

A Mother's Words

by Hadas Sela, at the ceremony dedicating the garden in her son's memory

Udi'le ...

I remember so well the Friday you were born, the drive to the hospital, when I said to Daddy on the way: "Look at how everything is blossoming all around."

It was a wonderful, color-filled day, just for you, to be welcomed into this world.

On that magical Shabbat eve, at the beginning of the spring of 2000, at a completely unexpected time, you came into this life embraced – gentle, angelic, soft and pure – and departed from it, four years later – embraced, gentle, angelic, soft and pure.

Like any mother, I longed for my firstborn. I anticipated your arrival and believed wholeheartedly that you would be unique, but at the same time, I imagined you playing, singing, running, climbing trees, learning to play the drums, writing poetry, falling in love ... like all children.

Yes, I had stories running through my head. I wasn't foolish or hallucinating – I was simply a mother. With dreams reserved for mothers.

But everything was different, Udi. One after the other, the old, naive, healthy dreams evaporated and were replaced by one strong desire: that you should only be happy. When your development did not follow nature's course, my little one, and as every milestone turned into a challenge, my body constricted and pain seared my heart.

We worried and feared what was to come – but we kept our faith and our strength.

You were our strength - the strength in your ability to withstand suffering, the strength in your bubbly laugh, the strength in your agility, the strength in the feel of your embrace and in the soft palm of your hand, the strength in your charm ...

And all this strength was not enough for you to live ...

Each time your body betrayed you, broke you and shattered you, you sank into your own world, disconnected and in pain – a world that we couldn't dare to imagine. And then you would recover and lift us up again and instill in us great hopes.

We would say: One day this mischievous little hero will be able to do anything he wants. Not a famous, battle-worn hero, but the special hero that you are, one of a kind.

(My sweet little son – the giant – who more than anyone taught me about life, about laughter and about how to keep going when you were no longer with us.)

And when you left this world for your own, when we caressed you for the last time and the hope and desire had deserted us, I hugged you and sang to you, and you were at peace and beautiful. In my mind's eye, I saw how you wrapped up all your suffering in one fell swoop, how you packed up your life's story and floated away whole, high up above.

I accompanied you with a nighttime story that I had written for you, in which the "sleep stars" welcome you with great excitement, line up behind you in a long row and say:

"Here's the angel Udiron, the most beautiful one there is,

He with the small and gentle features

His red lips, full

Open in a wide smile of wonder

His brown eyes, warm and shining – because in them lies a star

His body is agile and lovely, and he is swift."

Since then, Udi, the longing has become a permanent condition. And with each step I take, you are with me, in a way that can't be described, you calm and comfort me. And now and again, a sad tear slides down my cheek and whispers to me: Your Udi is now happy.

You, who came and went in silence, left us alone to discover your deepest desires. You loved taking trips, the fresh air, the beauty of nature, petting animals. You made impressive strides in the pool and at the playground ...

All these led us to choose this garden.

This garden which you are looking at together with us is in your honor.

And we could not wish for a more beautiful, youthful and colorful garden for you.

Look, my son, at the wide expanse, just as wide as you would open your arms when you wanted a hug. And lit up, just like your bright eyes.

Look, my son, this garden is in the place that was our haven, where we made friends and you played with yours.

This is the place where your wonderful and dedicated caretakers – who brightened your day and filled it with meaning and action – can rest and regain their strength to continue to do their amazing work.

Look at all the wonderful people who are here – they built your garden through careful thought, through great love for the children, and in a way that they thought you would like.

And this morning, your soul is floating above us here, above this little piece of heaven sprinkling goodness in the air
caressing the peace that is here
breathing pleasure and laughter
and instilling hope among the children who will play here – from this morning on for many years to come.

It is my hope that you will love this special place as we always tried to make your life good and comfortable.

Thank you, Udi, thank you

Thank you for paving the path and leading the way for us to reach this goal.

We are proud of you and will love you forever.

Daddy and I