing lightening!"

Cassidy – smaller, chubbier – considers her sister for a moment, then turns and continues to whack the table with the spoon. Thunder.

Her older sister drops the cymbals at Cassidy's feet. "Then I'm playing dinosaurs."

I laugh out loud, I can't help it, and watch as my eldest daughter abandons her sister and their game. She walks towards the pen of creatures on the other side of –

The image on my screen shrinks and I am left to look at a collage of stills. The video, which I had never seen before, has ended. My chest restricts as I fight a fleeting panic that my children are gone. I blink, refocus, search my screen for a way to jump back to that moment, but my husband had not filmed anything else from that particular evening.

2009. The girls were two and four. Where was I when my children were conducting stormy symphonies and corralling dinosaurs? How could I have missed such an uncomplicated moment with my small girls, when all I want now is to dive back there and squish their pudgy bodies against mine while the dinosaurs threaten escape?

I know where I was.

I was upstairs, washing dishes and preparing lunches and straightening up a house that never seemed to stay tidy, not even for five minutes, could you please put these toys away, please.

I was grocery shopping, walking the aisles slowly, forgetting what I was supposed to buy even as I fingered the list in my pocket. Tired, but finally alone, lingering over a package label, the guilt that I would miss bath time creeping in.

I was anywhere but there. I was anywhere but in the claustrophobic playroom filled with noise and needs and laundry piled in the corner.

2009 and were we ever all in one room at the same time? How quickly would I hand my children off to their father, leave for a few precious minutes to do something, anything, that did not require being immediately responsible for two small humans?

2009, my children were little and the laundry was piling, and I was desperate to find, even for a few minutes, a way out.

And today I search my screen, scanning the files, looking for a video; a way back in.

I shut my computer and rise, compelled to see my kids, unsure, for a moment, how many years I will find have passed.

They are downstairs, in another playroom, less claustrophobic; the laundry piled in another room entirely. My two girls are huddled around another table, leaning on arms, kicking feet, less pudgy.

“What are you guys doing?” I ask. I sit on the couch, lean back.

“We’re writing a song, Mom, listen.” Mischa stands upright, a chopstick in her hand. The conductor. Cassidy jumps to attention, and together they warble about a fawn in springtime. Cassidy stumbles through the lyrics; Mischa throws her a look of consternation, keeps singing.

I should film this, I think, but minutes pass. The song continues.

I make no move from my seat.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

Journeys to Here

By: Joy Meehan

September 1947

The small lady in a long, sapphire coat had her hands beyond full. With a squirming toddler clutched in one arm, she handed a stack of boarding tickets to the Army Major. He eyed the heavy brocade suitcase by her feet, the rounded belly evident beneath many layers of clothing, and six well-dressed children, clustered around.

"Are they all yours?" He asked, flicking two fingers towards the children.

"Yes," she answered, her voice affecting a calm indifference she didn't feel.

"Travelling alone?" He asked, intelligent eyes now fixed on hers.

"Yes," she repeated. Her mind raced anxiously through all the different ways this scenario might end, most of them unfavourably.

The smell of war was in the air. She and her seven children were on their way to join her husband, their father, before the borders were closed. As she eyed the last departing train behind the Army Major and waited for his response, she prayed silently, drawing hope and strength from her Faith.

Her family's future lay in this man's hands.

Finally, the Major looked down, stamped the tickets and handed them back. "God bless you and your little ones. Have a safe journey."

"God bless you," she whispered, guiding her children past their wingless angel and towards a shiny, new future.

March 1976

The frightened three year-old tugged urgently on his mother's hand, pulling her, with all his might, in the opposite direction. Mother told him they were going on a plane but it was so big it took his breath away. He no longer wanted to swim with his sister, build a snowman or jump in large piles of colourful leaves. It sounded so wonderful earlier but now he was tired, hungry and he wanted his bed.

Father, a suitcase under one arm and already holding his four-year old daughter's hand, reached out to hold his son's as well. Together, joined like a chain, the four of them continued walking on the tarmac towards the shining plane. Tears in more than just the three-year old's eyes.

They'd said good-bye to the familiar; their large home, friends and family, their favourite spot by the river. Father wondered how quickly he'd find work, whether the family left behind would follow, as promised, and if he'd ever feel confident about this decision. Mother, one trembling hand on her protruding belly, worried about giving birth in a new world, schooling for the kids and adapting.

Ah, but a new life awaited in a land of abundance and democracy; the promise of a spectacular future for their children, progress and safety.

Hours later, as the plane finally began to make its descent, Mother and Father reached for each other's hands. The reality of what they were doing was sinking in. Leaning in close to his wife, Father's whisper coloured Mother's pretty face with hopeful expectation:

"Welcome to Canada!"

August 2013

Joy rocked quietly under a million stars as the baby inside her stretched and played. Her third child – another girl – would soon be here to join the strong lineage of fiercely courageous women of her family.

In her heart, Joy's ancestors gathered. Their decisions, their joys and sorrows, their challenges and triumphs; all of these things had led to this pure and perfect moment.

Her grandmother who'd raised eight during the war.

Her mother who'd raised four in a brand new country.

This was exactly where Joy was meant to be.

Eyes closed and faced raised to the night sky, Joy sent up a silent wish to all the mothers who came before her; words filled with love:

"Thank You."

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

***A Constant Love*
By: Christina Myers**

My mother taped the poem inside a cupboard in the kitchen when I was just five or six. It stayed there until we moved, and was carefully peeled off and re-taped inside the next kitchen cupboard, and the next, and the next, through every move of my childhood.

By the time I was grown, it was curling at the edges, fading and speckled with age. But still, it hung there, flashing itself each time she opened the door and reached for a plate.

(My hands were busy through the day,

I didn't have much time to play

The little games you asked me to,

I didn't have much time for you ...)

My mother's hands were certainly busy with four children to care for: mountains of laundry to do and endless dirty floors to be swept. There were meals to cook, piano lessons to get to, ripped jeans to patch at the knees. There were birthday cakes to make and science projects to help with.

No, I suppose there weren't many "little games" we played, amidst all that. I don't recall her sitting on the floor with us to put together a puzzle. And though she'd sew sweet little outfits for our dollies, I can't remember that she kneeled down alongside us as we tended to them. She may have, and I've simply lost the memories to the passage of time. It hardly seems to matter either way: if there wasn't time to play as often as she'd have liked, it never lessened the constancy of her love, or her presence.

(Life is short, the years rush past,

A little child grows up so fast.

No longer is he at your side

With precious secrets to confide...)

I talk to my mother every day, about everything. I share so much, with so little filter, that I wonder sometimes what a stranger would think of all the things I have confided over the years. I'm quite certain I'd be lost without her presence. When my own first child arrived, it was my mother who quietly countered my anxieties with a calmness earned from 30 years of raising four children through illnesses and lost toys and first heartbreaks and bad report cards.

"You're doing everything he needs," she'd say, when I wondered tearfully if my newborn son was getting all the things the exhaustive baby books decreed were imperative. "You love him, that's what he needs most."

(The picture books are put away.

There are no longer games to play...

My hands, once busy, now are still.

The days are long and hard to fill...)

I copied the poem and pasted it up in my own kitchen when my son was still a baby, long before his sister arrived. A reminder, I told myself, that this season of life passes quickly, to make the most of each day.

But laundry still needs doing, birthday cakes still need baking. I balance the must-do's and the want-to-do's against the always racing clock as well as I can, like all mothers: imperfectly.

When the poem's urgency tickles at my heart and I feel worry pressing in, I remember my mother – busy in her mothering, constant in her love – and feel reassured that I'm getting it more right than wrong. And I hope that when my mother catches sight of that poem in her cupboard, and feels a stirring of second-guessing, she will know this above all else: that I could not have asked for more.

She loved me, and that's what I needed most.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

Finding Myself on the Kitchen Floor

By: Taslim Jaffer

“Is that the dishwasher you’re leaning on?” asked my bestie through my iPhone’s screen last week.

“Uh...yeah. I’m just...on the kitchen floor.”

She giggled and I continued on about my most recent misadventure at the ice skating rink.

It was only later, as I washed that night’s dinner dishes that I came to appreciate the significance of those tiles under my feet as an important part of my motherhood journey.

Nearly eight years ago, I became a mom. And every notion I had of mothering a newborn went out the window, as I lay slumped, much of the time, in tears on the kitchen floor. There were days when I swear that linoleum was the only thing keeping me from dropping into an abyss of despair. I don’t know what it was about the kitchen – maybe it was the way the sunlight streamed in through the windows as evening approached that made the space feel like a warm hug. Maybe it was just that I used up my last ounce of energy trying to throw together a cold sandwich for my starving body, and fell right where I was.

We moved homes when I was pregnant with my second child. This kitchen had hardwood floors. I tell you, though, fancy as they were, when that second baby came, crying and pooping and projectile vomiting, those floors did the same trick as the old linoleum. My butt landed there countless times throughout the day as I wailed about the tragedy of it all; me - a sleep-deprived, milk-engorged, fading version of myself, trying to pull myself together with my back against cupboards containing cleaning supplies.

I could have flooded those floors with my tears, but the refrigerator beat me to it. The damage was extensive, and out came the wood. Now we have vinyl tiles. And another baby.

(I think you can guess where this is going.)

After getting the older two to school, in the short time between feeding sessions, and while the baby slept, I found myself on those floors again. "I can't believe I'm still here," I'd whimper. But I was too tired to be anywhere else. Too frustrated at the mounting piles of laundry. Too anxious about getting through the day and then facing school pick-ups which was like the greatest feat ever. Getting out of my pyjamas for the 20 minutes I'd have to put together coherent sentences with the other moms for whom diapers were a distant memory was the most cumbersome part of my day.

Today, I don't have a baby. I have two children and a toddler. And while the tears aren't completely dried up, the faucet is moving toward a slow drip. I see the light at the end of the tantrums; my 7 year-old and 5 year-old remind me every day that these years are soon to be memories I may or may never get around to printing in photobooks.

Now the kitchen floor is where I play with my toddler, watching her amazement as she picks up crumbs between her thumb and forefinger. I toss her a twig of parsley while I chop vegetables at the island above her. She plucks at the leaves, enthralled. And dinner can sometimes be made in relative peace.

When I lean against the dishwasher now, it's to FaceTime with my bestie while the spaghetti sauce simmers, my eldest child reads her book, my middle child crashes cars in the living room and my toddler discovers the world.

This is now my view from the kitchen floor.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

You Should Envy Me

By: Tara Wilson

I'm jealous of my friends.

Not of their pools, tropical vacations, or decks that don't have raccoons living under them. Well, actually yes, I am jealous of those things, too. I don't claim to be a saint. I like drinks with umbrellas in them and backyard barbeques that don't require a tetanus shot as much as the next girl. But that's not what this is about.

I feel envy every time someone says that her kids are getting easier to raise. When she and her husband are spotted at the store alone because they were able to leave their kids at home for a couple of hours. When she can do something simple like weed the garden without abandoning it five minutes in, to follow her child back into the house.

I'm jealous that the only stack of paperwork she fills out for her child is for rep hockey, not for evaluations and treatments by doctors and therapists. I see her daughter's hair perfectly neat on picture day and wish my daughter would tolerate a haircut or even proper brushing.

I want to have carpets that have less popcorn on them than a movie theater. Or to go for a walk with my child without a knot in my stomach wondering if she'll run into the street again without warning. Will today be the day I'm not fast enough?

These moments of wanting what other parents have are something I am not proud of, and I only let the comparisons surface in my mind from time to time. Honestly I am too busy vacuuming up snacks and securing door locks to think about it much anyway.

But the real source of jealousy that lurks in my mind, like a monster in the closet, is about the future.

My oldest child is eleven and the twins are nine now and people have started making comments about how before we know it we'll have an empty house. They assure me that my house will be neat soon enough, and they ask me about our travel plans once we are on our own.

I even get caught up in that fantasy on the hard days. I've sketched many a home gym in my mind, and mapped out a European vacation itinerary that in no way resembles that of the National Lampoon excursion.

But the bubble pops and I remember that we probably won't ever have an empty house. My nine year-old daughter has Autism and in many ways functions like a two year-old. She lacks impulse control and safety awareness. She will not communicate with people unless they are standing between her and the bag of chips or they know the WiFi password. She has all the business and destructiveness of a toddler combined with the strength and sheer will of the leader of a riot squad.

As much as I would like to cling to hope, I can't envision her living on her own or walking down the aisle. And that makes me envy my friends who still have those plans in their "likely" file.

But then Maggie flashes me her genuine, beautiful smile. Or laughs her from-the-soul giggles. She climbs in my lap and covers me in kisses.

That's when I realize that I am the one to be envied. Maggie demands a close eye, which means that I have the privilege of spending a lot of time with her. Also, my house will long be filled with the joy and love of a beautiful daughter who will always be my little girl.

Nothing can compete with that.

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

A Letter to My Expectant Sister

By: Cristi Gambacourt

I know that you were disappointed in my reaction when you told me your wonderful news. I truly didn't mean to make you feel bad; I'm thrilled that you're having another baby!

I am also terribly jealous. Learning that you will soon be holding a precious newborn made me realize how much I miss that time in my life and regret that it will never come again for me. I'll never again feel the amazing peace that comes from breastfeeding late at night while the rest of the world is quiet, never again feel the absolute trust from that tiny little person who depends on me for literally everything, and never again feel that soft body relax against mine in deep slumber.

I know I've done each of those things before and am truly blessed to have experienced it at all. I know that I'm lucky to have my little boys who are now old enough to fill my days with hugs, jokes, songs and laughter. I know that my time with them today is precious too, watching them learn something new every day is an adventure, seeing the world through their eyes is an education. They make me laugh with their crazy antics, they make me cry with their incredible obstinacy, they make me proud when I think that everything they are is because of me. I know that I have to treasure these days because they will soon be gone.

Not too long from now they will want fewer hugs, encounter fewer problems requiring my assistance, and have fewer moments to spend with me. My heart will break a little every time they need me less but I will also rejoice in my newfound freedom. I will be glad to have time to spend on myself, learn something new, go back to work, and watch as my two babies grow into the men that I've tried to teach them to be.

All too soon they will be gone for good, they will start living their own lives in their own houses, potentially far away from here. I will only see them on holidays and speak to them when they have time for me. It will never be enough and I will long for the days when they were always underfoot, cute little impediments to anything that I was trying to accomplish.

You too, are in the middle of this journey but also standing again at the beginning. I will watch as you walk this path with your new little baby. I will be there beside you and try desperately to control my longing, show you my love and support you every way that I can.

Please don't feel bad for me, the desire to hold my own infant again is intense right now but will fade to a dull ache as time goes by. It's an ache that every mother knows, every mother experiences and every mother learns to live with. It's the price we pay for loving our children so much.

My heart is so full right now. Full of thoughts of my babies when they were small, love for the children that they are today, and dreams about the adults they will become.

Congratulations to you, mother-to-be. I envy you, I love you, and I can't wait to meet your new baby!

**YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015
Runner Up Winner**

Motherhood: A Story Untold

By: Vinma Joseph

The last time I saw my Mom was about twenty five years ago.

It is a day I remember so well.

Hot summer air, the sensation of sweat breaking out on my neck and the taste of salt on my lips. The breeze did little to soothe the unbearable heat I felt as I stood on weak knees. She sat on our porch and I shifted my weight from one foot to the other.

Things are about to change. Today will define my past, present, and future.

I watched my Mom as she stared past me at an empty space.

My beautiful Mom! She had the face of an Angel. But she brings my death today.

I listened as she spoke. Her words were barely audible though I was sure it had the sharpness of a million swords. Capable enough to kill me a thousand times...I wished to disappear before it happened. But the words are out there now, loud and clear. And I heard it too, finally.

"I don't wish to see you again, sweetheart. It is best for you and your brother to go live with your Dad. Hope you will understand..." She looked me in the eye the whole time as she said it.

I crumbled. Is this really happening? Is it possible for a Mom to forsake her own children?

I am incapable of handling this. I was only 10, you see? My eyes became blurry. The tears made it difficult to focus my vision. I watched as the outline of her figure slowly started fading right in front of my eyes. Wasn't she supposed to be compassionate? Aren't all moms compassionate?

I looked at the face that will haunt me for the rest of my life one last time. And walked out.

Looking back, I realize walking out that day was easy. But she never stepped away from my heart. My mom is an elusive, but dominant figure in my life still. Have I forgiven her for what she did to us kids? I don't know.

She is alive, in case you are wondering. Which makes it difficult for me to answer people's questions.

Me: "I don't have a mom."

People: "Oh, sorry to hear that. When did she pass away?"

No sir; my mom does not make things easier even in her absence! Some days, I feel very close to her. Other times, I try to run away from it all.

Motherhood has baffled me many times before I became a mom. I didn't understand the bond between a mother and her daughter. I was convinced that a mother's compassion for her child is nonexistent. Experiences tell me so.

My mom never loved me enough to stay so believing in the power of motherhood and the compassion it represented was hard.

Anyways, the day my mom left changed my life for the worse...or so I thought!

I was broken and weak. There was a gaping hole in me that was dark and ugly. I was drowning in it. Relief was not in sight...

And then...

It seemed like God opened the doors of heaven and dropped a gift - I became pregnant! Something warm stirred in my heart and I began to feel alive. I recognized compassion for my unborn child. I felt my soul again.

Letting go of the sadness after the great abandonment twenty five years ago seemed easy. As my body got ready for my baby, love and compassion fled through planting the seed of motherhood in its wake.

And as I held my baby for the first time in my arms, I forgave my Mom...

YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015

Meet the 2015 Voices of Motherhood Writing Contest Judges

Carolyn Forde, Literary Agent

Carolyn has been at Westwood Creative Artists, Canada's oldest and largest Literary Agency, for 10 years and is a shareholder in the company. She loves finding new voices, escaping into stories, learning new things and collaborating with great minds.

Jes Watson, Executive Producer, Women's and Family Digital at Corus

Executive Producer by day, mom to three wonderful kids by night, and a writer when she finds thirty minutes to herself. With a background in film and editorial, she's passionate about telling great stories and engaging audiences across platforms.

Julie Nowell, Publisher, BluntMoms.com

A blogger, publisher and private consultant, Julie works on amazing projects all designed to support and nurture creativity, a positive lifestyle and viable business practices.

Erica Ehm, Publisher, YummyMummyClub.ca

Erica Ehm created YummyMummyClub.ca almost a decade ago to give moms a place to celebrate and commiserate the rollercoaster ride of motherhood. Today YMC has become the online destination for Canadian moms to "spill it." Erica loves YMC and everything it stands for but she ADORES her son, daughter and husband a kajillion times more.

Sharon DeVellis, Head Writer, YummyMummyClub.ca

Sharon has worked at YMC for 8 years and what she loves more than anything is reading the incredible stories written and submitted by moms for moms. We all have a story to share. Isn't that what the community of motherhood is all about?

YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015

About YMC

Once you've felt the overwhelming, crushing responsibility of taking care of a child, you'll never see the world in the same way the same again. You're now one of the millions of mothers around the globe, and yet ironically, you sometimes feel isolated and alone.

YummyMummyClub.ca (YMC) is where women with kids can vent, laugh, share opinions, teach, and be heard. Our stories are written by moms, for moms (and a couple of dads). It's where you come when you need a few moments to yourself to be reminded you're not alone.

If you're trying to find the near impossible balance of raising kids while still finding time for yourself, YMC is for you.

Welcome to the club.

YMC Voices of Motherhood 2015

Meet the 2015 Voices of Motherhood Presenting Sponsors

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Mabel's Labels

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Mabel's Labels, award-winning creators of high quality labels for the stuff kids lose! As four moms frustrated by our children's belongings leaving home, never to return, we decided to create the very best personalized, waterproof name labels and tags possible.